

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Monday
Announced the Rise in the Number
Of Deaths Because of COVID-19
During the Past 24 Hours as
100 More Iranians Lost Their Lives**

IRAN NEWS

**Iranian Deputy Minister of Sports
And Youth Affairs Said That AFC
Should Accept Iran's Football
Teams Just Play in Saudi Arabia
Only When Its Representatives
Also Come to Iran**

VOL. XXVI, No. 7189 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY MARCH 16, 2021 - ESFAND 26, 1399

2

DOMESTIC

**Providing COVID-19
Vaccine in Sanctions,
An Honor for Iran**



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

**EAEU Accounts for
3% of Iran's Goods
Trade in 11 Months**



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

**Merkel Party in
Crisis After Defeat
In Regional Polls**



> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

**Ronaldo Notches
First-Half Hat Trick
For Juventus Win**



> SEE PAGE 8

Tehran Denies Involvement In Iraq Attacks

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran has denied any involvement in the recent attacks against the US-occupied military bases in Iraq, but at the same time denounced the American airstrikes against Iraqi forces as a violation of international law.

In a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the rotating president of the UN Security Council, Iran's ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi categorically denied his American counterpart's efforts to accuse Iran of supporting the so-called "non-governmental militia groups" in Iraq.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has not been directly or indirectly involved in any armed attack against any U.S. individual or body in Iraq," he noted. "Therefore, we deny any claim about our implicit or explicit involvement in attacks against American forces in Iraq. Such allegations are totally baseless, invalid, and false," the Iranian envoy added.

Earlier this month, a US contractor died after at least 10 rockets slammed into Ain al-Asad, a U.S.-occupied air base in western Iraq. The West has blamed what it calls "Iran-backed groups" for the deadly attack. The attack was the first of its kind since the U.S.' raid against Iraqi forces in late February.

See Page 7

West Hoarding COVID Vaccine Three Times More Than Its Need

TEHRAN (MNA) – Lashing out at Western countries' justice in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccine, Iranian Foreign Minister said that western countries have hoarded the coronavirus, COVID-19, vaccine three times more than their needs.

"I wish we knew that the vaccine could not be hoarded. Why has the West hoarded the vaccine three times more than its needs?"

Speaking on the closing ceremony of the "Narration of Coronavirus Event", held at the venue of Tehran's Milad Tower on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that everyone is identical in the face of this common human pain. If one country is insecure, the whole world becomes insecure.

"We cannot buy security for ourselves at the cost of making others insecure. We cannot build a future for ourselves by putting pressure on others. I wish coronavirus would at least teach us this lesson to understand that in an interconnected world, we are all sitting in the same boat," Zarif added.

See Page 7

IRGC Unveils New Site, Hosting Ballistic, Cruise Missiles



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN- The naval force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has unveiled a new strategic missile site at an undisclosed location, which hosts various types of advanced ballistic and cruise missiles.

The site was unveiled on Monday during a ceremony attended by the IRGC's Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami, Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, the commander of the IRGC's Navy, and a number of other high-ranking military officials and commanders.

During the ceremony, the IRGC's Navy displayed different types of modern cruise and ballistic missiles systems with various ranges.

The IRGC forces also took delivery of new missile equipment and systems enjoying new operational capabilities, including precision firing from passive defense sites, launching mines at different ranges, 360-degree firing power, mobile launching, and the ability to counter electronic warfare. The new equipment will greatly increase the range and destructive power of the IRGC's combat units.

All the delivered equipment have been designed and manufactured by competent Iranian specialists working with the Defense Ministry and knowledge-based companies as well as research and self-sufficiency units of the IRGC.

During the ceremony, the IRGC's Navy also unveiled missile systems capable of changing target once the missile is fired. Meanwhile the IRGC chief commander said that amid sanctions Iran has achieved great technological advances in the field of defense, saying achievements in the field of electronic warfare are within components of the IRGC's power.

Speaking at the ceremony of joining missile equipment to the IRGC Navy Force, Major General Salami called decline and destruction as the inevitable fate of the global arrogance and the enemies.

He described the heat of jihad and resistance as the most important factor in melting the icebergs of arrogant power, saying: "Great successes are achieved in the light of resistance, jihad, empowerment and getting out of passivism, and construction, expanding and using power in Islamic Iran. It is an interconnectedness that originates from the wills of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces."

"Mechanical, technical and modern movements also rely on electronic life, and sometimes electronic warfare is a complete level of confrontation, and superiority in this war can disable important part of the enemy's ability and power," the Iranian top general noted.

He added: "Communications, information and other areas are also dependent on electronics, and efforts made in this area means creating a new advantage for us; Praise be to God ... Today, Islamic Iran has a lot to say in this area."

Referring to the fact that Iran's IRGC has made great technological advances in the field of defense amid sanctions Major General Salami said: "It is important that our defense capabilities are expanding based on domestic capabilities, and today new developments in the field of electronic warfare are one of the components of our power."

In the end, the IRGC Chief Commander emphasized that Iran's defense force is fully equipped saying: "We defend our interests, dignity and honor with authority and we are confident that we will emerge victorious in this holy defense."

General Salami named the Islamic Revolution of Iran as a source of awareness for the world in the age of modern ignorance and stated: "Despite the alliance of all the oppressors, demons, and arrogant people of the world in the last four decades to defeat the inspirational revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, they have achieved nothing but despair, failure, defeat, and exhaustion."

Yemeni Army Targets Saudi Airport, Airbase

SANAA (Dispatches) - The Yemeni army has launched armed drones to attack Saudi Arabia's Abha Airport as well as King Khalid Airbase in the southern town of Khamis Mushait in retaliation for Riyadh's continuation of a six-year-long war on Yemen, said a spokesman.

In a tweet on Monday morning, Yemeni army spokesman Yahya Sare'e wrote that the country's air force managed to carry out "accurate" attacks with Qasef-2K (Striker-2K) combat drones against the two positions.

"It is part of our natural and legitimate right to respond to the crimes of the [war coalition] and its continuing blockade," Sare'e added.

Saudi Arabia and its regional allies, chiefly the United Arab Emirates (UAE), launched a war against Yemen in March 2015 to restore the government of former President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, who resigned in 2014 and then flee to Riyadh.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the war has killed almost a quarter of a million Yemenis, caused outbreaks of disease, turned Yemen into the world's worst humanitarian crisis and brought the poor Arab country to the verge of famine.

See Page 7

Zarif Warns Clock Ticking for U.S. to Return to JCPOA

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has warned the United States that it might run out of time for returning to the 2015 nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the Islamic Republic's presidential election approaches.

"The Europeans are used to compromise. Iran and the United States are not. The Americans are used to imposing, and we are used to resisting," Zarif said at an online conference with the European Policy Center think-tank in Brussels on Monday.

"So now is the time to decide. Will we both compromise and go back to the JCPOA, or will we go back to our own paths?"

Zarif emphasized that Washington should act quickly to revive the nuclear accord, because with Iran's presidential election in sight, it is very unlikely that much will happen until later this year.

"There is a time constraint and that is once we go to our election, it is a lame duck government and (it) will not be able to do anything serious, and then we will have a waiting period of almost six months. We will not have a government before September," he said, in reference to the July 18 vote.

See Page 7

Iranian COVID-19 Vaccine Begins Clinical Trial

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (MNA) – Phases two and three of clinical trials of the first Iranian corona vaccine, produced and manufactured by the domestic researchers at Execution of Imam Khomeini Order (EIKO), entitled COVO Iran Barakat" kicked off yesterday.

The Director of Clinical Trial Center of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) Dr. Hamed Hosseini broke the news on Monday and said that the next phase of the human test of the Iranian COVID-19 vaccine will start today and the third phase will be implemented in tandem with this phase.

Licensed by Iran Food and Drug Administration (FDI) and the National Ethics Committee, the feasibility study of the 2nd and 3rd phases of the human test of Iranian vaccine dubbed "COVO Iran Barakat" will be carried out together, he added. Meanwhile yesterday the Chairman of the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO) stressed that Iran had commenced its first phase of COVID-19 vaccine mass production with a capacity of 3 million doses per month on March 14, 2021.

See Page 7

Tehran Urges IAEA To Stay Impartial

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Monday urged UN nuclear watchdog to observe impartiality in commenting on technical issues about Iranian nuclear program to ensure cooperation with Iran, adding that Tehran has provided the IAEA with required access under the Safeguards Agreement.

"Monitoring Iran's nuclear activities is technical issue. Iran has provided required access under the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. We gave other accesses in the framework of Additional Protocol which was halted with a parliamentary legislation. We made also a three-month agreement opening a diplomatic window," Khatibzadeh said.

Asked about the next meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA, the Khatibzadeh said that the timing is not scheduled yet. Referring to the tripartite meeting in Doha on Syria, Khatibzadeh said that it was an initiative to help the Astana Process, as Russian foreign minister said Iran would support any initiative that helps the Syrian people.

See Page 7



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

TEDPIX Rises 9,000 Points on Monday

TEHRAN (MNA) - TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 9,066 points to 1,254 million on Monday.

Over 7.886 billion securities worth 64.578 trillion rials (about \$1.537 billion) were traded at the TSE on Monday. The first market's index gained 4,918 points, and the second market's index rose 24,268 points.

After several weeks of decline, growth finally returned to the TSE, Iran's major stock exchange, as TEDPIX rose 2.4 percent during the past Iranian calendar week.

The index closed at 1.206 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

Providing COVID-19 Vaccine in Sanctions, An Honor for Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani praised the measures taken to provide the COVID-19 vaccine in the country from Russia, China, and India besides producing the Iranian-made coronavirus vaccine.

