

The Number of the COVID-19 Deaths In Iran is on the Rise as Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Wednesday That 193 Iranians Died Over the Past 24 Years and the Toll Hit 63,699

IRAN NEWS

The World Health Day 2021 Was Commemorated Jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) In Iran and the Ministry of Health And Medical Education (MOHME) On Wednesday, April 7 in Tehran

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IMF Revises Forecasts On Iran Economic Growth in 2020

TEHRAN (IMF) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised its analysis of the economic situation in Iran in 2020 as its latest estimates suggest that the country recorded a positive economic growth last year despite grappling with US sanctions and the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

The IMF released its latest World Economic Outlook on Tuesday in which it revised up its estimate of growth in Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 to 1.5%, up from a negative growth of minus 5% reported for the same period in a previous analysis.

The Outlook, released at the start of the IMF's and World Bank's spring meetings, predicted that Iran's GDP will continue to expand this year by 2.5%, down from the IMF's previous forecast of 3.2%.

The latest data proves estimates provided by the Central Bank of Iran earlier this year which showed the economy had achieved a positive growth in the three ending quarters of the calendar year to March 20 both with and without oil revenues. That comes as Iran has seen its crude revenues significantly reduced in recent years because of US bans on the country's sale of oil.

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Iran Slams Ukraine's 'Unconstructive' Remarks On Plane Crash

TEHRAN (IFP) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Mohsen Baharvand has criticized the "unconstructive" remarks made by the Ukrainian foreign minister and his deputy regarding the tragic crash of the Ukrainian flight in Tehran.

"We see remarks by our Ukrainian colleagues in media outlets and pay attention to them, but sometimes we do not understand the reason behind some unconstructive opinions," said Baharvand on Wednesday.

"Maybe it is necessary that I once again remind you of the measures adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran with regards to the heart-wrenching Ukrainian plane crash," he added.

"The representatives of the Ukrainian government have been present through different stages of the investigation into the plane crash as well as when black boxes were being decoded in Paris," he noted.

"We had two rounds of talks in Kiev and Tehran attended by representatives of different Iranian and Ukrainian institutions, including civil aviation, judicial and law enforcement organizations, foreign ministries, etc., and they received detailed explanation about how the accident happened," the official explained.

"We agreed to hold the third round of talks in Kiev shortly, but the Ukrainian side first conditioned the third round on receiving certain documents, and we provided them with the documents as much as possible," said Baharvand.

"However, seven months on since the second round of the talks, the Ukrainian side still has not announced the date of the next session slated to be held in Kiev," he added.

"Still, in order to prevent any waste of time, the Islamic Republic of Iran decided to carefully and immediately fulfill its commitments in accordance with international aviation law," he said.

"Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, in due time, provided relevant countries and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) with the technical report prepared by the team probing the accident, and also published it for the public," the official noted.

"Those who are at fault for having caused the accident have been identified, and now indictments have been issued for 10 individuals and their cases will be heard in the court soon," he said.

"The government has provided the Ministry of Roads, Housing and Urban Development with the funding to pay damages to the survivors of the victims, and the damages are ready to be paid," he said.

"The reimbursements are seven times more than the amount Iran has undertaken to pay under Warsaw conventions, and Iran has also taken into account international norms in determining the damages in order for the payments to be fair," the official said.

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Tehran Not to Accept Division of Sanctions Into JCPOA-Related, Non-Related Ones



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official has told Press TV that the country will not accept any division of the sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran into those that had been removed under the 2015 nuclear deal and the ones unrelated to the nuclear deal.

Speaking to Press TV on the condition of anonymity on Wednesday, the senior official said "Iran will not accept a division of the Trump-era sanctions into JCPOA-related ones and those unrelated to the JCPOA."

The JCPOA is the acronym of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear deal that Iran clinched in 2015 with the U.S. under ex-president Barack Obama and five other major world states. The deal was abandoned by Obama's predecessor, Donald Trump, three years after its conclusion.

Now, Trump's successor, President Joe Biden, says the US wants to rejoin the deal; however, Iran wants the administration in Washington to compensate for Trump's wrong move by removing the sanctions on Iran first before it can rejoin the deal.

"From Iran's viewpoint, all American sanctions — including the Obama-era sanctions, the sanctions restored by Trump and the additional sanctions in the Trump-era labeled as non-nuclear — must be terminated," the official added.

"Iran does not accept and recognize negotiations based on a division of the sanctions," the official emphasized. "Iran's condition for returning to its JCPOA commitments is the lasting removal of all the entire sanctions."

The official said America and Europe must guarantee that the sanctions will not be restored on Iran again after their removal. Tehran's resumption of its commitments — which have been suspended in retaliation for Washington's exit from the deal — will not be possible until after "a reasonable verification" of the sanctions removal.

The official further emphasized that Iran will need enough time to verify the termination of the sanctions, and that it cannot be done within "a short time."

In another development on Wednesday, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, who heads the Iranian delegation to the Vienna talks, warned that Tehran will abandon the discussions if the other negotiators waste time or seek goals other than reviving the nuclear deal.

He told Nour News that the Vienna talks focus on technical and legal issues regarding the implementation of the JCPOA, first by the United States and then Iran.

"These negotiations are not even about the JCPOA itself, let alone an agreement beyond the JCPOA," he added.

"To us, it does not matter what aspirations our opposite sides have about the future of the negotiations. The position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is completely clear and we will not have any talks on other issues."

During the Vienna talks, Iran and the remaining signatories to the JCPOA agreed to form expert-level working groups to discuss the sanctions Washington might remove and the nuclear curbs Tehran might observe as they try to resurrect the nuclear accord.

Araqchi said that the working groups will work until Friday, after which they will report their conclusions to the JCPOA Joint Commission.

"If we see that the negotiating parties are seeking to waste time or pursuing other goals, we will stop [participation in] the negotiations at the current level," he underlined.

"It is worth mentioning that we have no subject such as a step-by-step implementation of commitments on the agenda. All the required measures will be taken in one step."

Russia, Hezbollah Mull Opening Representative Office in Moscow

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian government and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement are reportedly considering the possibility of opening a representative office for the Lebanese popular organization in the capital, Moscow, following high-level meetings between the two sides last month.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov received on March 15 a delegation of senior Hezbollah figures led by Mohammad Raad, the head of the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc — the political wing of Hezbollah — and media reports indicated that the two sides had held "open and friendly" talks.

The meeting, held at Russia's request, was described by analysts as different from Moscow's previous ones with Hezbollah and it showed Russia's inclination to see the Lebanese resistance movement as an "independent" power.

The visit by the four-member Hezbollah delegation to Russia took place at a time when Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis in decades as well as a political stalemate over the formation of a new government.

"The two sides stressed the need to strengthen means of communication between them and to adopt direct channels of communication between the party and Moscow, while studying the possibility of establishing a representative office for the party in the Russian capital," Lebanon's al-Akhbar newspaper said in a report on Tuesday.

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Iran's %20 Enriched Uranium Stock Hits 55kg

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says Iran has already produced 55kg of %20 enriched uranium.

Referring to a law ratified by the Iranian Parliament to create a balance in the JCPOA, Behrouz Kamalvandi said that "An important part of this law was annual production of 120kg of 20% enriched uranium and measures for implementing that was adopted instantly," he said on Wednesday. "55kg of 20% enriched uranium has been produced so far and with this speed, we can reach the determined aim in less than eight months."

The capacity for enriching uranium to a 20% level has increased compared to the pre-JCPOA era, he added. "Currently we have 16,000 SWUs capacity for the enrichment and the figure was 12,000 SWUs before the nuclear was inked." Since Iran is using new generations of centrifuges such as IR-6, the rate of uranium output has increased, he said.

"Currently, we see the deployment of 2,000 IR2M machines," he said, adding that a cascade of IR-4 centrifuges have been installed and the second cascade will also be put in place.

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President Hails New Chapter in Efforts To Revive JCPOA

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says the recent talks between Iran and the other signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement opened a "new chapter" in efforts to revive the multilateral deal as the participants in the Vienna meeting unanimously underlined the need to keep the agreement alive.

Rouhani made the remarks at a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, one day after envoys from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries — the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany — agreed to establish two working groups, one of which would focus on how to get the US to lift the sanctions it imposed on Iran after leaving the deal in May 2018. The other working group will also focus on how to get the Islamic Republic back into compliance with the limits set by the JCPOA on enrichment and stockpiles of enriched uranium.

Rouhani said the U.S. administration is today admitting explicitly to the failure of the so-called maximum pressure campaign that ex-American president Donald Trump initiated against Iran after pulling his country out of the agreement.

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Iranian Ship Struck By Blast in Red Sea, Suffers Minor Damage

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says one of its merchant vessels has been targeted by an explosion of unknown origin in the strategic Red Sea, in the second such incident in less than a month.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatizadeh told reporters that the Saviz ship was struck by the blast at around 6 a.m. local time (0300 GMT) on Tuesday, April 5, near the coast of Djibouti, and sustained minor damage.

"Fortunately, no fatalities were caused by the incident, and technical evaluations on how the incident occurred and its origins are underway," he added.

The Iranian official said Tehran will take all the necessary measures regarding the case through international bodies. Rejecting media claims, Khatizadeh said the Saviz is a non-military vessel, whose specifications and mission have been formally registered with the International Maritime Organization (IMO). He said the ship acts as Iran's logistic station in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, protects naval routes and provides security for merchant vessels and tankers against pirates.

