

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Sunday
That Some 88 More Iranians Died
From the Coronavirus Disease
Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing
The Total Deaths to 61,230**

IRAN NEWS

**Health Minister Saeed Namaki Said
Yesterday That Despite Sanctions
And Economic Pressures, Iran Has
Successfully Contained the
COVID-19 While Most Countries
Are Struggling to Contain It**

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Iran's Water, Soil Sectors Revolutionized In Past Eight Years

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says a giant step has been taken in the country's water and soil sectors during his tenure as president over the past eight years.

President Rouhani said on Sunday the major progress made in these sectors can best be described as a "revolution."

"Not only a leap, but a revolution has taken place in the water and soil sectors during the tenure of the 11th and 12th administrations," he noted. He made the comment in a ceremony where several major national water transfer projects were inaugurated.

The president noted that the country's officials have always longed to see desalinated water be transferred to the eastern part of the country. He emphasized the importance and necessity of development in eastern Iran while reiterating that the projects have been implemented while taking all environmental concerns into consideration.

President Rouhani said the projects, which will take water from the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman to central and eastern Iran, are very significant and historic projects which contribute to the "balanced development" of the country.

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Iran 9-Month GDP Growth at 2.2%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI), in its latest report, has put the growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 -December 20, 2020) at 2.2 percent.

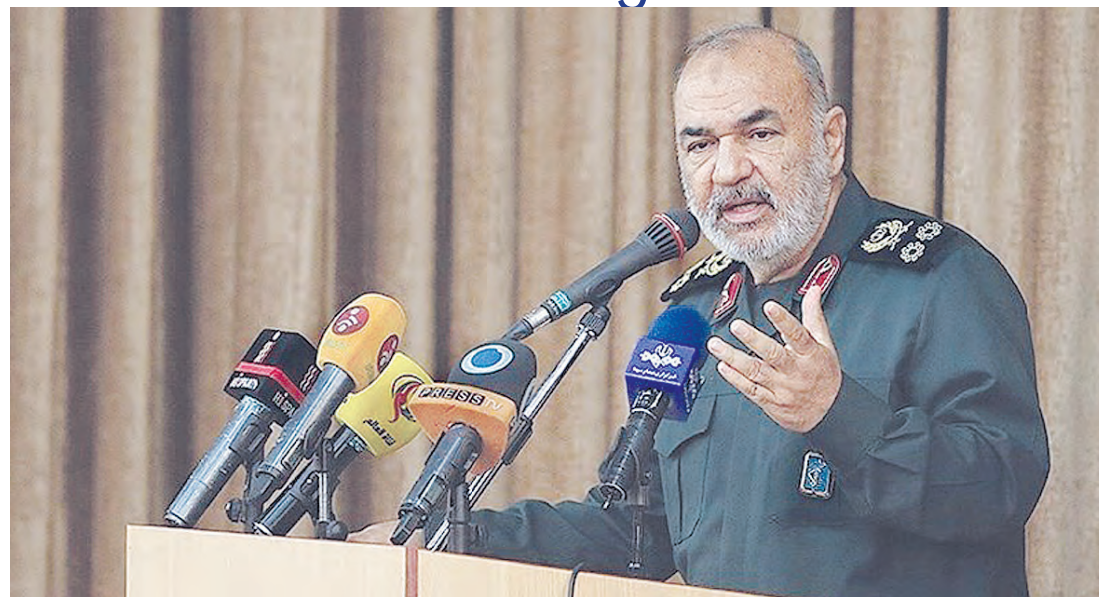
According to the mentioned data, the figure was 1.9 percent with oil excluded. Earlier this month, the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) had put the country's GDP growth at 0.8 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year.

The figure was 0.2 percent with oil excluded in the said period, according to SCI. The SCI data put the growth for the country's agriculture, industries, and mining, and services sectors at 5.5 percent, 3.7 percent, and -1.8 percent, respectively for the mentioned period.

Back in December 2020, the CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati had announced that the country's GDP growth - both with and without oil - became positive.

"Today's report of the Economic Accounts Department of the Central Bank indicates that the country's GDP growth in the first six months of the current year (March 19-September 20) was positive with and without oil," Hemmati wrote in a statement.

IRGC Chief Hails Iranian Nation Resistance in Foiling Enemies' Plots



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The chief commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) hailed the Iranian nation's resistance through the past decades, which has led to the hampering of all enemy plots in different areas.

"Our nation has been obstructing the enemies' evil plots in the past 42 years [since the victory of the Islamic Revolution] as today, we are the ones that set conditions [for talks] and decide for our own destiny," Major General Hossein Salami said in a conference in Tehran on Sunday.

Referring to the nature of resistance in the Islamic Revolution and the praiseworthy commitment of the Iranian nation, the IRGC chief said, "Our Revolution is a continuation of the mission of the divine prophets, the same mission that came to pure the earth."

Therefore, he noted, it is obvious that the enemies from across the world would be against such a spirit, and subsequently, make every effort to obstruct its path.

All of the enemy's dreams and objectives have ended in failure, the general said, adding that the policy of maximum pressure, for instance, has also failed to prevent Iran from boosting its capabilities, including those in the defense sector.

"We are witnessing the decay and weakening of the enemy and it does not look like a power and empire anymore."

He concluded, "The enemy today has realized that power is what we have. Today, we set condition [for talks] for the enemy, and this is due to the power of the righteous people, who were able to understand the truth of life."

He added Iran has obtained plenty of modern weapons, reminding the enemies that it is the Islamic Republic that sets conditions.

Salami said the Islamic Republic is not dealing with the enemies with empty hands anymore, as it has plenty of modern weapons.

"Today, we set conditions for the enemy. Of course whenever we were restricted by their (enemy's) conditions, we lost. But when we set conditions for the enemy, we won," he added.

Pakistan Urged to Review ECO Train Tariff

LAHORE (Dispatches) - Turkey and Iran have called upon Pakistan to review the tariff for Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) freight train on the basis of actual weight and per kilometer instead of the fixed charges for the 1,990km journey from Iran's Zahedan city to Islamabad.

In two recent coordination meetings of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) — held virtually on March 1 and 4 — both Turkish and Iranian authorities requested their Pakistani counterparts to introduce the per km distance charges rather than the fixed ones, which according to them, appear expensive to their business community and forwarding agents. Pakistan assured Turkey and Iran to consider the requests, an official source in the Pakistan Railways informed Dawn.

The ITI freight train, also known as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Train, was set to resume operations on March 4 after a period of nine years. However, mishandling, negligence and other administrative issues on the part of Ministry of Railways delayed the resumption of the train service which is expected to start operations later this month.

According to minutes of the recent two meetings, Mehmat Altinsoy, Ohan Akoay, Alperen Gulal and Kaveh Sabetkalam from Turkey, Shahram Jafari, Ali Abdollahi and Amin Pourbarkhordari from Iran, Imran Hayat, Kashif Yousefani, Ms Jehan Badar, Dr Hassan Tahir Bukhari and Shoaib Khan from Pakistan and Ahmad Saffari and Maryam Torabi from the ECO Secretariat attended the sessions. Maximum payload for 20 and 40 feet containers and rates (0.18 euro per km for a loaded 20-feet equaling unit/container, 0.23 euro per km for a loaded 40-feet equaling unit/container, 0.012 euro per km for conventional cargo and 5.60 euro per ton for lake van and 50 per cent of the full containers for the empty containers) were discussed in detail.

Pakistan announced agreeing on the tariff, already okayed previously, for the conventional wagon (for export, import and transit) between Turkey and Iran for Rs0.012 euro per km and clarified that the rates would be calculated based on the maximum payload for the charge (20 and 40-feet units/containers equalling to 20 and 40 tons respectively). However, the representatives of Turkey and Iran requested Pakistan that rates be charged based on the actual weight as agreed earlier.

On the issue of distance for charge, representatives of Turkey and Iran requested that the way of charge be calculated as container/conventional wagon per km and not as fixed rate of 1,990km single journey for all destinations. On this, the Pakistan Railways' representatives agreed to consider the request, minutes of the meeting shared with Dawn read.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Imam Khamenei: So Why the UN?

Expectations of the people in the world from the United Nations (UN) have not been materialized at any period. In these 70-year lifespan that the UN has been run under the influence of world big powers in making decisions to meet the demands and needs of these powers, what big cruelties that have not been persecuted against the world people from Vietnam to Palestine, from Cambodia to Argentina, from Nicaragua to Myanmar, from Tanzania to Yemen and from Africa to the South America.

Now that Antonio Guterres's services as the ninth UN Secretary General is nearing to its end and it lays the ground for electing a more effective person for the job, we should evaluate his performance and give him mark and in my opinion with such a very weak performance under influence of the world big powers he cannot get the passing grade.

