

Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Saturday That 193 More Iranians Died of the Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing the Death Toll to 64,232

IRAN NEWS

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Sye-Kyun Is to Pay an Official Visit to Tehran Today to Discuss Bilateral Issues, Particularly the Release of Billions Of Dollars of Frozen Iranian funds

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2 DOMESTIC

Delay in Removing Sanctions Benefits Iran, Harms West



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Chinese Expected To Invest \$80b in Iran's Mining Sector



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Myanmar UN Envoy Urges No-Fly Zone as Many Protesters Killed



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Jazz Routs Blazers, Extend Home Win Streak



> SEE PAGE 8

Amnesty Urged to Report Hardships of Iranians Under U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's mission to the European Union has called on Amnesty International to compile a report about the harmful impact of illegal American sanctions on the livelihoods of Iranians, especially at a time when the country is grappling with a deadly coronavirus outbreak.

In a chain of tweets on Friday, Iran's Embassy in Belgium — which hosts the EU's headquarters — drew attention to the difficulties that over 80 million Iranians have been facing under America's unilateral sanctions, saying those problems have been compounded by the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Along with one of the tweets, the diplomatic mission posted a recent Amnesty report on "deliberately divisive and destructive policies that have perpetuated inequality, discrimination and oppression and paved the way for the devastation wrought by COVID-19."

The Iranian mission said "as Agnès Callamard correctly observed in an Amnesty report 'the pandemic has cast a harsh light on the world's inability to cooperate effectively in times of dire global need.'"

See Page 7

Vienna Talks Constructive, But Rocky Road Ahead

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian diplomat has described as positive the atmosphere of the recent talks held in Vienna among members of the joint commission of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but says there is a bumpy road ahead.

"It was a busy week. Back-to-back consultations were going on between all sides," said Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi.

"We have separate meetings with the three European countries as well as Russia and China, which helped move forward with the negotiations," he told the state TV on Friday.

"I can say we are on track, but there is a rocky road ahead," Araqchi noted.

"It is difficult. It needs work. The United States needs strong willpower to decide to lift its sanctions. We hope it will be fruitful," he added.

The Iranian official highlighted that talks are being held amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

See Page 7

Iran Marks National Nuclear Day With Unveiling 123 New Achievements



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has unveiled 133 new nuclear achievements made by the country's experts in different areas of the nuclear industry, including quantum, enrichment, heavy water and deuterium compounds, radiopharmaceuticals, lasers, and etc.

In a video conference call on Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani unveiled the nuclear achievements in the provinces of Tehran, Markazi, Isfahan, Alborz and Qom to mark the 15th anniversary of the National Nuclear Technology Day.

On his order, Iranian experts began injecting gas to a new generation centrifuges in Natanz enrichment complex and also the mechanical testing of IR-9 centrifuge was started and the assembly center of the new generation centrifuges was put into operation.

Iran showed to the world the peaceful nature of its nuclear program by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — in 2015. The nuclear deal was also ratified in the form of a UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Addressing Saturday's event, Rouhani said one of the honorable effects of the JCPOA was that it completely legalized the nuclear industry in Iran.

"I reiterate that all our nuclear activities are peaceful and for civilian purposes. As Leader [of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei] has repeatedly stated, in our religion, pursuing a weapon that can be a great danger to a large community is forbidden," he noted.

The president also thanked Ali-Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and the staff of the organization, for the 133 nuclear achievements made over the past year.

"Today, a chain of 164 IR-6 centrifuges was launched. It can provide us with products 10 times more than those of the previous chain. This means that the previous centrifuges were at most 1 SWU (Separative Work Units), but this new series is 10 SWU," he said.

"Even today, we have developed the IR-9 centrifuge with the capacity of 50 SWU in terms of technology, i.e. they provide us products 50 to 60 times more than those of the old centrifuges."

Rouhani note that, "Radiopharmaceuticals are one of the products which are used for diagnostics and are very important in medicine."

Meanwhile the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization said that the infrastructure of the nuclear industry was maintained with high sensitivity.

Ali-Akbar Salehi stated that despite all the restrictions and pressures caused by illegal and oppressive sanctions imposed by the ill-wishers of Islamic Iran, various projects in diverse fields of nuclear science had been vigorously pursued.

Noting that the infrastructure of the nuclear industry was maintained with high sensitivity, he said if the Iranian authorities and senior decision-makers delegate something to the officials of the nuclear industry, a great flourish will come out in a short time.

He pointed out that the introduction of 133 new achievements, especially in capabilities of the health, industry, and agriculture sectors, as well as assistance to energy supply projects at the national level, had been a clear proof of this claim.

Iran Starts Injecting Gas Into Next Generation Centrifuges

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran has officially started injecting gas into next-generation centrifuges at Natanz Nuclear Facility, in a ceremony attended by President Hassan Rouhani through videoconference.

Marking the National Day of Nuclear Technology on Saturday, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran unveiled 133 new achievements in the field of nuclear technology.

Accordingly, the AEOI started injecting gas into next-generation centrifuges and began the mechanical test of the IR-9 centrifuges at Natanz Nuclear Facility.

Moreover, an assembly line for next-generation centrifuges was also inaugurated at the facility.

The AEOI chief, Ali-Akbar Salehi, said on Saturday that adhering to international regulations, Iran seeks to increase its nuclear achievements. He noted that despite all the restrictions and sanctions, various projects in the field of nuclear science and technology have been pursued.

Salehi named manufacturing of centrifuges required by the Blood Transfusion Center, industrial production of medical-grade titanium used in the manufacture of implants in the human body, and the production of several new radiopharmaceuticals as the obtained achievements.

See Page 7

Armed Forces Ready to Confront Enemies' Threats

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) said that the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to counter threats waged by enemies against the country with its utmost power.

In a message on the occasion of the commemoration of martyrdom anniversary of Brigadier General Ali Sayyad Shirazi, Major General Hossein Salami emphasized the unity, amity, integrity and all-out readiness of the Armed Forces to counter threats and conspiracies waged by enemies against Iran.

He pointed to the courage and bravery of martyr Sayyad Shirazi and stated that the martyr is a symbol of honor and zeal for the Islamic Republic of Iran whose services and salient roles are still inspiring.

See Page 7

Yemeni Forces Launch Drone Attack On Saudi Airport

SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's army and popular committees have carried out a drone attack on Abha International Airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia in retaliation for Saudi-led strikes on their country.

According to Yemen's al-Masirah television network, the spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said that the attack had targeted a "sensitive site" at Abha airport on Friday afternoon.

He added that a Qasef-2k UAV had been used in the strike, which hit the target accurately. Saree said the attack was a legitimate response to Saudi Arabia's escalating aggression against Yemen. On Thursday, Yemen's air force successfully targeted warplane hangars at Jizan Airport also located in southwestern Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a brutal war on Yemen in March 2015. The war was launched to suppress an uprising that had toppled a Riyadh-friendly regime. The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives.

The United Nations (UN) says more than 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger. The world body also refers to the situation in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The Saudi war has also taken a heavy toll on Yemen's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories.

Impossible to Trust U.S. After 4-Years Economic War Against Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that it is impossible for Tehran to trust Washington after four years of relentless economic war against the Iranian people.

"The process in Vienna is on the right track, and the P4 + 1 has taken positive steps in the Vienna talks, and the Vienna talks have shown that progress is possible, said Khatibzadeh in an interview with CNN.

"The positive move created by the P4 + 1 in the Vienna talks can be sustained if the United States is ready to fulfil its obligations under Resolution 2231," he added.