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Businesses in 85% of Iran Red Or Orange Zones Prohibited

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education Iraj Harirchi announced on Wednesday that 85 percent of the country is in red or orange zones where businesses are prohibited. Harirchi made the announcement at a press conference.

Over 250 cities are in red and 129 in orange zones; he regretted in the meantime, that work restrictions have not been observed yet.

According to latest report of Ministry of Health and Medical Education, 1,963,394 Iranians have been infected by the deadly virus, while the number of the dead has passed 63,000.

Tehran Calls for Sustainable Cooperation With Nur-Sultan

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif stressed the need to find ways for lasting cooperation with Kazakhstan, which he described as a friendly Caspian Sea neighbor.

In a meeting with President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, held in Nur-Sultan on Wednesday, the Iranian foreign minister called for efforts to find ways for sustainable cooperation with Kazakhstan in order to maintain and enhance the bilateral relations.

Describing Kazakhstan as a friendly neighbor of Iran in the Caspian Sea region, Zarif highlighted the importance of closeness of the views of the two states on regional and international issues.

For his part, the Kazakh president described Iran as a "key partner" in the region, emphasizing the necessity for the promotion of political and economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic.

The two officials also discussed the developments concerning the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the peace process in Afghanistan, the Astana Process for Syria peace, and the Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Earlier yesterday, the foreign ministers of Iran and Kazakhstan signed a cooperation document in Nur-Sultan on Wednesday.

Zarif, who was in Nur-Sultan in the third leg of a tour of Central Asia, held a meeting with his Kazakh counterpart Mukhtar Tleuberdi.

After the meeting, the two senior diplomats signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries.

The document entails interaction between the two sides to enhance the friendly and brotherly ties on the basis of mutual respect and trust.

The deal also highlights the importance of constructive bilateral, regional and international negotiations in order to achieve a mutual understanding, weigh plans for



stronger cooperation, and remove the obstacles on the basis of positive political will as well as a comprehensive, targeted and long-term approach.

The document stresses the significance of mutual interests in the expansion of cooperation in accordance with the UN Charter and the internationally-recognized norms.

The 15-article memorandum of understanding also urges regular consultations between Iran and Kazakhstan in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, environmental, military, security and cultural fields.

After the meeting, Zarif said at a press conference that discussions were held on strengthening Iran's participation in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) within the framework of bilateral relations.

Zarif noted that the peaceful use of the Caspian Sea was reiterated in the meeting. Iranian FM added that railways and transit routes are of great importance between Iran, Kazakhstan and other neighbors. It is necessary to increase cargo transportation by transit routes, he said.

"Kazakhstan's activity in the Incheh-Borun, Chabahar and Bandar Abbas ports is important for Iran. Iran is interested in expanding Kazakhstan's participation in Iranian ports. Thus, Kazakhstan will have access to international waters," he said. Earlier, in a meeting held in Nur-Sultan, Zarif and Tleuberdi conferred on the issues of mutual interest as well as the latest regional and international developments.

They underlined the need to boost cooperation between the two nations in various fields. The meeting follows Zarif's central Asian tour, which began on Monday and includes Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

No Talks Beyond JCPOA

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani says the Islamic Republic will under no circumstances enter negotiations beyond the nuclear agreement it clinched with six major world states in 2015.

"Regardless of whether Europe has the will or ability to persuade #USA to lift all sanctions at once & Washington's return to its commitments, there will be no possibility for Iran entering the talks in the new fields, more than JCPOA, under any circumstances," he said.

The security chief posted the tweet with the hashtag #activeresistance in his tweet. Shamkhani's tweet followed remarks by the US administration's special envoy for Iran, Rob Malley, who is based in a hotel near the venue of talks in the Austrian capital of Vienna between representatives of Iran and the remaining signatories to the JCPOA.

In an interview with the American National Public Radio, Malley was asked about a "follow-up" agreement in case the JCPOA gets back on track.

"What we would pursue is, first of all, a longer agreement. Even though this one lasts quite some time and some of its provisions last forever, of course, it would be better, as in any arms control agreement, to see whether we could get a follow-on deal that extends the timelines," he replied.

Earlier in the day, representatives of Iran and the P4+1 group of countries — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — began a new round of talks in Vienna over a possible return of the United States to the JCPOA, which abandoned by the US under former president Donald Trump some three years ago.

The Vienna negotiations took place within the "in-person" and expert-level formats.

Iran-China Strategic Cooperation Document Win-Win Agreement

TEHRAN (MNA) - A lawmaker in the Iranian Parliament said that the 25-year strategic cooperation document inked between Tehran and Beijing is a win-win document based on mutual respect and in the interest of both countries.

When unipolar international relations are under the domination of a system, the countries should stand against this unipolar system, and the comprehensive document between Iran and China is in this direction, said Mahmoud Abbaszadeh, a member of Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

To counter this unequal global system, the countries must form alliances against this unipolar system and counter it with unity and synergy, he added.

Stating that the world market is now under the control of the Western unipolar system, Abbaszadeh said that Iran and China need each other to break this domination.

According to the lawmaker, both Iran and China need each other to counter the economic domination of the Western unipolar system and the two countries must meet their needs through bilateral cooperation.

The Iran-China 25-year strategic cooperation document reduces the two countries' dependence on a market dominated by a unipolar system, and its outlook is positive and in the interest of the region, he noted.

This document is a win-win document and different from the domineering agreements of the West, Abbaszadeh highlighted. China and Iran's Foreign Ministers have signed a 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement recently. The agreement can strengthen Iran and China's long-standing economic and political alliance which both are under US sanctions.

IRGC Quds Force Chief Wraps Up Talks in Iraq

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Brigadier General Esmail Qa'ani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has ended a two-day trip to neighboring Iraq, the Arabic-language Al-Alam news network reports.

Citing informed sources as saying, the Iranian news channel's correspondent said Tuesday that the IRGC Quds Force's chief had met with a number of Iraqi officials and senior figures besides leaders of political parties and movements in the Arab country. The meeting, the report said, focused on the developments concerning bilateral relations between the two neighboring countries as well as regional issues of common interest.

Qa'ani was appointed as chief of the IRGC's Quds Force following the assassination of his predecessor, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, by the US military during an official visit to Baghdad.

General Soleimani was martyred — along with Deputy Commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and a number of their comrades — when his vehicle was hit by a drone strike ordered by ex-US president Donald Trump.

The IRGC's Quds Force under General Soleimani played a key role in the Iraqi armed forces' successful campaign that liberated the Arab country's soil from Daesh, the world's most notorious terror group, in late 2017. Qa'ani has vowed to continue the path of General Soleimani, whose main goal was to drive American forces out of the region.

That pledge prompted the US to threaten the Islamic Republic with yet another act of state terrorism and say Washington will assassinate General Soleimani's successor as well if he follows in the path of the martyred general.

Belgrade-Tehran Ties Longstanding, Friendly

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Serbia's Parliamentary Friendship Group with Iran Jasmina Karanac said that Belgrade-Tehran ties are longstanding and friendly with satisfactory parliamentary relations.

Ms. Karanac made the remarks in a meeting held on Tuesday with Iran's Ambassador to Serbia Rashid Hassanpour.

Existence of parliamentary friendship groups and exchange of delegations in the past shows proper level of cooperation, she said.

The Serbian official appreciated Iran for its principled stance on respecting countries' sovereignty and called for continuation of bilateral cooperation in the international arenas. She stressed the need to follow a mechanism for fostering relations in the sanctions era.

Congratulating Iran on achieving success in manufacturing COVID vaccine, she expressed her country's readiness to expand health cooperation with Iran, particularly in production of vaccines.

Iran's ambassador, for his part, said Iran attaches great importance for its parliamentary ties with Serbia.

Hassanpour also welcomed cooperation in fight against coronavirus, production of vaccines and the national vaccination campaign. About Iran's stance on international issues, the ambassador said Tehran does not politicize issues of peace, security and stability.

Hassanpour also welcomed Serbian official's proposal for holding webinar with participation of parliamentary friendship group members of both countries on the humanitarian crisis caused by corona pandemic.

The two officials reviewed ways to develop cultural, scientific and technological relations.

Tehran, Kuala Lumpur Emphasize Need for Broadening Bilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for economic diplomacy Rasoul Mohajer exchanged ideas on broadening the sphere of bilateral and regional cooperation with the Malaysian deputy foreign minister Qamareddin Jafar here on Tuesday.

Jafar, who is in a regional tour, in his day-long visit to Tehran met and conferred with Mohajer. Mohajer referred to the long and historical record of bilateral relations and announced Iran's readiness for comprehensive expansion of relations and full-scale cooperation with Malaysia.

He meanwhile asked the Malaysian government to see into facilitating the commercial and business interactions between the two countries' private and public sectors.

The Iranian deputy FM meanwhile referred to the successful presence of Iranian merchants, educated individuals and even elites in Malaysia, stressing the need for resolving the problems with which they are entangled, including in banking and financial affairs, as well the consular problems, judiciary problems, and exchange of criminals.

The Malaysian diplomat, too, expressing delight for having the chance to visit Iran, said that the main objective of his trip is expansion of bilateral ties, expressing hope that after getting rid of the Corona pandemic the two sides will be witnesses to comprehensive expansion of bilateral ties, especially in commercial and economic field, thanks to the visits of the two countries' high ranking officials of each other's capitals in near future.

Jafar has already visited Turkey and Qatar, too, also had meeting with deputy industries.

