

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Saturday
That Some 73 More Iranians Died
From the Coronavirus Disease
Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing
The Total Deaths to 61,142**

IRAN NEWS

**President Hassan Rouhani Noted
Yesterday That the Danger of a
Fourth Corona Wave Had Not Yet
Been Ruled Out and Urged the
Public to Observe the health
Protocols During of Nowruz Holiday**

VOL. XXVI, No. 7187 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY MARCH 14, 2021 - ESFAND 24, 1399

2 DOMESTIC

**Foreign Military
Presence Source of
Insecurity in Region**



> SEE PAGE 2

2 DOMESTIC

**Tehran Municipality
To Renovate Public
Transport Fleet**



> SEE PAGE 2

Iranian COVID Vaccine Ready for 2nd Phase of Clinical Trials

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran is going to test its first homegrown vaccine for the coronavirus on a larger group of volunteers in the second phase of clinical trials, a researcher said.

Minoo Mohraz told Tasnim on Saturday that the second stage of human trials with the coronavirus vaccine financed by the Barakat Foundation of Iran will begin on March 14.

Around 400 volunteers aged between 18 and 75 will get the vaccine in the second phase of clinical trials, the Iranian physician and researcher noted, adding that none of the 56 people that have received the COV Iran Barkat vaccine in the first phase has shown any symptoms.

See Page 7

Military Personnel Allowed to Run for President



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Spokesman Iran's Guardian Council confirmed on Saturday that military personnel are allowed to register as presidential candidates.

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran, Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei said the law has not forbidden those serving in the armed forces from running for president.

The regulations stipulate that military personnel are prohibited from interfering in the elections or expressing

their support, but applying for candidacy per se is not forbidden as it has happened before, the spokesman added.

The next presidential election in Iran will be held in June simultaneously with council and midterm parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections.

Candidates hoping to run in the next elections are to apply in early April for approval. The final list is to be announced by the Guardian Council in early June.

Several military figures have voiced readiness to run for the president so far.

Presidential election will be held on June 18, 2021.

Kadkhodaei also said the path is open for heads of the Judiciary and Legislative branches to compete in the presidential election.

Asked whether heads of the Judiciary and Legislative branches should hand in resignation before the election if they wish to compete, Kadkhodaei said "The law has not set such a ban and only those who are directly responsible for the execution of and monitoring on the election should resign before registering their candidacy."

Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, the spokesman said meetings have already been held between Guardian Council and Interior Ministry on related issues. He said that the number of polling stations has increased by 15% as a measure to avoid crowds. He also went on to say that if the law was amended, there would be no problem with holding the Presidential election in more than one day in the coronavirus situation.

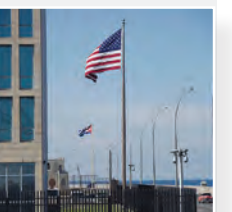
In response to question on whether the presidential election would be held in more than one day amid the COVID-19 situation, Kadkhodaei said: "The presidential election will be held in compliance with all health protocols, and election gatherings will be limited, as the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus officially declared." Kadkhodaei noted that people would go to cast their votes in elections by observing all health protocols.

"The number of ballot boxes will increase by 15% compared to the previous elections," said the Guardian Council spokesman. The Guardian Council Spokesman also added: "The plan to amend the articles of the Presidential Election Law was submitted to the parliament by the Guardian Council."

He stressed that there had been objections to the next Iranian year's budget (starting on March 21) and it had not been finalized yet; though, the Parliament has announced the unofficial views of the Guardian Council.

4 INTERNATIONAL

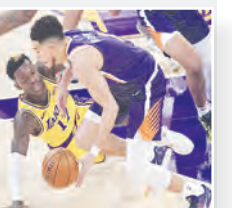
**Cuba Accuses
Washington of Stoking
Illegal Migration**



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORT

**Booker-Led Suns
Win Fifth Straight**



> SEE PAGE 8

Iran Economy Out of Recession

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, Abdolnaser Hemmati has said that the Iranian economy has recorded growth despite sanctions and pandemic.

The Governor of the Central Bank announced the positive economic growth in the third quarter of this year in the Iranian calendar (last autumn) and the exit of the country's economy from the recession and announced that the details of the growth of various economic sectors will be published early next week.

Abdolnaser Hemmati on his Instagram account wrote, "According to the report of the Economic Accounts Department of the Central Bank, the country's economic growth, which had been positive since the second quarter of this year (last summer), was also positive in the third quarter of the year."

Hemmati pointed out, "Given the continuation of maximum sanctions against Iran and coronavirus pandemic, which has caused a recession and severe negative growth in many countries, the Iranian economy growth is important and is the result of a Resistance Economy and a symbol of A Surge in Production under sanctions."

See Page 7

Tehran Rejects Baseless Israeli Claims

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the UN office in Geneva has dismissed "baseless" accusations leveled by Israel against the Islamic Republic at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), urging the body to avoid politicization.

Addressing the 46th regular session of the Human Rights Council on Friday, Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh said the regime occupying Jerusalem al-Quds has no right to comment on the noble issue of human rights in Iran.

The remarks came after the Israeli mission in Geneva tweeted, "Today, during the Item 4 General Debate, where HRC46 discusses situations which require its attention, we repeated our call for @UN_HRC to focus on Iran."

Baghaei Hamaneh said the Israeli regime is best described under the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, adopted on November 10, 1975. In the Resolution 3379, Israel was declared a racist regime.

See Page 7

Pakistan Calls for Ways To Expand Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan's Minister of Finance and Revenue stressed the role of Iran-Pakistan Investment Company in strengthening trade and investment and called for finding effective ways to further develop cooperation with Iran.

Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh made the remarks during a meeting with Hassan Abghari, Iran's Deputy Minister of Economic and Finance Affairs and the Managing Director of Iran Foreign Investment Company (IFIC) at the Finance Division on Friday.

According to a statement, Deputy Head of Embassy of Iran's Mission Muhammad Surkhabi was also present at the meeting. They exchanged views on matters of common interests and reiterated the resolve to promote economic and trade linkages between the two countries by building upon historical ties, geographical proximity, cultural affinities, and economic commonalities. The Finance Minister emphasized finding ways for furthering trade relations. The Pakistan Iran Investment Company can play a pivotal role in strengthening trade and investment between the two countries, he added.

"The Finance Minister briefed His Excellency Deputy Minister that Government of Pakistan is pursuing a broad-based economic reform agenda to achieve export-led growth and sustainable economic development," said the statement.

He referred to the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined socio-economic measures taken by the Government of Pakistan to lessen the adverse impact of the pandemic on marginalized sections of the society. The minister said the government announced the largest-ever Fiscal Stimulus Package and introduced the strategy of a smart lockdown to protect the vulnerable segments of the society which has been acknowledged worldwide.

The current Government is firmly committed to correct the fundamentals of the economy through effective policymaking and targeted reforms with an aim to achieving a sustainable and inclusive growth strategy, he concluded.

The First Digital and Electrical Home Appliances MegaStore



Branch1: Karaj, Ecomall

Telephone Number: 026-34925539

Branch2: Tehran, Mirdamad Street
Coming Soon

Telephone Number: 021-8805124

K1 MEGASTORE
Online and Physical Sales
www.k1land.com

K1 ALL IN ONE

Tehran Dialogue Forum 2021 Slated for March 16

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman says the 2nd Tehran Dialogue Forum 2021 is slated to be held in Tehran on March 16, 2021.

Saeed Khatibzadeh said the event has been organized by the Institute for Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

“The Tehran Dialogue Forum will open at 10:30 am with a speech by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif,” said the spokesman. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, said Khatibzadeh, the event will be held online, bringing together delegates from Iran and other countries.

Foreign Military Presence Source of Insecurity in Region

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Special Aide to Majlis on International Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a meeting with Ambassador of Norway to Tehran Sigvald Tomin Hauge said recent U.S. Administration bombardment in Abu Kamal in Syria and martyrdom of anti-terrorist fighters is a green light to the IS forces and to the escalation of insecurity.

Amir-Abdollahian pointed to the significance of restoring security and sustainable stability in the region and felicitated on the occasion of Norway’s membership to the UNSC as well as to the IAEA board of governors, and noted that all countries and governments should strive in true sense for establishing peace and security in the region and the world.

He went on to say that Iran believes that peace and security in the region is very important and any presence of foreign forces in the region will be provocative and source of insecurity. He said he believes the role of Norway in the UNSC is very important and undoubtedly all regional crisis should be settled through diplomacy and not military.

Amir-Abdollahian also called the U.S. behavior in Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan and some parts of the region and the world as unconstructive, interventionist and unilateralist. He went on to say that the U.S. policy in assassinating the international commanders of fight with terrorism Martyr Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis deteriorated the situation in the region and recent Biden’s decision on bombardment in Abu Kamal and martyrdom of anti-terrorist fighters is a green light to the IS forces and intensifier and intensifies the insecurity.

He also emphasized the role of parliaments and parliamentary friendship groups in strengthening the friendly and bilateral ties, adding that considering the formation of



Iran-Norway Parliamentary Friendship Group in Iran’s Majlis, he expects such a reciprocal action in Norwegian parliament for boosting parliamentary and friendly ties between the two countries.

He then announced readiness of the specialized commissions of Majlis for restoring ties with their counterparts in Norway’s parliaments and emphasized holding virtual meetings.

In response to a question by the Norwegian Ambassador on the future of the JCPOA, Amir-Abdollahian said that the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the JCPOA is very clear, it means, act against act. He added that if the U.S. removes sanctions in action, Iran after verification and watching the real lift of the sanctions will take reciprocal action.