Emphasizing the need for the Biden administration to distance itself from Trump's failed policies against Iran, the spokesman said, "It seems that members of the current US administration are much more committed to Trump-era sanctions [against Iran] than to the Obama nuclear deal."

"I think Biden has to make a political decision about whether he intends to jeopardize the nuclear deal with Trump's failed sanctions policy, or whether he wants to distance himself from those failed policies," Khatibzadeh noted.

He went on to reiterate Iran's position on the JCPOA, "Iran has always had a clear position on the JCPOA. Serious negotiations took place between Iran and the P5 + 1 [to reach the JCPOA]. After the JCPOA was signed and sealed, we implemented this agreement and since then we have always made it clear that everyone must abide by their obligations. Iran, even after the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA, was in good faith and fully committed to its commitments."

See Page 7

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Seven Iranian Fishermen Released, Returned Home

TEHRAN (IP) – Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said that seven Iranian fishermen were released and returned to the country on Thursday.

Saeed Khatibzadeh stated that seven Baluch fishermen who were rescued by the Coast Guard and transported to the country due to a storm last March on Comoros' shores were released and returned home on Thursday.

He thanked the humanitarian actions and assistance of Comoros' government and people.

Delay in Removing Sanctions Benefits Iran, Harms West

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says any foot-dragging in removing US sanctions on the Islamic Republic is in the interests of Tehran and to the detriment of the Western countries.

"Iran is moving fast in the nuclear industry, and time is on its side. In this regard, if no progress takes place in the negotiations, we are still making progress technically," Behrouz Kamalvandi said on his Instagram account.

Talks were held in Vienna earlier this week between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries — Britain, France, Russia, and China plus Germany — within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Joint Commission.

Tehran says Washington, as the first party that reneged on its commitments, should take the first step towards unconditionally remove all the anti-Iran sanctions in a verifiable manner. Kamalvandi said, "Now, the situation is such that as long as the Western side dithers, it will benefit Iran and harm the other side. The number of our centrifuges and the amount of enriched material is rising fast."

The official said Iran will not act until the sanctions are removed and the process is verified. "We have no trust in the other side. The list of 1,600 sanctions as well as demands mentioned in the JCPOA but not met in practice have now been brought up by Iran.



No measure will be taken by Iran until these issues are resolved," he said.

The AEOI spokesman stressed that nuclear power is very important to Iran's progress, adding it is a driving force behind the development of the country's industries.

Kamalvandi said Iran's nuclear industry has become completely indigenous and the country has made great progress compared to previous years.

Iran to Launch Plants for Key PP, PE Catalysts Production

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) announced the official inauguration of two plants for production of polypropylene and heavy polyethylene catalysts in a few weeks with the technical knowhow provided by the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC).

According to NPC, Behzad Mohammadi visited Arak Center of the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company on Wednesday, and was briefed on the latest state of the polypropylene and heavy polyethylene catalyst units.

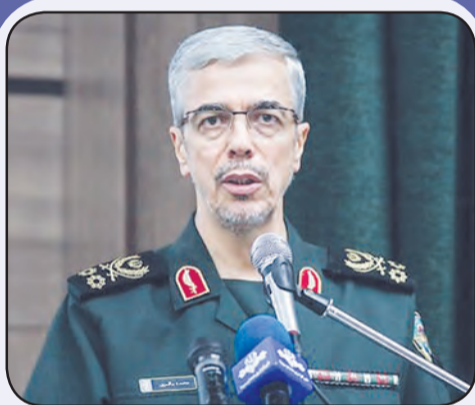
On the sidelines of the visit, he said that the strategy of the petrochemical industry is to produce catalysts required by the industry with Iranian technical savvy with the aim of reducing imports, adding: "Last year, the technical knowhow for the production of polypropylene from natural gas was unveiled at the Mahshahr Bureau of PRTC. It is based on this technical knowledge that the implementation of the GTPP project of Islamabad-West Petrochemical Plan has begun."

The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company stressed the value of the ongoing projects in the three centers of Tehran, Arak and Mahshahr of PRTC for the petrochemical industry.

The two new catalyst plants will become operational in weeks, he added. The projects will make Iran self-sufficient in production of the items.



Iran Strategic Policy Necessitates Complete Removal of Sanctions



TEHRAN (IP) - The Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran called the lifting of sanctions imposed on Iran under any topic as Iran's strategic policy, and said that in case of sanctions removal and verification in practice, Iran would return to its nuclear obligations.

Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, this morning (Saturday) at the 25th National Conference of Police Force Commanders, Deputies, Chiefs, and Managers, noting that the enemy is trying to hold long, useless talks along with making new claims and demands with the Islamic Republic of Iran, stated: "The strategic policy of the Islamic Republic, as outlined by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, is simply the complete lifting of sanctions that have been imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran under any topic."

He noted: "If these sanctions are lifted and verified in practice, then Iran, as always, has been logical regarding its promises and will return to its nuclear commitments."

Majlis Reviewed Iran-China Strategic Agreement

TEHRAN (IP) – The spokesman of the presiding board of the Iranian parliament said the MPs held several sessions during the recent days in various aspects of monitoring, development of foreign relations in lifting sanctions, and discussion of the Iran-China strategic agreement.

Mohammad-Hossein Farhangi stated that due to the fourth COVID-19 wave, parliament's open sessions would be held in three different halls.

He noted that the bill on surge in housing production was completed in the parliament so that if approved by the Guardian Council, the government would be obliged to cooperate and support the production of one million houses annually.

He added that bills such as the surge in knowledge-based production and business areas were also reviewed, aiming at supporting production and entrepreneurship.

British COVID-19 Variant, Prevalent in Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - The Spokesman of Iran's National Task Force for Combating Coronavirus called the British COVID-19 variant the predominant type of virus in Iran.

Alireza Raisi on Saturday, after the meeting of Iran's National Task Force for Combating Coronavirus which was held in the presence of the President, added: "All provinces are facing a heavy wave of the coronavirus. Most hospitals are crowded and the number of patients is high. We also have provinces that had just passed through the previous wave successfully and now are engaged with the new wave again."

He noted: "Various factors have played a role in the formation of this new wave, before the arrival of the new year and from mid-March on Nowruz eve, shopping and visits, the sharp decrease in compliance, which unfortunately fell below 60%."

The Deputy Minister of Health said: "On the other hand, family gatherings, going to parties and restaurants, and the number of wedding and mourning



ceremonies were other main factors that caused the formation of a new wave of the corona. Another important factor, not only in Iran but also in other countries, is the presence of the British virus variant which is now the predominant type of virus in Iran. The corona model in the provinces confirms this."

He noted: "We have a very steep slope in 12 provinces"

Raisi highlighted: "From today, for 10 days, the smart management plan will be applied based on the color scheme of cities in red, orange, and yellow cities. In the red cities, except for the first group of jobs, which are very necessary, the rest of the jobs are closed. In orange cities, only the jobs in group one and group two can operate. In yellow cities, the jobs in group one, two, and three can operate, and in blue cities, jobs in group four are closed."

Meanwhile yesterday Health Ministry spokeswoman announced in her presser on Saturday that so far, 2,049,078 people in the country had contracted coronavirus, and 1,702,062 recovered.

Belgium, South Korea to Host Iran 'Careless Crime'

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian film, 'Careless Crime' directed by Shahram Mokri will be screened at two international film festivals in Belgium and South Korea.

Written by Nasim Ahmadpour and Shahram Mokri, 'Careless Crime' will take part in MOOOV film festival in Belgium and the 22nd Jeonju International Film Festival in South Korea.