Tehran Ready to Cooperate With D-8 States in Various Areas

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Minister Zarif said that Iran is ready to cooperate with D-8 countries in various fields such as trade, transportation, tourism, technology, business, and human capacities.

Zarif yesterday participated at the 19th D-8 Council of Ministers Meeting held in Nur-Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan.



"The international community is still facing the unprecedented challenge of Covid-19 pandemic. For Iran, the challenge has been compounded by a barbaric economic terrorism against the great Iranian nation, a grave crime against humanity", said Zarif in this meeting while addressing the participants.

He went on to say, "Much as the international community eagerly wants to consign Corona Virus to the dustbin of history, the pandemic has taught us some valuable lessons. We learned that how a health crisis can easily lead to an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, an education crisis, a food security crisis, an inequality crisis (to name a few), leaving a disproportionate toll on developing and least developed countries"

"Concurrently, we also learned how a global crisis can unleash the blessings of solidarity among nations. Let me seize this opportunity to value the support the Islamic Republic of Iran received from our brotherly D-8 countries during the time of pandemic and amid unlawful and cruel sanctions", he added.

"Another lesson we have learned is that enhanced cooperation among countries and regions is the optimal choice should the international community wish to set the stage for shared challenges that loom ahead. Multilateral machineries, including the D-8, provide us with a pool of choices to make", Zarif also noted. Elsewhere in his remarks, he said, "Dear Friends, I am not going to elaborate on the shared challenges ahead of us. Rather, I would like to focus on decisive choices we can collectively make within the D-8 existing and potential frameworks for cooperation." "This is also very important and pertinent as we are about to finalize the D-8 Decennial Roadmap", he added.

Regarding the trade issue, the target of 20 percent intra-D8 trade by 2030 will be in our reach if the existing preferential trade agreement along with some supplemented arrangements (in terms of customs, finance and micro-finance, banking, digital capacities, etc.) are implemented, he said and added, "Our governments shall take the role of enabler and our private sectors and SMEs shall be taken on board."

"Notwithstanding the geographical remoteness of some D-8 countries, D-8 can be an interconnected body of countries. This can be and should be realized in terms of, among others, multi-modal transport and port cooperation; cultural affinity and tourism; and business-to-business connectivity", he said while speaking about the issue of connectivity. "We are grateful to the host country for its vigilance to make "harnessing the power of youth and technology" as the theme of this COM and Summit meetings", he said.

"Our relevant ministers in charge of youth gathered together this week and discussed ways of cooperation on this issue of great importance to our countries", he added.

Saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been active in two D-8 human and technology-related programs, Zarif said, "We are hosting the "D-8 International University" in Hamadan as well as the "D-8 Technology Transfer and Exchange Network" in Tehran. We welcome any idea to enhance these two initiatives."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:50
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:12
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:39

26. Say: "O Allah, Lord of Power (And Rule), Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all good. Verily, over all things, Thou hast power.
27. "Thou causeth the night to gain on the day, and thou causeth the day to gain on the night; Thou bringest the Living out of the dead, and Thou bringest the dead out of the Living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure."
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (26-27)

Iran-China Deal Needs No Approval in Majlis

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Finance minister says an economic partnership agreement signed with China last month would be effective without any need to win the approval of the Iranian parliament.

Farhad Dejpassand said on Tuesday that the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Iran and China is a broad document that sets out a framework for cooperation between private sectors of the two countries for the next 25 years.

"It is a strategic document focused on cooperation between the two countries' private sectors and does not need the approval of the Islamic Consultative Assembly," said Dejpassand in remarks made after a meeting in the Iranian parliament.

The minister said, however, that any specific contract signed within the framework of the Iran-China deal that could affect relations between the two governments would need to obtain the parliament endorsement before it goes into effect.

He said implementing the current document without the approval of the parliament would not be a violation of articles 77 and 125 of the Iranian constitution, as stipulated by some members of the parliament. "We explained (to the parliament) that this document does qualify as a contract or a convention and is merely a document that sets out the size of interactions between the two countries," said Dejpassand.



After some five years of negotiations, foreign ministers of Iran and China signed off on the economic partnership agreement in Tehran on March 27.

The deal has sparked widespread concerns in the West about the formation of a stronger alliance between Iran and China that could harm the interests of the United States and allies in Asia and in the Middle East region.

China has committed to over \$400 billion worth of investment in Iran's energy and infrastructure sectors under the deal. Iran, in return, would guarantee to provide a stable supply of crude and energy products to China over the period of the agreement.

Dejpassand also said that Iran has attracted \$6.2b of foreign investment in the heat of the maximum sanction pressure and the outbreak of the COVID-19 which is praiseworthy. He added that with the possible openings and resolving sanctions problems, the duty of Organization for investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran will be tough this year.

Tehran, Beijing to Cooperate On Pharmacy Bilaterally

TEHRAN (MNA) - According to one of the sections in the Iran-China 25-year strategic cooperation document, the two countries can cooperate in the development, investment and transfer of technical knowledge in the field of pharmacy.

The Iranian Pharmaceutical Industries Syndicate, in line with this paragraph of the cooperation document and considering China's capacity in technical and technological abilities to produce intermediate and pharmaceutical raw materials worldwide, intends to hold joint specialized events.

Considering the forthcoming 3rd Pharmex International Exhibition, as the most specialized exhibition of the country's pharmaceutical industry, the Iranian Pharmaceutical Industries Syndicate also intends to invite an Iranian and Chinese delegation to this exhibition.

The third edition of the Pharmex International Exhibition of the Middle East 2021 will be held in October in Tehran.

All-Out Cooperation in Majlis To Resolve Free Zone Problems



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Vice President for Parliamentary Affairs Hossein-Ali Amiri during meeting with Secretary of the Supreme Council of Iran's Free Trade, Industrial and Special Economic Zones Mr. Hamid Reza Momeni announced the vice presidency for parliamentary affairs' all-out cooperation with Majlis in line with easing affairs related to the free zones.

In the meeting and after felicitating the appointment of Mr. Momeni as the new secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Zones, Mr. Amiri announced the all-out cooperation of his office in all fields with the Supreme Council.

He noted that all capacities of the vice presidency for parliamentary affairs are ready for advancing the goals and developments of the free and specialized zones.

He added that pursuing the issues related to the free zones in Majlis and especially amending the laws can be resolved through convergence and cooperation, and all hurdles on the path of development of the free and specialized zones can be removed.

Mr. Momeni, for his part, hailed the special attention of the vice presidency and announced readiness of the Supreme Council for all-out cooperation with it.

U.S. Sanctions Blocked Iran Access to Medical Supplies



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdol-Nasser Hemmati said here on Tuesday that a times of Iran's dire need for medical supplies and medicine in its campaign against COVID-19 pandemic, the unilateral and illegally imposed US sanctions blocked Iran's access to them.

Hemmati made the comment at the Tuesday evening in the Video-Conference of the Middle East and Central Asia Central Banks Governors (MCD) that is held on the sidelines of the Spring Session of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

He noted that at a time when medical supplies and medicine were highly needed in Iran, the unilateral and illegally imposed U.S. sanctions had blocked the path for Iranian concerned official's access to them.

"Iran has made the required moves aimed at importing Corona vaccines and also started the vaccination of the high risk citizens, but we still not have full and broad access to those vaccines. Yet, under such conditions that there are still ambiguities about the termination of the US sanctions, good and satisfactory moves for production of Iranian vaccines are made that are very promising," he added.

Hemmati said that the Iranian oil sales were harmed due to the US sanctions, but the non-oil exports, and during the recent months also the oil exports, increased.

"The Iranian national currency, rial, was at the frontline of defense against the foreign tensions that aggravated its loss of value under the inflation pressure," he added.

The CBI governor said that in addition to using the hard currency gained from the non-oil exporters, the CBI allocated 10 billion dollars of out assets to provide the major food items, medicine and medical supplies for the people during the past year.

On Monday Hemmati also called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to act fairly with G24 countries.

Addressing a G24 meeting on Monday, Hemmati said: "Demands are expected to be met without discrimination and not under the influence of political lobbies."

Iran Underlines Rising Economic Ties Among Muslim States

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with the Malaysian deputy foreign minister the Head of TPOI underlined the vitality of boosting economic ties among Muslim countries.

"The development of relations with Islamic countries, especially Malaysia, which is recognized as a successful example in the Islamic world, is very important, and the expansion of economic relations between Muslim countries should be on the agenda," Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization Hamid Zadboom said in his meeting with Malaysia's Dato' Kamarudin Jaffar.

Referring to U.S. sanctions, Zadboom said: "Expanding relations and cooperation with friendly and brother nations will make these sanctions ineffective."

In this meeting, the two sides reviewed the status of



economic and trade exchanges between the two countries.

They paid attention to the existence of areas and infrastructure needed to further expansion of ties and focused on issues of cooperation between countries' fields of interest, including in the automotive industry, Halal products industry, tourism, preferential trade agreement, and etc.

The Malaysian Deputy Foreign Minister described his visit to Iran in the current context as a sign of the importance of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Malaysia's foreign affairs

Emphasizing the interest of Malaysian companies to invest in Iran, he said: "I hope that with mutual cooperation, the relations between the two countries will be further strengthened and the effects of Coronavirus in economic and trade relations will be managed."

Iranian Co. to Build Cars in Russia

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran Khodro (IKCO) is eyeing the Eurasian market, hoping to produce low-cost cars in countries such as Russia, the company's head of operations in Asia, Europe, America and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) says.