His re-nomination for the job, regarding the structure of electing the UN Secretary General officially and directly under the supervision of the five permanent and veto-right holding members, raises a question which has remained unanswered in all periods.

With reviewing different periods, the world is witnessing this important issue that there has scarcely been any secretary general at the UN to have performed at least 10 percent independently. It is deplorable that secretary generals of the UN have not been able to implement the goals which have been approved, written and published by the UN and it has disappointed and frustrated the world people towards this body and it should be admitted that unfortunately the predicted goals and principles in the UN charters have also been deviated or they have lost their efficiency and effects.

When we analyze the role of the UN secretary General, we find contents fully biased wherein American, British, and French and - to the little extent of placebo - Russian and Chinese goals are hidden. Therefore, the UN Secretary General is actually struggling with this accusation of being busy as the brokerage of big powers and indeed he cannot have necessary efficiency to vindicate the undoubted rights of the world people and even those who have suffered.

The weak performance of Guterres as the UN Secretary General regarding some important international issues has been actually the shameful spot in the performance of this organization during his term. With a glance and very brief, one can mention that in this edition, some serious crisis have happened internationally that the UN ignored its role regarding them like the issue of Daesh (IS forces) which was not only the issue of deviation but also it really created a sham state between Iraq and Syria by committing rape against women, and some countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE even took some actions for recognizing that government.

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Gov't Reports Robust Growth in Home Appliance Output

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A report shows that Iranian home appliance manufacturers have seen their output for main devices surge by up to 50 percent year on year in late February.

The Saturday report by the official IRNA agency said that production of TV sets, fridges and washing machines by Iranian home appliance brands had reached over four million sets in the 11 months to February 18.

Iranian companies produced 1.009 million sets of washing machines over the period, an increase of 49.9 percent year on year, said the report, citing figures published by Iran's ministry of industries (MIMT).

Output for fridges and freezers surged by 32.1 percent against last year to reach a total of more than 1.9 million sets, it said, adding that TV set production had topped 1.13 million, up 40 percent against the 11 months to late February, 2020.

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Tehran Condemns 'Act of Sabotage' Against Its Vessel in Mediterranean

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman has condemned an act of sabotage against an Iranian vessel in the high seas which resulted in damage to the ship.

"Incoming reports confirm the sabotage attack on this ship, which is a blatant violation of the international law and laws of the seas," he said.

"Different sectors have put on the agenda necessary measures to identify the perpetrators behind this act of sabotage, and the necessary actions are being seriously pursued in this regard," he added.

Iran Defends Human Rights Regardless of Color, Nationality

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of the High Council for Human Rights of Iran said that the Islamic Republic would defend human rights in all countries regardless of color, nationality, and geography.

Delivering a speech in the joint meeting of the High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the resident ambassadors and NGOs, Ali Bagheri Kani said that for more than 4 decades, several Western governments led by the U.S. regime had used all their capacities in the fields of hardware and software against the rights of the Iranian people.

"By using all tools they had tried to comprehensively and continuously violate the rights of the Iranian people, and in this context, they have even taken measures to ensure the definitive violation of the rights of the Iranian people," he added.

"The Iranian nation will not forget that the American regime opposed the issuance of a UN Security Council statement against the use of chemical weapons by Saddam's Iraq, and France and Britain did not vote either," he went on to say.

Secretary of the High Council for Human Rights of Iran said: "Our nation will not forget forever that the weapons that the United States, France, Britain, Germany, and



several other European countries gave to Saddam killed thousands of Iranians."

Bagheri Kani said: "The Iranian nation will not forget forever that the oppressive sanctions that have been approved in Washington and are being implemented by several European countries have led to the killing of innocent children with or special diseases."

He added: "The Iranians will never forget that those who pretend to defend human rights not only did not condemn the assassination of the Iranian nuclear and defense scientist but also did not recognize this crime as a terrorist act."

"The Iranian nation will not forget forever the heavy sanctions that Donald Trump imposed on Iran, Joe Biden pushing them forward and deprives the nation of its rights," he said.

Biden Must Show That Rationality Rules the White House

TEHRAN (IP)- Former Defense Minister says that the range of Iran's missiles will be as long as there is a threat and we will not have any restrictions in this regard.

In an interview with the Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar about the Biden administration's views on the nuclear deal, former Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan said, "Geopolitics has changed. The United States wants a stronger agreement than the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Why did he and his associates support the JCPOA when Trump was at the office but now they have changed their minds!?"

"I believe that Americans do not have the power to decide; because they have obligations to the Zionists and the Arabs and want to satisfy them at any cost," the Brig. Gen. Dehghan said. "Trump's insane decisions have complicated the issue, now Biden must show that the president is powerful and decisive, and by returning to the JCPOA he can prove that the White House is ruled by rationality," he added.

"Americans still think they are the lord of the world and have the right not to enforce international resolutions. The Security Council resolution is a guarantee in itself. Americans have Alzheimer's and have not got the world has changed. They must pay the price for the violation of the treaty and compensate. The United States wants Iran to return to its commitments first and then bring Iran back to the negotiating table when Iran has no power. We should not disarm ourselves and return to negotiations in this way," the former minister said.

Regarding the normalization of relations between Tehran and Washington, Dehghan said: "We are far from normalizing relations between the two countries. The Americans have to compensate for the damages that they have done to the Iranian people. The damages are not only financial but also include compensation for past damages and crimes against our country."

U.S. Seeking to Return to JCPOA

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said the United States left the JCPOA despite Iran's full compliance, adding that they are seeking to find a solution to return to the deal.

Giving a summary of the two terms of President Hassan Rouhani, Jahangiri said in an exclusive interview with IRNA carried out on Saturday that the Rouhani administration had three priorities: solving foreign policy issues, addressing domestic concerns and tackling economic problems.

He noted that the early years of implementation of the JCPOA could see billions of dollars in foreign investments in Iran as some countries like China offered tremendous investments, but it was hindered by political rivals in the country.

Iran and six world powers signed the JCPOA in 2015, easing international sanctions on Tehran in return for limitations on its nuclear program; however, the U.S. withdrew from the deal in 2018, restoring all its unilateral sanctions as part a so-called 'maximum pressure' campaign to allegedly compel Iran into a wider deal.

Jahangiri, however, said in the interview that U.S. sanctions were aimed at overthrowing the Islamic Republic through widespread riots supposed to be triggered by unprecedented economic pressure, described by the official as 'economic war'.

He underlined that President Rouhani played a pivotal role in maintaining the deal despite U.S. violation, changing the administration's focus on basic goods and sanctions didn't impact the livelihood of Iranians.

Underlining that Iran's economy will return to the main course once international issues are solved, he said that the new administration in the United States was seeking to find a way to return to the JCPOA.

Nevertheless, First Vice President stated, the Rouhani administration made great efforts to devise innovative methods to circumvent sanctions through complicated paths.



Defense Ministry Unveils COVID-19 Vaccine

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Health Minister Saeed Namaki said that the COVID-19 vaccine developed by the country's Defense Ministry, called Sepand, would start clinical trial on Tuesday, promising to reveal good news on vaccine production.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony of the Sepand vaccine, Namaki said that it was the product of a project commenced by Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the nuclear scientist assassinated by agents of the Zionist Regime in November.

Namaki is going to give more details about the Sepand vaccine on Tuesday when the clinical trial will begin.

In addition to Sepand, three other COVID-19 vaccine projects in Iran have begun their clinical trial. Razi Serum Production Institute and Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order are two Iranian institutes that are working on the vaccine, as well as the Soberana-01 vaccine of Cuba which began clinical trial in Iran.

In the ceremony, spokesman for headquarters for the fight against the coronavirus Alireza Raisi said that 1,260,000 doses of different coronavirus vaccines have so far been imported in order to vaccinate over 1 million people working as healthcare personnel in the coming weeks.

Day of Culture of Kazakhstan and Iran Held in Gorgan

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Day of Culture of Kazakhstan and Iran was held in Gorgan attended by Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Crafts of Iran Aliaskar Munesan, Governor of Gulistan Province Hadi Hakshenas, Deputy of the Iranian Parliament Gulamreza Montezari, Ambassador of Kazakhstan Askhat Orazbay, business people and representatives of the local Kazakh diaspora.

Speaking at the opening of the event, the Minister A. Munesan and the Ambassador A. Orazbay noted that over the past 30 years since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has made great strides in its development, as well as in cooperation with Iran in various fields.

H. Hakshenas emphasized that trade, economic, cultural, tourist, medical and pilgrimage ties between the regions of the two countries



are developing successfully.