The synopsis of 'Careless Crime' reads, "Forty years ago, during the uprising to overthrow the Shah's regime in Iran, protestors set fire to movie theatres as a way of showing opposition to Western culture. Many cinemas were burned down. In one tragic case, a theatre was set on fire with four hundred people inside, most of whom were burned alive. Forty years have passed and, in contemporary Iran, four individuals also decide to burn a cinema down. Their intended target is a theatre showing a film about an unearthed, unexploded missile. Will past and present meet?"

'Careless Crime' won an award for Best Original Screenplay in the International Film Critics' Week (SIC) during the 77th Venice International Film Festival.

It has been accepted into the 2020 edition of Viennale Film Festival in Austria, too.

MOOOV film festival is one of the oldest film festivals in Europe, held annually in Bruges, Belgium, since 1984. MOOOV will open its virtual doors on 20 April this year.

Launched in 2000, Jeonju International Film Festival (JIFF) is one of the Asian film festivals. 'Careless Crime' will compete in this festival along with eleven films from France, Brazil, Italy, Japan and the United States.



MPs Visit Four Nuclear Sites

TEHRAN (TASNIM) - In order to monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan to Lift Sanctions Act, 12 members of the parliament, mainly from the National Security and Energy Commissions, visited four nuclear sites in Isfahan, Natanz, Khandab, and Fordow, the spokesman for the parliament's National Security and Foreign Relation's Commission said.

Explaining the Iranian MPs' visit to four nuclear sites, the spokesman for the parliament's National Security and Foreign Relation's Commission, Abolfazl Amouiee said that production of 20 percent enriched uranium is being carried out carefully in six chains of the first generation of IRI centrifuges.

"The metal uranium factory completion process was observed by MPs," he said. Article 4 of the Law on Strategic Plan provides 5 months to complete this factory.

"One thousand IR2m centrifuges have recently been installed on Ahmadi Roshan (Natanz) nuclear site," he said. Also, a chain of 164 centrifuges of the 6th generation has been installed on the Natanz site within a legal period of 3 months.

He pointed out that in order to increase the enriched uranium reserves required by the country, 2 chains of IR4 centrifuges have been used at the Natanz site to produce enriched uranium.

Amouiee noted that the process of producing 20 percent enriched uranium, is carefully flowing in 6 chains of the first generation of IR1 centrifuges in Fordow.

Providing National Fuel Basket Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) emphasized safeguarding the policy of providing the national fuel basket with observing all sanitary protocols amid the outbreak of the coronavirus, and said due to the start of the fourth surge of COVID-19 in Hormuzgan Province, the company has intensified sanitary protocols.

Mohammad Ali Dadvar said that due to the fourth surge of the COVID-19 in the province, the company has intensified its sanitary protocols and it has imposed a lockdown for its staff and accordingly those personnel who had left the province are not allowed to enter the refinery. He added that all of his colleagues and their families have been recommended not to leave the province and the company in recent days has been culturalizing in different ways the sensitivity of the company regarding this disease.

Dadvar reiterated that personnel is the biggest asset of the refinery and said the company has taken some action for telework for those staff who have respiratory, kidney, cardiac and diabetes problems.

He said since the outbreak of this virus over 12,000 mask or other sanitation facilities have been distributed every day among the staff.

Dadvar went on to say that several scenarios for combatting the COVID-19 have been reviewed and carried out by the company for implementing better social distancing protocol, adding that the company has also held several maneuvers for implementing its sanitary plans.

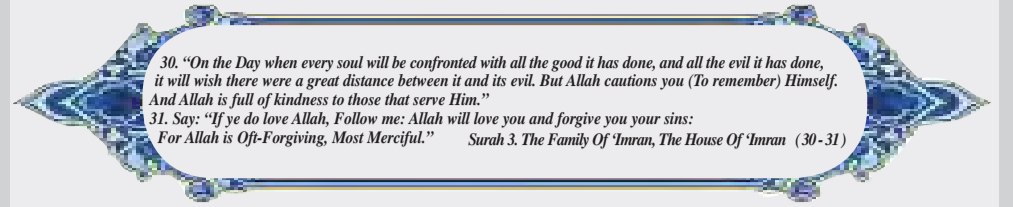
He also said that personnel of the refinery are defenders of the security of national fuel basket and in the current condition, safeguarding the production process of strategic products are highly important, expressing hope that in the current era, the refinery would do its job successfully as the soldiers of the country in the economic front.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:52
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:07
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:35



30. "On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil. But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself. And Allah is full of kindness to those that serve Him."
 31. Say: "If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: For Allah is Off-Forgiving, Most Merciful." Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (30-31)

Chinese Expected to Invest \$80b in Iran's Mining Sector

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Mines and Mining Industry Commission of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says the Chinese are interested to have \$400b investment in different sectors in Iran and it is expected \$80b to be invested in the mining sector.

Speaking to ILNA, Bahram Shakouri expressed his views on Iran-China 25-Year Document and its impacts on the mining sector and said there are different views on the Chinese investment in the mining sector. He added some believe this agreement will cause damage for the country but I believe that foreign investment can help the country grow and excel, noting that if Iran can have a good cooperation with other countries especially with a country like China, it will help it.

He pointed to the scale of investment by the Chinese in the mining sector, saying that what is seen in the document shows that the Chinese are interested to have \$400b investment in different fields in Iran of which \$80b will be in the mines and mining industry. Shakouri reiterated the amount of investment in Iran's mines and mining sector since Reza Shah has hardly touched \$50b.

He reiterated that even this small amount of investment in the mining sector has led to creation of job, development, production and exports, admitting that \$80b is a very considerable amount. Shakouri said this amount of investment as well as other investments in other fields like infrastructures, transportation, developing ports can have very good results for the country. He added that perhaps the concerns of people about this agreement is that those countries which have attracted investment from China have not been happy and there are also some concerns about finalizing these agreements. He reiterated that if the Chinese sign deals with the private sector, then the private sector because of its own interest will not risk and as the result it will meet the national interests.

Shakouri reiterated that ICCIMA, Majlis and all bodies in



the country are working hard on the agreement in order that it meet the national demands, reiterating that the contracts should be a win-win ones as both the Chinese and Iranians can benefit them and one cannot expect only the two parties just benefits the agreements.

Responding to a question on the investment of the Chinese in Iran's mining sector till now, he said due to sanctions, foreigners and even the Chinese have not have significant investments in this sector and due to sanctions they preferred to buy mining products and China's investment has not been considerable.

Shakouri noted that this document can help more capital to enter Iran's mining sector, adding that Iran has huge capacities in this industry which has attraction for investment.

He said all should have positive approach to this document but at the same time we should increase our vigilance that the agreements are signed in a way that both parties benefit them.

Materialization of Producing Assigned Amount of Gas in South Pars

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company says in last winter, some 15m cubic meters of gas per day above the Oil Ministry's approval was extracted from the joint field of rich gas South Pars.



In the meeting with the senior officials and assistants of the company which was held in Assaluyeh, Mohammad Meshkinfam felicitated the new year and said materialization of the assigned amount of gas production in South Pars was source of honor and pride for the staff of the company and said fortunately due to endeavors of his colleagues in the operation and support department of the company, there was no problem in last winter and some 15m cubic meters of gas per day above the assigned target of the oil ministry was produced in the joint field of South Pars.

He then pointed to drawing up the 20-year outlook document of the company in the field of development and maintenance, saying that it is also necessary a strategic document for sustainable gas production from South Pars to be drawn up in the production operation by forming a workgroup. He said it will help to identify problems and to have plans for resolving them for having a sustainable production.