"We are trying to produce cars in Russia in classes in which there is less competition," Sabina Nobari told Iran Economic News Agency (Econews). he largest car maker in the Middle East is counting on Eurasia Expo 2021 - to be held through May 18-21 in Tehran - to expand its footprints in a non-Western region which is emerging as a new center of partnerships.

Eurasia is rising as a new trend which is marginalizing Europe and the Western liberal order, while resurgent powers China and Russia are linking regional integration projects through the Belt and Roads Initiative (BRI) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Iran is a potential major player in both projects. The Middle Eastern powerhouse is a key destination in the trillion-dollar BRI, spearheaded by China, which involves huge infrastructure projects connecting Asia to Europe and beyond. The country is also a candidate for joining the EAEU, a Eurasian trade bloc with an integrated market of 180 million people headed by Russia.

A preferential trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU came into effect in April 2020 and the Islamic Republic's transactions with the block in six months topped \$1.7 billion.

"We hope to increase our relations with the member countries of this union so that after tariff liberalizations in the next one and a half to two years - when cars are to be added to the list of tariff-free goods - we can produce cars in the classes in which there is less competition in Russia," Nobari said.

Annual Gas Reproduction Rises 15%

TEHRAN (MNA) - Gas reproduction has risen 15 percent in the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), as compared to its preceding year, according to the production director of Iranian Central Oilfields Company (ICOFC).

Ahmad Rajabi announced that about three billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas has been reproduced from the country's gas storage facilities (Sarajeh and Shourijeh) in the past year.

He also said that 2.87 bcm of gas had been stored during the first eight months of the past year, showing a 24-percent rise year on year. The country's gas reproduction projects have registered some high records in the past decade, the official further highlighted.

In early January, the managing director of Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company announced that the country's gas storage capacity will reach 6.5 billion cubic meters by the Iranian calendar year 1402 (starts in March 2023).

NIDC Conducts Over 10,000m of Drilling in a Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has managed to carry out 10,182 meters of horizontal and directional drilling in 43 oil and gas wells across the country during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), Shana reported.

According to the Head of NIDC's Special Operations Department Ali Daqayeqi, some 654 meters of core extraction drilling was also conducted in the mentioned period which was a huge achievement for assessing the condition of the country's oil and gas reserves.

Referring to the indigenization of the necessary equipment and machinery for directional and horizontal drilling operations in the country, Daqayeqi said: "With the acquisition of the necessary technical and engineering knowledge, a number of basic parts and equipment for horizontal and directional drilling and core extraction are currently under construction inside the country."

"This has been achieved as a result of synergy between the company's specialists, scientific and research centers, and knowledge-based companies," he said.

Referring to NIDC's capabilities and capacities in various sectors including technical equipment, as well as specialized and experienced workforce, the official said: "NIDC's Special Operations Department is fully prepared to respond in a timely manner to the requests of the applicant companies, and several such requests for cooperation have been received from domestic oil companies since the beginning of this year which are on the agenda."

Back in February, NIDC Managing Director Abdollah Mousavi had announced that his company dug and completed the digging operation of 117 oil and gas wells during the first nine months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 - January 19, 2021).



Brazil's Daily Covid-19 Death Toll Passes 4,000

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil registered more than 4,000 Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours for the first time Tuesday, the health ministry said, as the country reeled from a surge of infections that has made it the current epicenter of the pandemic.

The coronavirus claimed 4,195 lives in the deadliest day of the pandemic yet for the hard-hit country, whose total reported death toll is now nearly 337,000, second only to the United States. Brazil's health system is buckling under the strain of the latest virus wave, which has forced doctors into agonising decisions over which patients to give life-saving care and led cemeteries to hold nighttime burials to deal with the crush of coffins.



N.Korea's Kim Urges Grass-Roots Party Members to Be More Proactive

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called on "grass-roots" members of the ruling Workers' Party to be more proactive and responsible in carrying out the country's new five-year economic plan, state media KCNA reported on Wednesday.

The comments came after Kim last week visited a site involved in a project to build 50,000 more apartments in the capital Pyongyang, and called for a renewed push in housing development - part of the economic plan unveiled at a congress in January. On Tuesday, Kim addressed a conference of cell secretaries - individuals responsible for groups of up to 30 party members - held as the country was in "high spirits" at the prospect of implementing decisions adopted at the congress, KCNA reported.



Amnesty International Condemns Rich Countries for Hoarding Covid-19 Vaccines



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Richer countries are failing a "rudimentary" test of global solidarity by hoarding Covid vaccines, Amnesty International said Wednesday as it accused China and others of exploiting the pandemic to undermine human rights.

In its annual report, the campaigning rights organization said the health crisis had exposed "broken" policies and that cooperation was the only way forward.

"The pandemic has cast a harsh light on the world's inability to cooperate effectively and equitably," said Agnes Callamard, who was appointed Amnesty's secretary general last month.

"The richest countries have effected a near-monopoly of the world's supply of vaccines, leaving countries with the fewest resources to face the worst health and human rights outcomes."

Amnesty strongly criticized the decision by former U.S. president Donald Trump to withdraw Washington from the World Health Organization (WHO) in the midst of the pandemic -- a step now reversed by Trump's successor Joe Biden.

Callamard called for an immediate acceleration of the global vaccine rollout, calling the inoculation campaign "a most fundamental, even rudimentary, test of the world's capacity for cooperation".

Since the coronavirus emerged in China in late 2019, the pandemic has claimed more than 2.8 million lives globally and infected at least 130 million people.

Despite regular calls for global solidarity from international organisations, figures show widening inequality in access to vaccines.

According to an AFP count, more than half the 680 million-plus doses administered worldwide have been in high-income countries, such as the United States, Britain and Israel, while the poorest have received only 0.1 percent of the doses.

At the end of March, the WHO warned of an increasingly unbalanced distribution of vaccines.

Amnesty International has supported initiatives such as the WHO's vaccine exchange platform C-TAP to share know-how, intellectual property and data.

The under-used initiative could be used to build production capacity and additional vaccine production sites, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, according to the WHO.

Amnesty dismissed as "paltry half-measures" decisions like those of the G20 group of nations to suspend debt repayments for 77 nations.

Amnesty also hit out at the "gross irresponsibility" of China during the pandemic, accusing Beijing of censoring health workers and journalists who tried to sound the alarm at the start of the outbreak.

Bloodshed in Myanmar as Troops Open Fire on Protesters

YANGON (Reuters) - Myanmar troops stormed an anti-coup protest camp on Wednesday, a resident said, in a pre-dawn operation that local media said killed and wounded several demonstrators, as activists defied a bloody crackdown and internet blockade by the ruling junta.

Myanmar has been in chaos since a Feb. 1 coup that ended a brief period of civilian-led democracy and sparked nationwide protests and strikes, despite the ruling military's use of lethal force to quell the resistance.

Violence erupted as troops entered the protest site on Wednesday in the town of Kale in the Saigang region, a hotspot of unrest, where demonstrators were demanding the restoration of Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government, a resident told Reuters.

News outlets cited witnesses saying there were casualties and repeated gunfire. Mizzima news outlet said three people were killed and posted pictures on Facebook of a fire burning near parked vehicles and soldiers with rifles in the street.

The Kale resident said the information was provided to him by witnesses, who took pictures of five dead bodies. Reuters could not independently verify the information.

The mostly youth-led movement's ability to organise anti-coup campaigns and share information via social media and instant messaging has been severely hampered by curbs on broadband wireless internet and mobile data services.

Fixed-line services, which few in Myanmar have access to, are still available.

"Myanmar has been subject to a stepwise collapse into the information abyss since February," Alp Toker, founder of internet blockade observatory NetBlocks told Reuters on Wednesday. "Communications are now severely limited and available only to the few."

With print media also halted, protesters have sought workarounds to get their message across, producing their own A4-sized daily news pamphlets that are shared digitally and printed for distribute among the public.

Some lessened their populations to create space for incarcerated people through early release programs at the beginning of the pandemic, such as the Santa Rita Jail in Alameda County, California. These appeared to result in lower COVID-19 cases.

Still, systemic issues continued, and many jails and prisons slowed their inmate release programs, according to the Prison Policy Initiative.

As recently as January, a city jail in St Louis, Missouri housed a COVID-positive pretrial detainee for 14 days before authorities were informed, according to documents obtained by Al Jazeera.

Yet the violence has intensified just as Prime Minister Abiy's government is trying to assert control over Tigray - underscoring how the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner is struggling to keep the country together ahead of the general election in June.

The election was originally set in August 2020 but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. It is regarded as a litmus test for the country's fragile unity, challenged by many newly resurgent regional and ethnically based parties.

"The Somali region special forces ... attacked the areas of Haruk and Gewane using heavy weapons including machine gun and rocket-propelled grenades. Children and women were killed while they were sleeping," Ahmed said.

pastoralists" and injuring at least 50 more

"The local community then beat back the attackers and caught some of them red-handed," temporarily restoring order, he said.

Both sides deny having initiated the attacks and blame the other for the violence.

Clashes along the border predate the six-month-old conflict in the north that has pitted the federal government against the former ruling party in the Tigray region.

Over 100 Killed in Clashes in Ethiopia's Afar, Somali Regions

MOGADISHU (Dispatches) - Border clashes between Ethiopia's Afar and Somali regions have killed at least 100 people, a regional official said, in the latest outbreak of violence ahead of national elections in June.