The governor of the province proposed to hold the Day of Culture of Kazakhstan and Iran in the first days of spring and on the eve of the common holiday for the two countries of the New Year - Nauryz - as a corresponding "week" alternately in the Mangistau region and the province of Gulistan. This proposal was supported by the Minister of Cultural Heritage of Iran.

Participants of the event visited an exhibition of handicrafts made by craftsmen of the local Kazakh diaspora, organized in the halls of the Central House of Culture in Gorgan, and got acquainted with photo and video materials dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Independence. In addition, a small national orchestra played Kazakh melodies, and folk songs of the two countries were performed at the concert by the local Kazakh diaspora and Iranian artists.



PERMIT NO : 55/99/30857

DATE : 2021/3/15

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY



Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 2x40000±5% MTS of Granular Di ammonium Phosphate (GDAP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 15/3/2021 until Sunday dated 28/3/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

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

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Sunday dated 2/5/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Monday dated 3/5/2021 at 3:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

- The bid bond value should be at € 294940 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 9/3/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR 81714000000 which must be only submitted by the bidders.

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

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



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- The bid bond value should be at € 196118 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 9/3/2021 for 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR 54335000000 which must be only submitted by the bidders.

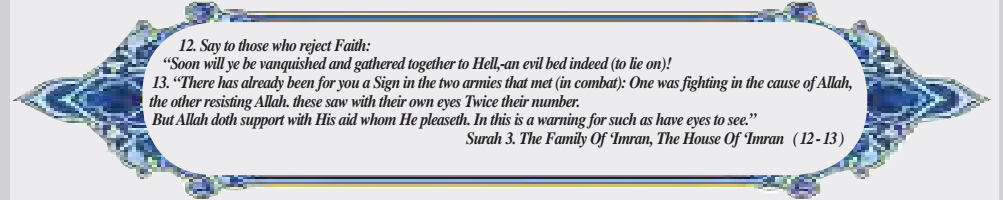
For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

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



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:13
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:49
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:13



Iran Among Top Gas Turbine Designers

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran is now able to design and make a wide variety of gas turbines at world standards, said the managing director of MAPNA Group on Saturday.

Speaking on the sidelines of signing an agreement in Tehran, Aliabadi noted that gas turbines are used in planes, ships, and power production, adding that gas turbines are among the most important man-made objects.

Iran proudly announces that it owns the technology to make different kinds of them, he said.

He went on to say that Iran has devised the MGT75, which will improve the efficiency of power plans up to 60 percent.

The newly-designed turbine can combust hydrogen and emit water steam, instead of greenhouse gases, he said, adding that the product is totally Iranian and cheaper than the foreign models.

He also said that it is going to be presented in the world market, and it will definitely be welcomed.

Aliabadi added that the consumption of water in the new power plant will drop to 1/10 of the older ones.

MAPNA Group and Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH), a sub-set of Energy Ministry, on Saturday signed an agreement for design installation and the launch of national turbine MGT-75.



Aliabadi further noted that the MGT-75 turbine has been designed according to the requirements of the country's power network and can be used for the development of the network in the future.

The MGT-75 turbine has improved efficiency by 60 percent over the previous designs and increased output capacity to 220 megawatts, he noted.

This turbine will impose the least fluctuation on the electricity network while improving the efficiency of the country's thermal power plants, according to the head of MAPNA Group.

The first Iranian-made MGT-75 gas turbine is going to be installed in a thermal power plant in the capital Tehran.

As Iran's top engineering and energy enterprise, MAPNA had previously manufactured E-class and F-class turbines such as MGT-70.

According to the agreement, the turbine is to be designed and installed at the Besat power plant at southern Tehran. The turbine will boost power generation as well as reducing fuel consumption.

D-8 Conferences Discuss Impact of COVID-19 on Member States

TEHRAN (MNA) - Member states of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, also known as Developing-8, on Wednesday discussed the impact of coronavirus on the tourism sector as well as ways to rebound.

Furthermore, the participants also discussed several issues regarding the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in West Asia and outside of the region, in line with the rapid changes in the political, economic, educational, and social spheres. The event also witnessed research papers and articles from the universities of the D-8 Member States such as Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Turkey.

The Third Meeting of the Senior Officials on Tourism Cooperation was hosted virtually by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture of Nigeria on March 9 and 10.

Iran's tourism industry has suffered a loss of some 220 trillion rials (about \$5.2 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister said in late February. "Iran's tourism has suffered some 220 trillion rials due to corona pandemic so far.... and we hope that with the production of domestic vaccines, tourism will flourish in 1400 [the new Iranian calendar year which begins on March 21]," Ali-Asghar Mounesan said.

"Over 1.5 million jobs have been lost in the tourism sector of Iran due to the COVID-19 disease.... Many of the tourism-insiders are now unemployed or they are staying at home," Mounesan announced last December. Despite the toughest economic pressures and sanctions, the government has provided good support to all sectors of tourism, the minister said. However, there is hope that the beginning of mass vaccination against the coronavirus will provide better conditions for tourism and businesses related to this sector, he explained.

Major Part of Equipment for Iran Tube System Produced Domestically

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says knowledge-based companies have been able to meet a major part of the equipment needed in the country's transportation sector, especially for the underground system.

Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari says Iranian knowledge-based companies have what it takes to push urban transport system toward becoming smart.

"Transport services should be offered by innovative and technological individuals in the private sector. Accordingly, the government is duty-bound to provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate knowledge-based and innovative businesses," Sattari added.

He was speaking at a ceremony where Line 6 of the Tehran underground system was opened.

"Some 18 knowledge-based companies as well as

hundreds of creative people had a role in producing 85% of the national train engine system domestically," said Sattari in another ceremony to unveil the achievements pertaining to the National Underground Train Project.

He said the project to domestically develop an engine for underground trains is of significance and a source of honor because it shows local companies have managed to develop the capability inside the country.

The vice president noted the government stands ready to support and cooperate in that regard.

"In this connection, we have cooperation with municipalities of metropolises in strategic areas," he said.

Abshar Atefeha Conducts Charity Maneuver in Khuzestan Province



According to the manager of the poverty eradication headquarters of Abshar Atefeha International Charity NGO Ms. Fatemeh Chooapani, a God-pleasing charity maneuver was conducted in Khuzestan Province in form of the national committee of social supports by the Almighty's blessing and with the order of managing director of Abshar Atefeha International Foundation Haj Muhammad Javad Fooladpoor and it was communicated to all representatives of the foundation nationwide.

Therefore, all representatives of the foundation in the country in an urgent action rushed to the help of Khuzestan Province due to the province's red situation because of the evil Coronavirus outbreak and being among the underprivileged provinces whose cities and villages face with problem of livelihood. In this maneuver, the God-pleasing charity action was conducted through the national committee of social support and over 20,000 packages of food and sanitary items were collected from provinces and were distributed in the deprived towns and villages of this province on Wednesday and Thursday, March 10 and 11, and on the eve of the auspicious anniversary of Mabaath (the day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was chosen as God's messenger). It is hoped this charity would open another window of the God-pleasing aids to our needy compatriots, and Abshar Atefeha International Charity NGO, as the national committee of social supports, would have growing progress in serving the society and helping the esteemed benefactors of our Islamic hometown.



Trade With Eurasian Economic Union Important for Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The growth of trade exchanges between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic indicates the importance of international business for the economy of the Islamic Republic.

The trade value increased two percent in 2020 to stand at 2 billion dollars, despite the fact that many countries around the globe were facing economic aftermaths of the coronavirus lockdowns.

Seyed Rasoul Mohajer, Deputy Minister of Economic Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, believes that the main reason of the growth of trade exchanges between EAEU and Iran is a preferential tariffs agreement, which was implemented from November 2019 to November 2020.

The EAEU is a market consisting of around 200 million population in its member states with the total GDP of about 5 trillion dollars. The union tries to promote trade and services among member states as well as direct joint policies in energy, agriculture, transport, customs, trade and foreign investment.

Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed a deal to initiate the Eurasian Economic Union in 2014; then Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the union one year later.

The Islamic Republic proposed creation of a free trade zone between the EAEU and Iran in 2017, which was accepted in 2019.

At the invitation of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani heading a delegation visited Yerevan in 2019 in order to take part in the meeting of heads of member states of the union.



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Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 2x40000±5% MTS of Granular Potassium Sulphate (GSOP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 15/3/2021 until Sunday dated 28/3/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000000.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Sunday dated 2/5/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Monday dated 3/5/2021 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

- The bid bond value should be at € 253180 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 09/03/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

2 - The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR 70144000000, which must be only submitted by the bidders.

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

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

Biden, Japan PM Likely to Meet in Washington on April 9

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is likely to meet U.S. President Joe Biden on April 9, the first foreign leader to meet the president in the White House, Japan's Yomiuri newspaper reported on Sunday.