After receiving the report on the measures taken to prepare safe vaccines from Russia, China, and India, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani praised the efforts made for providing the vaccine.

Rouhani said on Monday: "The measures taken to prepare and supply the coronavirus vaccine during the sanctions are an honor for the country."

Rouhani also noted that it was an honor for the Iranian nation that they were able to achieve success in the difficult and breathtaking conditions of the enemy's economic war, both in the field of research and production of home-made vaccines and the preparation and supply of foreign vaccines.

Meanwhile on Sunday President Rouhani said that the economic macro figures and indicators are a sign of victory in the enemies' economic war on the country.

He said that economic indicators on the macro-scale showed the positive direction



of Iran's economy, neutralization of sanctions, the definite failure of the enemy's policy of maximum pressure, and sparks of victory in the economic war.

Rouhani who attended the government's economic board's meeting said the success comes at a time when many countries experienced negative growth rates due to the coronavirus pandemic, adding: "This success is what the enemies, in the framework of their sinister goals towards the Iranian nation, seek to downplay and deny".

"No doubt," he stressed, "the next Persian year would be a promising and thriving year for the country with the support of the people and economic activists."

The head of Iran's Central Bank Abdulnaser Hemmati who also attended the meeting presented a report according to which

Iran's GDP in the first nine months of the current Persian year experienced %2.2 oil-dependent and %9 non-oil growth compared to the same period last year.

More Than 15,000 People Registered for Iran Local Elections

TEHRAN (IP)- As of 6 pm on Sunday, 15,049 people have registered to run in the Islamic city council elections, the spokesman of Iran's Election Headquarters announced.

Seyed Esmail Mousavi said that thirty percent of city council nominees used electronic methods, including cell phones (15 percent) and personal computers (15 percent), to register.

He added: 90% of the nominees by the end of the fifth day of registration are men and 10% are women. Mousavi went on to say that 56.1 percent of registrants have a bachelor's degree, 29.7 percent have a master's degree and 2.8 percent have a doctorate.

"8.6% of these people are under 30 years old, 41.7% of them are between 31 and 40 years old, 31% of these people are between 41 and 50 years old, 15% are between 51 and 60 years old, 3.4% are between 61 and 70 years old and 0.3.3% (three-tenths of a percent) are people over 70 years old," he stated.

He emphasized: 15% of the registrants have a history of membership in the council.

Registration of candidates for the elections of Islamic councils of cities has started on March 11 and will continue for another three days. The registration of candidates for membership in Islamic councils of villages will begin on April 6 in the governorates.

New Brazilian Envoy Submits A Copy of Credential to Zarif



TEHRAN (MNA) – The newly-appointed Ambassador of Brazil to the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a copy of his credentials to the Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday.

In the beginning of his mission in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ludmar González Aguilarento new Brazilian envoy to Tehran met and held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged their views on issues of mutual concerns and bilateral ties between Islamic Republic of Iran and Brazil.

Tehran, Islamabad Discuss Afghanistan



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Pakistani prime minister's special envoy on Afghanistan has traveled to Iran, meeting with senior Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, to discuss the latest developments in Afghanistan.

Mohammad Sadiq met with Zarif Monday for his last round of talks in Tehran after arriving in the Iranian capital at the head of a political and security delegation a day earlier.

Sadiq expressed his satisfaction with the discussions held so far, during which he outlined Islamabad's standpoints concerning Afghanistan's developments.

Zarif laid emphasis on the need for the establishment of peace in Afghanistan and the importance of regional cooperation towards preserving the Afghan people's achievements.

On Sunday, the Pakistani official met with Abbas Araqchi, an Iranian deputy foreign minister.

Sadiq underlined the effect that developments in Afghanistan have on Iran and Pakistan, urging expansion of bilateral cooperation towards the establishment of sustainable peace in the violence-wracked country.

Araqchi welcomed the Pakistani envoy's demand for better cooperation. Iran, he said, supports the establishment of peace in Afghanistan with the aim of protecting the fundamental rights of the Afghan people and safeguarding the achievements of the past two decades in their country.

The officials, meanwhile, expressed concern over the presence of Daesh in Afghanistan and agreed to maintain consultations on matters related to the security of the entire region.

The terror group has been trying to establish a foothold in Afghanistan, especially in its eastern province of Nangarhar, amid the chaos that has plagued the Central Asian nation since the United States' 2001 invasion.

The invasion toppled the Taliban, but the militants regrouped soon and currently have a presence in much of the country.

Minister Says Iran Is Safe

TEHRAN (IP)- Iran has no problems in the public, election security, and all provinces are seriously pursuing national security, Iran's Interior Minister said.

In a meeting of governors with the Minister of Interior on Sunday, Abdoreza Rahmani Fazli stated that four important issues were discussed in the meeting: 1- Security 2- Foods and prices during Nowruz 3- the government's decision to import goods and 4- the election.

He pointed out that the Ministry of Interior, in charge of economic coordination, has been reviewing prices for the past four months, saying governors were required to oversee market regulation in coordination with the Ministry of Jihad and the Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Trade.

Regarding the facilitation of the possibility of importing goods, the Minister of Interior noted that the government has decided to compensate for the shortages.

Rahmani Fazli stressed that elections were critical for the country, and all cooperation has been done to register for the country's upcoming city council elections.

He asked the educated and qualified citizens to register for the council elections, explaining registration for the expert, presidential and parliamentary elections would also begin.

Rahmani Fazli called on people to take part in the elections seriously and all organizations to work and pave the situation for a glorious competition in the elections.

Regarding the coronavirus and travel during the new year holidays, the Minister of Interior highlighted that travel to all cities except red and orange cities was free by observing the protocols strictly.

He pointed out that the disease has decreased since the establishment of the National Task Force for Combating Coronavirus and stressed that officials in the provinces' administration, transportation, public services, and medical services should work to create a healthy atmosphere in the country in the new year.

Using Science, Knowledge, a Need to Identify Enemies' Threats

TEHRAN (MNA) – Deputy Coordinator of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army said that taking advantage of science and knowledge is essential in identifying enemies' threats.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of Exhibition of Achievements of Scientific Jihad Headquarters of AJA University of Command and Staff (DAFOOS) on Sunday, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari reiterated that if science and knowledge are put atop agenda, "we will definitely recognize threat well and we can also have multiple scenarios and be ready to confront any threat."

Appreciating those who work in the development of science and research is a very good measure, he said, adding, "According to the Leader of the Islamic and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, science and knowledge is an asset for the country and this asset should be taken into serious consideration."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rear Admiral Sayyari pointed

to the Global Arrogance and said that the Global Arrogance knows that if it invades the Islamic Republic of Iran, it will regret them as it did during the eight years of the Sacred Defense (Iraqi imposed war against Iran in 1980-1988). He reiterated that if science and knowledge are put atop the agenda, "we will certainly identify threats well and also we can define various scenarios to deal with any threat."

"Weekend" Wins at 26th Hong Kong Film Awards

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian short film 'Weekend' has won the Best Short Film award at the 26th Hong Kong Film Awards. Directed by Ariyo Motevaghheh, 'Weekend' narrates the story of two families that have gone on an outing to the park, but it turns out that they are there for something else.

The film previously was screened at the competition section of the 51st Nashville International Film Festival in Tennessee, the 17th Sedecicort Festival in the section for Iranian films as well as the Tryon International Film Festival in the US. 'Weekend' has won the Graveyard Shift Award from the Nashville Film Festival and the Best Fiction Short Film Award from the artistic events of Sedecicort and Tryon.

Swiss Ready for Pharmaceutical Cooperation With Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Swiss Ambassador to Tehran said his country was ready to expand medical cooperation with Iran on the drugs area.

In a press conference and in response to Iran Press question on pharmaceutical collaborations between Switzerland and Iran, Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner said that his country's pharmaceutical company did not leave Iran and was interested in having more cooperation with the country.

Meanwhile, in an exclusive interview with Iran Press regarding sanctions against Iran, the Danish Ambassador to Tehran Jasper Vahr stressed that the Denmark government reject the maximum pressure strategy on Iran.



Electronic Warfare Equipment Joins IRGC Navy Force

TEHRAN (IP)- The ceremony of joining electronic warfare equipment to the IRGC Navy Force was held in the presence of the IRGC chief-commander.

The ceremony of joining electronic warfare equipment to the IRGC Navy Force was held on Monday morning in the presence of IRGC Chief-Commander Major General Hossein Salami, Commander of the IRGC Navy Force Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, and a group of high-ranking commanders and officials of the Armed Forces.

In the sixths ceremony of joining combat equipment to the IRGC Navy Force, indigenous electronic warfare systems including radar, navigation, monitoring, and disruption systems, and simulators that provide new and crucial capabilities to IRGC naval combat units, were joined the IRGC Navy Force.

These pieces of equipment were designed and built by capable Iranian specialists in the Defense Ministry, knowledge-based companies, and IRGC's research departments, and IRGC Naval Self-Sufficiency Jihad.

Monthly Red Meat Production Rises 43% yr/yr

TEHRAN (MNA) - Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced that production of red meat in Iran stood at 42,000 tons in the eleventh month of the current Iranian calendar year (January 20 – February 18), showing 43 percent growth compared to the same month in the past year.

The SCI's report said that beef and veal had the lion's share in the country's red meat output during the eleventh month with 24,100 tons, followed by lamb and mutton with 14,500 tons, goat meat with 2,500 tons, and red meat from other livestock with 918 tons.

The head of Iran's Livestock Provision Council has called on the government to purchase the red meat at guaranteed prices to support the producers.