About 100 civilians, many of them herders, were killed since clashes broke out on Friday and continued through to Tuesday, Ahmed Humed, the deputy police commissioner for the Afar region, told the Reuters news agency by phone. He blamed the violence on an attack by Somali regional forces.

The bloodshed in territory claimed by the Somali and Afar regions highlights security woes facing Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that extend well beyond the ongoing conflict farther north in Tigray.

Ali Bedel, a spokesman for the Somali region, said 25 people had been killed on Friday and an "unknown number of civilians" died in a subsequent attack by the same forces on Tuesday.

Reuters could not independently verify whether the 25 deaths claimed by the Somali official were in addition to the 100 deaths or included in that figure.

Meanwhile, Ahmed Kaloyte of the Afar region, told the AFP news agency that Somali special police and militias raided an area known as Haruka, "indiscriminately firing on locals and killing more than 30 Afar civilian



Chile President Enacts Election Postponement

SANTIAGO (Dispatches) - Chile's President Sebastian Pinera enacted a law Tuesday to postpone by five weeks an election to choose a commission to rewrite the country's dictatorship-era constitution, amid a surge in coronavirus infections.

The vote was to have taken place on Sunday, but Pinera proposed that it be delayed, and received the backing of parliament. "We did not think it prudent or convenient to hold elections this coming weekend," Pinera said as he signed the bill in Santiago.

The election to decide the members of a Constituent Assembly who will rewrite the constitution -- which has been in effect since the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-90) -- will now take place on May 15 or 16.

Campaigning would be suspended until April 28.

Pinera said the reasons for the postponement were "taking care of the health of our compatriots and secondly, taking care of the health of our democracy."

Chile has notched record new daily infections recently, regularly topping 8,000 -- a much higher number than during the first wave of the pandemic and despite a fast advancing vaccination campaign.

Chile's intensive care units are running at 95 percent occupancy. Last October, Chileans voted overwhelmingly in favor of rewriting the constitution.

It had been one of the major demands when social unrest that lasted for months broke out in October 2019.



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S/pool, S, J
L.balcony
yard, pkg
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Pasdaran Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p, S
J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Elahieh (\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, F.F
Pasdaran (\$2500) 300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, F.F
Niavaran (\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, F.F

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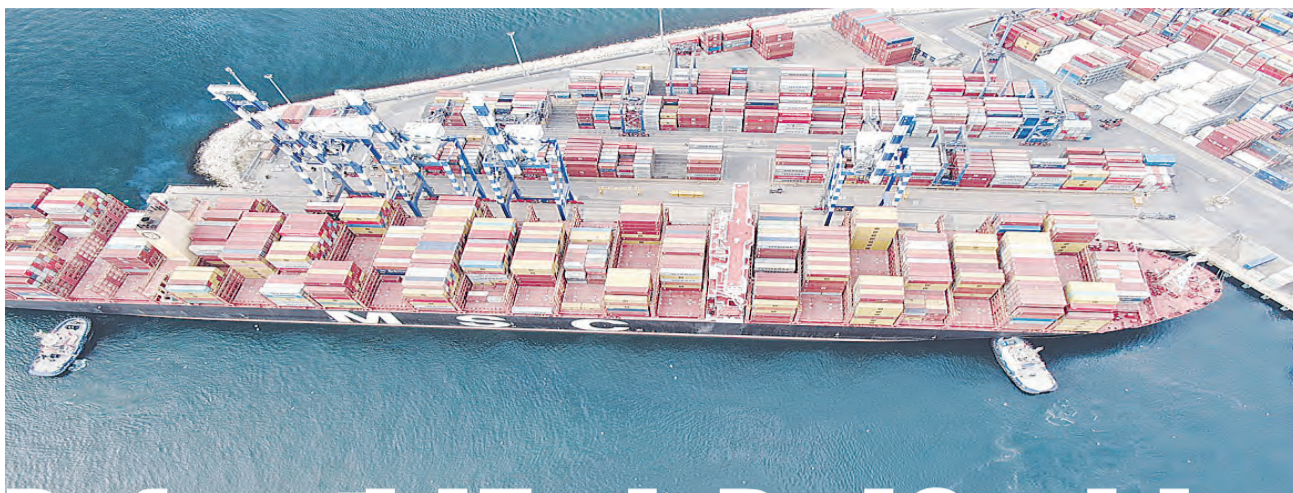
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Crypto Market Cap Surges to Record \$2 Trillions

LONDON (Dispatches) - The cryptocurrency market capitalization hit an all-time peak of \$2 trillion on Monday, according to data and market trackers CoinGecko and Blockfolio, as gains over the last several months attracted demand from both institutional and retail investors. By mid-afternoon, the crypto market cap was at \$2.02 trillion. The surge was led by bitcoin, which hit its own milestone by holding at a \$1 trillion market cap for one week. Bitcoin was last up 1.4% at \$59,045. Since hitting a lifetime peak of more than \$61,000 in mid-March, bitcoin has traded in a relatively narrow range.



Preferential Trade Deal Crucial as D-8 Nations Eye \$500B Volume

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The D-8 preferential trade deal could be a crucial tool in strengthening commercial relations of the group of developing nations, Turkey's Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan said as she called for broader cooperation in the digital economy and in e-commerce.

"The D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement can be very instrumental in enhancing our trade relations," Pekcan said in her virtual address at the 10th D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation's Business Forum.

Pekcan stressed that Turkey supports every initiative and strategy to boost trade ties in pursuit of achieving the \$500 billion (TL 4 trillion) trade target.

"I am glad to say that Turkey has already put the agreement into implementation based on our commitments," the minister noted.

"We would like to see other countries as well," Pekcan said, calling for Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan to also begin the implementation of the agreement at the earliest. "Besides this agreement, we need to support our investors and try to improve our investment relationships."

The group has an annual trade volume of around \$1.6 trillion of which 6.5% stems from intra-D-8 trade. "So I think we need to improve our trade relations. In particular, we must work towards the goal of achieving a trade volume of \$500 billion within the D-8," Pekcan said of the target aimed to be reached by 2023.

The group represents 4.5% of global trade and 5% of the global gross domestic product (GDP).

Pekcan also stressed trade facilitation and cooperation regarding customs matters.

Given the significance of international logistics and supply chains, D-8 countries should work on improving logistical ties and infrastructure in order to facilitate trade, the minister said.

"As Turkey, we emphasize our key role in trans-Asian logistics routes and attach importance in enhancing the effectiveness of the Middle Corridor," she added.

Also addressing the event, Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) Chairperson Rifat Hisarcikloğlu said the \$110 billion trade volume between D-8 member nations is not enough.

"This is not enough. We need a better trade and investment environment between our countries. We need to broaden the scope of our preferential trade agreement. There needs to be full participation of our member states in this agreement. We need better physical and legal infrastructure," Hisarcikloğlu said.

She stressed that Turkey is well aware of the economic synergy that could be generated with fellow countries of shared historical, economic, social and cultural foundations.

"Our involvement with the D-8, along with Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is a solid outcome of this belief," the minister noted.

Underlining that the coronavirus pandemic increased the importance of the countries to act in harmony and pool their resources, Pekcan said, "We support initiatives towards ensuring the distribution of vaccines to every country without any exceptions, in a cost-effective way."

Foreign Investment in China Climbs 81% in 2020

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China last year attracted \$520.6 billion of foreign investment, up by 81 percent from 2019, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) said in a report.

Amid China's steady economic recovery and improved business climate, foreign direct investment into the Chinese mainland grew by 14 percent in 2020, the report said.

In 2020, China's securities market saw net inflows of overseas funds totaling \$254.7 billion, a surge of 73 percent year on year, SAFE data showed.

Net inflows into Chinese bonds jumped by 86 percent from a year ago to \$190.5 billion, while that into equities reached \$64.1 billion, up by 43 percent year on year.

In contrast, the country's outbound direct investment lagged behind due to the spread of COVID-19 worldwide, down 20 percent year on year to \$109.9 billion.

The report attributed the significant growth in Chinese securities' overseas holdings to the country's promising economic development prospects, prudent monetary policy, and high-level opening up of the financial market.

Thailand Has No Plans to Adjust VAT Rate

BANGKOK (Bernama) - Thailand has no plans to adjust its value-added tax (VAT) rate and will keep it at seven per cent, in a bid to alleviate the people's burden on cost of living.

Government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri said the current rate was based on the Cabinet's resolution in August 2020 that approved keeping the VAT at seven per cent from Oct 1, 2020 to Sept 30, 2021.

"The 7 per cent VAT rate has been set to be in line with the country's economic situation, which is to stimulate economic growth, while

not being too much of a burden to the people," he said in a statement.

The seven per cent rate applies to sales of goods and services within Thailand as well as imports of goods and services into the country.

"According to the Revenue Code, Thailand's standard VAT rate has been 10 per cent since its implementation in 1992, replacing the Business Tax (BT), but the rate has continually been reduced to 7 per cent except during the 'Tom Yum Kung' financial crisis in 1997," Burapachaisri said.

U.S. Pushing G20 for Global Minimum Corporate Tax

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States is pushing in the G20 to adopt a global minimum corporate tax to stem the erosion of government revenues, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Monday.

Just days after President Joe Biden announced plans to raise corporate taxes to finance a massive \$2 trillion infrastructure and jobs program, Yellen said a collective international effort would end the "race to the bottom" on taxation.

Biden expressed outrage at multinationals -- like Amazon -- that have moved to tax havens or used loopholes and pay little to no tax, far less than some individuals, and said he would put a stop to the practice.