The two are expected to agree to strengthen the bilateral alliance and their commitment to the freedom of passage in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the Yomiuri reported without citing sources.

Calls to the prime minister's office were not answered. Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said on Friday that Suga will make the visit in the first half of April.



Italy to Vaccinate at Least 80% Of Population by September

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy said on Saturday it aims to vaccinate at least 80% of its population by September through ramping up the daily vaccination campaign.

Francesco Paolo Figliuolo, the new special commissioner for coronavirus, released a national plan to issue 500,000 vaccine doses a day, according to a statement released by the cabinet office.

Italy has registered 101,881 deaths since the outbreak emerged in the country in February last year, the second-highest toll in Europe after Britain and the seventh-highest in the world. The country has reported 3.2 million cases of infection to date.



North Korea Unresponsive To Behind-the-Scenes Biden Administration Outreach



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - North Korea has not responded to behind-the-scenes diplomatic outreach since mid-February by President Joe Biden's administration, including to Pyongyang's mission to the United Nations, a senior Biden administration official told Reuters on Saturday.

The disclosure of the so-far unsuccessful U.S. outreach, which has not been previously reported, raises questions about how Biden will address mounting tensions with Pyongyang over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

It also adds a new dimension to a visit America's top diplomat and defense secretary will make next week to South Korea and Japan, where concerns over North Korea's nuclear arsenal are expected to be high on the agenda.

The senior Biden administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, offered few details on the diplomatic push. But the official said there had been efforts to reach out to the North Korean government "through several channels starting in mid-February, including in New York."

"To date, we have not received any response from Pyongyang," the official said. North Korea's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Biden administration has so far been cautious in publicly describing its approach to North Korea, saying it is carrying out a comprehensive policy review following former President Donald Trump's unprecedented engagement with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump's efforts failed to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

The Biden administration official said it appeared there had been no active dialogue between the United States and North Korea for more than a year, including at the end of Trump's administration, "despite multiple attempts during that time by the United States to engage."

The U.S. official declined to speculate about how the silence from Pyongyang would impact the Biden administration's North Korea policy review, which was expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

Protesters in Argentina Attack Bus Carrying President

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Dozens of protesters kicked and threw rocks at a minibus carrying Argentine President Alberto Fernandez on Saturday as he visited an area devastated by forest fires, TV footage showed.

As he left a community center in the town of Lago Puelo in the southern Patagonia region, Fernandez had to take refuge behind a wall of people as a crowd of demonstrators pushed toward him and his delegation.

The protesters later stopped the bus carrying the president, punching and kicking it and throwing stones that broke windows in the vehicle, according to footage broadcast by the TN network and the newspaper Clarin.

U.S. Protesters Demand Justice A Year After Breonna Taylor Killing

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Hundreds of demonstrators have rallied in the US city of Louisville, demanding justice on the anniversary of the death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman who was shot and killed by police during a botched raid of her apartment.

Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, led the crowds marching on Saturday behind a large purple banner with an illustration of the young woman's face, chanting "No justice, no peace."

"We got two different Americas. We got one for Black Americans and one for white Americans," Benjamin Crump, a lawyer representing Taylor's family, told the demonstrators.

"We got to get justice for all our people in America."

Taylor's death, along with the police killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, sparked huge protests against police abuses and racism across the United States last year. But 12 months after the killing, only one of three police officers involved in the raid has been charged, and only for endangering Taylor's neighbors by firing wildly into an adjacent apartment.

Tamika Palmer, center, the mother of Breonna Taylor, leads a march through the streets of downtown Louisville on the one year anniversary of her death in Louisville (Timothy D. Easley)

U.S. President Joe Biden on Saturday declared his support for police reforms.

"Breonna Taylor's death was a tragedy, a blow to her family, her community, and America," he said in a tweet. "As we continue to mourn her, we must press ahead to pass meaningful police reform in Congress."

I remain committed to signing a landmark reform bill into law."

The Louisville rally came a day after Kenneth Walker, Taylor's boyfriend, filed a federal lawsuit against the city's Metro Police Department, alleging his constitutional rights were violated during last year's raid, news outlets reported.

Walker last year filed a continuing state lawsuit against the city and police, saying he was the victim of assault, battery, false arrest and malicious prosecution.

Taylor's front door was breached by Louisville officers as part of a drug raid in the early morning hours of March 13, 2020. Walker fired his gun once, saying later that he feared an intruder was entering the apartment. One officer was struck, and he and two other officers fired 32 shots into the apartment, striking Taylor five times.



Nigeria Jihadists Ambush Military Convoy, 19 Troops Dead

KANO (Dispatches) - Islamic State-aligned jihadists ambushed a Nigerian military convoy, killing 15 soldiers and four militia fighters in the northeastern state of Borno, security sources said Saturday.

The convoy came under heavy attack from Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) fighters near Gudumbali in the Lake Chad region on Thursday, the sources said.

The attack was the latest in a jihadist conflict which has killed 36,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands in northeast Nigeria since it began more than a decade ago.

"We lost 15 soldiers and four civilian JTF (militia) in the terrorists' ambush in the forest near Gudumbali," a military officer, who asked not to be identified, told AFP.

He said 13 government fighters, including 10 troops, were wounded in the ambush. The 10-vehicle convoy was on its way to Gudumbali from the town of Kukawa for a military operation against the insurgents when it came under fire, said another military source, who gave the same toll.

"The casualties were brought to Maiduguri this afternoon," the source told AFP, referring to the regional capital.

Militia leader Umar Ari said a vigilante leader in the area was among those killed. Nigeria's army works with local militia forces as part of its battle against jihadists.

"Four of our comrades were among the dead, including, Yusuf Baba-Idris, the head of Civilian JTF in Kukawa," Ari said.

On Saturday, ISWAP issued a statement, claiming responsibility for the ambush, according to the SITE jihadist monitoring agency.

German Regional Elections a Crunch Test for Merkel's Party

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German voters went to the polls on Sunday in regional elections in two western states that pose an early test of the conservative Christian Democrats' prospects of retaining power in a federal vote later this year.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, in power since 2005, is not seeking re-election in September and her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is already missing the 'Merkel bonus' she has brought them with four consecutive national election victories.

The CDU goes into Sunday's polling in the southwestern auto hub of Baden-Wuerttemberg and the neighbouring wine-growing region of Rhineland-Palatinate with its poll numbers sliding, exacerbated by a face mask procurement scandal.

In the once safe CDU region of Baden-Wuerttemberg the party risks being replaced as junior coalition partner to the Greens by the Social Democrats (SPD) and liberal Free Democrats.

In Rhineland-Palatinate, where such a 'traffic light' coalition of party colors already governs,

the CDU was leading in opinion polls as recently as late February but has now slipped behind the left-leaning SPD.

CDU leaders fear that if a traffic light alliance ousts them from government in Baden-Wuerttemberg, then such a tie-up could gain credibility at September's federal vote - and could leave the party in opposition at national level.

Its image has been tarnished by the face mask scandal, which has seen conservative lawmakers quit over allegations they received payments for arranging procurement deals.

Sunday's elections will also have ramifications within the conservative bloc of the CDU and its Bavaria sister party, which together run Germany's federal government in coalition with the SPD.

While new CDU leader Armin Laschet is in pole position in the race to succeed Merkel, defeat in Baden-Wuerttemberg could help his Bavarian rival Markus Soeder in his bid to become the conservative chancellor candidate in September.



Bolivia Ex-President Anez Behind Bars

LA PAZ (Reuters) - Bolivia's former interim President Jeanine Anez landed behind bars on Saturday in the capital of the country she led just six months ago after the new government arrested her on claims she participated in a 2019 coup to seize power.

Bolivia's former interim President Jeanine Anez is seen in a car outside the FELCC (Special Force to fight against Crime) headquarters in La Paz, Bolivia March 13, 2021. REUTERS/Manuel Claude

Anez and a raft of ministers and security officials face charges of terrorism, sedition and conspiracy over an alleged coup against Bolivia's 13-year socialist government, according to an arrest warrant she posted on social media.

Anez led Bolivia for less than a year after long-time President Evo Morales left office following contested elections and violent protests.

The crackdown escalates hostilities between the current socialist administration of Morales' political ally and successor President Luis Arce, and more conservative opponents it accuses of ousting Morales.

Hours after a dawn raid on Anez's home in the central city of Trinidad, she was pictured behind bars in a women's holding cell in La Paz awaiting a judicial hearing due to take place within 24 hours.