Then Tomin Hauge, for his part, said the parliamentary cooperation is very crucial in developing bilateral ties and said that Embassy of Norway in Tehran will do its best for reinforcing the bilateral relations between parliaments of both states.

He also pointed to his country’s membership in the UNSC and said considering Iran’s important and constructive role in the region and the world, Norway’s approach in the UNSC is to cooperate with Iran for restoration of peace and sustainable security in the region.

Touching upon on recent developments in Afghanistan and Iraq, he said the Islamic Republic of Iran has very important capacities and then both sides reviewed the latest developments in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Islamic Revolution Moving Forward Powerfully

TABRIZ (IP) - Majlis Speaker stated that the Islamic Revolution of Iran was going forward with power despite all the difficulties.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said at the conference on the 100th anniversary of the martyrdom of Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani in the Vahdat Hall of Tabriz University: “He is one of the role models of this country.”

He added: “The Islamic Revolution of Iran is going forward with strength despite all the difficulties. Whenever there was success, it was due to relying on beliefs and ideals.”

He said that all Iranians are proud of Azerbaijan, adding: “The struggle and resistance is prominent in the history of this land.”

The people of Azerbaijan have made history in a way that the people of Iran are all proud of them, according to Qalibaf. The conference to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the martyrdom of Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani began on Saturday in the Vahdat Hall of Tabriz University.

Resistance Economy Effective to Avert Adverse Impacts of U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said on Saturday that the Government adopted Resistance Economy to avert adverse impacts of the U.S. sanctions and the policy should remain in place to control damages of the illegal sanctions.

Jahangiri answered several questions on the performance of President Hassan Rouhani’s Government in two terms in office, including a positive evaluation of Resistive Economy and the Government’s success in this regard.

Jahangiri elaborated on the circumstances created by the sanctions imposed by former US president Donald Trump and the difficulties created by coronavirus pandemic, saying that adopting the resistance economy was helpful, as they were agreed

upon by both political parties in Iran.

Highlighting Iran’s 19th or 20th place in world economies, Vice President Jahangiri said that economic policies formulated for such an economy should consider related conditions, so that when the sanctions were imposed, the resistance economy could safeguard the country.

Iran focused on key sectors of its economy, like gas and wheat, he said, so that it could resist the pressure from the sanctions.

The United States under former President Trump withdrew in 2018 from a deal, known as the JCPOA, among Iran and six world powers to ease international sanction against Iran in return of limitation on its nuclear program.

Iran Allocates 26% of Total Budgets of UNDP to SWO

TEHRAN (IRNA) - UNDP resident representative, Claudio Providas said Iran has allocated 26% of the total budgets of UNDP to SWO to extend more cooperation.

He made the remarks in a meeting with the head of the State welfare organization. During a meeting in the presence of UNDP resident representative, Claudio Providas, with the head of the State Welfare Organization, the two sides accentuated more cooperation.

He appreciated SWO’s services in recent years, saying in order to appropriate performance of SWO in recent years UNDP has allocated around 26% of its total budgets (21 million \$) since 2005 to so far.

According to SWO official website, Providas stated that the allocated budgets to combat Coronavirus are funded from two resources, including the Economic Cooperation Organization and the World Fund, and in this line, our goal is to appreciate the SWO to obtain effective results in different areas such as rendering services to vulnerable groups, elderly and fighting with AIDS among vulnerable groups as well as setting up centers like mobile clinics makes that we considered more financial aids to follow up these plans. Elsewhere he said that about imposing sanctions against Iran we are neutral but the issue of health is very important to us and I deeply regret the effects of the sanctions on Iran and the loss of lives of some people due to these sanctions, he added.

UNDP in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF managed a joint working group about health which succeed to obtain the necessary licenses to purchase health and medical items, he noted.

In response to the fight with Coronavirus in Iran, the UNDP office announces its readiness to help female-headed households and vulnerable groups across the country and in this regard is determined to improve Iran’s health condition by purchase items needed from global companies and some domestic companies to support domestic production in Iran.



Tehran Municipality To Renovate Public Transport Fleet



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) and Tehran municipality on Saturday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for renovating 31 subway trains and 10,000 public taxis.

The MOU was signed by PBO Head Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht and Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi, IRIB reported.

As reported, over 100 trillion rials (about \$2.3 billion) is allocated only for the renovation of the mentioned 10,000 taxis.

On the same day, Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operation Company also signed an MOU with Tehran Wagon Company for cooperation in building 105 wagons for the capital city’s urban railway fleet.

Tehran municipality had previously signed an MOU with Iran Khodro car manufacturing company to meet part of the transport fleet’s need for 3,000 buses.

“Tehran needs 3,000 buses to reduce waiting times at stops so that we will try to achieve this goal”, Hanachi had said in June 2020.

The Iranian government has been implementing several programs, including the renovation of the public transportation fleet and increasing the number of dual-fuel cars, for reducing the country’s fuel consumption and also for reducing air pollution in big cities.

Biden Urged to Learn From History

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian official says the Islamic Republic will never engage in any negotiations with the United States under pressure and threats, warning new American President Joe Biden against making the same mistakes that his predecessors made in their treatment of the Iranian nation.

In a tweet on Friday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who advises the Iranian Parliament’s speaker on international affairs, said “Biden must learn lessons from history” and avoid going down the same path of confrontation taken by previous US administrations vis-à-vis Iran.

Iranian FM slams U.S., European Performance in JCPOA

TEHRAN (IP) - In a letter to EU Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Iranian Foreign Minister criticized the U.S. and European sides’ performance regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In his long letter to Josep Borrell, Mohammad-Javad Zarif noted that if the other parties fulfill their obligations, Iran would also fulfill its commitments.

Following the unilateral and illegal withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA (May 8, 2018), Iran tried to maintain the nuclear agreement, provided that the other parties to the agreement adhered to their obligations, but the Europeans did not succeed in the practical measures to maintain the agreement.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also suspended voluntary actions under the JCPOA on February 23 within the framework of the Law on ‘Strategic Action Plan to Lift Sanctions and Protect Iranian Nation’s Interests’.

Installation of 1st SPM of Jask Oil Terminal Begins

TEHRAN (Shana) - The head of the Jask oil terminal project said the early operation section of the project is 90% complete, announcing start of the installation of the first single point mooring (SPM) in the Oman Sea.



According to Pars Oil and Gas Company, Vahid Maleki said the early operation section of the project was being completed with 1 million barrels per day of export capacity, saying installation of the Pipeline End Manifold (PLEM) has been completed with the Sea Master barge at a depth of 48 meters on the seabed, and the installation of the first SPM at a distance of 6 km from the coast of Jask began immediately.

He underlined favorable weather conditions as one of the important components in the timely implementation of maritime operations of the project, and predicted that if the weather conditions are suitable, installation of the SPM would be complete by the end of the current calendar year, which began on March 21.

The head of the Jask oil terminal project stated: “By launching and exploiting this section as the last piece in the chain of the strategic plan for transferring crude oil from Goreh to Jask, it will be possible to dock and load oil with giant VLCCs and, consequently, Iran can for the first time export oil from the Oman Sea.”

IME Posts Weekly Trade Worth \$384m

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of various types of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$383m last week.



According to a report by the IME’s international affairs and PR, the exchange saw trade of 551,375 tons of commodities on its mineral and industrial trading floor valued at nearly \$176m, which included 231,398 tons of steel, 1,380 tons of copper, 2,310 tons of aluminum, 250 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 27 tons of precious metals concentrate, 160 tons of zinc, 315 tons of iron ore concentrate, 400 tons of coke and 1 kg of old bars.

Next trading floor was the IME’s oil and petrochemical which saw trade of 351,418 tons of commodities worth nearly \$192m.

On this floor, customers of the IME purchased 89,270 tons of vacuum bottom, 117,021 tons of bitumen, 64,674 tons of polymeric products, 32,074 tons of chemicals, 45,000 tons of lube cut, 2,612 tons of insulation and 1,800 tons of sulfur.

Based on this report, the IME’s agricultural trading floor was a platform to sell 46,270 kg of saffron valued at more than \$17m.

Last but not least, the exchange saw trade of 4,034 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities on its side market.

Achieved through the capability of Iranian companies;

Launching the Biggest Rotary Pelletizing Plant

One of the most honorable mining projects of the country, which was gradually completed by local professionals during imposing the most difficult international sanctions against Iran, was officially launched under presence of Ministry of Labor, Cooperative, and Social Welfare, Managing Director of Steel Pension Fund, and some of other authorities as well as having video-conference connection with the President. The biggest pelletizing plant of the country, with production capacity of five million tons, which has the biggest rotary kiln in Iran and even the region, was put into operation in Bafgh, Yazd, Iran as the joint work result by Fakour Sanat Tehran Company and Kobe Steel (Japan). It is a project with an investment of 7,300 Billion Tomans, which has not only created 880 and 1,500 indirect jobs, but also enjoys special features in terms of various aspects, all demonstrating the capability of local professionals.