Meshkinfam noted that almost 70 percent of the consuming gas in the country is supplied by the South Pars gas field, adding that problems like the outbreak of coronavirus, changes in the management and financial shortages should not hinder achieving production and supplying 70 percent of the national consuming gas.

He added that currently 8 gas production units are under the control of the contractors of the developmental projects of South Pars and all plans should be in a way that those platforms are handed over to the operation and support department of the company by the end of June.

IME Enjoys Weekly Trade Growth In Volume and Value

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 745,073 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$443m last week, showing 102 and 109 percent of growth in volume and value of trades respectively.

According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold

on its mineral and industrial trading floor, 334,819 tons of various commodities valued at almost \$219m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 329,239 tons of steel, 4,680 tons of copper, 685 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 100 tons of lead.

Another trading floor of the IME was the oil and petrochemical which saw trade of 408,779 tons of commodities on both its domestic and export pits worth more than \$201m.

On this floor the IME's customers purchased 217,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 68,103 tons of bitumen, 57,546 tons of polymeric products, 26,420 tons of chemicals, 33,200 tons of lube cut, 3,293 tons of base oil, 50 tons of argon, 250 tons of insulation rolls and 1,275 tons of sulfur.

Based on this report, the IME also traded on its agricultural trading floor 2,500 kg of saffron. Moreover, the exchange traded 1,473 tons of commodities on its side market.



Engineer Mohammad Ali Akhbari, CEO of Toos Iron and Steel Company, in an interview with Pardazesh specialized monthly, emphasized:

The Need to Establish Consistency Between Different Institutions in Order to Improve The Business Environment



Toos Iron and Steel Industries is one of the first service centers of Mobarakeh Steel Complex with the aim of providing conversion services and distribution of steel products to small customers. During its activity, it has always been considered as one of the most prominent and well-equipped and having various conversion service lines. Steel products in the east of the country and relying on engineers and specialized personnel has been able to fulfill its mission in supplying raw materials at the beginning of the lines of industrial units in the best way, the company has a dedicated railway line for rail transportation, as a dry port in the east The country has played a role for various industries, which in the near future will be developed as a strategic priority and will play a more effective role by connecting to the Mashhad-Khaf railway as an export pilot in the east of the country.

Engineer Mohammad Ali Akhbari, CEO of Toos Iron and Steel Company, said in an interview with Pardazesh specialized monthly: "If we look realistically, the foreign exchange dependence of most industries in different sectors of production is undeniable, but this dependence is strong and weak in different industries. How Looking at the issue of sanctions, causes the progress or decline of a production unit, to explain the issue, it is enough to look at the era of war and holy defense, at that time due to the invasion of the country, we need not only in the field on the fronts We have secured ourselves, but in the field of national economy, despite all the bottlenecks, there was stability. At present, if we only think about survival, we will lose in the long run, but if, despite the sanctions, we look inward, review and identify potentials in all Let's put the sectors, both economic and non-economic, it is clear that the existing threats have become opportunities, will provide economic development and growth of the country in all fields. Pointing out that one of the main problems in the industry, especially in the production chain, is the supply of raw materials, he added: "The nature of this problem is such that sometimes, the difficulty in supplying raw materials in the upstream part of an industry increases the cost of its final product." The sector leads and due to the continuity of the production chain, it has spread to the downstream sectors, which is one of the main reasons for the high cost of production in the country's metal industry. Akhbari added that the solution may be to provide support packages as incentives for production, but given its nature, the solution must be sought elsewhere, in addition to believing in the principles of a free economy. However, the concept of support will not have a place in this economy, because each production unit, according to its external environment and advantages, will formulate strategic strategies to improve its organization. The CEO of Toos Iron and Steel Company stated that the main role of the

government as the largest executive body in the country is to improve the business environment, noting that the stability of the external environment is the most important parameter for an enterprise, because in this case having a strategy and planning means Will find, the multiplicity of sections, instructions, parallelism, and the like takes the energy of a production unit and causes a waste of resources. He added: "The consistency of the procedures of various institutions in order to improve the business environment is very important for us. Steel service centers have the role of supplying raw materials at the beginning of production lines of various industries including car parts, home appliances, packaging, machine building, etc." Services with needs assessment and aggregation of needs of small customers, provide special services for them, many of them have the problem of working capital and also the lack of infrastructure for warehousing and special services, all of which are in the mission of steel service centers. Is defined. According to Akhbari, the lack of coordination between the mentioned organizations has created many problems in order to supply the raw materials to the producers, which unfortunately contradicts the slogan of the Supreme Leader on the leap of production, while in addition to the supervisory duty of these organizations and institutions. Related, a deeper understanding of the existing business environment will help guide the parties, as these organizations focus only on their supervisory dimension and only become more prominent after their mission, while some companies Like us, we are always with the manufacturers to meet the needs of the beginning of their product lines. In other words, the existence of Mobarakeh Steel Service Centers, along with the Producers and Consumers Protection Organization and the Inspection Organization of the Ministry of SAMT, will complement their mission at the macro level of the resistance economy.

Former Portuguese PM to Stand Trial

LISBON (Dispatches) - A Lisbon judge ruled Friday to put former Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates on trial for alleged money-laundering and forgery but said the statute of limitations had expired on more than a dozen corruption allegations.

Judge Ivo Rosa said that 1.7 million euros (\$2 million), much of it in cash, given to Sócrates by a childhood friend who was working for a Portuguese construction company amounted to an attempt to gain influence over the prime minister and win contracts. Sócrates argued that the money and other assets, such as works of art and the use of an upscale Paris apartment, were loans from his longtime friend.



Volcano on Caribbean's St Vincent Erupts

ST VINCENT (Dispatches) - An explosive eruption rocked La Soufriere volcano on the eastern Caribbean island of St Vincent on Friday following mandatory evacuation orders from the local government.

Emergency management officials said the ash column rose about six kilometres (3.7 miles) high and that the ash was headed east into the Atlantic Ocean.

Dormant since 1979, the volcano started showing signs of activity in December, spewing steam and smoke and rumbling away. That picked up this week, prompting Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines Ralph Gonsalves to order an evacuation of the surrounding area late on Thursday.



Myanmar UN Envoy Urges No-Fly Zone as Many Protesters Killed



YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's own ambassador to the United Nations has called for a no-fly zone and sanctions, as the international community puts more pressure on the military government to end a deadly crackdown and restore democracy, and as the death toll continues to rise with dozens more reported killed early on Saturday.

The United States and European nations pleaded for action at a meeting on Friday of the UN Security Council where a Southeast Asian summit on the crisis was taking shape, but the military leadership remained defiant and refused entry to a UN special envoy.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, who has passionately rejected the February 1 coup and brushed aside the military's claims that he no longer represents Myanmar, told the Security Council that there has been a "lack of adequate and strong action" despite hundreds of deaths, including children.

"Your collective, strong action is needed immediately," said Kyaw Moe Tun, in virtual remarks as he sat before the Myanmar and UN flags.

"I strongly believe that the international community, in particular the UN Security Council, will not let these atrocities keep going on in Myanmar."

The ambassador called for a no-fly zone to "avoid further bloodshed caused by the military air strikes on civilian areas".

He also asked for an international arms embargo and the freezing of bank accounts associated with members of the military and their families.

All foreign direct investment should also be suspended until the restoration of the democratically elected government, the ambassador said.

The diplomat's call came as reports emerged of more deadly crackdowns in the country, with at least 60 civilians killed on Friday night and into Saturday morning during protests in the Bago division outside of the largest city of Yangon.