Mansour Pourian has also recommended the exports of livestock to support the producers while bringing foreign revenue for the country.

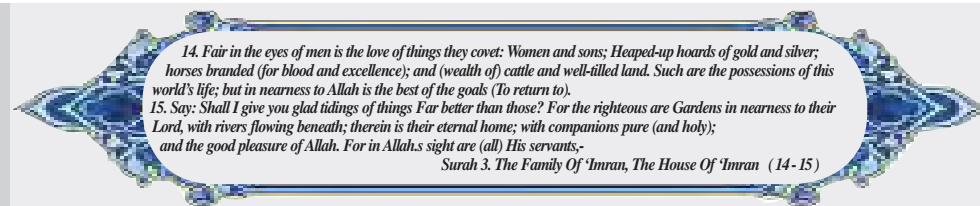
Saying that the purchase of red meat at guaranteed prices started in the country in the middle of the fourth Iranian calendar month of Tir (early July, 2020), Pourian announced that 4,000 tons of red meat have been purchased in this way by the State Livestock Affairs Logistics Company since then.

The purchase of red meat at guaranteed prices is already done in 15 provinces, including Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, Gilan, Alborz, Yazd, Isfahan, Fars, Sistan-Baluchestan, Khuzestan, East Azarbaijan, and Semnan, he said, adding that it will be then conducted in the other provinces as well.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:12
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:30
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:48
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:11



EAEU Accounts for 3% of Iran's Goods Trade in 11 Months

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The latest report released by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (TCCIMA), Iran's trade with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) states has been valued at \$1.9b in 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year which accounts for 3 percent of Iran's total trade value and it is 9.4 percent lower than the same period last year.

The TCCIMA report claims that 2.4m tons of goods, excluding the crude oil, worth of \$933m have been exported to the EAEU member states in 11 months this year which indicates 17 percent and 4 percent decline comparing to the same period in terms of weight and value.

As per report, Iran's imports from those countries in the mentioned period have been around 2.9m tons and valued at \$1b (3 percent of the total value of the imported goods) and the figure shows one percent rise in terms of weight and 14 percent decline in terms of value.

By the way Iran's exports to Armenia and Russia have been more than other EAEU members in this period comparing to the preceding year and it has experienced 15 and 21 percent rise, respectively.



Iran's exports in terms of weight have increased to Belarus and Russia 21 and 15 percent while the country's exports to other destinations like Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have declined in terms of weight. By the way, except Russia and Belarus, Iran's exports to other EAEU member states have slumped in terms of value.

Russia has been the top exporter to Iran with exporting goods worth \$956m and the figure also shows 11 percent drop comparing to the same period last year and it shows 7 percent decline.

The TCCIMA report also claims that Iran's trade balance with EAEU states in 11 months this year has been minus \$84m and the figure shows \$122m improvement.

EAEU's trade volume with the world is around \$850b annually and their exports are valued at \$518b and in exchange their imports are around \$231b while Iran's share of this market is \$2.5b and its exports to those countries are around \$1.6b.

Agro products especially grain are the major imports of Iran from EAEU states while agro products especially fruits and dried fruits are its exports to those states.

Iran and EAEU signed an agreement in November 2020 while Iran's free trade with those states is to start after 2022.

Call for Rise in Share of Free Zones In Cooperation With China

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In the meeting between Secretary of Iran Supreme Council of Free Trade, Industrial and Special Economic Zones Mr. Hamid Reza Momeni and Coordinator of Iran-China 25-year Cooperation Mr. Ali Larijani, both sides emphasized the necessity of increasing the share of industrial-trade free zones in the 25-year Iran-China Cooperation document especially in the field of energy.

According to reports, on Saturday Mr. Momeni met with Larijani and during the meeting both sides reviewed ways of increasing the amount of cooperation Iran's free zones in the 25-year Iran-China Cooperation Document.

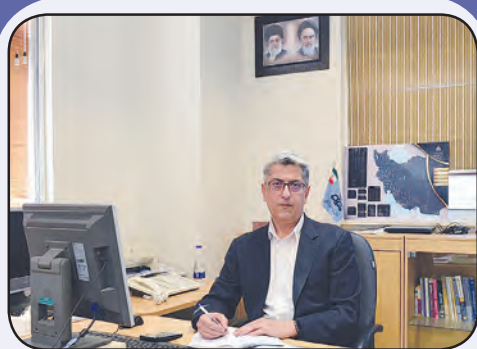
In the meeting, Momeni said that free zones in recent years and during President Hassan Rouhani's presidency has experienced rise in investment in the field of energy and they have taken effective actions in this regard. He added that the number of MoUs signed between the free zones in the field of energy in the past seven years with the companies active in energy sector indicates that these zones especially in the field of petrochemical field can have higher share and place in the Iran-China 25-year Cooperation Document.

Meanwhile, Larijani who is in charge of coordinating relation with China suggested some short, mid and long term plans for more relation with China with taking into consideration the national interests centered on the capacities of free and especial zones.

He called China the second economy in the world, adding that cooperation with China in the fields of mining and exploration provided that it is accompanied by imports of mining and exploration technology can boost Iran's capability in this field.



New Petchem Projects To Go Operational



TEHRAN (MNA) - Five new major petrochemical projects are scheduled to go operational across the country during the first quarter of the next Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), the project manager of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) announced.

According to Amir Vakilezadeh, the mentioned projects will be inaugurated as part of the second leap of the country's petrochemical industry.

The official noted that the said projects were planned to be inaugurated in the current year, however, their execution faced some problems due to the restrictions created by the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 17 petrochemical projects worth about \$12 billion were planned to be inaugurated across the country in the current year to realize the second leap of the industry, of which 12 have been put into operation, Vakilezadeh said.

The new projects are aimed at increasing Iran's annual petrochemical production by 35 percent in the present year, according to NPC Managing Director Behzad Mohammadi.

The petrochemical industry plays a crucial role in Iran's non-oil economy, as the petrochemical export is the second-largest source of revenue for the country after crude oil. Petrochemical exports already constitute nearly 33 percent of the country's non-oil exports.

Iran has been highly developing this sector over the recent years as the development of the giant South Pars gas field (Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) has been supplying more feedstock to the petrochemical units.

Also, the U.S. sanctioning Iran's oil exports has encouraged more development of the petrochemical industry to boost exports from this sector.

Iran Trade With SCO Exceeds \$23b

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran's Customs Administration spokesman Rouhollah Latifi said on Monday that foreign trade with Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the past 11 months exceeded \$23.1 billion.

He said that during the last 11 months, Iran traded roughly 41,748,000 tons of goods worth near \$23.166 billion with member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in both imports and exports.

The majority of the figure, roughly \$15.518 billion, represented Iran's trade with China, a founding member of the SCO, while the smallest number, \$2.86 million,

appertained to Mongolia, according to Latifi.

Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Belarus are other members of the SCO.

The official also said that during this period, Iran's exports amounted to \$11.173 billion and its imports worth roughly \$11.2 billion. Iran became an observing member of the organization in 2005 and applied for a full membership in 2008. The organization is yet to approve Iran's request.

Latifi said that the issue has been raised in several meetings of the SCO.

Razavi Khorasan Province Exports \$37.2m Handicrafts

MASHHAD (IRNA)- Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Director in Razavi Khorasan Province, northeastern Iran, said on Monday that the province has exported \$37.2 million handicrafts in the current Iranian year (March 2020-March 2021).

Abolfazl Mokarrami said that 13.9 million dollars of handicraft products in Razavi Khorasan Province have been exported through official cross-border customs offices and 24 million dollars handicrafts were exported in the form of carry-on luggage. He explained that exported products included woven goods, handmade leather, wooden, wicker, stones, paper crafts, textile fabrics, precious stones, silver jewelry and needlework.

The products have been exported to 50 countries around the globe, including Germany, Austria, Britain, Sweden, Australia, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Qatar, Pakistan and Persian Gulf and Central Asian states.

Water Supply to 110 Villages in Isfahan Province

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater (ABFA) Company Mr. Hashem Amini says with integration of urban and rural water and wastewater companies, the gap for serving villages comparing to the cities will be narrowed and this service has been accelerated so that 23 types of services are offered in the villages of the province by the company.

The water supply to 110 villages of Isfahan Province with population over 93,077 people came on stream through a videoconference in presence of energy minister, the CEO of Water and Wastewater Company of Iran, deputy governor of Isfahan and in the 44th week of A-B-Iran program.

The acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity (in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar



year (ended on March 19, 2020).

Mr Amini during the ceremony of water supply to some villages of the province said that under this program in nine villages of Kohangan, Valadkhani, Rahiz and Shibani in Samirom, Loteri in Kouhpayeh, Hook, Mohammad Shahreza and Makdin Alia in Fereydoonshahr, and Khorram Abad village in Ardestan the water network were constructed, and population over 1,967 people in those villages will enjoy healthy and drinking water.

He also pointed to the mobile water supply in the villages of the province, reiterating that with integration of urban and rural water and wastewater companies, the gap will be narrowed for serving the villages.

Amini stipulated that 100-300 projects have started to eliminate the mobile water supply and they will end by the yearend and they will be inaugurated in the spring.

Necessities of Industrial Development of Neishabour Examined

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mr. Mohsen Salehinia and the CEO of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Mr. Ali Rasoulzadeh during their visit to Khorasan Razavi Province examined industrial problems and woes of the towns of Neishabour, Firouzeh and Zebard Khan.