His plan would raise the U.S. corporate tax rate to 28 percent and the minimum for multinationals to 21 percent.

He dismissed concerns the higher rate would drive companies overseas, telling reporters on Monday that "there's no evidence of that."

"We're talking about a 28 percent tax that everybody thought was fair enough for everybody," he said. "I'm going to push as hard as I can (to) change the circumstances so we can compete with the rest of the world."

Yellen said the practice of seeking tax havens erodes government revenues and undermines an economy's competitiveness. "Together we can use a global minimum tax to make sure the global economy thrives based on a more level playing field in the taxation of multinational corporations," she said in a speech to The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

The interconnected global economy has led to "a 30-year race to the bottom on corporate tax rates." But for companies and economies to remain competitive, governments must make sure they "have stable tax systems that raise sufficient revenue to invest in essential public goods and respond to crises, and that all citizens fairly share the burden of financing government."

Biden's proposal recognizes "it is important to work with other countries to end the pressures of tax competition and corporate tax base erosion," Yellen said.

G20 finance ministers are expected to discuss the proposal during a virtual meeting on Wednesday, hosted by Italy. A Treasury official told reporters the G20 goal is to have a proposal on the global minimum tax by July, and the Biden administration could if needed change its legislation to bring the US minimum tax into line with the international plan.

UAE Announces \$3b Investment in Iraq



DUBAI (Dispatches) - The United Arab Emirates announced a \$3 billion investment in Iraq in a fresh bid to strengthen economic and investment relations between the two nations, according to a statement on Sunday released by Emirates News Agency.

The statement added that investments will target new prospects of partnerships between the two countries, while accelerating socio-economic and developmental growth in support of the people of Iraq.

The announcement came during Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's visit to the UAE where he met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.

The statement added that al-Kadhimi thanked the UAE for its medical support that was sent to help Iraq and its people face the health crisis.

"The two sides agreed to grow economic cooperation and accelerate trade and investment exchanges, urging their businessmen to exchange visits. They also agreed on establishing the Iraqi-UAE Business Council and to streamline all the measures in the service of the two nations and their peoples," the statement added.

WAM added that Iraq commended the UAE's initiative to renovate Al Hadba Minaret, the Great Mosque of al-Nuri, and a number of churches.

The two sides also doubled down on the importance of strengthening security and defense cooperation by sharing intelligence in the fight against terrorism. They also agreed to propel energy cooperation, particularly in the field of clean energy.

At the end of his visit, the Iraqi premier thanked the UAE, its leadership, government, and people for the warm welcome and hospitality he received during the visit.

Al-Kadhimi's visit comes as part of efforts by Iraq to improve bilateral ties with countries in the region.

Last week, the prime minister traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss relations between the two countries.

Concerns Rise as South Korea's Household Debt Nears GDP

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Household debt in South Korea surged to nearly 100 percent of the nation's gross domestic product, raising concerns that the central bank's rate hikes may be placing a heavy burden on the household sector, a report showed Monday.

The proportion of Korea's household debt to its GDP -- the market value of all final goods and services produced in an economy during a certain period -- came to 98.6 percent at the end of June last year, according to the report from the Korea Institute of Public Finance.



The level of household debt in Asia's fourth-largest economy outstripped the global average of 63.7 percent and the average in advanced countries of 75.3 percent, it said.

In addition, Korea's household debt figures have increased at a much faster pace than those of its foreign counterparts.

The latest figure represented a gain of 27.6 percentage points from 2008. In contrast, between 2008 and 2020 the global average gained 3.7 percentage points and advanced nations on average logged a 0.9 percentage point decrease, data showed.

In addition, Korean households were more reliant on short-term loans compared with households in other major economies. Of the country's total household debt, short-term debt accounted for 22.8 percent -- much higher than the corresponding figures of 2.3 percent for France, 3.2 percent for Germany, 4.5 percent for Spain and 11.9 percent for Britain. The United States was an exception, with a short-term debt ratio of 31.6 percent.

Korea's household debt is on the rise as people increasingly borrow money from financial institutions either to purchase apartments or invest in stocks amid the prolonged low-rate environment.

The Bank of Korea slashed the benchmark interest rate to an all-time low of 0.5 percent in May last year after an emergency rate reduction to 0.75 percent the previous March. This was done to inject liquidity into banks, businesses and households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to ample liquidity, the total value of all financial loans plus credit card-based payment services extended to households reached an all-time high of 1,726 trillion won (\$1.53 trillion) as of December, the BOK data showed.

The research institute also noted that a sharp rise in the benchmark interest rate amid fast-growing debt could trigger household indebtedness, which could take a toll on the real economy.

Meanwhile, BOK Gov. Lee Ju-yeol earlier said "it is premature to change the current monetary easing policy due to lingering economic uncertainty amid the protracted COVID-19 pandemic."

2 Iranian Movies Win Awards At New Delhi Festival

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Two Iranian movies, "That Night's Train", "The Inheritance", won awards from the 4th New Delhi Film Festival.

The 4th New Delhi Film Festival has awarded Iranian movies "That Night's Train" and "The Inheritance". "That Night's Train" directed by Hamidreza Qotbi

received the Red Rose Award for best-released film between September 2019 and December 2020. The film also won the best-adapted screenplay award.

"The Inheritance" was directed by Sadeq Sadeq-Daqiqi. It is about Adel, a 16-year-old boy whose parents have divorced and his mother lives abroad.



Pakistan Faces Dilemma Over Trade Ties With India

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The Pakistani government's recent flip-flop on the partial resumption of trade with India highlights how geopolitical considerations — rather than economic or rational — drive policymaking.

In a sign of rapprochement between the two sides, Indian PM Modi (L) and Pakistani PM Khan (R) recently exchanged letters

Pakistan's government last week put a hold on restarting limited imports of sugar, cotton and wheat from India until New Delhi reviews its 2019 decision to revoke the Kashmir region's special status.

It reversed the decision made earlier by Pakistan's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to give the green light for imports from India, which would have ended nearly 20 months of trade suspension between the rivals.

The government's decision came after sharp criticism from opposition parties. They slammed Prime Minister Imran Khan's administration for not consulting the parliament and trying to mend ties with New Delhi without first resolving the Kashmir dispute.

After the reversal, Khan stressed that trade with India would not be normalized until New Delhi resumed Kashmir's special constitutional status.

Kashmir is a territory that is claimed by both India and Pakistan and partly controlled by each, with China also controlling the most remote segment of the region. India and Pakistan fought two of their three full-fledged wars over the Kashmir region.

Pakistan halted trade and diplomatic ties with India in 2019 after New Delhi imposed direct rule on the part of Kashmir it administers and imposed strict security controls there in anticipation of unrest at the decision.

There has been a frosty standoff since, but signs of rapprochement recently have included Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exchanging letters with his Pakistani counterpart, Khan, as well as a resumption of talks last week on the use of resources from their shared Indus River.

In February, Pakistan and India also agreed to continue a ceasefire at the often-tense Kashmir border.

Anti-India sentiment runs deep in Pakistan, but experts say it does not help the struggling Pakistani economy.

"Anti-India sentiments have always been there in Pakistan, and those in power have



successfully exploited them for their benefits," Amit Ranjan, a research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, told DW.

He pointed out that New Delhi's moves affecting Kashmir over the past two years have further strengthened anti-India forces in Pakistan, resulting in a total breakdown in trade and diplomatic ties.

"Cutting off such relations has been far from being practical as it puts a tremendous burden on the economically struggling Pakistan. Goods from India are always cheaper than from anywhere else," he said.

Khurram Husain, a Pakistani business journalist, told DW that anti-India sentiment is rooted in geopolitics, nothing else. "It grows and diminishes with the requirements of Pakistan's foreign policy," Husain said.

Observers say the deep-seated animosity between the nuclear-armed neighbors is clouding rational policymaking on the part of some political leaders.

"It's also being exploited by the opportunistic Pakistani opposition to try to make Imran Khan look soft on India. Throw in the mix Kashmir, and the government's options to try to open up a dialogue with India become very limited," Claude Rakisits, honorary associate professor in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University, told DW.

UN Chief Calls for Allocation Of Resources So All Can Enjoy Same Health Outcomes



TEHRAN (UNIC) – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on World Health Day, 7 April 2021, while highlighting the health systems' inequalities and injustices, called for implementation of policies and allocation of resources so all can enjoy the same health outcomes.

The full text of his message reads:

On this World Health Day, we highlight the inequalities and injustices of our health systems.

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed how unequal our societies are.

Within countries, illness and death from COVID-19 has been higher among people and communities that contend with poverty, unfavorable living and working conditions, discrimination and social exclusion.

Globally, the vast majority of vaccine doses administered have been in a few wealthy countries or those producing vaccines. Thanks to the COVAX initiative, more nations are now beginning to receive vaccine supplies, but most people in low- and middle-income countries still must watch and wait.

Such inequities are immoral, and they are dangerous for our health, our economies and our societies.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must implement policies and allocate resources so all can enjoy the same health outcomes. That means achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

And it means delivering universal health coverage so everyone, everywhere, can thrive.

On this World Health Day, let us commit to work together for a healthy, equitable world.

Energy Ministry Fulfills People's Needs Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN - Minister of Energy says despite the imposed economic war on the country, the ministry diligently tries to fulfill people's needs regularly and integrally.

Speaking at the weekly inauguration ceremony of utility projects, Reza Ardakanian said: "We were able to the operation of 227 utility projects and the ministry would continue to serve people based on regular planning."