She claimed to be the victim of "aberrant political persecution" and said she should benefit from immunity as a former president. In letters to the Organization of American States and the European Union, Anez appealed for observer missions to evaluate her arrest and those of her former enemy and justice ministers.

"It is an absolute outrage, they are accusing us of being accomplices of an alleged coup," Anez told local television as she arrived in a military plane at a La Paz airport under heavy police escort.

"There is not a grain of truth in the accusations. It is simple political intimidation. There was no coup. I took part in a constitutional succession."

Anez took power in late 2019 after Morales resigned amid widespread violent protests against his government over allegations he fraudulently won an election when running for an unprecedented and unconstitutional fourth term.

At least 33 people were killed in violence that followed the election, 30 of them after Anez took office.



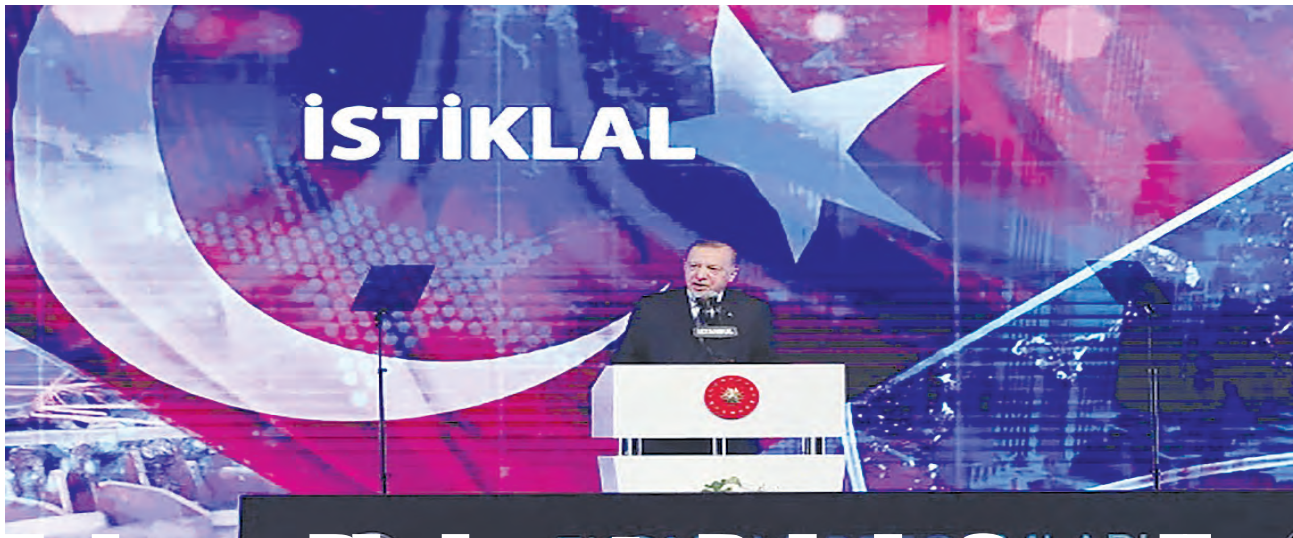
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Ford to Launch Recall of 2.9m Defect Vehicles

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Ford Motor Co said it will begin notifying owners April 1 in its new recall of 2.9 million vehicles in North America with potentially defective driver-side Takata air bags after U.S. regulators demanded the fix in January.

The second largest U.S. automaker said in January it would comply with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration request and that the recall would cost \$610 million. The defect, which leads in rare instances to air bag inflators rupturing and sending potentially deadly metal fragments flying, prompted the largest automotive recall in U.S. history of more than 67 million inflators.



Erdogan Pledges to Rein in Spending As Part of Turkey's Economic Reset

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pledged to rein in government spending and bring the inflation rate below 10 per cent as part of efforts to rebuild credibility with investors after years of economic turbulence.

The government is prioritizing efforts "to achieve single-digit inflation" and will create a price-stability committee, Erdogan said on Friday, in what had been flagged as a major policy speech.

Plans include indexing public sector price and tax increases to government inflation targets and increasing the issuance of lira-denominated bonds. Turkey will also abolish extrabudgetary spending, reform the public tender process and reduce the budget deficit to 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product from a previous target of 4.3 per cent, he said. "The public finance reforms we will implement in this period will positively distinguish us from many other countries.

We are determined to write a new success story," Erdogan said.

In recent months, Erdogan has promised a return to free-market principles after he replaced his economy team late last year. His son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, quit as finance minister after complying with Erdogan's demands to keep interest rates low to fuel economic growth, a move that devalued the lira currency and sparked an exodus of foreign capital.

Low interest rates helped Turkey's \$730bn economy expand last year during the coronavirus pandemic. But inflation has been stuck in the double digits for much of the past three years, and unemployment remains above 12 per cent.

The new finance minister, Lutfi Elvan, and central bank governor, Naci Agbal, have vowed to keep monetary policy tight to bolster the lira and curb inflation that accelerated to 15.6 per cent last month. Agbal raised interest rates by 675 basis points to 17 per cent in November and December, helping the Turkish lira recover, although a stronger dollar and rising US treasury yields have halted the rally in Turkish assets.

Erdogan's promise in the speech to tighten state finances and lower inflation "were welcome but there was little else that was meaningful and concrete in terms of major reform initiatives," said one London-based investor who was not authorised to be quoted by name.

What was most notable was what Erdogan did not say — he did not reiterate his unconventional theory that high interest rates cause inflation nor his recent defence of Albayrak's stewardship of the economy, the investor said. The real test, he said, will come at the central bank's monetary policy meeting next week as expectations mount it will increase rates. "That will be seen as a validation of Erdogan's willingness to support the central bank governor, part of a bigger reorientation of the policy framework in Turkey and a much stronger message than this speech," he said.

Erdogan's recent pivot has also included a pledge to reform the judiciary to improve human rights, as well as diplomatic outreach to allies and rivals alike. Relations are strained with Turkey's western partners and across its own region as Erdogan pursued a more assertive foreign policy.

Lebanon Approves World Bank Rescue Plan for Needy Families

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Lebanese parliament approved a \$246 million World Bank emergency assistance plan to support struggling families and strengthen the social safety net amid the country's worst economic and health crisis in decades.

Under the relief plan, 161,251 families classified as the poorest in Lebanon will receive 800,000 Lebanese pounds (\$80) per month per family for one year.

The aid program will be implemented under the supervision of the World Bank.

The emergency package is expected to reduce mounting resentment against the country's political leadership, which is widely blamed for the economic collapse and parliamentary stalemate.

Mohammed Fahmy, the caretaker interior minister, warned of "a diminishing security situation," adding that "security is a product of politics, and all the country's systems have diminished."

He said: "We are part of the people and we are hungry. The political forces must resolve the obstacles to form a rescue government as soon as possible.

"We can no longer take it. The situation is very bad, the country is exposed, and I am sounding the alarm."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian warned on Thursday that "time is running out to prevent the collapse of Lebanon, and we do not see any indication that Lebanese politicians are doing what they can to save their country."

The approval of aid follows growing protests against the economic meltdown.

Protesters attempted to march on the UNESCO Palace in Beirut while a parliamentary session took place, but tight security measures stopped them from reaching the venue.

Meanwhile, the dollar exchange rate on the black market in some regions reached new highs of 11,000 Lebanese pounds.

As the dollar exchange rate soars, the price of essential materials and commodities is increasing, while the value of people's wages continues to decline.

The minimum wage, once equivalent to \$450, has fallen below \$62. As a result, public and private sector salaries have lost their value.

In its plenary session on Friday, parliament authorized the government to amend the housing loan ceilings for the Banque de L'habitat from 300 million to 450 million Lebanese pounds, and from 400 million to 600 million pounds.



IMF Welcomes China's Focus on Growth Quality

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund welcomes China's putting "greater focus on quality rather than the quantity of growth" and committed to greener development with a specific carbon neutrality goal, an IMF spokesman said Thursday as the country's annual legislative session concluded.

A Government Work Report, approved at the conclusion of the weeklong National People's Congress (NPC) meeting Thursday, said China aims for gross domestic product growth of over 6 percent in 2021, with more efforts on reform, innovation and high-quality development.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang told reporters that such a growth target is "not low" considering the size of the Chinese economy. He said that walking quickly for a moment does not mean one is walking steadily, and that "it is only with a steady pace that we will be firm in our steps".

"We do welcome this greater focus on quality rather than the quantity of growth, (which) is something we've been commenting on for some time," Gerry Rice, director of the IMF's Communications Department, said.

"We think this should help reinforce China's quest to rebalance this growth model toward greener and more consumption-oriented growth," Rice told a news conference.