Taking benefit from latest international experiences in the field of design

As a matter of fact, Seh Chahoun Pelletizing Plant has special advantages in terms of iron ore concentrate pellet qualitative and quantitative production, which makes it special from amongst several similar plants. First of all, its annual production capacity is five million tons, which is unique in comparison to other domestic production lines using Alice-Chalmers technology. On the other hand, this factory is able to produce high quality pellets using a wide range of input feed with a variety of physical and chemical characteristics such as silicon, alumina, calcium oxide, titanium oxide, etc. Interestingly, the equipment of this plant has been supplied from the best international brands from Japan, Australia, Germany, Austria, and Italy, while considering the governing international situation during the project, supplying such project equipment faced several difficulties. However, the task was successfully completed through cooperation and participation by all the concerned parties. On the other hand, basic design and supplying main equipment of this plant were conducted by Kobe Steel Company (Japan) as a well-known technologist, in a way that the latest experiences were used to design this plant. Therefore, this major project was put into operation under presence of President Hassan Rouhani, Mohammad Shariatmadari, Ministry of Cooperative, Labor, and Social Welfare and some other authorities. In this regard, the President stated: "It is quite grateful for us that the biggest local pelletizing plant with a capacity of five million tons, which is quite modern, is hereby launched as a means to complete the steel chain. I would like to hereby congratulate to both people of Bafgh and authorities serve for the development of both Iran and Yazd Province."

One of the Most Honorable Projects

Also Minister of Cooperative, Labor and Social Welfare, mentioning the 9,300 Billion-Toman value of this project completed by honorable stakeholders of steel chain of the country, stated: "Launching such projects indicates the ability of our men of steel, which has been completed under the harshest sanctions. Seh Chahoun Pelletizing Plant, with a capacity of 5 million tons, is one of the most honorable projects completed by Fakour Sanat Tehran Company and Kobe Steel (Japan), and we are honored that such a major project was completed under the peak of sanctions." On the other hand, Reza Masrour, Managing Director of Steel Pension Fund, stated: "This plant current market value is 9,300 Billion Tomans, which has the capacity to produce 5 million tons of pellets, while by putting it into operation, a major step is taken towards completion of steel industry chain in Iran Central Iron Ore Company. Additionally, 800 direct jobs have been created". Masrour stated that 800 direct and 1500 indirect jobs are created by this project and said: "The plant products enjoy quite high quality and over 96% metallization. Therefore, it is competitive in Global markets. Interestingly, upon recent economic war, the project faced no interruption although the foreign engineers quitted the project, and the plant was launched as expected thanking to the efforts by Iranian engineers, and 700,000 tons of quality pellet have been produced by far."



Improving Variation of Iron Ore Products

On the other hand, Reza Fallah mobarakeh, Managing Director of Iran Central Iron Ore Company- Bafgh, stated: "By launching this plant measures have been taken to prevent selling raw iron ore produced at this township for 23% (4 million tons). The plant works were commenced in year 2015 in the form of a consortium of Chinese, Japanese and Iranian companies, and put into operation after five years. He mentioned iron ore concentrate as the feed of this industrial unit and said: "Extracted iron ore from regional mines is further be converted into concentrate after enriching (over 60%) in a process using advanced mining equipment. He mentioned launching the plant as one of the other steel production loops in Iran Central Iron Ore Company- Bafgh, and reminded: Preventing untreated ore selling, creating more added-value, and improving varieties of iron ore products are some of this project advantages."

Delegating Industrial Partnerships Leadership to Iranians

As mentioned above, taking benefit from the latest technical ideas and international experiences to optimize main elements of production line are some of the main features of this pelletizing project in Seh Chahoun. In this concern, Managing Director of Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company "Jahan Sanat" said: The matter which is quite important in this project is that in the past, the foreign companies were the leader of JVs with Iranian companies and local companies used to play the role of their subordinates; however, since some local companies, including Fakour Sanat, have become strong enough for project implementation, major Global companies, including Kobe Steel (Japan) accepted the leadership of Iranian companies for their industrial JVs. Mohammadvahid Sheikhzadeh mentioned that Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company was the project leader for Seh Chahoun Pelletizing project and said: In this concern, Kobe Steel Company played its part in work design and offering technology; however, the company abandoned the project due to the sanctions during the last year. This is while Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company managed to advance this quite major project, which is the biggest local rotary pelletizing plant, using local capabilities. Expressing that we have two pelletizing methods, he said: One is rotary kiln, and the other is linear roast kiln. Kobe Steel has the best rotary kiln technology of the world. Also in Iran, before Seh Chahoun of Bafgh-Yazd project, Chadormalou Pelletizing Company of Ardakan was the best rotary kiln method, who produced 3.2 million tons of pellets. However, in this project 5 million tons of pellet will be produced, which may even be increased to 6 million tons. Reminding that rotary kiln of this project (D: 8m, L:60m) is the biggest size local kiln, Sheikhzadeh said: Some parts of this kiln have been manufactured in South Korea and Japan and further assembled in Iran. He added: The other important point of this project is that here Fakour Sanat played an engineering role, i.e. the project procedure was not in a way that Kobe Steel (Japan) engineers the project and Fakour Sanat conducts the needed measures for installation and implementation. In fact, we managed to establish a partnership with the Japanese so that the Japanese engineers stayed at our company for three years jointly worked with our engineering staff to enable the project succeed in the end. Expressing that the project is the result of joint work of Iran and Japan, Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company Managing Director said: The project work procedure was not in a way that the Japanese progress the work and the local companies install the equipment. He mentioned one of the other advantages of this project and said: In many projects, the foreigners used to give the plans and equipment as well as the technology and the Iranians only installed the works. However, in this project Kobe Steel (Japan) conducted basic and conceptual engineering and the other engineering tasks have been completed by Fakour Sanat Company under Kobe Steel supervision. Sheikhzadeh said: Now we have rotary kiln technology knowhow to produce 5 million tons of pellets, i.e. we are able to complete such project without any help from foreign professionals.

Best produced Pellet

Also mentioning the quality of Seh Chahoun pellet, Managing Director of Fakour Sanat Tehran Company said: Following performance test conducted concerning Seh Chahoun produced pellet, we may say that it is a best locally produced pellet, while its parameters in terms metallization is 97%, while such feature in other local pelletizing units is 92-93%. Also in terms of waist, local pelletizing units usually have 3% waist, while here it is less than 0.5%. Mentioning that this project has unique characteristic aspects, Sheikhzadeh said: There is no rotary kiln with such a size in the country and it is the biggest rotary kiln in Iran. Also it is one of the biggest in the region. However, there are 5-million ton pelletizing plants in Oman and Bahrain, while they lack the updated technology of this project in Iran. He said: The next point is the fact that most of this plant works have been progressed exactly when Trump took the power and at the time of peak of sanctions. This is while the Japanese used to work with us before that but under Trump rule in US the Japanese had no choice but to leave Iran.

Foreign Supervisors did not come to Iran

The Managing Director of Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company stated: Till equipment supplying phase, the Japanese worked with us as needed. However, regarding supervision on installation and operation, performance test, etc. not a single correspondence was made by the Japanese with Fakour Sanat Company. None of the Canadian supervisors also came for equipment and machines installation. Therefore, we developed the software needed in this concern. Also Kobe Steel Company (Japan) did to come to Iran to provide software and install equipment. Australian supervisors for kiln flare work and German supervisors for mixer system as well as Austrian supervisors for installation of disks failed to come to Iran under the peak of sanctions. Mentioning that COVID-19 pandemic also worsened the situation, Sheikhzadeh said: Therefore, we managed to advance in needed measures for this project

thanking to local companies capability, or in other words, inter-company cooperation.

Increasing Local Pelletizing Capacity up to 15 million

He mentioned that some launches have been made during this year to produce 15 million tons of pellet and said: We started up Sangam Mashhad 2.5 million ton pelletizing plant in June. Also 2.5million ton pellet plant in Madghoush, Bandarabbas project was commissioned last month. On the other hand, 5 million ton pelletizing project was launched by Gohar Zamin three weeks before and now by launching Bafgh Yazd Seh Chahoun 5 million ton project, totally 15 million tons have been added to local pelletizing capacity. The Managing Director of Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company said: This project is the result of cooperation of Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company and Kobe Steel (Japan). On the other hand, NFC Company (China) was the financier of the project. On the other hand, sensitive equipment has been supplied from South Korean and Japan. Much equipment has been manufactured locally, i.e. the plant is a mixture of Japanese and Iranian technologies. He mentioned that in general, we managed to localize much plant equipment and added: However, certain pieces of equipment such as mixer, which is not repetitive, have been supplied from certain countries such as Germany. This is while we could also localize them, but it was not cost-effective.

Sanctions Problems

In this concern, Mahdi Goudarzi (Engineer), manager of Seh Chahoun Project in Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company said: Seh Chahoun Pelletizing Plant Development Project with annual pellet production capacity of 5 million tons is the major local pelletizing plant using Alice-Chalmers technology or combined application of traveling grate and rotary kiln. He added: In Alice-Chalmers method, preheat process is made through traveling grate machine, which is in turn composed of four stages of primary drier, secondary drier, primary preheat (tropical) and final preheat based on technologist design type of Seh Chahoun pellet project, i.e. Kobe Steel (Japan). Further, pelletizing is made in rotary kiln (1200 C), and eventually, the roasted pellet is cooled down through a rotary cooler and is passed through product screen and final sizing the pellets in that section (D: 9~16mm), and eventually the product is transferred to stock section. Expressing that project contract was executed in July 2015, but project opening L/Cs faced with problem due to sanctions and Central Bank limitations, the manager of Seh Chahoun pelletizing project said: Finally, through efforts by management of Fakour Sanat Tehran Engineering Company and Iran Central Iron Ore Company, the first project L/C was opened in February 2017. According to him, 60,000 CBM concreting, 16000 tons mechanical equipment, 9000 tons steel structure and roughly 600 Km power cable and around 400 Km control cable have been implemented to construct this factory. Eventually, the foregoing implementation process resulted in commissioning the project and production the pilot samples of pellet after aggregation and conducting the independent and group pre-commissioning works.