Ardakanian also pointed to the motto of the new Iranian year 'Production: Support and the Elimination of Obstacles', and said: "Any activities should be followed fully to meet the country's needs, especially in utilities."

He further exemplified dam constructions as one of the ways to deal with the drought to store water, which Iran was trying to implement with neighboring countries, both with border and non-border rivers.

The inauguration ceremony of 5 key electricity distribution network projects including 8,142 projects for the development, construction, improvement, and optimization of the electricity network in the country was held via videoconference on Tuesday with the

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



presence of the Minister of Energy, Reza Ardakanian.

He also said the ministry plans to increase the water and electricity tariffs of high-consuming subscribers by 16 percent.

Ardakanian said the tariff increase for ordinary subscribers will be seven percent like the previous years.

Although the high-consuming subscribers will have to pay more money for their water and

electricity, low-consuming households are awarded a 100-percent discount on their bills, following the implementation of a program called "Power of Hope".

Earlier this month, the managing director of Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR) announced that seven million subscribers have received a 100-percent discount on their electricity bills in the framework of the Energy Ministry's "Power of Hope" program.

Mohammad-Hassan Motevalizadeh said, "Since the start of this program last August, the subscribers have had some good cooperation with us and we hope that this cooperation will increase during the upcoming hot season."

Iranian Ship...

FROM PAGE 1

A New York Times story published on Wednesday quoted an anonymous US official telling the newspaper that the Tel Aviv regime notified the United States that Israeli forces had attacked an Iranian ship in the Red Sea.

The unnamed U.S. official said Israel called the strike a retaliation, and that the ship had been hit below the water line.

In a similar incident last month, an Iranian cargo ship was damaged after it was targeted by a terrorist attack en route to Europe in the Mediterranean Sea.

Tehran said back then that such acts of terror are a clear example of naval piracy and run counter to international law on the safety of commercial vessels.

On February 25, an explosion struck Israeli-owned and the Bahamas-flagged ship, the MV Helios Ray, in the Sea of Oman near the strategic mouth of the Persian Gulf.

President Hails...

FROM PAGE 1

The Americans "explicitly say that 'we have no choice but to negotiate.' They say 'if you (Iran) are ready, we are prepared to negotiate directly, and if you are not ready, we are prepared to negotiate indirectly with the P4 + 1 group.' This means the victory of the Iranian nation, which we should not underestimate," Rouhani said.

"In recent days, we have been witnessing a new chapter in the JCPOA's revival [process]. All the countries that were committed to the JCPOA gathered in Vienna with different combinations, including the P4+1 and Iran as well as the P4+1 and the United States. But anyway, a single voice is heard today, which is everyone around the nuclear deal has come to the conclusion that there is no better solution than

the JCPOA and no other way but the full implementation of the JCPOA. This is a new success for the Islamic Republic."

Rouhani said his administration managed the country under the most severe sanctions and economic war in such a successful manner that made not only its friends, but also its enemies admit to the defeat of the "maximum pressure" campaign. The administration's success, the chief executive added, was achieved through the resistance and unity of the Iranian nation. "Returning to obligations means repentance in religion. The US wants to repent and return to the JCPOA. Now, we have to see how true it is and how faithful [the US] is to its words in practice. We do not want to make a final judgment now," Rouhani said.

IMF...

FROM PAGE 1

The country was hit by reduced economic activity last year as a result of the spread of the coronavirus which forced long closures for businesses and industries.

Experts believe U.S. sanctions that were enacted in 2018 gave Iran the opportunity to diversify its economy away from crude. The country is currently enjoying higher earnings from non-oil exports as key sectors of the economy, including agriculture and manufacturing, keep growing at a record pace. Iran is speeding up its nationwide inoculation campaign against the coronavirus, raising hopes that the economy will further expand in the months to come.

Iran Slams...

FROM PAGE 1

"We have also contacted the Ukrainian company and have expressed our readiness for talks on paying damages to the company for the air accident," he added.

"Unfortunately, we are still hearing unusual comments from Canadian officials which are not supported by the norms of legal logic and are not acceptable," he said.

"Some comments made by our Ukrainian colleagues implicitly suggest baseless threats of taking legal action and the like," he said. "I deem it necessary to say the Islamic Republic of Iran has discharged all its responsibilities based on international law and will move forward with the same trend till the end," he said. "So, Iran is not afraid of any rhetoric or any other possible out-of-the-ordinary move," he added. "While respecting its bilateral relations with other countries, Iran does not, within the framework of its national sovereignty, bow to any pressure or threats, will proportionately react to any illogical and irrational move against it, and will respond to the slightest unilateral move with legitimate, legal and diplomatic tools," he said.

Iran's %20 Enriched...

FROM PAGE 1

According to the Parliament's law, a cascade of IR-6 has also been deployed and the next cascades are under development, the spokesman said, noting that the speed of enrichment will see a 'significant increase' with the completion of these installations.

Meanwhile yesterday, Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Ali Akbar Salehi said that Iran's uranium enrichment capacity has reached 16,500 SWU and possesses 57 kg of 20-percent-enriched uranium.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Salehi referred to the National Day of Nuclear Technology in Iran on April 9, and said that an exhibition of achievements in this field would be held on Saturday.

He highlighted AEOI's efforts in meeting medical needs of one million people with refractory disease and added that the organization adds to its medical products annually and collaborates with universities in this regard. Salehi also mentioned a Iontophoresis center in Alborz province with 200 million euros of equipment which is going to be completed in three years. He referred to another project named Tetra with 60 million euros of equipment which is dedicated to Radiopharmaceuticals, the first phase of which is going to be launched later in summer.

Iran has introduced several new centrifuges, including IR4, IR6 and IR2M, according to the official who added that Iran had an enrichment capacity of 13,000 SWU, but the number stands at 16,500 SWU today. He underlined that Iran has a stockpile of 5 tons of enriched uranium and 57 kg of 20-percent uranium which would reach 120 kg in a year.

Iran's yellow cake production was 4-5 tons annually which has now increased to 35 tons, as said by AEOI chief. Salehi expressed a positive assessment of the meeting of Joint Commission of the JCPOA on Tuesday and said that Iran's stance is clear and unchanging.

According to the official, Iran has made it clear that the US was the party who violated the nuclear deal by its ceasing participation and resuming sanction; and now, its Washington's responsibility to rejoin the deal by removing sanctions and then Iran would return to full compliance.

He also stressed that there would be no step-by-step measure for the US rejoining the JCPOA.

Russia, Hezbollah...

FROM PAGE 1

The Lebanese paper also said the two sides had discussed the situation in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine.

So according to Lebanese Al-Akbar, #Russia is studying the possibility of opening a representative office for #Hezbollah in Moscow. Russia informed Hezb in its visit to Moscow weeks ago in response to an official Russian invitation that they consider the Resistance party

Pointing to the Syrian crisis, the al-Akbar newspaper said the Russians stressed that the presence of Hezbollah in the war-inflicted Arab country was "necessary," and added that Moscow counted on future cooperation with the resistance movement. "Russian officials were keen to deliver a clear message to the Hezbollah leadership: Your presence in Syria is necessary, in politics, as in the military," the paper said. "We count on cooperating with you in the future in both fields."

Hezbollah was established following the 1982 Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon. Since then, the popular resistance movement has grown into a powerful military force.

During the 2000 and 2006 Israeli wars on Lebanon, battleground contribution by Hezbollah proved an indispensable asset, forcing the Israeli military into a retreat and shattering the myth of the occupying entity's invincibility.

Moreover, Hezbollah has played a critical role in the Syrian military's counter-terrorist operations over the past years with the aim of preventing the spillover of the Syria crisis into Lebanon.

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Tokyo Water Polo Test Event Postponed Due to COVID-19

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Tokyo Olympic organisers said on Tuesday they had decided to postpone a water polo test event planned for this weekend, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt preparations for the start of the Summer Games in July. Organisers are seeking a suitable date in May or June to hold the event, the Tokyo 2020 committee said in a statement. "Carrying out test events is greatly important for the preparation of the Tokyo 2020 Games," Tokyo 2020 said.

Hertha Berlin Sack Goalkeeping Coach

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bundesliga football club Hertha Berlin have sacked goalkeeping coach Zsolt Petry over controversial statements he made about homosexuality and immigration to a Hungarian newspaper, it was announced Tuesday. The Budapest-born 54-year-old, who joined Hertha in 2015, was released "with immediate effect" over an interview he gave to Hungarian newspaper Magyar Nemzet.

Vinicius Double Puts Real Madrid on Top Against Liverpool

MADRID (Dispatches) - Vinicius Junior scored twice as Real Madrid made Liverpool pay for more defensive errors on Tuesday, a 3-1 victory putting them in sight of the Champions League semi-finals.

Vinicius and Marco Asensio both profited in the first half after darting behind Liverpool's makeshift back-line before a simple move from a throw-in gave Vinicius a simple finish in the second.

Mohamed Salah's strike shortly after the interval briefly made it a contest at Valdebebas, with an away goal certainly a significant consolation for Liverpool to take into the second leg at Anfield next week.

But without fans and with a miserable recent record at home, Jurgen Klopp will know his side have it all to do to avoid his team's season becoming solely about scraping into the Premier League's top four.

"We didn't play well enough, that's my first concern," said Klopp. "We didn't deserve to win tonight, but the good news is that there is another match."

"We are going to fight, 3-1 is not good, but we have a chance."