According to Radio Free Asia, civilians were reportedly shot at using live ammunition as security forces started dismantling a barricade set up by the protesters. Several people were also reportedly taken by police without arrest warrants.

More than 60 people were killed in Myanmar's Bago division Friday after security forces removed barricades set up by pro-democracy demonstrators at around 3:00 a.m. and began firing live ammunition and grenades at the crowd.

China and Russia wield veto power at the Security Council and generally oppose international sanctions, although Beijing - the top ally of Myanmar's military - has voiced growing concern about instability in its neighbour.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the United Nations, said the military "needs to feel the cost associated with its horrific actions" after ignoring previous condemnation.

Northern Irish Loyalists Demand Brexit Changes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pro-British loyalist militants in Northern Ireland said on Friday there had been a "spectacular collective failure" to understand their anger over Brexit and other issues as there was some respite in street clashes following a week of riots.

Despite appeals for calm from London, Dublin and Washington, the nightly unrest in pro-British areas spread further into Irish nationalist parts of Belfast on Thursday, where police responded to petrol bomb and stone attacks with water cannon.

A number of loyalist protests planned for Friday night were postponed in what posters put up in pro-British areas said was a mark of respect for Queen Elizabeth and the Royal Family following the death of her husband, Prince Philip.

However some masked individuals threw bricks and missiles at police in a loyalist area of Belfast where television footage showed a British Union Jack flying on a flagpole nearby.

The clashes have been some of the worst violence in Northern Ireland in years and have raised concern about the 1998 peace accord that largely ended three decades of sectarian and political bloodshed during which 3,600 people were killed.

The Loyalist Communities Council (LCC), which says it speaks for the Ulster Volunteer Force, Red Hand Commando and Ulster Defence Association militant groups, said it was not involved in the riots and it called for calm.

However it warned in a statement that border arrangements with EU-member Ireland must be negotiated.

The loyalist paramilitaries, as they are known, laid down their weapons in the years that followed the Good Friday Agreement. But the LCC said Unionist anger had been misunderstood.

"To date there has been a spectacular collective failure to understand properly the scale and nature of Unionist and Loyalist anger," it said.

The council cited concerns over post-Brexit trade barriers as well as policing following a decision last week not to prosecute Irish nationalist rivals Sinn Féin for an alleged breach of COVID-19 regulations at the funeral last June of a former IRA leader.



Harry, Meghan Honor Prince Philip

LONDON (Dispatches) - Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle's foundation Archewell paid tribute to Britain's Prince Philip following his death Friday as speculation builds about their plans to attend the funeral.

The foundation updated the archewell.com website so that it just displayed a single message without any drop-down menus or links to other pages.

"In Loving Memory of His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, 1921-2021," read the message in white on a dark background.

"Thank you for your service... You will be greatly missed," it added.

Philip, the longest serving royal consort in British history, died peacefully in the morning at Windsor Castle, west of London, Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

His death immediately fueled speculation about when Harry might return to Britain for his grandfather's funeral and whether Meghan, pregnant with their second child, would join him.

The couple, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, live in Los Angeles following their decision to quit frontline royal duties early last year.

They have yet to publicly say whether they will attend the funeral. If they do, it would mark their first return to Britain since their explosive interview with U.S. talk show superstar Oprah Winfrey last month.

During the two-hour sit-down, viewed by more than 17 million people in the US and over 11 million in Britain, Harry and Meghan said racism had played a part in them quitting the UK for North America.

The couple said a senior royal had speculated how dark their child's skin would be before he was born. Meghan's mother is black and her father is white. The sensational claim set off a whirl of speculation about who might have said it. Neither the queen, now 94, nor Philip, made the racist comment, Winfrey later told CBS.

Harry, 36, and Meghan 39, accused newspapers of racial stereotyping, particularly set against coverage of Harry's sister-in-law, Kate, who is white.

U.S. Loosens Restrictions on Taiwan Contacts in Defiance of China

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The State Department has announced that it will make it easier for U.S. officials to meet Taiwanese representatives, defying pressure from China at a time of high tensions, and as the U.S. Congress considers sweeping legislation to counter Beijing's influence.

The United States still considers Beijing to be China's legitimate government, consistent with its switch of recognition in 1979, but will do away with some of the convoluted rules that restricted dealings with Taiwan, including in-person meetings.

The updated guidance "underscores Taiwan is a vibrant democracy and an important security and economic partner that is also a force for good in the international community," State Department spokesman Ned Price said. "These new guidelines liberalize guidance on contacts with Taiwan, consistent with our unofficial relations," he said in a statement.

The move by President Joe Biden's administration formalizes increasingly vocal US support for Taiwan, a self-governing democracy, and came in response to

an act of Congress that required a review.

Taiwan's mission in Washington - officially called the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States", rather than an embassy - welcomed the new guidelines, saying they reflected a bipartisan consensus for closer relations.

"Taiwan and the U.S. share a deep and abiding partnership based on our common values and joint interests," it said, pointing to cooperation on global health, space, trade and democracy promotion.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a staunch critic of Beijing, in his last days in office, said that he was getting rid of previous guidelines on dealing with Taiwan but not issue new ones, drawing confusion in some quarters on what had changed.

Under the guidelines issued by the Biden administration, U.S. officials will be allowed to invite Taiwanese representatives into government buildings in Washington or attend working-level meetings at the Taiwanese mission, both of which were previously prohibited, a State Department official said.



Peru Braces for Most Fragmented Election in History

LIMA (Dispatches) - Peru will vote for a new president today in a wide-open election framed by a deadly surge in coronavirus cases, and under the long shadow of a constitutional crisis last year that saw the Andean nation go through three leaders in a week.

As candidates closed their campaigns, pollsters say half a dozen of them are still in the running for a top two spot, which would see them move into a second round run-off vote in June. Predicting which two will make it, they say, is impossible.

"These are the most fragmented elections in history, we have never reached the eve of the election with so many candidates in with a chance," Alfredo Torres, head of local pollster Ipsos Peru told reporters on Thursday.

The uncertainty over the elections comes as Peru battles the peak of COVID-19 cases with hospitals overwhelmed and after the world's no. 2 copper producer suffered its worst economic drop in three decades last year. The twists and turns have buffeted markets and Peru's sol currency.

In the final pre-election polls, Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of the imprisoned ex-president Alberto Fujimori, has climbed to the top of the pack, but with a slim lead. A radical leftist professor Pedro Castillo has also shot up from nowhere.

No candidate has more than 13% of the voting intention and 'no vote' still remains the most popular single choice.

Close behind are Yonhy Lescano, the recent poll leader whose populist style has lured voters, Opus Dei member Rafael López Aliaga, liberal economist Hernando de Soto and leftist Verónica Mendoza. Ex-soccer star George Forsyth also remains in the mix.

Castillo, 51, who has surprised pollsters to suddenly arrive near the top of the pack, closed his campaign on Thursday night calling for a change to Peru's Magna Carta, something the country's youth had called for amid angry protests last year. "The time has come to recover the homeland through a new political Constitution," he said.



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(adviser)

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parquet fl
Fully Furn

←← Parsian →→→

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S/p, S, J, pkg
Fully Furn

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Airbus Deliveries Surge in March, Sending Shares Higher

PARIS (Reuters) - A rebound in air travel in China and the United States helped to drive a surge in March deliveries for Airbus, sending the planemaker's shares higher. Airbus reported slightly higher deliveries for the first quarter and posted 39 gross orders, including a new deal for 20 A220s to an unidentified buyer. But the company's net orders - which are adjusted for cancellations - remained in negative territory for the first quarter, with a total of minus 61 net orders dominated by a Norwegian cancellation unveiled in the previous month.