Rice, who has served as the department chief since 2011, said the IMF has projected the world's second-largest economy to grow at 8.1 percent in 2021, after posting a 2.3 percent GDP increase last year, the only major economy to attain growth.

That suggests that a growth above 6 percent should be easily reached, given China's fast recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the large base-effects from the impact of the pandemic on growth last year, the official said.



IMF spokesman said Thursday as the country's annual legislative session concluded.

Bitcoin Passes \$60,000 for First Time

PARIS (AFP) - Bitcoin briefly rose above \$60,000 for the first time on Saturday, as increasing backing from corporate heavyweights helps the world's most popular virtual currency continue its record-breaking run.

The cryptocurrency hit an all-time high of \$60,012, according to the website CoinMarketCap.

Bitcoin has been on a meteoric rise since March last year, when it stood at \$5,000, spurred by online payments giant PayPal saying it would allow account holders to use cryptocurrency.

Last month Elon Musk's electric carmaker Tesla invested \$1.5 billion in the virtual unit, while Twitter chief Jack Dorsey and rap mogul Jay-Z said they are creating a fund aimed at making Bitcoin "the internet's currency".

Others jumping on the bandwagon include Wall Street player BNY Mellon, investment fund giant BlackRock and credit card titan Mastercard.

Bitcoin, which was launched back in 2009, hit the headlines in 2017 after soaring from less than \$1,000 in January to almost \$20,000 in December of the same year.

The virtual bubble then burst in subsequent days, with bitcoin's value then fluctuating wildly before sinking below \$5,000 by October 2018.

However the last year's rise has been much steadier, with investors and Wall Street finance giants wooed by dizzying growth, the opportunity for profit and asset diversification, and a safe store of value to guard against inflation.

Bitcoins are traded via a decentralized registry system known as a blockchain.

The system requires massive computer processing power in order to manage and implement transactions. That power is provided by "miners", who do so in the hope they will receive new bitcoins for validating transaction data.

Boeing Unveils Order for Troubled 737 MAX, Shares Jump

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Boeing Co unveiled a new order for its 737 MAX on Friday, pushing its shares up 6% as it renews efforts to recapture investor confidence following a two-year safety crisis.

The deal to sell 24 of the 737-8 model to a backer of Canadian low-cost carrier Flair

Airlines comes after Reuters reported it was poised to win another, much larger deal with Southwest Airlines.

Shares in Boeing rose 6.2% to \$267.86.

Boeing has been trying to rebuild its image with passengers and airlines following the nearly two-year grounding of the MAX after crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia killed 346 people.

This week marked the second anniversary of the second accident, with a final investigative report expected any day.

Boeing said Miami-based private equity firm 777 Partners, which has a stake in Flair Airlines, agreed to buy 24 737-8 airplanes with an option to purchase a further 60.

Flair, which was recently relaunched by veterans of European budget giant Wizz Air, is now operating one plane for domestic flights. It said it would lease 13 of the 24 aircraft from 777 Partners starting this year.

Reuters on Wednesday reported Boeing was on the verge of a deal to sell dozens of 737 MAX 7 jets to Southwest Airlines in potentially its largest 737 MAX order since the jet's safety ban was lifted.

Both deals would provide a much-needed injection of cash for the U.S. planemaker, which ended last year with more than \$60 billion in debt and an historic loss of \$12 billion.

The coronavirus pandemic has further complicated the MAX's recovery by decimating demand for air travel and new jets.

Ultra low-cost carriers, or ULCCs, are seen as the winners of the COVID-19 crisis as they offer a no-frills experience at low prices.

They are pervasive in Europe's fragmented market, with Hungarian Wizz Air - a key Airbus customer - competing with the likes of Ireland's Ryanair, a top Boeing user like Southwest.

U.S. Stimulus Offers Significant Boost to Global Economy



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. president Joe Biden's stimulus program is being hailed as both boosting domestic growth and spurring the global recovery, but the IMF warned that policymakers will need to be alert to risks posed by the massive spending as well as low interest rates.

The package, which Biden signed into law on Thursday, will inject \$1.9 trillion in aid into the pandemic-damaged economy by funding small businesses, extending unemployment benefits that were due to expire in days, and sending direct payments of as much as \$1,400 to many Americans starting this month.

That spending will expand US GDP by 5 to 6 per cent over three years, according to the IMF's preliminary estimates. And higher demand will help other countries sell more products to American consumers, the fund's spokesman Gerry Rice told reporters on Thursday.

"We see potentially significant positive spillovers in terms of global growth," he said. "Most countries should benefit from stronger US demand... so this will help global growth and recovery."

However, he cautioned that with low interest rates, policymakers worldwide should be on the alert for a sudden shift in borrowing costs.

That has been a growing concern for financial markets in recent weeks as accelerating COVID-19 vaccine rollouts offer hope of a rapid recovery, but also sparked fears that growth could ignite an inflationary spiral that would force the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates sooner than expected.

The concerns have sent stock markets reeling in recent sessions, especially tech shares, which are more likely to be hindered by rising lending rates.

Fed chair Jerome Powell has repeatedly tried to calm financial markets, saying that policymakers have no intention of reining in stimulus or raising the benchmark interest rate until inflation is holding solidly above 2 per cent and employment has recovered.

He acknowledged that inflation could jump this year compared to the depressed rates during the pandemic restrictions in 2020, but said those price spikes are likely to be "transitory."

Ocean Port to Be Constructed on Jask Coast

BANDAR ABBAS (IRNA) - A senior official in Ports and Maritime Organization of Hormuzgan Province said on Sunday that an ocean port plan was being prepared to be constructed on the coast of the province.

PMO Deputy for Ports Mansour Khorramshahi said that the port would be constructed on the southern coast of Iran, with a

capacity similar to that of Shahid Rajai Port.

Hormuzgan Province is home to 20 active ports, including 10 commercial and cruise ports and 10 small ports, according to Khorramshahi. He added that Shahid Rajai Port has a capacity of 60 to 70 million tons which would reach 110 million tons once the parts under construction are completed in the next four years.



Draghi Announces New Italian Lockdown, Fresh Support for Economy

ROME (Dispatches) - Mario Draghi said his Italian government would launch a new economic package to support the country during fresh Covid-19 lockdown measures coming into force from next week amid a surge in cases.

The prime minister said he would boost support for struggling workers and businesses, as well as tripling the number of vaccines being administered daily during a new lockdown that will last until the first week of April.

"More than a year after the beginning of the health emergency, we are unfortunately facing a new wave of contagions," Draghi said. "The memory of what happened last spring is alive, and we will do everything to prevent it from happening again."

Italy, which has suffered more than 100,000 deaths since the pandemic began, has in recent weeks experienced a sharp increase in cases as a result of the spread of the variant of Covid-19 first detected in the UK.

Under the new measures, from Monday any Italian region that has more than 250 cases per 100,000 inhabitants over a seven-day period will be placed automatically under the strictest "red" restrictions. This means bars, restaurants and schools will close. Over the Easter holidays, all of Italy will be placed under these strict measures.

At current infection levels, with Italy having reported 26,824 new cases on Friday, up from levels closer to 10,000 per day at the start of March, large swaths of the country are likely to face such restrictions, including Milan and possibly Rome.

Draghi said additional support for the Italian economy during the lockdown would be announced next week. This would involve an increase to the €32bn in stimulus and support already budgeted for by the last government.

He also said that Italy's vaccination campaign would be sped up, with the aim being to triple the number of shots administered from a current daily rate of 170,000. This increase, Draghi said, would be helped by the European Medicines Agency's approval on Thursday of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Italians would be prioritised for vaccination by age and vulnerability. Those key workers yet to be vaccinated would also receive priority.

Draghi added that his government would continue to block the exports of vaccines by companies that had delayed their deliveries. Earlier this month,



Italy obtained EU backing to block a shipment of 250,000 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine to Australia.

"In recent weeks, we have taken strong decisions against companies in delay with deliveries," he said. "We will continue to do so to defend the health of Italians."

Draghi also said Italy would continue to administer the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, in line with EMA recommendations. Some European countries suspended its use on Thursday after a small number of people who received the jab experienced subsequent adverse health effects.

He said the opinion of the Italian regulator was that "there is no evidence that these events are related to the administration of the vaccine".

Imam Khamenei...

FROM PAGE 1

The disaster was that no country tried to stop the advancement of this terrorist group and sham government and if there was, and it was the Islamic Republic of Iran which bravely fought and resisted strongly and devoted several martyrs on this path otherwise today we could face with the emergence of second Israel in the region while the UN with this secretary general had chocked into silence. Of the other signs of inefficiency of Guterres or any other secretary general of the UN is that in the structure of the UN, electing the secretary general is fully in control of the five veto power countries and wherever these countries either clandestinely or even openly deal together politically, the world sees the cruel silence of the UN and its secretary because in electing the secretary general all of these veto powers in the UN Security Council should approve the candidate and this approval is not just limited to electing the secretary general and for other jobs in this body, the story is the same. For example in electing financial deputy of the UN, the French are very sensitive and they pick their favorite candidates in advance and announce who is next to run the financial department of the UN.