Except for two spells after half-time and at the finish, when their opponents were holding on to what they had, Liverpool were overpowered by Real Madrid, whose only disappointment might be missing out on a clearer margin ahead of the return in eight days' time.

Before then, they go up against Barcelona on Saturday and this result, their fifth consecutive victory, should be another huge boost to morale going into what will be a crucial fixture in La Liga's title race.

"Nothing is close, nothing is won," Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said. "We are alive in two competitions and we will keep fighting. We will start the second leg like it's 0-0 because it will be another very difficult game."

Madrid were without Sergio Ramos, who throughout was bellowing at his team from the stands, while Raphael Varane testing positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday morning meant both sides were fielding patched-up back fours.

The last time these two clubs met, Ramos dislocated Salah's shoulder and Madrid went on to win their 13th European Cup but Klopp insisted there was no desire for revenge in the minds of his players.



They could have done with some extra fire because Madrid were superior in the first half, more controlled in possession and more aggressive out of it. Liverpool seemed caught between trying to match Madrid's intensity and slowing the game down to gain a foothold. Meanwhile Manchester City's Phil Foden grabbed a last-minute winner as they beat Borussia Dortmund 2-1 in their Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday after Marco Reus netted a late equaliser for the Germans at The Etihad.

While the visitors will be bitterly disappointed to have conceded a second goal so late, Dortmund will take heart from the away goal and their overall performance and believe they have a real chance in next Wednesday's return game.

City lacked their usual sharpness in the final third, with Pep Guardiola's false-nine tactic not delivering benefits on this occasion, but Foden's 90th minute goal gives them the edge.

Much of the focus before the game was on Dortmund's prolific 20-year-old Norwegian forward Erling Haaland and while he was relatively quiet he did force a fine save out of Ederson before creating Dortmund's equaliser.

City had taken a 19th minute lead with a classic counter-attacking move finished off by playmaker Kevin De Bruyne after Dortmund's former Liverpool midfielder Emre Can had given the ball away to Riyad Mahrez on the halfway line.

Mahrez started the break, finding De Bruyne who burst forward and fed Foden on the left, the Englishman's cross to the back post was over hit but Mahrez recovered to pick out De Bruyne in the middle and the Belgian slotted home.

Guardiola's side then had a penalty awarded but correctly overturned by VAR after a challenge by Can on Rodri.

Loew to Remain Germany Boss At Euro 2020

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Joachim Loew will remain Germany coach at Euro 2020 despite last week's latest humiliating defeat, the president of the German FA (DFB) said in an interview on Tuesday.

Loew is under pressure after Germany crashed to a 2-1 home loss to North Macedonia in a World Cup qualifier, four months after a 6-0 drubbing by Spain in the Nations League.

The latest defeat was Germany's first loss in World Cup qualifying for 20 years.

Germany have struggled for consistent form since finishing bottom of their group at the 2018 World Cup under Loew, when they were defending champions.

The 61-year-old is set to step down after 15 years in charge following the delayed European Championship from June 11-July 11. "The disappointing game (against North Macedonia) has not changed anything with regards to our plans," DFB president Fritz Keller told daily Bild.

"Jogi' Loew and his team will analyse everything and draw the right conclusions to be successful at the European championships." The defeat left Germany third in their World Cup qualifying group, trailing leaders Armenia by three points and behind North Macedonia on goal difference and led to calls for Loew to be replaced before the Euros.

Irving Scores 40, James Harden Hurt in Nets' Win

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Kyrie Irving scored 40 points, including a critical 3-pointer in the final minute, and Jeff Green made a pair of free throws with 3.7 seconds left to seal the host Brooklyn Nets' 114-112 comeback win over the New York Knicks on Monday.

The Nets, playing the second leg of a back-to-back, carried over some of the struggles from their 115-107 loss Sunday in Chicago. Brooklyn fell behind by 10 points at halftime and lost James Harden after just four minutes due to hamstring tightness.

Green finished with 23 points for the Nets, who hold a half-game lead over the Philadelphia 76ers for first place in the Eastern Conference. Harris scored 16 points and grabbed a team-high eight rebounds, and Alize Johnson added 12 points and seven rebounds off the bench.

Julius Randle recorded a triple-double with 19 points, 15 rebounds and 12 assists for the Knicks. RJ Barrett shot 4 of 6 from 3-point range en route to a team-high 22 points.

Mavericks 111, Jazz 103

Luka Doncic tallied 31 points, nine rebounds and eight assists to lead host Dallas past Utah for its fifth straight win.

Doncic shot 6 of 11 from 3-point range to help the Mavericks pull away. Dorian Finney-Smith added 23 points and Jalen Brunson chipped in 20 off the bench. Josh Richardson added 17 while making all five of his shots from 3-point range.

Mike Conley scored 28 points and went 6 of 10 from 3-point range to lead Utah. Donovan Mitchell, Jordan Clarkson, and Bojan Bogdanovic scored 16 apiece, although Mitchell missed 17 of 23 shots from the field. Rudy Gobert added 14 points and 15 rebounds.

Suns 133, Rockets 130

Devin Booker scored a game-high 36 points, Deandre Ayton and Chris Paul recorded double-doubles and Phoenix extended its winning streak to six games by edging host Houston.

Booker sank four free throws in the final 37.8 seconds left and picked off a Jae'Sean Tate pass to seal the win. Booker finished 6 of 8 from 3-point range and added six rebounds and six assists. Ayton finished with 27 points and 11 rebounds, and Paul had 19 points and 11 assists.

Jan-Lennard Struff Saves Five Match Points to Win



Sixth-seeded Australian John Millman needed three hours and 15 minutes to put away Argentina's Federico Coria, 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-3. Other winners included 19-year-old Italian

ROME (Dispatches) - Fifth-seeded Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany saved five match points in a 1-6, 6-1, 7-5 victory over Portugal's Joao Sousa in first-round action Tuesday at the Sardegna Open in Cagliari, Italy.

Struff overcame a 5-2 deficit in the deciding set and will face British qualifier Liam Broady, a 6-1, 6-3 winner against Switzerland's Marc-Andrea Huesler.

Lorenzo Musetti, who crushed Austria's Dennis Novak 6-0, 6-1 in 53 minutes. Also advancing to the second round were Slovakia's Jozef Kovalik and Andrej Martin, Italy's Marco Cecchinato and France's Gilles Simon.

Fifth-seeded Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain rallied for a 6-7 (1), 6-2, 6-2 first-round win over Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Marbella, Spain.

Fellow Spaniard and No. 6 seed Feliciano Lopez had an easier time, firing 12 aces and saving all four break points in a 6-4, 6-4 defeat of Japan's Taro Daniel. Lopez next faces 17-year-old countryman Carlos Alcaraz, who defeated Serbia's Nikola Milojevic 7-6 (3), 6-3.

Other first-round winners included Argentina's Facundo Bagnis, Ilya Ivashka of Belarus, Gianluca Mager of Italy and Spain's Jaume Munar and Mario Vilella Martinez.

Rio Backs Off Plan To Rename Maracana Stadium for Pele

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - The Rio de Janeiro state legislature backed down Tuesday from plans to rename Brazil's iconic Maracana stadium for football legend Pele, after the proposal triggered controversy.

In an unusual move, legislative speaker Andre Ceciliano, who sponsored the bill, asked interim governor Claudio Castro to veto rather than sign it.

After lawmakers voted on March 9 to change the stadium's official name to "Edson Arantes do Nascimento - Rei Pele" to honor the three-time world champion, critics questioned why they were spending their time on such matters in the middle of a raging health crisis in Brazil, hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

"My intention was to pay tribute to the king of football, the best player of all time. But the Maracana will always be called the Maracana," said Ceciliano, of the left-wing Workers' Party (PT).

There was also a squabble over the fate of the stadium's current official name, "Jornalista Mario Filho," for a beloved Brazilian journalist and sportswriter credited with helping give football the near-religious devotion it enjoys in the country today.

The bill retained Filho's name for the sports complex surrounding the stadium, which also includes gymnastics and athletics venues.

But Filho's family and admirers resented the change.

The Maracana, which takes its unofficial name from the surrounding neighborhood, has been the scene of historic matches including the 1950 and 2014 World Cup finals, as well as the venue for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2016 Olympics.

It is the home stadium for two local football clubs, Fluminense and reigning champions Flamengo.



Man City Blame Coronavirus for £126m Loss

LONDON (Dispatches) - Premier League leaders Manchester City blamed a £126 million (\$175 million) net loss last season on a series of factors caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

City's revenue for the year to the end of June 2020 fell 11 percent to £478.4 million, with the Premier League and Champions League finishing after the accounting period.

Delayed income from the postponed fixtures, including broadcast earnings, and player sales will show up in next year's figures.

"Clearly, the 2019/20 accounts in isolation are not the best representation of the reality of the season with delayed player trading and numerous games being played after 30th June 2020, the revenues from which will be accounted in the 2020/21 period," said City CEO Ferran Soriano.

"A better financial picture of the Covid years will be provided at the end of the 2020/21 season, when the two seasons are combined and normalised."

Despite playing an entire season behind closed doors, City said the "club expects to immediately return to profitability in 2020/21, as a result of a less Covid-impacted season and deferred 2019/20 revenues".

A drop of £13.3 million in matchday revenue was more than offset by an increase of nearly £20 million in commercial income thanks in large part to a new kit sponsorship deal with Puma. Wage costs across the club rose to £351 million.

"Our long-term approach has meant that we are now not wholly dependent on income streams that have been most vulnerable to the ongoing impact of Covid-19," said chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak.