Salehinia and Rasoulzadeh accompanied by representatives of constituencies of Neishabour, Firouzeh and Zebard Khan to Majlis Mr. Ehsan Ardakani and Mr. Hajer Chenarani reviewed problems and issues as well as capabilities and industrial development capacities in those towns and paid visits to the factories and industrial parks of this region.

During the meeting, some joint meetings were held on accelerating the process for investment and required support from these developmental organizations, and enhancing convergence between national and regional organs for boosting production and industry in the province.

Visiting Nafis Part, Poolad Plastic and Khorasan Exhaust Manufacturing companies as well as Khayam, Kamal and Attar industrial parks were on the agenda during the visit.

During his visit to the different production line of Khorasan Exhaust Manufacturing Company and affiliate companies to Iran Khodro, Mr. Salehinia emphasized reinforcing the chain of domestic production and deepening the domestic production. Khorasan Exhaust Manufacturing Company is the manufacture of different types of exhaust which has the rise in production on the agenda.



All Flights From Iraq Suspended Due to UK Variant

TEHRAN (MNA) – Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAO) in a statement announced that all flights of Iranian and Iraqi airlines from Iraq were suspended for a period of one week effective as of Mar. 14 due to the UK COVID-19 variant.

Due to the outbreak of a new type of UK coronavirus and in order to observe necessary precautions and protect health of citizens, effective measures have been taken in this regard, the statement added.

Also, all domestic airlines are obliged to inform passengers of the case timely, CAO announced.

PG Water Transfer Project to Guarantee Sustainable Water for Isfahan Industries

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Senior manager in charge of Technical Services and Logistics Department of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) says the project of transferring water from the Persian Gulf will guarantee sustainable water for industries in Isfahan Province.

Javad Nili said all industries of Isfahan Province exploit less than 5 percent of water of Zayandehrud River and Mobarakeh Steel Company's share is less than one percent of it and the project of water transfer from the Persian Gulf will guarantee the sustainable water for industries in Isfahan.

He added that one of the essential processes of steel production is sustainable water while

in recent years the province has seen ups and downs in rainfall and for this reason MSC decided to cooperate in this mega project of water transfer from Persian Gulf to Isfahan in order to receive sustainable water from the sea.

Nili noted that the operation for transfer of water from the Persian Gulf is carried out merely for industrial and mining purposes, and share of MSC in the project is more than other shareholders.

He went on to say that currently major shareholders of providing water for Isfahan Province are MSC, Esfahan Refinery, Esfahan Steel Company, Isfahan Municipality, Isfahan Chamber of Commerce and Hamyari Organization of Isfahan Province Municipalities.



Asma al-Assad Faces Police Investigation in UK

LONDON (Dispatches) - Police in the United Kingdom have opened an investigation into allegations that Asma al-Assad, wife of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, incited and encouraged “terrorist” acts in Syria.

Al-Assad, a dual British-Syrian national, could be stripped of her UK citizenship if convicted of the crime, according to media reports. The Metropolitan Police told UK media outlet Sky News on Sunday it “received a referral” in July last year “relating to the ongoing Syrian conflict”.

“The referral is in the process of being assessed by officers from the War Crimes Unit,” the statement said.



Fear, Worries Over Sri Lanka’s Burqa Ban

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka’s move to ban the burqa on “national security” grounds while calling its use “religious extremism” has been termed a “racist agenda” used to cause divisions in the country.

On Saturday, Sri Lanka’s Minister for Public Security Sarath Weerasekera said he had signed a paper for cabinet approval to ban the burqa, adding that the government also plans to ban more than 1,000 Islamic schools that were defying national education policy.

Sri Lankans expressed disapproval of the proposal, with many viewing the act as an attempt to appease Sri Lanka’s Buddhist majority and cause divisions.



Merkel Party in Crisis After Defeat in Regional Polls



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative party was in crisis mode Monday after suffering heavy losses in two regional polls, seen as a rebuke of its pandemic management six months before a general election.

Merkel’s center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) scored its worst-ever results in elections in the southwestern states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, according to estimates from public broadcasters. Sunday’s rout raised questions about the conservatives’ chances in the September 26 general election, when Germans will choose a successor to outgoing leader Merkel.

“It can’t go on like this,” said Der Spiegel weekly, saying Merkel’s house was “on fire”.

The rout was blamed on growing public anger over a sluggish vaccine rollout, a delayed start to mass rapid testing and higher infection numbers despite months of shutdowns.

In the days leading up to the regional votes, Merkel’s CDU and its CSU Bavarian sister party were also rocked by revelations of lawmakers apparently profiting from deals to procure face masks in the early days of the pandemic.

Three conservative MPs have since resigned, and the CDU/CSU alliance has forced all its lawmakers to declare any financial gain from the coronavirus crisis, vowing “zero tolerance”.

CSU secretary general Markus Blume called Sunday’s drubbing a “wake-up call” for the CDU/CSU.

If Germany’s largest bloc wants to stay in power when Merkel bows out after 16 years, it urgently needs to “win back trust”, he said.

“We need clear decisions and a clear course in the fight against the coronavirus,” he added.

The first order of business should be to decide the bloc’s candidate for chancellor, media outlet Spiegel said.

New CDU chief Amin Laschet is the obvious choice but he lacks broad support.

Critics say he has failed to carve out a political profile beyond representing continuity in the post-Merkel era.

Laschet needs to “free himself from Merkel’s shadow” and “say what the party stands for”, Andreas Roedder, a historian at Mainz university and a CDU member, told the Bild daily.

Opinion polls suggest Germans would prefer to see popular Bavarian premier and CSU leader Markus Soeder in the top job, but he has yet to declare a willingness to run.

If Soeder genuinely has chancellor ambitions, “he must strike now”, said Handelsblatt financial daily.

Merkel’s CDU garnered just 24 percent of the vote in the wealthy state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, down from 27 percent five years ago, estimates showed.

The state is an outlier in Germany because it has been run by a premier from the Green party for over a decade, Winfried Kretschmann.

Kretschmann led the left-leaning ecologists to a record result of more than 32 percent.

Dutch Police Break Up Anti-Gov’t Protest on Election Eve

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - Dutch police used water cannon and horses to clear anti-government protesters in The Hague Sunday, the day before three days of voting starts in national elections.

Hundreds of demonstrators rallied in a park in the center of the city against Prime Minister Mark Rutte, with some also criticizing the coronavirus restrictions his government has put in place.

Police arrested several people, Dutch media reported. Riot officers with a dog pinned one man to the ground before detaining him, an AFP photographer saw.

“Today it’s mainly because we have elections next week and we don’t want the same government again,” Elvis Vanheest, 32, who is unemployed, told AFP. “Because they are lying about everything and they are only working for themselves, and not for the people. So that’s mainly why I’m here today.”

Riot police with shields, batons and dogs moved in after some of the protesters refused to leave at the scheduled end of the protest, detaining a number of them.

Police on horseback then charged at the demonstrators, few of whom wore masks.

Police finally fired water cannon but many of the demonstrators sheltered underneath yellow umbrellas from the spray. The yellow umbrellas have been a feature at several anti-lockdown protests.

The Hague police later also confirmed a “warning shot” was fired and said the cause was being investigated.

The Netherlands goes to the polls on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in elections seen as a verdict on Rutte’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Polling has been spaced over three days to ensure social distancing and allow Covid-vulnerable people a chance to vote early. Rutte and his liberal VVD party are on course to win a fourth term at the head of a coalition government, according to opinion polls.



Protests in Jordan After Covid-19 Patients Die

AMMAN (Dispatches) - Protests erupted across many of Jordan’s cities and provincial towns against the government’s coronavirus restrictions, a day after oxygen ran out at a state hospital leading to the deaths of at least six COVID-19 patients, witnesses said on Sunday.

Advertising

Hundreds of people spilled into the streets in defiance of a night curfew in the northern city of Irbid and several other provincial cities including a neighbourhood in the capital and the city of Salt. Protesters also gathered further south in Karak city and the port city of Aqaba.

“Down with the government. We don’t fear coronavirus,” hundreds of youths chanted in Irbid where outrage at the hospital scandal combined with anger over tighter restrictions that include extending a night curfew to stem a major surge of infections driven by a more contagious variant of the virus.

Jordan’s economy has been particularly hard hit by the shutdowns aimed at containing the virus with unemployment surging to a record 24 % and poverty deepening. It witnessed its worst contraction in decades last year.

Demonstrators who blamed the government for worsening economic conditions also called for an end to draconian emergency laws enacted at the start of the pandemic last year used to limit civil and political rights.

Prime Minister Bisher al Khasawneh fired the health minister and said he bore full responsibility for the initial deaths of six coronavirus patients that exposed gross negligence in the state health system when medical staff failed to act after oxygen ran out for two hours.

King Abdullah visited the hospital in Salt, a city west of the Jordanian capital of Amman, in a move officials said was intended to defuse tensions. Anger with the authorities over worsening living standards, corruption has in the past triggered civil unrest in Jordan.

The authorities detained the hospital head and their aides Saturday evening with officials saying another three deaths could be linked to the rupture in oxygen supplies.

Suu Kyi to Face Court After Bloody Day in Myanmar

YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar’s ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi is to appear in court on Monday, after one of the country’s bloodiest days since the February 1 coup.

At least 38 protesters were killed on Sunday as security forces cracked down on anti-coup protesters, taking the total death toll to more than 120, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) monitoring group.

Protesters demanding the release of Suu Kyi and the restoration of democracy have taken to the streets across Myanmar every day for around six weeks despite the junta’s increasingly forceful attempts to quell the dissent.