Project Proper Implementation Time

The manager of Seh Chahoun pelletizing project manager in Fakour Sanat Tehran announced project implementation time as three years and nine months and reminded that it is a quite proper time in comparison to pelletizing projects implemented with annual capacity of 2.5 million tons (half of Seh Chahoun project capacity), developed during 4 to 5 and even 7 years under normal international situation. Goudarzi stated: Supplying main equipment of this



plant has been conducted from the best international brands from certain countries such as Japan, Germany, Italy, Canada, Austria, South Korea, etc. and under harshest US sanctions. In fact, this success has been achieved when Kobe Steel (Japan) suddenly declared force majeure situation and unilaterally terminated its contract with Fakour Sanat Tehran Company in last July following unilateral US sanctions, which was exactly when the project was under its peak of installation of sensitive equipment and when the supervisor of Kobe Steel stopped supervising on equipment installation process and failure to provide relevant training by the said company professionals, the project installation and commissioning process was under ambiguous situation. He further said: However, cooperation and sympathy by all project pillars, client supports and institutionalized self-belief in different pillars of Fakour Sanat Tehran Company resulted in severe continuance of the path and eventually successful project commissioning.

Strengthening Self-belief Principle

Goudarzi considered strengthening self-belief principle as well as localizing pelletizing plants construction knowhow in Fakour Sanat Tehran Company by local professionals and engineers as the most important achievement of this project implementation by Fakour Sanat Tehran Company. Seh Chahoun pelletizing project manager in Fakour Sanat Tehran Company referred to using Alice-Chalmers method as one of the most important advantages of this project and said: Smooth and better pellet roasting, which is the result of motion of materials and better heat convection and eventually, better roasting, production qualitative and quantitative increase as well as technology transfer by one of the best Global companies (Kobe Steel) to Fakour Sanat Tehran Company is one of the other features of this project. Also Goudarzi stated that by manufacturing certain pieces of equipment locally, such as structures (with quite high precision), pumps, fans, compressors, manual valves, process water treatment system, cooling towers, cyclones, ESP, bag filters, cables and electrical and lighting equipment, some parts of power boards and much other plant equipment, Fakour Sanat has fulfilled its mission in this concern. According to him, replacing project-based thinking by duty-oriented systems, also known as island systems, is quite essential.

Brazil Suffers Worst Run of Daily COVID Deaths

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil reported 2,216 COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, the third day in a row that fatalities exceeded 2,000 in the worst run of deaths since the pandemic began a year ago.

The health ministry also reported 85,663 new coronavirus infections, its second highest number for one day, as the pandemic surges in South American country driven by a highly contagious new local variant.

The World Health Organization said the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil is very concerning and serious action needs to be taken.

Brazil has now registered 11,363,380 cases in all, passing India as the country with the second worst outbreak.



Australia Records First Local COVID-19 Case

CANBERRA (Reuters) - Australia on Saturday recorded first local COVID-19 case in more than two weeks after a doctor tested positive for the coronavirus, triggering restrictions in area hospitals.

Queensland state Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said the unnamed doctor last week treated two patients who had recently returned to Australia and had tested positive for the UK variant.

"We know this doctor, who assessed these two COVID-positive patients was at the hospital at the time. Now, she developed symptoms," Palaszczuk told reporters in the state capital, Brisbane. It was Australia's first local infection since Feb 24.



Cuba Accuses Washington of Stoking Illegal Migration



HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba accused Washington of stoking illegal migration by not processing visas in Havana and making it relatively easy for Cubans to claim asylum, in the wake of a spate of ill-fated clandestine attempts to reach U.S. shores by boat.

The fate of a group of Cubans risking their lives to reach the United States illegally by boat has gripped people on both sides of the Florida Straits after a vessel capsized near the Bahamas a week ago, leaving some people floating in the water for more than 14 hours. While a Royal Bahamas Defense Force ship has rescued 12 people and recovered one body, several others have not yet been found, including women and two children, the Cuban foreign ministry said in a statement late on Thursday.

Thousands of Cubans used to attempt to emigrate to the United States by boat per year until former U.S. President Barack Obama in 2017 ended a measure granting automatic residence to Cubans who reached U.S. soil, though he left in place some other exceptions to usual migration rules. Since then, the numbers have dropped but still hover around several hundred per year. The U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted 87 people of Cuban origin in the Caribbean in the first six months of the 2021 fiscal year which began on Oct. 1, a spokesman told Reuters. That is an increase on the 49 registered in the full 2020 fiscal year, although this was impacted by the pandemic, and compares with 314 in 2019, the spokesman said.

"Among the factors that constitute incentives for irregular migration are the suspension of the processing and granting of immigrant and non-immigrant visas at the United States Consulate in Havana," the Cuban foreign ministry said in its statement.

A U.S. State Department official said in response to the statement that it had designated the U.S. embassy in Guyana as the primary site to process immigrant visas for residents of Cuba. The United States was committed to supporting "safe, orderly, and humane migration from Cuba," the official said.

The administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump drew the U.S. embassy in Havana down to skeletal staffing after a series of unexplained health incidents among its diplomats, moving consular services for Cubans to third countries.

Trump's successor, President Joe Biden, vowed during his campaign to reverse some Trump policy shifts that "have inflicted harm on the Cuban people." But hopes he might move quickly restore consular services were dampened when the White House said this week a broad Cuba policy shift is not among Biden's top priorities.

Nonetheless, the perception Biden will be more tolerant than Trump towards undocumented migrants, as well as Cuba's deepening economic crisis, are likely also boosting illegal migration this year, said Jorge Duany, director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University.

Huawei Listed Anew as Threat to U.S. National Security

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. regulators on Friday listed Huawei among Chinese telecom gear firms deemed a threat to national security, signalling that a hoped for softening of relations is not in the cards.

A roster of communications companies thought to pose "an unacceptable risk" to national security included Huawei Technologies; ZTE; Hytera Communications; Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology, and Dahua Technology.

"This list is a big step toward restoring trust in our communications networks," said Federal Communications Commission acting chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel.

"This list provides meaningful guidance that will ensure that as next-generation networks are built across the country, they do not repeat the mistakes of the past or use equipment or services that will pose a threat to U.S. national security or the security and safety of Americans."

The five Chinese companies that provide communications equipment or services were on a roster compiled by the FCC and the Homeland Security Bureau as per US law.

Huawei chief and founder Ren Zhengfei last month called for a reset with the United States under President Joe Biden, after the firm was battered by sanctions imposed by Donald Trump's administration.

In his first appearance before journalists in a year, Ren Zhengfei said his "confidence in Huawei's ability to survive has



grown" despite its travails across much of the western world where it is maligned as a potential security threat.

The comments came as the firm struggled under rules that have effectively banned US firms from selling it technology such as semiconductors and other critical components, citing national security concerns.

Insisting that Huawei remained strong and ready to buy from U.S. companies, Ren called on the Biden White House for a "mutually beneficial" change of tack that could restore its access to the goods. Continuing to do so, he warned, would hurt U.S. suppliers.

Founded by Ren in 1987, Huawei largely flew under the global radar for decades as it became the world's largest maker of telecoms equipment and a top mobile phone producer.

That changed under former president Donald Trump, who targeted the firm as part of an intensifying China-U.S. trade and technology standoff.

Car Bomb Kills at Least 7, Injures 53 in Herat

HERAT (Reuters) - A powerful car bomb near a police station on Friday night killed at least seven people and wounded more than 50 others in Afghanistan's western Herat province, officials said.

Herat Governor Sayed Abdul Wahid Qatali said several women and children were among the dead. He added that at least 53 people including civilians and security forces have been hurt in the explosion.

Dozens of homes and shops were also damaged in the blast as rescuers rushed to the scene to help several people trapped under the rubble, Qatali said.

No one claimed responsibility for the bombing but local officials blamed the Taliban insurgents.

Representatives of the Taliban, which has been fighting a foreign-backed Afghan government since they were ousted from power by U.S.-led forces in late 2001, were not immediately available to comment.

Peace negotiations between the Afghan government and insurgent Taliban in Qatar's capital Doha have struggled to make progress amid international calls to reduce violence.

Russia plans to hold a conference on Afghanistan in Moscow on March 18 and has invited several regional players, including Afghan government and politicians to jumpstart the peace process as diplomacy by foreign powers including Washington ramps up.

It comes at a crunch time for the peace process as a May 1 deadline for foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan looms and the United States reviews its plans.

Two Killed in Protests in Myanmar

YANGON (Reuters) - At least two people were killed in police firing in Myanmar overnight, domestic media reported, as activists called for more anti-coup protests on the death anniversary of a student whose killing in 1988 sparked an uprising against the government.

Saturday's calls for protests came as the leaders of the United States, India, Australia and Japan vowed to work together to restore democracy in Myanmar where violence has escalated as authorities crack down on protests and civil disobedience. Domestic media reported two protesters were killed in police firing in the Tharketa district of Myanmar's commercial capital Yangon overnight. DVB News said police opened fire on a crowd that gathered outside the Tharketa police station demanding the release of people arrested.

Posters spread on social media calling on people to come out on the streets to protest against the junta and to mark the death anniversary of Phone Maw, who was shot and killed by security forces in 1988 inside what was then known as the Rangoon Institute of Technology campus.

His shooting and that of another student who died a few weeks later sparked widespread protests against the military government known as the 8-8-88 campaign, because they peaked in August that year. An estimated 3,000 people were killed when the army crushed the uprising.

Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as a democracy icon during the movement and was kept under house arrest for nearly two decades. She was released in 2008 as the military began democratic reforms and her National League for Democracy won elections in 2015 and again in November last year.

On Feb. 1 this year, the generals overthrew her government and detained Suu Kyi and many of her cabinet colleagues, claiming fraud in the November elections.

More than 70 people have been killed in the Southeast Asian nation in widespread protests since then, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) advocacy group said. The coup in Myanmar, where the military has close ties to China, is a major early test for new U.S. President Joe Biden.

His administration flagged a virtual meeting with the Indian, Japanese and Australian leaders on Friday, the first official summit of a group known as the Quad, as part of a push to demonstrate a renewed U.S. commitment to regional security. "As long-standing supporters of Myanmar and its people, we emphasise the urgent need to restore democracy and the priority of strengthening democratic resilience," the four leaders said in a statement released by the White House.

A spokesman for the junta did not answer phone calls from Reuters seeking comment.



Pakistan Senate Elects Ruling Alliance Candidate as Chairman

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan's Senate elected ruling alliance candidate Sadiq Sanjrani as chairman of the upper house of parliament, after a fractious election that saw the opposition accuse the government of installing "spy cameras" over the ballot booth.

Sanjrani, the incumbent whose candidacy was supported by Prime Minister Imran Khan, received 48 votes, with the opposition's Yusuf Raza Gilani receiving 42 votes in the election on Friday.

"Mr Sadiq Sanjrani has received 48 votes, Mr Yusuf Raza Gilani 42 votes," announced election presiding officer Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, to widespread cheers and celebrations from the treasury benches.

The opposition protested the result after Shah earlier announced he was rejecting seven ballots in favour of Gilani for having the voting stamp placed on the candidate's name, rather than the designated box.

"Instead of the box, the stamp has actually been affixed on the name of Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, and they are rejected," said Shah. Pakistan People's Party Senator Farooq Naek contested the presiding officer's verdict. The opposition can file an appeal with an independent election tribunal.

The result further strengthens the hold of Prime Minister Khan's ruling alliance over the Senate, where it is the largest single party, although the opposition alliance outnumbers the treasury benches in absolute numbers.

Sanjrani is a member of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), a member of the ruling alliance, and hails from the southwestern province of Balochistan.

Earlier in the day, opposition Senators Mustafa Nawaz Khokher and Mussadik Malik alleged they had found six "spy cameras" around the polling booth in the upper house of parliament.

The two senators shared images of what appeared to be at least two hidden and one visible camera that were pointed at the area where senators were to fill out their ballots.

A bipartisan Senate committee has been formed to probe the allegations. Elections for the Senate and its officeholders are conducted by secret ballot according to the constitution of the country. Last week, the Supreme Court rejected a government move to require voting be done by public ballot.





Elahieh Apt (\$3000)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, bakcony
marble fl
L.balcony
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Shariati Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
L.balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1700) 2bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$2200) 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$2600) 4bdrs, S/p, F.F

Available bldgs
Darrous (\$7000) 3storey
Velenjak (\$9000) 5storey
with pkg lots, & S/pool

Jordan Apt
180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, pkg, F.F (\$15000)

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Commercial office
Vanak (\$30 per sq.m)
300sq.m, 4bdrs, pkgs



IRAN NEWS ADVERTISING
44253401

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate
Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865



IRAN NEWS
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS
ADVERTISING

TEL: 44253448-50
FAX: 44253234
ADIRANNEWS@GMAIL.COM

Indonesia Seeks to Host ASEAN Creative Economy Forum

JAKARTA (ANTARA) - Indonesia is seeking to host the ASEAN creative economy business forum, which will focus on improving the digital economy through digital transformation, especially in the creative economy sector, said Communication and Informatics Minister Johnny G Plate.

"We have conveyed Indonesia's initiative to organize the ASEAN Creative Economy Business Forum, which is planned to be held in November, 2021 and is entitled Enhancing Digital Creative Economy: A Step Towards Regional Economic Recovery," said Plate at the 15th virtual meeting of ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI), as quoted in a statement issued here on Friday.



Russia Gradually Ditching U.S. Dollar in Trade With Allies

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - A senior Russia lawmaker says his country is gradually reducing the role of the US dollar in financial transactions with allies and commercial partners, a long-pursued measure aimed at using currencies other than the greenback to offset the impacts of American sanctions.

Vyacheslav Volodin, the speaker of the Russian parliament's lower chamber, the State Duma, made the announcement on Thursday and said Russia was gradually reducing the share of the U.S. dollar in the Russian economy and foreign exchange reserves.

"For example, within the framework of the EAEU, settlements in national currencies have grown to 74%. We are systematically increasing trade in national currencies with China and Turkey," Russia's Kommersant business daily quoted Volodin as saying, referring to the Eurasian Economic Union, a trade bloc with an integrated market of 180 million people.

The State Duma speaker underlined that, in late February, Russia changed the currency structure of the National Wealth Fund, including the Japanese yen and the Chinese yuan.

Volodin also said that the share of US dollar and euro decreased from 45% to 35% at that time, while the share of the pound sterling remained at ten percent.

Head of Russia's upper house of parliament — Federation Council — earlier said that the US dollar would remain in circulation in Russia but the economy's dependence on the American currency must be reduced.

Valentina Matvienko also said Russian gold and foreign exchange reserves are already much less dependent on the dollar, and that Moscow's investments in government obligations of the US have decreased 30 times over the past ten years.

Moreover, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said in an interview with Bloomberg television news network last month that Russia must take urgent steps to cut its use of the dollar to a minimum as the new US administration of Joe Biden signals it will ramp up sanctions against Moscow.

Ryabkov stressed that Russia needs to reduce the role of the dollar in any operations, eliminating "dependence on this poisonous source of constant hostile actions."

The Russian diplomat said Washington has imposed more than 90 rounds of sanctions in recent years that targeted state banks and corporations, the oil and gas sector, top officials and business tycoons and is likely to add even more restrictive measures.

Relations between the U.S. and Russia remain strained over such issues as Syria, Ukraine and allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election, which Moscow denies.

In the latest move, the Biden administration imposed sanctions against seven senior Russian officials and 14 entities over the case of opposition figure Alexei Navalny, who Western governments say was poisoned last year.

South Korea to Exempt Auto Chip Buyers From COVID-19 Quarantine

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea said it will exempt business people working to secure supply of auto chips from two-week COVID-19 quarantine requirements and prioritizes the vaccination of people key to auto chip procurement.

The move comes as South Korea tries to limit the damage from a chip shortage that has plagued global automakers and forced production cuts worldwide, including at Volkswagen and General Motors. Germany and the United States have also ramped up efforts to resolve the shortage.

South Korea's leading automaker Hyundai Motor has so far kept factories running, but a Hyundai union official told Reuters on Tuesday that overtime production of less-popular models had stopped and production schedules were changing from week to week.



Although the domestic auto industry's situation was good compared to international rivals, "concerns about future production disruptions have increased", the government said in a statement.

Chip production capacity could not be increased quickly, with 98% of auto chips used by South Korean automakers coming from abroad, it added.

To help deal with the shortage, Koreans and foreigners involved in auto chip imports or production would no longer have to quarantine for two weeks on arrival in the country from abroad, starting April.

COVID-19 vaccinations would be available for people departing for essential purposes such as purchasing and procuring auto chips.

The government also said it would speed up performance evaluations of auto chip components and modules developed by domestic companies.

Swiss Gov't Forecasts Economy Will Grow by 3% in 2021

ZURICH (Reuters) - Switzerland's economy will bounce back from its coronavirus-driven downturn to grow by 3% in 2021, the government said in its latest forecasts on Thursday, although it expects a weak start to the year.

GDP will likely fall "significantly" in the first quarter of 2021 following the reintroduction of restrictions last December, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) said.

But the easing of public health measures, already under way with the reopening of shops, should lead to rapid recovery afterwards, it added.

"Should the epidemiological development allow the gradual easing of coronavirus measures as intended, the domestic economy should recover very quickly," SECO said.

"Consumer opportunities that were largely unavailable in the winter months would re-emerge and lead to turnover rising again."

Growing global demand would also boost Switzerland's export sector, while investment on production capacity will also increase, SECO said.

The Swiss economy contracted by 2.9% in 2020, its worst performance in more than 40 years, although the country avoided the deeper downturns in other countries by adopting a "lockdown light" approach which kept schools and many ski slopes open.

Bern has run a record budget deficit as it cranks up aid to the economy.

The government has launched a tentative reopening, with further steps expected on March 22 if the course of the pandemic allows.

The expected recovery in 2021 - in line with SECO's December forecast - and will mean the Swiss economy returns to pre-crisis levels towards the end of the year, SECO said.

For 2022 SECO expects the economy to grow by 3.3%, up from its December forecast for a 3.1% increase.

The international economy has become more favourable since December, SECO said, which would benefit Swiss exports, while employment in the country is expect to rise considerably.

Chinese PM Rejects Idea That 2021 GDP Growth Target Too Low

BEIJING (Reuters) - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang defended the government's target for more than 6% economic growth this year, saying it is "not low", and policies would not be dramatically loosened to chase higher growth.

The target was well below analysts expectations, as their consensus forecast is for growth of more than 8% this year.

Li said the focus this year is on

consolidating China's economic recovery, and setting hugely different growth targets from year to year would only "disturb" market expectations.