On the social and political issues, the British pick their candidates for the jobs. In the military and critical issues it is the U.S. which picks its official agent. So it is seen that Americans have entered Iraq and Iraq parliament has officially approved for the pullout of the U.S. troops but they create different pretexts and are not ready to pull out their forces from Iraq. The U.N. Secretary General takes no action to settle this issue. The UN is totally silent regarding the international terrorism led by the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Zionist regime. Assassination of martyr Haj Qasem Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their comrades was snubbed by the U.N. blindness and speechlessness. It also fully ignored killing and dismembering the corpse of Saudi Arabian journalist and critic Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey.

The UN has actually violated its own convention in pushing the world towards terrorism from assassination of nuclear scientist to the political and security assassinations. Violation of diplomatic rights, Conventions 1961 and 1963 and especially the Convention 1961, violation of human rights convention and diplomatic conventions have meant disregarding the UN by the UN itself that the Secretary General could have played a more effective role in these regards but because of being under influence of the U.S. or other big powers, he has unfortunately left the worst performance regarding the assassination of Marty Soleimani and some other issues.

In the issue of Iran's ballistic missiles, every country has right to have ballistic missile and it is considered as the defensive pillar and essentially it has nothing to do with any other country to stop other countries in this regard. But Americans did what they could against Iran as if there existed no UN Secretary General to explain and defend the rightfulness of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Recently and on the anniversary of Mabaath, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in his speech said one of the modus operandi of enemies in the soft war is to distort the truth 180 degrees and referred to some of the obvious lies and said, "It has been six years now that the U.S.'s Arab ally has been bombarding the oppressed people of Yemen in their homes and on the streets, in hospitals and at school. The people have been besieged and their supplies of food, medicine and oil have been cut off. And of course, this has happened with the U.S.'s go-ahead. Now the Yemenis have managed to create defensive weapons for themselves by benefiting from certain opportunities, they and even the UN raised an outcry against Yemen's campaign of self-defense."

The Leader also stated that "Having the largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the world and massacring over 220,000 people by A-Bomb while screaming that they are against the development of atomic weapons," "Creating the terrorist group like the Daesh and providing them with money, facilities, modern technology and media, the ground for selling Syria's oil by them with the claim of fight with terrorism" are the other examples of distortion of the truth by the U.S. Administration and the UN's deadly silence.

On the whole, it should be acknowledged that not only Guterres but also the UN nature in the current condition, before being defender of truth, rights and security of the countries and the world, is mostly a justifier of power and tyranny current and massacre of the innocent people in any part of the world, and as long as this issue is not resolved, the universal disaster will not be resolved, either.



Iran's Water...

FROM PAGE 1

Rouhani inaugurated on Sunday the second part of the Persian Gulf water piping project which as a mega-project transfers water from south of Iran to Sarcheshmeh Copper Mine in Rafsanjan, central west of the southern province of Kerman.

He inaugurated the second part of the giant project through a video conference based in Tehran.

Piping the Persian Gulf water to Kerman is a national project to tackle the water shortage crisis which is a source of great concern for people, farmers and industrialists living and working in Iran's desert cities including Kerman in southern Iran.

About 7,200 billion tomans have been invested in the second part of the 150-km long project.

Sarcheshmeh Copper Mine is located 160 km southwest of Kerman.

The officials have said that water shortage has put the life of 63 percent of people living in the southern Iranian province of Kerman in danger.

The Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman water transfer project will be of great benefit to Gol-Gohar Mining and Industrial Complex in Sirjan, the center of Kerman, and Sarcheshmeh Copper Mine in Rafsanjan, central west of Kerman, as two important industrial plants which are the main target of implementation of the project.

The Persian Gulf water piping project is a giant plan aiming to desalinate water for people in the south of the country and for industrial use as well.

With the 5 phases of the project becoming operational, desalinated water is taken from the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman to the provinces of Hormozgan, Kerman, Yazd, Isfahan, South Khorasan, Korasan Razavi and Sistan-Baluchestan.

Foreign Investment in Industrial, Trade Sectors Up Over 113%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has approved 135 foreign investment projects valued at about \$1.821 billion in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-February 18, 2021), up 113.2 percent compared to the last year's same period.

According to the latest data released by the ministry, the number of approved projects has also increased by 64 percent in the mentioned 11-month period compared to the same time span in the previous year.

The Industry Ministry had approved 82 foreign investment

projects with a total investment of \$854 million in the previous year's same period.

Of the total number of investment projects in the current year's 11-month period, 88.9 percent was the share of industry sector, 5.2 percent was the share of mining sector, while trade-related projects accounted for 5.9 percent of the total figure.

The highest volume of foreign investment approved in the industry, mining, and trade sectors in the period under review were in the categories of chemical materials and products, manufacturing of paper and paper products, home appliances, as well as the manufacturing of machinery and equipment, respectively.

Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 1

In a follow-up meeting, the participants again discussed the freight tariff related issues. On the issue of distance for charge, Pakistan, on this occasion announced that it is committed to the operation of the train and said it will implement the calculation according to a fixed rate of 1,990km single journey for all destinations. However, it agreed to negotiate with the other two parties (Turkey and Iran) and, if requested, to consider the charge to be calculated as container/conventional wagon per km and not as a fixed rate of 1990 km single journey for all destinations.

The representative of a freight forwarding company hired temporarily by Pakistan said that calculating the additional costs (if any) along with an analogical comparative report on rail and maritime charges for a clear understanding will be portrayed to potential

cargo owners, the minutes read.

The Turkish and Iranian representatives urged Pakistan Railways' Chief Marketing Officer Kashif Yusefani to provide the meeting with clarifications on the rates to be calculated based on actual kilometers.

Similarly, the representative of the Pakistani freight forwarding company was asked to provide an estimate of any additional costs, if any, along with an analogical comparative report. Moreover, the representative of a Turkish forwarding company was asked to commence negotiations with the Pakistani freight forwarding company for transferring the first run of the train and update the secretariat, read the minutes.

When contacted, Pakistan Railways Chief Executive Officer Nisar Ahmad Memon said fixed rates introduced by his department were already subsidised and cheapest one.

"We have already calculated them on the basis of per km and then made them fixed. These are applicable for three destinations in Pakistan including Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi," he clarified. Despite all this, his department has started working on the tariff/rates as proposed by Iran and Turkey, Mr Memon added.

Gov't Reports...

FROM PAGE 1

For the past two years, Iran has been reporting a robust surge in activity across the manufacturing sector amid lower imports of foreign-made products and a growing demand for local brands.

Iranian customers have lost their traditional appetite for major foreign brands of home appliances especially after reports showed many of those companies left the Iranian market in recent years under growing pressure from the US.

The MIIT had set a record output target of 12 million devices for the domestic home appliance sector for the year to March 20. The output, the highest on record since 1979, was materialized in late January, said the IRNA report.

Official studies suggest Iranian home appliance brands can expand to supply their products to a regional market of 400 million people.



Agricultural Support Services Co.

PERMIT NO : 55/99/30857

DATE : 2021/3/15

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 4x40000±5% MTS of Granular Triple Super Phosphate (GTSP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 15/3/2021 until Sunday dated 28/3/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000000.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Saturday dated 1/5/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Sunday dated 2/5/2021 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

- The bid bond value should be at € 246371 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 9/3/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR 68257000000 which must be only submitted by the bidders.

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

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

Meillard Leads Pinturault In Slovenia Giant Slalom

KRANJSKA GORA (Dispatches) - Swiss skier Loic Meillard led men's World Cup overall leader Alexis Pinturault after the first leg of the giant slalom in Kranjska Gora on Saturday.

Pinturault, trailing by 0.11sec, holds an 81 point advantage over Marco Odermatt in the chase for the big crystal globe.

Odermatt, in fourth after the first run, also trails his French rival in the discipline standings, with 25 points the gap between the pair.

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Noel Le Graet Wins Fourth Term as French Football Chief

PARIS (Dispatches) - French Football Federation president Noel Le Graet was reelected for a fourth term after a crushing victory against his two rivals on Saturday.

The 79-year-old, in the role since 2011, saw off Frederic Thiriez and Michel Moulin in the first ballot to earn a further four years as FFF chief.

In the ballot at the federation's general assembly, he emerged with 73.02 percent of the vote, with lawyer and former head of the French League (LFP) Thiriez garnering 25.11%.