Sunday -- the joint deadliest day of unrest along with March 3 -- saw violent clashes between security forces and protesters and the torching of several Chinese-owned factories in a textile-producing district of Yangon, as many protesters believe Beijing to be supportive of the coup.

State-run television confirmed on Monday that a police officer was shot dead in the city of Bago during a protest.

The Yangon court hearing for Suu Kyi -- who spent more than 15 years in house arrest under previous military rule -- is expected to start by video link around 10 am (0330 GMT), her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told AFP.

The Nobel laureate faces at least four charges: possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies, violating coronavirus restrictions, breaching telecommunications laws and intent to cause public unrest.

Military authorities have also accused her of accepting illegal payments of \$600,000 in cash as well as a large quantity of gold -- allegations her lawyer says are “groundless”.

“The ruling junta has showed its teeth and taken its mask off... they are showing their true self,” Khin Maung Zaw said of Sunday’s violence.

Khin Maung Zaw has complained he has not been allowed to meet Suu Kyi, who has been in custody since the coup, though he said the 75-year-old appeared in good health at her last court appearance, by video link, on March 1.

The international community is growing ever more alarmed at the bloodshed, but so far the generals have shown no signs of heeding calls for restraint.

The UN’s top rights expert on Myanmar Tom Andrews tweeted that he was “heartbroken/outraged” at Sunday’s events.

“Junta leaders don’t belong in power, they belong behind bars,” he wrote.

“Their supply of cash & weapons must be cut now. I appeal to UN member states to heed my call to act.”



Egypt Says Turkey Must Lay Ground for Normalizing Ties With Actions

CAIRO (Reuters) - Turkey’s actions must show alignment with Egypt’s principles and goals for relations between the two countries to return to normal, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said on Sunday.

Shoukry confirmed contacts between Cairo and Ankara after years of tensions but indicated that dialogue was limited.

Relations have been frosty since Egypt’s army ousted Mohammed Mursi, who was the country’s first democratically elected president and an ally of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, following protests in 2013.

“(There is) no communication outside the normal diplomatic framework. If real actions from Turkey show alignment with Egyptian principles and goals then the groundwork will be laid for relations to return to normal,” Shoukry said.

Top Turkish officials said last week that diplomatic contacts had resumed and that Ankara was seeking further cooperation. Erdogan said contacts were “not at the highest level, but right below the highest level”.

Egyptian intelligence sources said Turkey had proposed a meeting to discuss cooperation.

Any thaw in ties between the two regional powerhouses could have repercussions around the Middle East, where Cairo and Ankara have sought to influence events in various hotspots and stand on opposing sides in a Mediterranean maritime dispute.

Shoukry also told lawmakers there were positive messages from Qatar indicating a desire to further repair relations following a summit in Saudi Arabia’s al-Ula in January.

Egypt and its Gulf allies Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed at the summit to restore diplomatic, trade and travel ties with Doha, which had been severed in 2017 over allegations Qatar supported terrorism, a charge it denies.





Elahieh Apt (\$2300)
260sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Darrous Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Darrous
240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S
S, J, balcony, pkg, & F.F

Niavaran bldg
7storey, 20bdrs, S/pool, S, J
green yard, pkg lots, New

Farmanieh Apts
(\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F
(\$3000) 300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F

Jordan Apt (\$1300)
150sq.m, 2bdrs, & S/p

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

Vanak Office (\$20 per sq.m)
1000sq.m, 5stoery, & 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

Pakistan's Economic Indicators on Positive Trajectory

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) – Pakistan Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shibli Faraz has on Sunday said that Pakistan's economic condition is doing good despite the Coronavirus crisis.

While addressing a press conference alongside Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry, Faraz said that all the economic condition of Pakistan is going much positive. He emphasized the concerned authorities to control the ongoing rise in COVID-19 infections and also urged everyone to take all possible precautionary measures.



Lebanon's Currency Plummets Reaching an All-Time Low

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's socio-economic crisis is deepening after the local currency further depreciated on Saturday to reach a historic low of 12,400 Lebanese pounds to the US dollar, losing 85 percent of its initial pre-crisis and official rate value, which is still at 1,507 Lebanese pounds to the US dollar.

A parallel market for the Lebanese pound emerged last summer for the first time since it was pegged against the U.S. dollar at a rate of 1,507 in 1997.

Deputy head of MENA and Europe at the World Economic Forum Maroun Kairouz said that the underlying cause or the structural cause of the currency collapse is basically a big deficit in the balance of payments, "there are more foreign currency outputs than inputs and the economy is ground to a complete hold."

"However, there are amplifying causes.

The lira has lost its value as a 'store of value'. The Lebanese are in a mass conversion of their reserves from Lebanese Lira to US dollars to maintain their savings. The second amplifying cause is the failure to form a government on one side and the failure to act for a period of over a year and a half since the beginning of the crisis, which is unprecedented in recent history," Kairouz added.

Kairouz added that it is important to note that some politicians have focused on imports while lambasting the Lebanese for their consumption style.

"There are over 130 countries in the world that have higher import to GDP ratios than Lebanon. The real problem is that we export too little, not only goods but services. Cutting down on imports is not a solution. It will just make people hungrier," Kairouz added.

Kairouz added that making predictions is not always accurate and could be a 'fool's game', but a freefall may be witnessed in the absence of serious policy measures.

"We have seen failed attempts to deal with the crisis, banning applications or arresting money exchange are really a mockery of serious policymaking, real reforms need to include a serious agreement with the International Monetary Fund, it is our right as a member. This is the first needed step to restore trust in our economic system, people lost trust in the system, and that is why the currency is collapsing," Kairouz added.

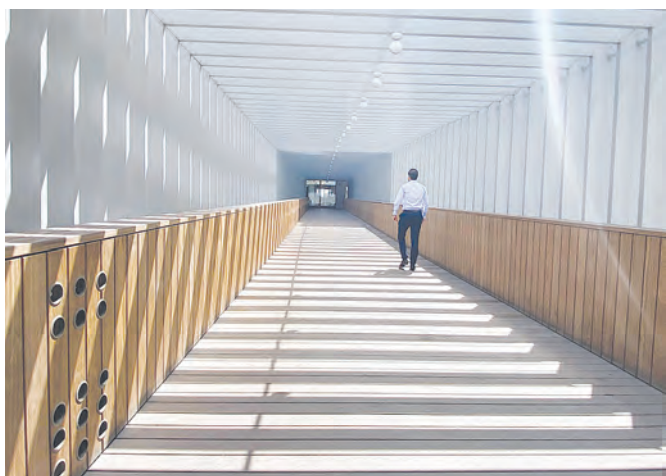
Lebanon has been facing political and economic uncertainty since October of 2019 after the resignation Saad Hariri following a series of nationwide anti-government protests.

Slow Persian Gulf Economic Recovery to Have Long-Lasting Impact on Banks

DUBAI (Reuters) - Economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis in the oil-rich Persian Gulf region will be slow, weighing on the region's banking sector, S&P Global Ratings said.

Persian Gulf countries fell into a sharp recession last year as the COVID-19 pandemic affected vital non-oil economic sectors such as hospitality, commerce, and real estate, while lower oil prices hurt state revenues.

Events like Dubai Expo this year and the World Cup in Qatar next year, as well as a rebounding oil market, will provide some support but growth will remain below historical levels, S&P said.



"Indeed, most countries will not return to 2019 nominal GDP before 2023, with an even longer road for Saudi Arabia," it said in a report on Sunday.

Recovery in sectors such as aviation, tourism, and real estate will take time, and while vaccination programs are progressing, there are downside risks due to mutations in the novel coronavirus.

These factor will weigh on bank's asset quality with non-performing loans expected to increase, as well as on profitability, with some banks expected to post losses in 2021.

"We think that the measures implemented by most central banks in the region are supportive of liquidity but do not remove or reduce credit risk from the balance sheet of banks (yet)," said S&P.

"Cost of risk will remain elevated following a jump of 60% in 2020 as banks set aside provisions in preparation for more stress."

S. Korea's Exports to U.S. Jump 26% Since FTA Kick-Off

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's exports to the United States have jumped a whopping 26 percent since the implementation of their bilateral trade agreement in 2012, data showed Sunday, expanding at a faster pace compared with other global counterparts.

Asia's No. 4 economy's exports to the U.S. reached \$74.1 billion in 2020, compared with \$58.5 billion posted in 2012, according to the data compiled by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. The two countries' free trade agreement (FTA) went into effect in 2012.

Over the period, South Korea's combined outbound shipments edged up 6.4 percent.

Around 84 percent of products traded with the U.S. enjoyed benefits from the FTA, which also marked a sharp rise from 79 percent posted in 2015, the latest available data.



Exports to the United States advanced 1.1 percent on-year in 2020, while South Korea's overall exports dipped 5.5 percent amid the COVID-19 pandemic, led mostly by chips and computer products.

Outbound shipments of chips to the U.S. jumped 25.3 percent on-year in 2020, while that of computers doubled as more people worked from home.

South Korean products accounted for 3.3 percent of the US market last year, advancing 0.2 percentage point from 2019, the ministry data also showed.

In 2020, the combined amount of investment pledges made by US companies here reached \$5.3 billion, falling 22.6 percent on-year amid the economic fallout from the virus pandemic. It marked the first on-year decrease since 2016.

From 2012 to 2020, the amount came to \$42.9 billion, which doubled from \$19.8 billion posted in the earlier nine-year period.

India's Forex Reserves Surpass Russia's to Become World's 4th Biggest

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's foreign-exchange reserves surpassed Russia's to become the world's fourth largest, as the South Asian nation's central bank continues to hoard dollars to cushion the economy against any sudden outflows.