"Walking quickly for a moment does not mean one is walking steadily," Li said. "It is only with a steady pace that we will be firm in our steps."

Li warned against any "sharp turn" in policy making, and said that there would be no drop in efforts to secure people's livelihoods.

"We did not ease policies last year, nor do so-called quantitative easing, and there is also no need for a 'sharp turn' this year," Li told reporters after the close of the annual meeting of parliament.

On the government's 2021 target to create more than 11 million urban jobs, Li said he hoped that goal could be exceeded even though pressure on employment remains significant.

"In generating jobs, we have to let the market play a critical role, which is protecting jobs by supporting market entities," he said.

Financing channels to small and medium-sized enterprises should be kept open even as banks remain vigilant over debt risks.

"We will guide financial institutions to reasonably give up profits while stabilising leverage ratios, to make it easier for firms to raise capital amid declining financing costs," Li said.

China will also continue to open up to outside investment, including a push to open up its services sector, he said.

"We will deepen our opening up while boosting domestic demand through all efforts, and make China an important destination for foreign investment," he said.

With 260 million elderly people, China's "aging industry" in particular can be a huge "sunrise industry" for foreign companies, Li said.

India May Block China's Huawei Over Security Fears

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India is likely to block its mobile carriers from using telecom equipment made by China's Huawei under procurement rules due to come into force in June, two government officials told Reuters news agency.

New Delhi is wary about awarding new technology business to Chinese firms both because of security fears and a desire to get Indian manufacturers to produce more telecoms equipment.

A United States campaign to curb Huawei has triggered bans or limits on the use of its equipment around the world, but the situation in India has been amplified by strained relations between New Delhi and Beijing over their shared border.

India's telecoms department said on Wednesday that after June 15 carriers can only buy certain types of equipment from government-approved "trusted sources" and said New Delhi could also create a "no procurement" blacklist. Huawei is likely to feature on this embargoed list, the two officials, who declined to be named, told Reuters news agency.

"We cannot prioritise economic gains if an investment poses [a] national security risk," one of the officials said.

The telecoms department, which did not comment on Thursday about Huawei, has yet to provide further details on the plans for trusted sources or a procurement blacklist.

However, a third official, who also declined to be named, told Reuters news that ZTE Corp, another Chinese firm that has a smaller presence in India, could also be excluded.

Huawei and ZTE are under scrutiny for allegedly installing "backdoor" vulnerabilities to spy for the Chinese government.

Both have denied the allegations and Huawei has previously told Reuters news it is ready to enter into a "no backdoor" deal with India to allay security concerns.

Huawei and ZTE did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Two of India's three big telecoms carriers, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, use Huawei gear. Any restriction on Huawei gear is likely to push up costs, industry analysts say.

The Chinese firm's equipment and network maintenance contracts are typically cheaper than European competitors such as Ericsson and Nokia and there is limited availability of such gear in India.

India has begun to fast-track approvals of some of the more than 150 Chinese investment proposals worth over \$2bn that it had put on hold after a June standoff between the two neighbours on the disputed Himalayan border.

OPEC Sees Most of 2021 Oil Demand Recovery in H2



LONDON (Dispatches) --: OPEC said a recovery in oil demand will be focused on the second half of the year as the impact of the pandemic lingers as a headwind for the group and its allies in supporting the market.

In a monthly report, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said demand will rise by 5.89 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2021, or 6.5 percent, up slightly from last month. But the group cut its forecasts for the first half.

"Total oil demand is foreseen to reach 96.3 million bpd with most consumption appearing in the second half," OPEC said in the report.

"This year's demand growth will not be able to compensate for the major shortfall from 2020 as mobility is forecast to remain impaired throughout 2021."

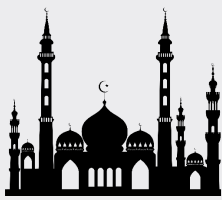
The latest forecasts could bolster cautious views among OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, on how quickly to unwind more of last year's record oil output cuts. OPEC+ last week decided to mostly extend current cuts into April.

OPEC raised its forecast of world economic growth this year to 5.1 percent from 4.8 percent, although it sees the pandemic's impact lingering in the first half.

The report also showed lower OPEC oil output in February as most OPEC+ members returned to output restraint and Saudi Arabia pledged a voluntary cut of 1 million bpd in February and March, which last week was extended into April.

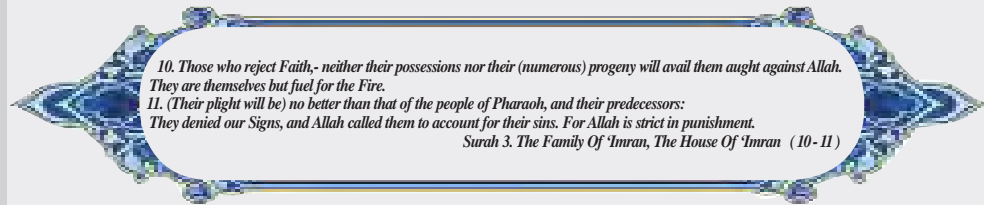
OPEC said its output fell by 650,000 bpd to 24.85 million bpd, driven by the Saudi cut.

Riyadh told OPEC it made almost all of the reduction, lowering production by 956,000 bpd to 8.147 million bpd.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:13
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:51
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:14



Latin America's Police Dogs Turn Noses to Covid

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Their highly superior sense of smell has long been used to sniff out drugs, weapons and dead bodies. Now Latin America's crime-fighting police dogs are being trained to detect Covid-19.

In El Salvador, police are using artificial aromas similar to the sweat of a person infected with the coronavirus to train dogs.

"It's not so easy, because the Covid-19 strains seem to be changing a lot," said Wilber Alarcon, a canine handler from the Central American nation's anti-narcotics police.

"But the ones that are known have been synthesized and pseudo-aromas have been extracted to train the dogs," said Alarcon, who was in Mexico for a regional canine training exercise.

Alarcon expects Covid-19 sniffer dogs to soon be patrolling airports, bus terminals and border posts in his country, one of seven to attend the drills in Mexico's eastern state of Veracruz.

"The dog detects and marks the infected person, a strict biosafety protocol is activated, and you are reducing the risk that a person, or others close to the infected person, may catch the virus," he said.

Dogs are believed to have up to 300 million olfactory receptors -- far more than humans -- that give them their superior sense of smell.

Studies have suggested that they can detect the virus even in asymptomatic patients.

It is not the first time that dogs have been trained with artificial scents -- they are also used to teach them to sniff out drugs or explosives.

In crime-plagued Mexico, where 80,000 people officially went missing between 2006 and 2020, the aromas include "putrefied, fresh or drowned corpse."

In Mexico's northwestern state of Sonora, state and private organizations already have six dogs in operation and are training about 30 to detect the coronavirus, Juan Mancillas, head of "Canines Against Covid," told AFP.

They include breeds such as Golden Retrievers, Labradors, German Shepherds and Belgian Shepherds.

Similar programs are being carried out elsewhere in the region in response to a pandemic that has left more than 700,000 people dead across Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Chile, a squad from the Police Canine Training School has been deployed in the capital Santiago and there are plans to extend the initiative to other parts of the country.

In Europe, meanwhile, Czech trainers have reported a 95-percent success rate in Covid-19 detection in samples of human scent by dogs -- seen as a fast,



effective and pain-free method.

In Britain, the charity Medical Detection Dogs is also hoping to harness the power of canine noses that it says can smell other human illnesses such as cancer, Parkinson's disease and malaria.

In Miami, dogs have been deployed to sniff out Covid-19 infections among fans going to watch basketball.

Their new role in the pandemic is no surprise to handlers of the Veracruz state government's K9 Company of sniffer dogs, worth an estimated \$24,000 each.

So powerful is their sense of smell that in 2016 they located a body buried three meters underground -- a national record.

Several years later they detected a shipment of marijuana covered with thick layers of motor grease and coffee.

"They're infallible animals. They're never wrong. Humans are wrong," said K9 Company trainer Daniel Valentin Ortega.

Generation Threatened as Pandemic Sets Back Childhood Development



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Closed schools, surging poverty, forced marriages and depression -- after a year of the pandemic, indicators measuring child and adolescent development have all regressed, a setback that heralds lasting stigma for an entire generation, UNICEF warned Thursday.

"The number of children who are hungry, isolated, abused, anxious, living in poverty and forced into marriage has increased," Henrietta Fore, executive director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, said in a statement released exactly one year since the World Health Organization classified Covid-19 as a pandemic.

"Their access to education, socialization and essential services including health, nutrition and protection has decreased. The signs that children will bear the scars of the pandemic for years to come are unmistakable," Fore said in the statement.

Faced with such "devastating" effects, Fore urged for children to be placed "at the heart of recovery efforts," particularly by "prioritizing schools in reopening plans."

UNICEF cited a series of worrying figures in support of Fore's words.

While the pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the elderly, children and adolescents under 20 make up 13 percent of the 71 million coronavirus cases reported in the 107 countries that provided age-specific data.

In developing countries, projections show a 15 percent increase in child poverty.

Six to seven million more children could suffer from malnourishment in 2020, an increase of 14 percent that could translate to more than 10,000 additional deaths per month, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

For 168 million students around the world, schools have been closed for nearly a year. A third of those students do not have access to online education.

As a result of the shuttered schools and worsening economic situation, the pandemic could also lead to the marriage of 10 million children by 2030, adding to the 100 million girls already considered at risk of marriage by then.

At least one in seven children or adolescents has spent the majority of the past year under lockdown orders, increasing anxiety, depression and isolation.