IMF Warns More Funding Needed To Safeguard Global Economy

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Warning that the recovery from the pandemic crisis is not yet over, the IMF on Thursday called on policymakers to continue to spend money to shore up the global economy and ensure no one is left behind.

Without that aid, and additional financing from both the fund and the World Bank, developing nations and the poor in many countries could struggle to rebound from the downturn caused by Covid-19, the International Monetary Fund said at the conclusion of its spring meeting.

Continued support is needed to "mitigate and heal economic scars," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told reporters. "We want to make sure everybody has a fair shot to a better life." That means accelerating access to vaccines and taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the crisis to invest in green technology, which can create good paying jobs and address climate change. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen joined the call, urging "significant" new spending to ensure a solid rebound from the damage inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the economic outlook has "improved significantly," especially due to substantial government support, "the job is not yet done, given high uncertainty and the risk of permanent scarring," Yellen said.

"I urge major economies to not just avoid removing support too early, but to strive to provide significant amounts of new fiscal support to secure a robust recovery," she said.

The IMF now projects global growth of six percent this year after the 3.3 percent contraction last year, and credited the \$16 trillion in global public spending during the pandemic with keeping the worst peacetime recession in a century from being three times as severe.

Yellen highlighted the \$1.9 trillion US aid package President Joe Biden signed last month, as well as his proposal announced last week to spend \$2 trillion on infrastructure and jobs.

She said that with stimulus already boosting the recovery from the pandemic shutdowns, the US economy "could reach full employment as soon as next year," but many developing countries do not have similar resources to support their economies.

Georgieva warned about a "dangerous divergence" in low-income countries' prospects compared to rich nations, which could worsen if advanced economies like the United States raise interest rates sooner than expected.

She also praised the IMF members who agreed to allow the fund to issue \$650 billion in new Special Drawing Rights, an additional pool of IMF currency that will add to nations' reserves and boost their ability to access financing.

The IMF is expected to present a proposal to its board in June, and Georgieva said the fund is working with rich nations to shift some of their share of those reserves to help aid developing nations, which "face a crucial policy transition from crisis to recovery."

The officials again stressed that ending the health crisis remains central to the economic recovery, and the closing statement from the IMFC, the fund's steering committee, lamented the "uneven access to vaccines." The committee emphasized "the need for strong international cooperation to accelerate vaccine production and support affordable and equitable distribution to all."

Yellen pledged U.S. support for vaccine rollouts, including efforts to "make sure financing does not become an obstacle for global vaccination... and to work toward ensuring robust, equitable, and transparent vaccination deployment."

The crisis offers policymakers a vehicle to capitalize on the need for investments to accelerate green projects that can provide good-paying jobs.

U.S. Adds Chinese Supercomputing Entities to Economic Blacklist

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -The U.S. Commerce Department said it was adding seven Chinese supercomputing entities to a U.S. economic blacklist for assisting Chinese military efforts.

The Commerce Department said the seven were "involved with building supercomputers used by China's military actors, its destabilizing military modernization efforts, and/or weapons of mass destruction programs." The department is adding Tianjin Phytium Information Technology, Shanghai High-Performance Integrated Circuit Design Center, Sunway Microelectronics, the National Supercomputing Center Jinan, the National Supercomputing Center Shenzhen, the National Supercomputing Center Wuxi, and the National Supercomputing Center Zhengzhou to its blacklist. China's foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Beijing will take "necessary measures" to protect its companies' rights and interests.

"U.S. containment and suppression cannot hold back the march of China's scientific and technological development," he said at a daily news conference in Beijing on Friday.

Companies or others listed on the U.S. Entity List are required to apply for licenses from the Commerce Department that face tough scrutiny when they seek permission to receive items from U.S. suppliers.

"Supercomputing capabilities are vital for the development of many - perhaps almost all - modern weapons and national security systems, such as nuclear weapons and hypersonic weapons, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a statement.

The new rules take effect immediately but do not apply to goods from U.S. suppliers already en route.

Russian Central Bank Considers Digital Rouble in 2023

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The Russian central bank is considering limiting future transactions with a digital rouble to smooth the impact of its implementation, planned for 2023, Deputy Governor Alexei Zabolotkin said on Thursday.

Russia is working on introducing the digital rouble on top of existing cash and non-cash roubles, to facilitate payments for individuals and businesses and make the use of its currency more global in the face of Western sanctions.

"The emission of the cryptorouble will be akin to cash emission," Zabolotkin said.

"It will be feasible to introduce limits on the transactions from non-cash form into the digital rouble," Zabolotkin said, adding that the central bank will stand ready to compensate for possible liquidity shortages when introducing the digital rouble.

Russia is joining other central banks across the world that are stepping up efforts to develop digital currencies to modernise financial systems, speed up payments and counter a potential threat from other cryptocurrencies.

Below are the key aspects that are known about Russia's digital rouble project:

- * The central bank first floated the idea of the digital rouble in October, citing the need to make payments more convenient;

- * The digital rouble will be issued by the central bank and will not substitute for cash in circulation or accounts in banks;

- * The first test-drive stage is planned for 2022 and will include transactions with banks. Other operations, such as tax payments and budget settlements, will be tested later;

- * Russia is leaning towards a two-tier system for its digital rouble, with banks opening digital wallets with the central bank and serving as intermediaries for customers and companies;

- * Russian banks expressed concern about the digital rouble, pointing at cyber risks, possible liquidity shortages and damage to their profits;

- * Russia gave cryptocurrencies, such as bitcoin, legal status in 2020. But it banned them from being used as a means of payment, stressing that only currencies issued by central banks can be used for that;

- * Russia eyes the digital rouble introduction at times when major central banks including the U.S. Federal Reserve have teamed up with the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) to explore central bank digital currencies.

World Food Prices Continue to Soar, Hitting Nearly 7-Year High

ROME (Dispatches) - World food prices rose for a 10th consecutive month in March, hitting their highest level since June 2014, led by jumps in vegetable oils, meat and dairy indices, the United Nations food agency said on Thursday.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index, which measures monthly changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar, averaged 118.5 points last month versus a slightly revised 116.1 in February.

The February figure was previously given as 116.0. The Rome-based FAO also said in a statement that worldwide cereal harvests remained on course to hit an annual record in 2020, adding that early indications pointed to a further increase in production this year.

FAO's cereal price index fell 1.7 percent month on month in March, ending eight months of consecutive gains, but still 26.5 percent higher than the same period last month.

Among major cereals, wheat export prices dropped the most, declining 2.4 percent on the month, reflecting good supplies and encouraging production prospects for the 2021 crops, FAO said.

FAO's vegetable oil price index surged 8 percent on the month to reach its highest level since June 2011, lifted by higher prices for palm, soy, rape and sunflower oils.

Dairy prices rose for a 10th month running, registering a 3.9 percent increase. FAO said one of the drivers in the sector was milk powder, which was boosted by a surge in imports in Asia, especially China, due to concerns about short-term supplies.

The meat index climbed 2.3 percent, but unlike all the other indices, it was still slightly down on a year-on-year basis. FAO said poultry and pig meat quotations increased, underpinned by a fast pace of imports by Asian countries, mainly China.

Sugar prices dropped 4 percent month on month, but was still up 30 percent on the year. March's decline was fuelled by prospects of large exports from India, FAO said.

FAO raised its forecast for the 2020 cereal season to 2.765 billion tons from a previous estimate of 2.761 billion, pointing to a 2 percent increase year on year.

Looking ahead, FAO said it expected global cereal production to increase for a third consecutive year in 2021.