Reserves for both countries have mostly flattened out this year after months of rapid increase. India pulled ahead as Russian holdings declined at a faster rate in recent weeks.

India's foreign currency holdings fell by \$4.3 billion to \$580.3 billion as of March 5, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday, edging out Russia's \$580.1 billion pile. China has the largest reserves, followed by Japan and Switzerland on the International Monetary Fund table.

India's reserves, enough to cover roughly 18 months of imports, have been bolstered by a rare current-account surplus, rising inflows into the local stock market and foreign direct investment.

Analysts say a strong reserves position gives foreign investors and credit rating companies added comfort that the government can meet its debt obligations despite a deteriorating fiscal outlook and the economy heading for its first full-year contraction in more than four decades.

"India's various reserves adequacy metrics have improved significantly, particularly in the last few years," Kaushik Das, chief India economist at Deutsche Bank, said before the latest data were released. "The healthy FX reserves position should give enough comfort to RBI for dealing with any potential external shock-driven capital-stop or outflows in the period ahead."

The RBI bought a net \$88 billion in the spot forex market last year, central bank data show. That helped make the rupee the worst performer among Asia's major currencies last year and earned India a place on a U.S. Treasury watchlist for currency manipulation.

A recent RBI report recommended further strengthening of foreign-exchange reserves, citing swings in the rupee around the time of the global taper tantrum in 2013. Governor Shaktikanta Das has said that emerging market central banks need to build reserves to prevent any external shocks, irrespective of being put on watch by the U.S.

Kazakh Minister Reports Positive Economic Indicators In First Two Months of 2021

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Kazakh Minister of the National Economy Aset Irgaliyev reported on the country's economic development over the past two months noting positive dynamics across the sectors, as the epidemiological situation shows signs of improvement, according to the Kazakh Prime Minister's press service, writes Assel Satubaldina in Business.

The real sector, excluding mining, demonstrated a 6.3 percent growth, while investments in fixed capital grew by 13.3 percent. Inflation remained at 7.4 percent.

"The entire real sector, with the exception of the mining industry, showed steady growth. That is, construction, water supply, manufacturing, electricity and agriculture. The information and communication sector also grew by 9.4 percent," Irgaliyev told the meeting of the cabinet.

Growth was also driven by an increase in engineering (21.2 percent), production of construction materials (22.9 percent), chemical industry (14.1 percent), clothing (19.9 percent), and pharmaceuticals (9.2 percent).

The cities of Almaty and Nur-Sultan, as well as the Almaty Region are leaders in industrial production. The government sets ambitious goals to attract investments. The average growth in investments reached 13.3 percent.

"Significant growth in investment has been noticed in information and communication by two-fold, 85 percent in manufacturing, 56 percent in transport, 40 percent in agriculture, 31 percent in trade, 25 percent in construction and 18 percent in real estate," said Irgaliyev.

Shymkent, a city of national significance, performed best within the country in attracting investments due to the increased construction of industrial facilities and industrial equipment. Similar dynamics have been in play in the Zhambyl Region due to the reconstruction of national roads and in the Turkestan Region due to the construction of solar power stations and numerous infrastructure projects in its new administrative centre.

To facilitate economic growth, Irgaliyev urged the local executive bodies to focus on the accelerated launch of construction works as part of Kazakhstan's Nurly Zher (bright land), Nurly Zhol (bright path) and Employment Road Map. Nurly Zher programme envisions the construction of affordable housing, enables Kazakh citizens to purchase housing at favourable

loan rates and offers opportunities for socially vulnerable groups to improve their housing conditions.

The Nurly Zhol programme, in turn, is an infrastructure development programme with a focus on the renovation and construction of transport infrastructure.

"To stimulate business activity, it is necessary to effectively implement urgent measures by providing access to finance and demand markets, reducing the burden on business to support the small and medium businesses. These measures were adopted 4 March at a meeting of the state commission," said Irgaliyev.

70% of Japanese Firms Rethink Overseas Business Strategy Amid Virus



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Around 70% of Japanese companies keen on pursuing overseas operations are rethinking or reviewing their business strategies due to global risks such as the coronavirus pandemic, a recently released survey showed.

With the spread of COVID-19 battering the world economy since last year, 64.8% of firms with business dealings abroad said they have been negatively impacted in terms of sales for fiscal 2020 ending this month, according to the Japan External Trade Organization.

COVID-19 and the lockdowns have forced companies in Japan to restructure their business plans in order to better weather the fallout from the virus.

Among other global risks, U.S.-China trade tensions as well as export restrictions by the two economic giants have also caused concern among companies.

The survey found that 36.4% are concerned that over the next two to three years China will strengthen its export regulations, while 32.6% expressed worry the U.S. would do the same.

Some 42.5% of respondents, including those in the food, apparel and electrical machinery sectors, noted they were reviewing their sales strategies.

The survey also found that in fiscal 2020, overseas sales dropped by 38.4% on average, more than 10 points higher than that of domestic sales — especially in the apparel and retail sectors.

Although the proportion of firms looking at expanding their existing overseas operations for the next three years has hit a record low, the JETRO survey said the proportion for those still wanting to start forays abroad has only marginally decreased, underscoring how the eagerness to expand overseas "has not waned."

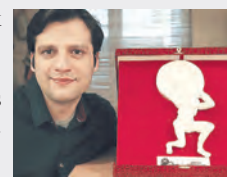
Around 13,500 Japanese firms ranging from manufacturers to trading houses were surveyed between the end of October to early December, with a total of 2,722 giving valid responses.

Iranian Cinematic Work “Eaten” Awarded in Switzerland

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian short animation ‘Eaten’ received an award at the Black Movie International Film Festival in Switzerland.

Mohsen Rezapour, who is a successful artist, has directed the short animation.

The synopsis of the flick reads, “On a mysterious planet, a bizarre rabbit eats a carrot... before being devoured in his turn, setting off a never-ending cycle. The bitter bit!”



East Asia Faces Population Drop 10 Years Earlier Than Anticipated

TOKYO (Dispatches) - East Asia has entered an era of population decline. Japan was the first to show a clear trend of sustained falls, but now China, South Korea and Taiwan are too.

Last year, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong all posted natural population declines -- meaning there were more deaths than births -- for the first time since comparable data became available. And the number of newborns seems to have declined significantly in mainland China as well.

The region could see a further drop in the number of newborns this year due to the pandemic.

Net population declines have begun 10 years earlier than widely anticipated, hampering long-term growth prospects.

South Korea recorded a natural population decline of 32,700 in 2020, while Taiwan posted a drop of 7,900 and Hong Kong a fall of 6,700.

The number of deaths in South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong remained roughly unchanged last year thanks to their stringent coronavirus measures, but the number of newborns fell sharply -- 10%, 7% and 18.5%, respectively.

China, which has an estimated population of 1.4 billion, is also edging closer to a natural population decline. According to the country's Ministry of Public Security, the number of newborns fell 15% in 2020 to 10.03 million, almost balanced out by the country's nearly 10 million deaths.

Yet, the figures could be deceiving. The ministry's data is based on registration, and there could be many unfiled births. China's National Bureau of Statistics is expected to release its newborn figure for 2020 as early as April, based on its once-a-decade population census, which was conducted last year.

Given how long pregnancies last, COVID-19 would have had a limited impact on the number of the region's newborns last year. The declining number of marriages had a bigger impact.

In China, South Korea and Taiwan, the number of marriages had been on a steady downtrend before the pandemic. The number of couples getting married in the three economies fell 10% to 30% between 2015 and 2019 due to soaring housing prices and other harsh economic realities that stifle younger generations. In each, the number of marriages fell about 10% last year, a sign that newborn numbers could drop further in 2021.

A falling birthrate seriously impacts a nation's economic performance. In the 1970s, Japan's total fertility rate -- the average number of children a woman will have in her lifetime -- was about 2, so there were enough newborns to keep the overall population afloat. But the rate started to drop markedly in the mid-1980s, when the country's gross domestic product topped \$10,000 per capita. A decade later, the rate sank below 1.5.

South Korea's and Taiwan's per capita GDPs crossed \$10,000 in the first half of the 1990s, and their fertility rates fell below 1.5 a decade later. China's per capita GDP exceeded \$10,000 in 2019, and if the experience of its peers is any guide, its fertility rate will start falling soon.

The only difference between Japan's total fertility rate and those of its East Asian neighbors is the speed of decline. Japan started experiencing a fall in natural population in the 2000s, but its fertility rate has largely held above 1.3.



South Korea's fertility rate dipped to 0.98 in 2018 and to 0.84 in 2020, while Taiwan saw its rate fall to around 1. Some experts estimate that China's fertility rate has already dropped to 1.2 or 1.3. A rapid decline in population leads to a “demographic cliff,” and those economies would face much steeper cliffs than the one confronting Japan, if the downtrend continues.

The next 10-plus years will be crucial for arresting the rapid birthrate declines.

Until 2000, the number of newborns in China, South Korea and Taiwan remained twice as high as current levels. If people aged 20 or older, who make up a large portion of these populations, have more babies, the population decline could stop. But since baby booms ended after 2000, these nations' birthrates have fallen sharply. In a decade or so, the pool of potential parents will have severely evaporated.

None of East Asia's economies expected their populations to start shrinking so soon. In late 2016, Statistics Korea projected that the country's population would start declining in 2032. In 2019, the United Nations forecast that South Korea's population would start shrinking in 2025 and Taiwan's in 2030. As for China, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences expects the country's population to start falling in 2030, with the U.N. saying the decline will begin in 2032. But recent figures indicate the drop could begin much sooner.