The coronavirus has also led to the suspension of vaccination campaigns against other diseases -- starting with measles -- in 26 countries, increasing threats to the health of non-immunized people.

Turks Grapple With Poverty as Inflation Bites

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Gulay Avsar is a regular at a market in Ankara's old town, where prices are more reasonable than most other places around the Turkish capital.

But even here she struggles to fill her basket with staples such as cheese and olive oil, which seem to grow more expensive by the day.

"This is the third time I come to buy cheese and walk away empty-handed because of the prices," the 65-year-old lamented.

"Everything costs so much."

In trouble even before the coronavirus pandemic, the Turkish economy is now on the edge of a precipice.

While the economy officially expanded by nearly six percent in the last three months of 2020, growth came at the expense of a government credit push that sent consumer prices soaring.

The annual inflation rate had shot up to 15.6 percent by February, while the Turkish lira has lost more than half its value against the dollar since the start of 2018.

For people like Avsar, this means her meagre pension is able to buy less and less.

"Olive oil is now worth its weight in gold. This is what a man should offer his beloved to impress her," quipped another shopper, Ahmet.

Behind the stoic sarcasm lies the stark reality of Turks slipping into poverty, which is officially defined as an income of less than \$4.30 (3.60 euros) a day.

The World Bank estimated that 13.9 percent of the population -- or just under 12 million people -- were already living in poverty at the time of its last report in April 2020.

Now, Hacer Foggo, founder of the Deep Poverty Network NGO who has worked with Turkey's poor for 20 years, says she has never seen the situation more dire.

"Access to food has never been as big a problem as it is today," Foggo said.



"Before, if you didn't have food, you would ask your neighbours. But today, the neighbours don't have anything either." Some of Turkey's poorest neighbourhoods often include a mix of construction workers, people who pick over rubbish for recycling, and women and children who work as street vendors.

"I have seen mums who feed their babies soup from a packet because they can't afford baby formula," Foggo said.

Formula "is so expensive that supermarkets put it under lock and key, as if it were a luxury product."

Foggo said Turks who had never thought twice about poverty were now turning to her NGO for help.

Pensioner Avsar knows all about it, tearfully admitting that she can no longer afford to pay the gas bill, leaving her with no heat in the middle of the winter freeze.

"The government doesn't care. To them, these worries don't exist," she complained.

These problems came to a head in October, when a video of a trader telling President Recep Tayyip Erdogan he "could no longer bring home bread" caused an uproar.

"It seems like an exaggeration to me," Erdogan replied.

In power for 18 years, Erdogan peppers his daily speeches with imagery of the country "rebounding" and growing into "one of the largest economies in the world".

But Erinc Yeldan, an economist at Istanbul's Kadir Has University, said Turkey's president was paying for the mistake of emphasising growth at any cost.

The result has been soaring inflation, the central bank burning through most of its reserves trying to prop up the lira, and the erosion of foreign investor confidence in Turkey.

Erdogan overhauled his economic team late last year, but Yeldan said the damage had already been done, hurting the poorest the most.

Iranian Container Ship Damaged in Terror Attack in Mediterranean

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRIS) Group says one of its cargo ships has been damaged after it was targeted by a terrorist attack en route to Europe in the Mediterranean Sea earlier this week.

Ali Ghiasi, the IRISL Group's spokesman, told Nour News on Friday that an explosion object had hit the container ship -- identified as Shah-e Kord -- as it was traveling in the high seas on Wednesday.

The official said the vessel's hull sustained slight damage, but those aboard were unharmed.

A small fire broke out in the aftermath of the explosion, which was quickly put out by the crew members, Ghiasi said.

The ship, he added, "will continue on its route after damage assessments and repair."

Such acts of terror are a clear example of naval piracy and runs counter to the international law on the safety of commercial vessels, the official said, pledging that the country will pursue the case through relevant international institutions to identify the perpetrators.

Late last month, an Israeli-owned cargo ship said it had come under attack while it was in the Sea of Oman, claiming that it suffered holes in both sides of its hull.

The regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to blame Iran for the alleged incident, an accusation Tehran categorically rejected.

Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi said in a letter to the UN Security Council that the incident "has all the characteristics of a complicated false flag operation by actors in order to pursue their malign policies and to advance their illegitimate objectives."

On Thursday, a report by The Wall Street Journal that claimed the Israeli regime had been involved in a clandestine campaign of attacks on Iranian ships carrying oil and arms to Syria since 2019.

The Israeli attacks started in late 2019 and targeted both Iranian vessels, and other ships with Iranian cargo, the report claimed, citing "U.S. and regional officials."

Iranian officials have not commented on the claims so far.

Iranian COVID Vaccine...

FROM PAGE 1

Around 20,000 volunteers are planned to be injected in the third phase of human trials.

In February, the Headquarters for Executing the Order of Imam Khomeini, the institution that has developed the vaccine, said the first stage of human trials has produced promising results as the vaccine is one hundred percent effective against the mutated variant of coronavirus found in the UK.

Meanwhile the spokesman of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus said that the UK variant of coronavirus should be taken seriously in the country.

Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raeisi in a press conference on Saturday describing the situation of coronavirus in Iran said, "As the Nowruz holidays approach, the UK coronavirus variant has been identified in the country and is spreading in 28 provinces of Iran."

He said that the situation of coronavirus in the country was relatively stable, but people must observe health protocols more than ever to avoid a new wave of COVID-19 in the country.

Raisi said that Nowruz trips would not be allowed to the red and orange cities, and if planes, trains, and buses also wanted to leave the red cities, the passengers' COVID-19 tests must be negative.

Raisi added that the entering of non-local cars to red and orange cities and vice versa was also forbidden.

He also talked about the situation of coronavirus in Khuzestan province, noting that with the full observance of health protocols, some red cities of Khuzestan province had turned to yellow.

Raisi stressed that if people of Khuzestan province observed the health protocols more carefully, they would soon overcome the coronavirus.

Iran Economy...

FROM PAGE 1

By Resistance Economy, the CBI chief was referring to the Leader's insistence on establishing a resilient economy in the face of sanctions and by "a surge in the production" meant naming of this Iranian year by the Leader.

He also said, "Details of the growth of various economic sectors in the country will be announced early next week," adding, "This good event is the result of the resistance of the people, the resilience of the Iranian economy to the shocks."

Hemmati further expressed hope that that economic growth will continue in the coming seasons.

Tehran Rejects...

FROM PAGE 1

He said the rule of law makes up the basis for promoting human rights and protecting the foundations of freedom.

The Iranian envoy also expressed regret that some governments focus on weakening the rule of law in developing countries by targeting their judicial systems under the pretext of defending human rights.

No country or group of states should consider that they have the right to dictate their priorities and ideals to others, the Iranian envoy said, stressing that the world's countries can freely choose their governments as well as judicial, legal and economic systems according to the principle of independent action.

He further called on the UN Human Rights Council to distance itself from politicization, double standards and stereotypes.

Baghaei Hamaneh also criticized Canada, Australia, Britain, Denmark, the U.S., France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Sweden for accusing others of rights violations while pretending as if no one was aware of their own contradictory performance both inside and outside their countries.

These states, he added, are accused of widespread human rights violations across the world through exporting weapons to aggressor countries and adopting unilateral policies towards developing countries.

Raj Becomes First Indian Woman Past 10,000 Runs

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Mithali Raj became the first Indian woman cricketer to pass 10,000 international runs on Friday, as she made 36 in a one-day match against South Africa. Raj's knock took her total to 10,001 runs across three formats, before she fell to the next ball from Anne Bosch in the third of five ODIs in Lucknow.

Sachin Tendulkar, the world's leading run-scorer in men's cricket, congratulated Raj, saying on Twitter: "Terrific achievement... Keep going strong!"

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

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

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,

Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran

Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and

Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Ajax Starlet Brobbey To Join RB Leipzig

BERLIN (Dispatches) - RB Leipzig confirmed Friday they have won the race to sign Ajax starlet Brian Brobbey, 19, who will join the Bundesliga high-fliers next season on a free transfer. "Brian Brobbey fits the profile of RB Leipzig perfectly as a young, very variable and assertive player," said sports director Markus Kroesche.

Despite having had "several offers from other top European clubs", Brobbey has signed with Leipzig until June 2025, Kroesche added.

Booker-Led Suns Win Fifth Straight

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Devin Booker had 35 points and Chris Paul added 19 as the Phoenix Suns rallied for a 127-121 victory over the host Portland Trail Blazers, opening the season's second half by extending their winning streak to five games.

Mikal Bridges had 18 points while Jae Crowder and Cameron Payne added 13 points each as the Suns first erased a 13-point deficit in the second quarter, then overcame multiple 11-point deficits in the third. Forced to miss Sunday's All-Star Game at Atlanta because of a left knee sprain, Booker looked fit Thursday, going 12 of 21 from the field and 3 of 5 from 3-point range.

All-Star Damian Lillard had 30 points for the Trail Blazers while Enes Kanter had 16 points and 11 rebounds.

The Suns improved to 13-5 away from home, matching the Los Angeles Lakers for best road record in the NBA.

Milwaukee Bucks 134 - New York Knicks 101

Giannis Antetokounmpo recorded 24 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists to fuel host Milwaukee's victory over New York, avenging a 20-point loss on Dec. 27.

Antetokounmpo made 8 of 12 shots from the floor and all seven attempts from the free-throw line in his first contest since being named the All-Star Game's Most Valuable Player on Sunday. Bryn Forbes drained all seven of his 3-point attempts to finish with 21 points for the Bucks, who shot 57.5 percent from the floor to notch their seventh win in the past eight games.