Global wheat production was seen hitting a new high of 785 million tonnes this year, up 1.4 percent from 2020 levels, driven by an anticipated sharp rebound across most of Europe and expectations of a record harvest in India, FAO said.

Above-average outputs were also expected for maize, with a record harvest forecast for Brazil and a multiyear high predicted for South Africa.

Economic Activity Rebounds Globally Even as Covid-19 Cases Rise



LONDON (Dispatches) - Moody's Investors Service has said that high-frequency alternative data indicates a strong rebound in economic activity even as infection rates rise and restrictive measures remain in place across many countries.

New infections are spiking again across 13 of the G-20 countries. Nevertheless, the number of fatalities has decreased in recent weeks as vaccinations gather pace.

The United Kingdom and the United States lead in vaccinations among the G-20 countries, said Moody's in a sector in-depth report released on Thursday (local time).

Pent-up demand is driving a rebound in economic activity even as restrictive measures remain in place across many countries.

U.S. household spending has risen above pre-Covid levels across all income groups, driven by retail, apparel and general merchandise spending.

The latest high-frequency data suggests a strong rebound in trade activity across G-20 countries. Industrial production and manufacturing data support a continued, although uneven supply-side recovery.

Financial conditions remain supportive in the U.S. and Euro area, and they continue to improve in the UK. In contrast, the financial conditions recovery in emerging markets has stalled with conditions tightening in China, Brazil, Turkey and Argentina.

The latest retail sales data suggests a slower pace of contraction in Germany and the UK, and strong growth in the U.S., Australia and South Korea. Retail sales increased in Japan, reversing a contraction in January.

Moody's said mobility data indicates that while workplace visits have slowed, consumer retail, recreation and park visits have increased across most countries. Time spent at home has decreased. Use of public transport remains below January 2020 levels, except in Japan and France.

Non-OPEC supply to Grow by 1mb/d in 2021

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC, has predicted that the Non-OPEC oil supply will grow by one million barrels per day, mb/d in 2021.

Speaking at the International Monetary and Financial Committee Meeting, via videoconference, monitored by Vanguard, HE Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, OPEC Secretary General, said the global economy and, consequently, the global oil market have started to emerge from the severe crisis, caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, he said: "In 2020, countries around the world virtually shut down, imposed travel restrictions and mandated social-distancing measures. These measures are still necessary for some regions to combat new waves of infections and virus mutations, with a recovery to pre-pandemic levels not yet projected for 2021. Following an estimated decline of 3.5% in 2020, the OPEC Secretariat forecasts global economic growth of 5.4% in 2021.

"The measures to stem the spread of COVID-19 not only severely affected global economic growth, but they also caused a historic demand shock in the oil market, which led to extreme volatility in oil prices." He said: "The impact of the lockdown measures has disproportionately affected mobility and thereby fuel demand. World oil demand is therefore estimated by the Secretariat to have contracted by a very significant 9.5 mb/d in 2020 and is forecast to grow by around 6 mb/d in 2021. Similarly, non-OPEC supply suffered from unprecedented events and is estimated to have declined by around 2.5 mb/d in 2020, while it is forecast to grow by around 1 mb/d in 2021.

"In response to the global crisis and the massive oil demand contraction, OPEC and 10 non-OPEC participating countries under the 'Declaration of Cooperation (DoC)' acted swiftly and decisively to contribute to more stability in the oil market, by voluntarily adjusting production. 'These are the largest and longest in duration in the history of the oil industry, lasting until well into 2022.

A series of technical and ministerial Meetings of both the OPEC Conference and the countries participating in the DoC throughout 2020 and 2021 have successfully responded to market challenges and confirmed the commitment to sustainable oil market stability. These joint efforts succeeded in driving down the unprecedentedly high commercial oil inventories."

He added: "In closing, OPEC would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its longstanding commitment to supporting oil market stability for the mutual benefit of consuming and producing nations, contributing significantly to addressing the common challenges to the global economy." Meanwhile, oil prices continue to drop in the international market, mainly due to prolonged pandemic, which has slowed down economic and other activities globally.



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Rose Hopes to Stretch Lead With Early Charge

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Justin Rose prepared to make an early charge as Friday's second round of the 85th Masters began at Augusta National with the Englishman holding a four-stroke advantage.
Rose fired his lowest Masters round in 59 trips with a seven-under par 65 on Thursday to match the largest 18-hole Masters lead since 1941 in quest of an elusive green jacket. Rose, whose only major title came at the 2013 U.S. Open, was set to tee off while his nearest rivals were all among the afternoon starters.

No Evidence of Racist Slur Against Diakhaby

MADRID (Dispatches) - La Liga said Friday it had found no evidence that Valencia's Mouctar Diakhaby was racially abused by Juan Cala of Cadiz during a La Liga match last weekend.
The Spanish football federation, which has the final say on disciplinary matters, still has to make its ruling on the incident that has received widespread coverage in Spain. A furious Diakhaby walked off the field after being involved in a heated exchange with Cala and claimed the Spanish player had used a racist slur towards him in the first half of the game in Cadiz on Sunday.

Jazz Rout Blazers, Home Win Streak

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Donovan Mitchell scored 37 points and Rudy Gobert contributed 18 points and 20 rebounds to lift the Utah Jazz to a big 122-103 win over the Portland Trail Blazers on Thursday night in Salt Lake City.
Utah snapped a two-game losing streak -- the NBA-leading Jazz had stumbled on the road at Dallas and Phoenix -- and secured its 23rd consecutive home victory.
Four other Jazz players scored in double figures -- Joe Ingles (13), Mike Conley and Bojan Bogdanovic (11), and Georges Niang (10) -- as Utah bounced back 24 hours after a tough overtime loss to the Suns.
Damian Lillard topped Portland with 23 points and CJ McCollum scored 19, but the Blazers fell for the third time in four games.

Mavericks 116, Bucks 101

Luka Doncic recorded 27 points, nine rebounds and nine assists to help host Dallas defeat Milwaukee for its sixth win in the past seven games.
Kristaps Porzingis added 26 points and 17 rebounds, and Josh Richardson scored 14 points for the Mavericks. The Bucks played without two-time reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo (knee) for the third straight game and the fifth time in the past 10 contests.
Donte DiVincenzo made a career best six 3-pointers and scored 22 points to lead the Bucks, who have lost two straight games and five of their past eight. Bobby Portis recorded 20 points and a season-high 14 rebounds, and Brook Lopez added 16 points.

Pistons 113, Kings 101

Cory Joseph scored 24 points and dished seven assists as visiting Detroit held off a late Sacramento push.
Isaiah Stewart recorded 16 points and a game-high 13 rebounds for Detroit, which has alternated losses and wins over the past eight games. Sacramento took its fifth straight loss despite getting 23 points, nine rebounds and seven assists from De'Aaron Fox.

Detroit capitalized on a poor shooting night from the Kings, who finished 7 of 30 (23.3 percent) from beyond the 3-point arc. The Pistons built a big first-half lead that gave them a cushion down the stretch.

Heat 110, Lakers 104

Jimmy Butler scored a game-high-tying 28 points to lead host Miami past Los Angeles.

Ex-NFL Player Fatally Shot South Carolina Doctor, Four Others

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A former professional football player shot and killed a prominent South Carolina doctor, his wife, two grandchildren and another man before taking his own life at his home a short distance away, authorities said.
Phillip Adams, 32, who left the National Football League more than five years ago, was found dead hours after the killings of five people on Wednesday at the home of Dr. Robert Lesslie in suburban Rock Hill, South Carolina, York County Sheriff Kevin Tolson said.
Investigators were at a loss to offer a motive for the shooting spree that broke out in the quiet community about 30 miles (48 km) south of Charlotte, North Carolina.
"We have probably more questions than you do right now," Tolson told reporters at a briefing. There was no indication that Adams had any relationship with Lesslie or his family, Tolson said.