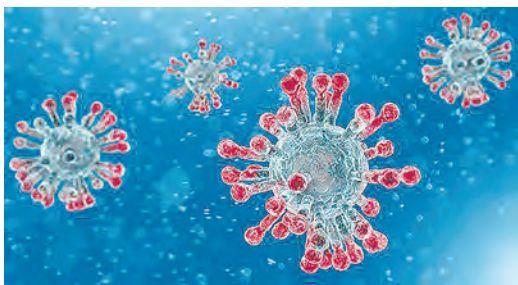
This would necessitate a revision to the region's long-term economic forecasts. The number of people aged 15 to 64, a demographic that is crucial to economic growth, has already started to decline in China, South Korea and Taiwan. A further drop in their fertility rates would accelerate the working-age population declines beyond current projections.

What is worrying is that Southeast Asia's population could also start falling earlier than expected. While the region has seen a sharp increase in population, growth in Thailand and Vietnam is already slowing.

“Compared to Japan, the pace of population decline is much faster in the rest of Asia, and growth led by a booming population is coming to an end,” said Minoru Nogimori, chief economist at the Japan Research Institute. “Asian economies could face a much longer period of low growth than the one Japan has experienced, unless their productivity improves dramatically through effective use of IT and other means.”

The 21st century has been called the Asian century, but if the region is to truly shape global trends and culture it must correct its population decline.

Scientists Discover Possible New Coronavirus Mutation in Brazil



BRASILIA (Dispatches) - A possible new variant of the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has been detected in several regions of Brazil, the Ministry of Science and Technology's National Laboratory for Scientific Computing (LNCC) said.

Brazilian scientists discovered the new variant as the country's healthcare system nears collapse due to a rise in cases generated by the P.1 strain that emerged in northern Brazil's state of Amazonas in November 2020, the Xinhua news agency reported.

A study carried out in 39 municipalities of five Brazilian states “led to the identification of a possible new variant of SARS-CoV-2 originating from variant B.1.1.33 that had circulated in Brazil,” the laboratory said in a statement.

This latest variant contains a mutation that could “complicate the planning of new strategies to control Covid-19,” the laboratory warned. The results of the study were reported in the international coronavirus genome database GISAID.

“The growing need for effective genomic surveillance to be able to identify potential viral mutations early is clear, thus helping to improve current vaccines against Covid-19,” the laboratory said. Brazil has reported 11,363,380 Covid-19 cases, with 275,105 deaths, since the start of the pandemic.

U.S. Stimulus Package Leaves Europe Standing in the Dust

LONDON (FT) - In the future, Europe and the U.S. will loom less large in the global economy as emerging countries outperform their growth. That is inevitable. What we do not know is how fast that U.S. and European dominance will be whittled away, as that depends in part on policy choices made today.

On that score, U.S. president Joe Biden has delayed his country's relative decline. EU leaders, however, look set to accelerate theirs.

Biden's \$1.9tn fiscal stimulus package, passed last week, may not be literally visible from space, but it is certainly of planetary scale. In the OECD's March update to its forecasts, the organization estimated that the US stimulus will add one whole percentage point to projected global growth. It more than doubled its 2021 growth forecast for the US itself, from 3.3 to 6.5 per cent. Biden's own administration foresees US output returning to its potential three to four years faster because of the stimulus.

According to the OECD, the policy response is so

forceful that by the end of next year, U.S. output will be one per cent above its projected pre-Covid path.

The eurozone, in contrast, will by then still trail more than 2 per cent behind what was expected before the pandemic, the OECD thinks. The UK's shortfall will be twice as large.

This is good for U.S. citizens and bad for Europeans. But it also has geopolitical implications. It means the U.S.'s relative decline is a little postponed, while Europe's economic marginalisation is accelerated. Is it not the first time an inadequate crisis response at home has hastened western countries' global economic demise. In 2008, just before the global financial crisis, China's gross domestic product was one-third that of the U.S.'s or the EU's (including the UK), measured at market exchange rates.

Just four years later, however, that ratio had reached one-half for the EU, due to its double-dip recession, and only a little less for the U.S., which mustered a somewhat stronger recovery. Compared with the early years of the millennium, China managed to double its speed of convergence during the crisis.

Zarif...

FROM PAGE 1

“A lot of things can happen between now and September,” Zarif said, adding “It is advisable for the United States to move fast and moving fast requires them not to be shy, but take measures that they need to take.”

The administration of former president Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the nuclear deal in May 2018, and unleashed what his team called a “maximum pressure campaign” with the stated objective of forcing Iran to negotiate “a better agreement.” Despite throwing verbal support behind the JCPOA, the European parties to the deal ultimately succumbed to Washington's pressure and failed to fulfill their contractual commitments to Tehran.

That promoted Tehran to begin a set of retaliatory measures in several stages as part of its legal rights stipulated in Articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA.

Elsewhere in his Monday's remarks, Zarif noted that he had seen no change between the Biden administration and the Trump administration's policy of maximum pressure to force Iran back to the negotiating table.

“We don't see any reason for talks; we can go immediately to implementation and then have talks,” he stressed.

West Hoarding...

FROM PAGE 1

Justice is important in distributing vaccines and creating equal opportunities for rich and poor countries, he said, adding, “During the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, no patient was left unattended in hospitals of the country and this is an honor for our country.”

Those countries who prevented Iran from transferring money to buy vaccines, can they say they received the right humanity and humility, Zarif said. Elsewhere in his remarks, Zarif seized this opportunity to express his special thanks to the medical staff of the country who sacrificed their soul and body to save the lives of their fellow citizens in the fight against the deadly disease.

“Coronavirus revealed some facts we all knew. The first reality was a human weakness. We need to realize our weakness once in a while and know that in the face of this vast expanse of the universe, we are nothing that sometimes forget our position and oppress others, but we do not realize that such a virus can bring down the whole world to its knees,” Foreign Minister continued.

Yemeni Army...

FROM PAGE 1

Further advancing in Ma'rib province in recent days, forces of the Yemeni army and allied Popular Committees on Sunday killed scores of Saudi-backed forces in Tai'zz after targeting a camp of Saudi mercenaries in a missile attack.

The Yemeni forces also killed and injured tens of Saudi forces in Saudi Arabia's southern city of Najran in clashes between the two sides on Sunday, according to the official website of the Ansarullah movement.

The Yemeni military media released videos showing confrontation with the Saudi army mercenaries, which forced them to retreat and flee after they had suffered great losses in lives and equipment.

The footage showed confiscated weapons and ammunition belonging to the Saudi forces after the clashes.

It also showed the burning of a military armored vehicle targeted with a guided missile and the pursuit of the remnants of the mercenaries, as well as the bodies of those who were killed. Fighting between the Yemeni forces and Saudi-backed forces has recently escalated in Tai'zz province in southwestern Yemen and the country's western province of Ma'rib.

Tehran Denies...

FROM PAGE 1

In his Sunday letter, Takht-Ravanchi also noted that Iran condemns the US' unlawful attack on 25 February against Iraqi forces along the Syrian border.

“Such dangerous measures, which are wrongly justified based on an arbitrary interpretation of the article 51 of the UN charter, are considered violation of the sovereignty of regional countries, and a symbol of blatant breach of the international law and the UN charter,” he noted. He warned that such attacks only exacerbate the already tense situation of the region, and in effect only serve the interests of terrorist groups in these countries.

The U.S. airstrikes killed one member of the Iraqi resistance forces. It was U.S. President Joe Biden's first illegal military action on the Iraqi-Syrian border to target the facilities of PMU fighters.

Observers compared Biden's militaristic approach to that of his hawkish predecessor, Donald Trump. The attack killed one and wounded four others.

Iranian COVID-19 Vaccine...

FROM PAGE 1

In response to question on the latest measures taken by the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO), Mohammad Mokhber said that the second phase of COVID-19 vaccine mass production with a capacity of 12-15 million doses per month was scheduled to be operational by the end of June.

Mokhber added that the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO) was expected to operate the Iranian-made COVID-19 vaccine mass production with a capacity of 15-20 million doses per month by the end of spring. The Chairman of the (EIKO) also highlighted the ways how all the international health protocols and standards were observed and applied in all vaccine-production processes.

Mokhber underlined that various world countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, had made nonstop efforts to develop the COVID-19 vaccine some of which were at the human trial phase, fortunately.

Phases 2 and 3 of the first Iranian COVID-19 vaccine's clinical trial started this morning (Monday) at Eram Hotel in Tehran with the chairman of Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order in attendance.

Tehran Urges IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

Khatibzadeh said that whether the sabotage attack on the Iranian ship last week in the Mediterranean should be determined by the General Staff of the Armed Forces. However, he added that the geographical location puts the blame on the occupying Israeli regime.

Underlining that the Zionist regime has carried out sabotage operations anytime the region began to see a relative peace, the spokesman said that when the perpetrator was determined, all options would be on the table.

He said that Iran has asked the Iraqi government to reveal the perpetrators behind the missile attack on Erbil airport last month, suggesting Israeli regime's involvement.

The spokesman recommended that the UK government must avoid politicizing the legal case against Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and let it move forward in its legal path.

He also touched on remarks by the White House national security advisor on the indirect diplomatic talks between Iran and the U.S., saying that Tehran has neither direct nor indirect negotiations with Washington. Saeed Khatibzadeh also referred to last week's terrorist attack on the container ship belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRIS) Group, saying that the incident is under investigation. Referring to the possibility of identifying perpetrators behind the attack, Khatibzadeh said, “Given the geographical location of corruptive attack it is possible that this terrorist act was carried out by the Zionist regime.”