Man City Go 17 Points Clear

LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester City moved 17 points clear of the pack with a 3-0 win at Fulham on Saturday with John Stones continuing his surprising goalscoring touch and Sergio Aguero rediscovering his.

Defender Stones, who had managed one goal in his first 170 Premier League appearances, has now netted four in his last 10.

His close-range effort broke Fulham's resistance two minutes after the interval and after Gabriel Jesus capitalised on a Fulham mistake to make it 2-0, Aguero netted a penalty to grab his 181st City league goal, but first for 14 months.

While City have all but sewn up their third title in four seasons, the battle for a top-four spot continues to be unpredictable and looks set to go to the wire.

Chelsea's 0-0 draw at Leeds United made it 12 games without defeat since Thomas Tuchel replaced Frank Lampard in charge.

But it opened the door for Everton later to close the gap on Chelsea who occupy fourth spot.

Victory against Burnley would have put Everton into fifth, two points behind Chelsea having played a game less, but Carlo Ancelotti's side suffered another home stumble.

Chris Wood and Dwight McNeil gave Burnley a 2-0 lead and while Dominic Calvert-Lewin did pull a goal back for the hosts they could not avert a seventh league defeat at Goodison Park.

"It's a big disappointment but we can't give up. There are 10 games left and we fight until the end," Ancelotti said.

Everton remain in sixth spot with 46 points from 28 games, two points behind West Ham United who could go level on points with Chelsea, and have a game in hand, on Sunday if they win at second-placed Manchester United.

Zidane Confident Hazard Will Be Success at Madrid

MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane says he believes Eden Hazard is "going to do very well" at the club as the Belgium star prepares for his latest comeback from injury.

Hazard has missed Madrid's past seven games with a thigh problem but could return, a timely boost ahead of next week's Champions League clash with Atalanta.

"We're happy we're getting back Sergio and Eden for tomorrow. Our idea is they get some minutes, and then we'll see," Zidane told a news conference Friday.

Signed for 100 million euros from Chelsea in July 2019, Hazard has been restricted to just nine starts this season. He has suffered a series of injuries and also missed a game after testing positive for Covid-19.

"He looks well physically and emotionally. He's overcome all these injuries, these aches and now he looks good, that's why he's with us and I hope he can play," said Zidane.

"He had a lengthy injury, that he hadn't had before, but he has a long contract and I think he's a player who, when he gets fit, is going to be great, I'm certain of it."

"It's difficult when a player has an injury and isn't 100%, but I'm sure he's going to do very well here," added Zidane.

Germany to Face Latvia In Tune-Up for Euros

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany will host Latvia on June 7 in a friendly ahead of the European Championship, the German FA announced.

Joachim Loew's team will face Latvia in Duesseldorf eight days before Germany play world champions France in their opening group game in Munich. The friendly will be part of Germany's pre-tournament training camp and another warm-up game is also expected to be announced.

On Tuesday Loew confirmed he will step down as head coach after the finals, which run from June 11-July 11. Germany have also been drawn alongside holders Portugal and Hungary in Group F.

Germany are currently ranked 13th in the world after being routed 6-0 by Spain last November in the Nations League, while Latvia are down in 136th place.



"Disappointing. I asked the team to be brave and show courage against the team who will be champions -- and we were," Fulham boss Scott Parker said. "There's no denying the mistakes we gave away for the goals were sloppy."

"We will dust ourselves down and move on."

Bottom club Sheffield United parted ways with manager Chris Wilder on Saturday and while they look doomed to the drop, West Bromwich Albion are also running out of time. Their 1-0 defeat by Crystal Palace left them eight points behind Fulham and 17th-placed Brighton and Hove Albion. "There's 27 points available and 20 needed," West Brom manager Sam Allardyce, who has never been in charge of a relegated team in the top flight, said.

Palace captain Luka Milivojevic decided the game with a VAR-awarded penalty while the other talking point was Palace's Wilfried Zaha opting not to take a knee before kickoff -- the first Premier League player not to make the anti-racism gesture this season.

"There is no right or wrong decision, but for me personally I feel kneeling has just become a part of the pre-match routine and at the moment it doesn't matter whether we kneel or stand, some of us still continue to receive abuse," he said.

"I now just want to focus on football and enjoy being back playing on the pitch. I will continue to stand tall."



Shiffrin Top in Are Slalom First Leg

ARE (AFP) - Mikaela Shiffrin topped the times after the first leg of the slalom in Are on Saturday marked by a major mistake from overall women's World Cup leader Petra Vlhova.

Shiffrin, third to Vlhova in Friday's slalom at the Swedish ski resort, has won 45 World Cup slalom events - already an all-time record among men and women.

She needs one more win to equal the record of most World Cup wins in a single discipline: 46 by Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark in the giant slalom.

The skier from Colorado led the first leg rankings by 0.19sec from Austria's newly-crowned world champion Katharina Liensberger with Germany's Lena Duerr at 0.68sec back in third.

Vlhova scraped through to the second run in 27th of the 30 qualifiers after recovering well from an early error.

The Slovak, almost three seconds behind Shiffrin, will be looking to pick up some precious points in the second run.

She took control of the overall standings from Lara Gut-Behrami by 64 points on the strength of Friday's win, her 20th on the World Cup circuit.

Gut-Behrami has opted out of the two slaloms in Sweden.

Lewandowski Equals Goal Milestone

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich romped to a 3-1 win at Werder Bremen on Saturday as Robert Lewandowski claimed another goal-scoring milestone in the Bundesliga and hit the woodwork three times in a dynamic display.

Bayern dominated their final fixture before hosting Lazio in the Champions League last 16, second leg, on Wednesday holding a 4-1 lead.

Goals by Leon Goretzka and Serge Gnabry put Bayern 2-0 up in Bremen before Lewandowski claimed his 32nd league goal this season.

"He fights for his goals for the team in every game," Bayern midfielder Thomas Mueller said of Lewandowski to Sky.

"We were fresher and more active. We had control of the game. We should have scored more," added Mueller, who set up the first two goals.

Despite hitting the post and clipping the crossbar, Lewandowski finally scored with an hour gone to equal former Schalke striker Klaus Fischer's tally of 268 Bundesliga goals.

Only Bayern legend Gerd Mueller has scored more in Germany's top-flight with 365 in 427 league games.

A superb save from Bremen goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka also prevented Lewandowski scoring with a powerful header late on.

The victory extends Bayern's lead at the top of the table to five points.

Second-placed RB Leipzig need to beat Eintracht Frankfurt at home on Sunday to keep pace with the Bavarians.

Mueller was outstanding in Bremen as his deft flick allowed Goretzka to head home the opening goal from a corner on 22.

With a superb piece of skill, Mueller then deftly chested down the ball and rolled a pass into Gnabry's path to score on 35 minutes.

It was 2-0 at the break and Lewandowski hit the post twice in quick succession early in the second-half.



Ronaldo Warns True Champions Never Break After European Flop

MILAN (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo warned that "true champions never break" as he turned his focus to Juventus's Serie A match at Cagliari on Sunday after their early Champions League elimination.

"True champions never break! Our focus is already in Cagliari, in the Serie A struggle, in the Italian Cup final and in everything that we can still achieve this season," Ronaldo said on Instagram, the first time he has spoken since Juventus crashed out of the last 16 to Porto.

"More important than the number of falls you take in life, is how fast and how strong you get back on your feet." Ronaldo's future at Juventus is in the spotlight after a third Champions League failure since he was signed for 100 million euros (\$117 million) in the summer of 2018 from Real Madrid.

"It's true that the past belongs in museums (I should say!), but fortunately, football has memory... and so do I," the 36-year-old continued.

Ronaldo is the record scorer in the competition with 134 goals, and has lifted the trophy five times with Manchester United and Real Madrid. But the Portuguese forward failed to score in either leg of a knockout round for the first time in 16 years.

He added: "History can't be deleted, it's written every single day with resilience, team spirit, persistence and lots of hard work. And those who don't understand this, will never achieve glory and success." Juventus are third in Serie A -- 10 points behind leaders Inter Milan -- but with a game in hand as they target a 10th consecutive league title.

They are also through to the Italian Cup final.

"Ronaldo is fine, it's normal that he is disappointed the other night like the whole team," said coach Andrea Pirlo before Sunday's game in Sardinia.

"Ronaldo trained well, he recovered to play tomorrow."

"It is normal for there to be rumours after the elimination because he is the most important figure in the world of football together with (Lionel) Messi and always makes people talk about him, but let's remember that he has always done well, scoring over 90 goals in 100 games."

"It may happen that he doesn't score in a match and it happens to the others too, but with him it makes more noise."