RJ Barrett scored 22 points and Alec Burks added 17 off the bench for the Knicks, who opened a four-game road trip with a thud.

Brooklyn Nets 121 - Boston Celtics 109

Kyrie Irving tied a season high with 40 points and host Brooklyn overcame a sluggish start to beat Boston in New York.

The Nets won their third straight and prevailed for the 11th time in 12 games. James Harden added 22 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for the Nets, who shot 47.7 percent from the floor and hit 19 3-pointers. Brooklyn's Kevin Durant missed his 10th straight game with a hamstring injury, and newly acquired Blake Griffin sat out.

Jayson Tatum scored 31 points but Boston saw its four-game winning streak end. Marcus Smart added 19 after missing the previous 18 games due to a calf injury, and Daniel Theis contributed 17 and eight rebounds.

NFL Revenue Dropped By \$4b in 2020

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The NFL lost \$4 billion in revenues in 2020 compared to the prior year, the Sports Business Journal reported.

Citing a source, the publication said revenues in 2020 totaled \$12 billion, down from \$16 billion in 2019 -- a drop of 25 percent. Revenues had been projected to reach \$16.5 billion.

And while the NFL played a full 16-game season, plus the playoffs, in 2020, games were played with limited or no fans in attendance because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bulk of the revenue decline was absorbed by the individual teams, who couldn't benefit from sales revenue tied to tickets, parking and concessions or local sponsorships during the pandemic. League revenues, which reached \$9.5 billion in 2019, did not incur as steep of a drop because the NFL received full media payments, Sports Business Journal said.

Muguruza Advances To Dubai Semis

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Ninth-seeded Garbine Muguruza of Spain outlasted third-seeded Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 to earn her third appearance in the semifinals of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.

Muguruza has yet to appear in the final of the United Arab Emirates event. Her semifinal opponent will be 10th-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium, who rallied past American Jessica Pegula 5-7, 7-5, 6-0.

The other semifinal will feature a pair of unseeded players. Switzerland's Jil Teichmann, who got past American Coco Gauff 6-3, 6-3, will face the Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova, who routed Russia's Anastasia Potapova 6-0, 6-2. Italian qualifier Elisabetta Cocciaretto continued her stellar run in Guadalajara, Mexico, defeating American Lauren Davis 6-3, 6-0 in the quarterfinals.

The match featured a total of one ace and 14 double faults, but Cocciaretto prevailed thanks to her success at key moments. She saved 8 of 9 break points on her serve and took advantage of 5 of 6 break-point opportunities on Davis' serve. Cocciaretto will next face either Canadian Eugenie Bouchard or American Caty McNally.



Oklahoma City Thunder 116 - Dallas Mavericks 108

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points on 11-for-22 shooting and added six assists to lead host Oklahoma City past Dallas.

Gilgeous-Alexander registered his second consecutive 30-point game and his eighth of the season. Al Horford scored 21 points and grabbed nine rebounds to help the Thunder begin their second-half schedule with a second consecutive victory.

Dallas had its four-game winning streak snapped, but played without Luka Doncic (right ankle) and Kristaps Porzingis (right knee) as both rested on the second night of back-to-back games. Josh Richardson led the Mavericks with 27 points and six assists.

Atlanta Hawks 121 - Toronto Raptors 120

Tony Snell hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to help visiting Atlanta overcome a 15-point, fourth-quarter deficit and beat Toronto in Tampa.

It was the third straight win for the Hawks, all on the road. They got 37 points from Young, 20 points from reserve Danilo Gallinari and 19 points from Kevin Huerter.

Toronto was led by 33 points from Norman Powell, who has scored at least 24 points in seven of his last nine games. Reserve Chris Boucher followed with 29 points and added nine rebounds.

Kyle Lowry chipped in 17 points and 12 assists, but the Raptors lost their third straight game.

Miami Heat 111 - Orlando Magic 103

Jimmy Butler had 27 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds, leading host Miami past Orlando to move over .500 for the first time this season.

Kelly Olynyk had 20 points and seven rebounds for the Heat, who have won eight of their past nine games. Miami also got 17 points from Tyler Herro, including eight in the fourth quarter.

Orlando, which has lost six straight games, was led by All-Star Nikola Vucevic's 24 points and 17 rebounds. Dwayne Bacon added 21 points, and Michael Carter-Williams added 17 points and seven assists.



German FA in No Rush to Replace Loew

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German FA said Thursday it will not rush into naming Joachim Loew's replacement as head coach, while Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has put forward former RB Leipzig boss Ralf Rangnick.

Loew, 61, confirmed Tuesday he will step down as Germany coach after the European Championship, which is due to finish on July 11 with the final at Wembley.

At a press conference in Frankfurt on Thursday, Loew said it was "time for a change" and new ideas after nearly 15 years in charge.

Liverpool boss Klopp has already ruled himself out and suggested former Leipzig sports director Rangnick. "Ralf Rangnick would be good. He would have been my first solution," Klopp told reporters after Liverpool reached the quarter-finals of the Champions League on Wednesday.

Other candidates to replace Loew are Bayern Munich's Champions League-winning coach Hansi Flick and Germany Under-21 boss Stefan Kuntz. Rangnick, who masterminded Leipzig's rise from the fifth tier of German football to the Bundesliga, has signalled his interest.

"It's a job that leaves no one in Germany indifferent. At the moment I am free," he told Sky.

Whoever replaces Loew will inherit a Germany team in transition.

Paire Hits Out at "Ridiculous" ATP Tour After Chile Exit

LONDON (Dispatches) - Playing matches in empty stadiums and following strict COVID-19 protocols has made the ATP Tour "sad, boring and ridiculous", France's Benoit Paire said after he was knocked out of the Chile Open by Danish teenager Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune.

The professional circuit was shut down for several months last year before tournament organizers set up biosecure bubbles for players and support staff while keeping fans away from stadiums.

Barring the swing in Australia in February, tournaments continue to be played in front of a handful of fans at most. The lack of spectators has affected players who thrive on a febrile atmosphere, while also impacting tournament finances.

Paire, ranked 29 in the world, said the sport had become a "tasteless job".

"The ATP circuit has become sad, boring and ridiculous," the 31-year-old, who last month criticized Australian Open organizers for their treatment of players during quarantine, wrote on Instagram.

"I know you are going to say you don't realize how lucky you are... but playing in closed stadiums without any atmosphere (isn't) why I play. Having to stay at a hotel or club and be forbidden to go out without risking a fine, where is the pleasure of travelling?"

"Tennis (has) become a tasteless job...I need time to adapt to this pseudo ATP circuit but I will make the efforts to try to just rediscover the pleasure of playing tennis."



Mourinho Expects Master Kane to Be Fit to Face Arsenal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jose Mourinho expects Harry Kane to be fit to face Arsenal on Sunday after he had ice applied to his knee following a knock in Tottenham's 2-0 Europa League win over Dinamo Zagreb.

The 27-year-old England captain scored both Spurs goals in the first leg of the last-16 tie in London on Thursday.

He now has 26 goals and 16 assists in all competitions this season and was hailed by Dinamo boss Zoran Mamic as a "master of football."

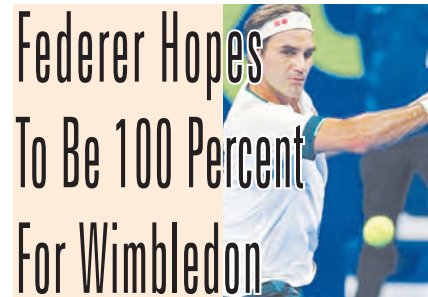
Spurs manager Jose Mourinho is optimistic Kane will be fit for the north London derby. "I hope so, I believe so," he said. "It is a big match, only big problems stop him to be there. Let's see the reaction tomorrow (Friday) but I am sure he will be fine."

Mourinho agreed with Mamic's glowing assessment of Kane, highlighting his intelligence. "Some strikers score lots of goals and that is the most important thing in football for a striker, which he does," he said.

"But apart from that he understands every tip we give him, in terms of his positioning, movement, he understands the game very well.

"He feels the spaces, he looks around to see where other players are and he can affect the game. He is really a very good player." Mourinho is delighted with the way his team have rebounded after a poor spell, winning their past five matches in all competitions.

They are now seventh in the Premier League table, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a game in hand. Arsenal are 10th.



Federer Hopes To Be 100 Percent For Wimbledon

DOHA (Dispatches) - Roger Federer admitted his goal was to be "100 percent" back in business by the time Wimbledon rolls around after the 20-time Grand Slam title winner saw his comeback from 13 months out with injury end in Doha. The 39-year-old squandered a match point and was knocked out with injury in the Qatar Open by Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili in his first tournament since losing to Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open semi-finals in January 2020.

Federer, who underwent two knee surgeries last season, secured the first set against world number 42 Basilashvili but eventually wilted and lost the quarter-final tie, 3-6, 6-1, 7-5. It was just his second match of his return having also needed three sets to see off Britain's Dan Evans on Wednesday. "I might be better earlier, that would be a bonus and that means I'm at 100 percent before Wimbledon," said Federer when asked if he was targeting the All England Club because that was the earliest he anticipated being back at full strength.

"I'll just see how much workload the body and the knee still take and what's the best way to prepare all the way for basically the beginning of the season for me, which is the grass court season." Federer has won eight of his 20 majors at Wimbledon. He was agonizingly close to a ninth in 2019 when he had two championship points in an epic five-set final loss to Djokovic.