The spokesman noted that “Whenever the region moves toward peace, this [Israeli] regime tries to create unrest for a clear reason,” and that is that it sees all its life and death in crisis and insecurity, and thinks chaos can help prolong its existence. He said Iran reserves the right to use all its options to respond to the attack once the perpetrators are identified. An IRIS cargo ship was damaged after it was targeted by a terrorist attack en route to Europe in the Mediterranean Sea last week. 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.

Olympic Champion Goggia Returns From Injury

MILAN (Dispatches) - Olympic champion Sofia Goggia will return from a knee injury in the final downhill race of the season at Lenzerheide, Switzerland next week, the Italian ski federation announced on Sunday.

The 28-year-old, who leads the World Cup downhill standings, suffered a fracture of the tibial plateau of the right knee on January 31, and missed the world championships at home in Cortina d'Ampezzo last month.

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.Marzadaran 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

Van der Poel Solos to Tirreno-Adriatico Fifth Stage Win

MILAN (Dispatches) - Mathieu van der Poel won a solo break for Sunday's fifth stage of the Tirreno-Adriatico for his second win in this year's 'Race of the Two Seas'.

The Dutch national champion, who rides for Alpecin-Fenix, crossed the line alone 10 seconds ahead of Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar who holds the race lead.

Van der Poel already won a sprint for the third stage having won the Strade Bianche last weekend in Tuscany.

Ronaldo Notches First-Half Hat Trick For Juventus Win

ROME (Dispatches) - A few days after being eliminated in the Champions League Round of 16 in stunning fashion, Cristiano Ronaldo had an emphatic answer to his critics in the form of a first-half hat trick in Juventus' very next match.

Ronaldo ended the first half with three goals to his name in Juventus' match against Cagliari in Serie A action at Sardegna Arena in Sardinia.

The 36-year-old forward wasted no time finding the back of the net, scoring just 10 minutes into the match, before adding a penalty in the 25th minute and a third goal in the 32nd minute. This marks Ronaldo's third hat trick since joining the Italian club in 2018 and his 57th hat trick overall.

This comes just days after Juventus got knocked out of the Champions League by Portuguese club Porto FC. They entered the second leg of their matchup trailing 2-1 but needing just a 1-0 victory to enter the quarterfinals. But instead, the club gave up two goals to Porto, with the second one coming in extra time and when the Portuguese club had just 10 men on the field.

After winning several Champions League trophies during his time with Real Madrid, Ronaldo has never made it to the semifinals of the tournament with Juventus and has now lost in the Round of 16 in consecutive seasons.

A few days after the loss, Ronaldo broke his silence on social media, posting a statement on Instagram saying that "champions never break" and that the team has moved on from the loss to Porto and instead is focused on Cagliari and Serie A play.

If his first-half performance is any indication, it is clear Ronaldo really is focused on defeating Cagliari and is proving that he is capable of bouncing back



as he has throughout his career.

Meanwhile Lautaro Martinez nodded Inter Milan nine points clear at the top of Serie A with his winner five minutes from time in a tight 2-1 win over Torino on Sunday.

But Roma's Champions League push was dealt a blow after a 2-0 defeat to relegation-threatened Parma, who ended their 17-match winless streak.

Antonio Conte's Inter once again needed their strike duo of Romelu Lukaku and Martinez to find a way through in a tough encounter in Turin.

Christian Eriksen came off the bench after 56 minutes and had an immediate impact, playing a part in the move which resulted in Torino defender Armando Izzo fouling Martinez in the penalty area.

Lukaku then fired home his 19th goal of the season from the spot in the 62nd minute.

Inter looked to be wobbling when Antonio Sanabria pulled Torino level eight minutes later, finishing off a rebound amid a scramble in front of the Inter goal.

But Martinez snatched the victory by getting his head to an Alexis Sanchez cross for his 14th league goal this term.

Despite missing players to Covid-19, and captain Andrea Belotti out, Torino threatened in the first half with a Lyanco header hitting the post with Lukaku clearing off the Inter line.

Japan to Limit Size of Foreign Delegations At Games



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan is considering limiting the number of people who will be allowed to accompany foreign ministers and leaders for the delayed Tokyo Olympics due to health concerns amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday.

Kyodo said the Japanese government will restrict the accompanying staff to 11 people per head of state, while cabinet-level delegations will be limited to five people, the report said.

The Tokyo Games, postponed last year due to concerns over the spread of the novel coronavirus, were rescheduled for July 23 to Aug. 8 this year. Kyodo said VIP guests will be asked to undergo COVID-19 testing within 72 hours of travelling to Japan and will be re-tested on arrival.

Earlier, the Sankei newspaper reported that Japan is also considering limiting spectators to 50% of venue capacity due to risks posed by the spread of the virus.

Although the number of COVID-19 cases in Japan is relatively low compared to other countries such as the U.S., some areas including Tokyo are still under a state of emergency, with the country experiencing a third wave of the pandemic.

Arsenal Hit Back To Beat Spurs

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal recovered from Erik Lamela's astonishing rabona opener to beat 10-man Tottenham 2-1 in a dramatic north London derby despite the absence of exiled captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang on Sunday.

Lamela scored one of the greatest goals in Premier League history with an audacious strike in the first half at the Emirates Stadium.

But the Tottenham forward went from hero to villain when he was sent off for a second booking after Jose Mourinho's side blew the lead.

Martin Odegaard had equalised with a deflected effort just before half-time and Alexandre Lacazette sealed the points with a second half penalty.

Lamela's moment of genius was ruined by his red card and it was Arsenal's day as they beat Tottenham for the first time in six games.

Denting Tottenham's bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish in the Premier League was an added bonus for Arsenal, who hadn't defeated their neighbours since 2018.

It was an even more impressive success given Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta caused a storm by dropping Aubameyang as punishment after he reportedly turned up late for a pre-match team meeting.

It is believed Arteta had grown frustrated with Aubameyang for similar offences in the past.

"He was going to start the game, but we had a disciplinary issue. We've drawn the line. We keep it internal," Arteta said before leaving Aubameyang as an unused substitute for the entire match.

After just a third loss against the Gunners in Mourinho's career, Tottenham remain without a win at Arsenal since 2010 and are six points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea, with Arteta's team a further four points behind.



Clijsters Pulls out of Miami But Not Ready to Quit

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former world number one Kim Clijsters, who was due to return to competition in 10 days in Miami, pulled out of the tournament on Sunday but said on Twitter that she was "not ready to quit".

The 37-year-old Belgian, who won the Miami tournament in 2005 and 2010, had been handed a wild card to take part in her first official match since September 2 when she lost to Ekaterina Alexandrova in the first round at the US Open.

The four-time major winner underwent a knee operation in October and then contracted Covid-19 in January, forcing her to revise her plans.

"While the symptoms were mild it did disrupt my training schedule," the mother of three said on Twitter.

"Unfortunately I am not where I need to be especially if I want to compete with the best. It's disappointing and frustrating. I knew this was going to be hard when I started this journey - and there have been challenges outside my control.

"I'm not ready to quit... I'm going to keep pushing and see what's possible."

Clijsters only played three tournaments and three matches in 2020, beaten each time in the first round.

Currently ranked at 1,055 in the world, Clijsters had also been offered a wildcard at Charleston.

She has 43 singles titles, including three US Open titles and one Australian Open.

Kohli, Kishan Power India to Big T20 Win Over England



LONDON (Dispatches) - Skipper Virat Kohli and debutant Ishan Kishan hit half-centuries as India hammered England by seven wickets in the second Twenty20 international in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Chasing 165 for victory, a blazing second-wicket stand of 94 between Kohli, who finished unbeaten on 73, and Kishan saw India romp home in 17.5 overs and level the five-match series at 1-1.

Left-hander Kishan, just 22, hit 56 off 32 balls before he fell to Adil Rashid's leg-spin. Kohli hit form after three ducks in his five previous innings to seal the match with a four and a six.

Sam Curran struck in the first over to get K.L. Rahul caught behind without scoring but Kishan, who made his T20I debut alongside Suryakumar Yadav -- both key players for Indian Premier League champions Mumbai Indians -- and Kohli took charge.

Kohli was dropped on 10 by wicketkeeper Jos Buttler who failed to grab a flick down the leg side off Chris Jordan and the batsman made the most of the reprieve.

Kishan, who was dropped on 40 by Ben Stokes, smashed Rashid for two successive sixes to pass 50 but departed in the same over.

Rishabh Pant made 26 off 13 balls with two fours and two sixes.

Schwarz Seals World Cup Men's Slalom Title

KRANJSKA GORA (Reuters) - Austria's Marco Schwarz sealed the Alpine skiing men's World Cup slalom title on Sunday after finishing seventh in a race in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia.

France's Clement Noel won ahead of compatriot Victor Muffat-Jeandet with Switzerland's Ramon Zehnhausem third. Schwarz played it safe in tricky conditions to take his points tally to an unbeatable 625 to Zehnhausem's 503 with one race remaining.

The World Cup finals are being held in Lenzerheide, Switzerland next week, starting with the men's downhill on Wednesday and with the men's overall, downhill, super-G and giant slalom globes still to be decided.

Three women's globes are also still up for grabs, with Slovakia's Petra Vlhova leading Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami by 96 points overall.

Vlhova also leads the women's slalom standings with a slender lead of 22 points over Austrian Katharina Liensberger and American Mikaela Shiffrin a further 15 behind.

Italy's Marta Bassino has already won the giant slalom globe and Gut-Behrami clinched the super-G title last month.