The sheriff said two weapons were used in the violence, a .45-caliber and a 9mm.
Adams died from a single gunshot to the head at his home a short distance from the murder scene, where he lived with his father, as police closed in hours after the shootings, officials said.
As a player, Adams had a six-year NFL career as a defensive back with five teams, finishing with the Atlanta Falcons in 2015. He attended South Carolina State University and was selected in the seventh round of the 2010 draft by the San Francisco 49ers. Adams' father, Alonzo Adams, blamed the shooting outburst on football.

Toni Nadal Returns To Tour to Work With Auger-Aliassime

MADRID (Dispatches) - Toni Nadal, the man who masterminded nephew Rafa's incredible career, is returning to the Tour as part of the coaching team of Canadian youngster Felix Auger-Aliassime.
Nadal, 60, decided to step down as Rafa's coach in 2017 and concentrate on running the Rafa Nadal Academy in Mallorca.



Miami also got 18 points from Victor Oladipo, who grabbed his right knee after a dunk with 5:35 left in the game. He immediately went to the locker room and did not return.
Kentavious Caldwell-Pope led the Lakers with a season-high 28 points. Andre Drummond returned for the Lakers and notched 15 points and 12 rebounds after missing the past three games with a toe injury.

Clippers 113, Suns 103

Los Angeles ran its home record to 20-8 this season, pushing past Phoenix in a battle of the second- and third-place teams in the Western Conference standings.
Paul George led the Clippers with 33 points on 12-of-19 shooting, including 7-of-9 success from 3-point range. Kawhi Leonard scored 14 of his 27 points in the third quarter for the Clippers, who saw Patrick Beverley and Marcus Morris Sr. get ejected in the fourth quarter.
Devin Booker finished with 24 points to lead the Suns. Mikal Bridges added 20 points, and Deandre Ayton chipped in 18 points and 10 rebounds.

Bulls 122, Raptors 113

Lauri Markkanen, Coby White and Daniel Theis came off the bench to provide double-figure scoring performances as Chicago used superior depth to thrash short-handed Toronto in Tampa.
Starters Zach LaVine and Nikola Vucevic led seven Bulls in double figures with 22 points apiece as Chicago won its third straight game.
The Bulls clinched the three-game season series despite a huge game from the Raptors' Chris Boucher, who set career highs with 38 points and 19 rebounds. Pascal Siakam had 27 points for Toronto, which played without injured starters Kyle Lowry and Fred VanVleet.

Ibrahimovic To Make Acting Debut

LONDON (Reuters) - He has already sampled the life of a singer at Italy's Sanremo music festival, and AC Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic will now turn his hand to acting after being cast in a new Asterix and Obelix film.
Reports that the Swede would take a role in 'Asterix and Obelix: The Silk Road' appeared to be confirmed when Ibrahimovic posted a picture saying 'Antivirus' on his Instagram page, the name of the character he will play.
The 39-year-old appeared at Italy's Sanremo festival in March, where he sang a duet with Bologna coach Sinisa Mihajlovic and said he would like to try acting.
But the news that he would be cast in the Asterix film, directed by Guillaume Canet and scheduled for release in 2022, came as a surprise.
The striker is Milan's top scorer with 17 goals in all competitions this season and he is yet to agree a new contract, with his current deal set to expire at the end of the campaign.

Sinner Leads Italian Charge Up World Rankings



LONDON (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner's run to the Miami Masters final has fuelled hopes of a new era for Italian men's tennis with, for the first time this week, 10 players ranked in the ATP Top 100.
No Italian had reached the final in the ATP Masters 1000 tournament in North America before Sinner, with their previous best Fabio Fognini's semi-final appearance in Miami back in 2017.
The 19-year-old Sinner became the second-youngest Miami finalist after Rafael Nadal in 2005, rising this week to 23rd in the world rankings, just the sixth teen since 2010 to break into the Top 30.
Sinner is the third highest ranked Italian after world number 10 Matteo Berrettini and 18th-ranked Fognini.

They are followed by Lorenzo Sonego (34), Stefano Travaglia (69), Salvatore Caruso (87), Lorenzo Musetti (90), Gianluca Mager (91), Marco Cecchinato (93) and Andreas Seppi (96).
After his break-through in 2019, winning the ATP Challenger title in Bergamo and the NextGen ATP finals in Milan, Sinner has claimed two titles and reached the Roland Garros quarter-final on his debut in 2020.
The highest an Italian man has ever been ranked was their only Grand Slam winner Adriano Panatta, who reached a career-high world number four in August 1976 after his French Open triumph.
Only France and Spain have more players in the top 100 with 11 each, but they have much older average age whereas five of the 'Azzurri' are under 26 years, and two are teenagers.
Eight of France's players are over 30 and six of Spain's compared to two of Italy's Fognini, 33, and Seppi, 37.

Barty Advances To Quarter-finals In Charleston

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Australia's Ashleigh Barty returns a shot to Shelby Rogers, of the U.S., during a WTA Tour clay court tournament in Charleston, South Carolina.
World number one Ashleigh Barty defeated hometown favourite Shelby Rogers 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-4 in the third round of the WTA clay court tournament in Charleston, South Carolina.
Barty moves on to the quarter-finals where she will face Spain's Paula Badosa, a 6-3, 6-3 winner over Caty McNally of the US. "Shelby's an exceptional ball-striker, she always makes you work very hard for every single point, every single match, and tonight was no different," said Barty.
The Australian from Ipswich arrived in Charleston fresh off a victory in the prestigious Miami Open, where she successfully defended a WTA title for the first time.
After a first-round bye she made a quick adjustment to the green clay of Charleston, needing just 61 minutes to dispatch Japan's 77th-ranked Misaki Doi, 6-2, 6-1.
Unseeded Danka Kovinic of Montenegro, ranked 91st in the world, toppled two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, the third seed, 6-4, 6-1 to reach the quarters.
"We both have pretty big serves and she's very good hitting from the baseline," Kovinic said. "Today it was the key that I tried, and did it really well, to take her pace of the ball and use her energy. As you can see, her returns on my second serve were sometimes incredible -- I didn't even move and the ball passed by me, but somehow I managed."
Kovinic broke twice for a 5-1 lead in the second set, then served out the victory with four straight service winners.



Boateng's Confirmed Exit Sparks Tension At Bayern Munich

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich have confirmed 32-year-old centre-back Jerome Boateng will leave when his contract expires at the end of the season, but the decision has sparked obvious tensions behind the scenes.
Bayern have already signed France centre-back Dayot Upamecano, 22, from Bundesliga rivals RB Leipzig for the 2021/22 season, effectively hastening Boateng's departure.
"That was a joint decision of the club management and the coach was also involved," sports director Hasan Salihamidzic told Sky.
"I explained that to Jerome, he understood."
Boateng was at fault for Paris Saint-Germain's winning goal as Bayern's 19-match unbeaten run in the Champions League ended as they lost 3-2 in Wednesday's quarter-final, first leg.
He struggled to mark Kylian Mbappe when the fleet-footed 22-year-old scored the visitors' crucial third goal at the Allianz Arena with the return to come in Paris on Tuesday.
Behind the scenes, confirmation of Boateng's exit is causing tension.
On Tuesday, head coach Hansi Flick spoke out in favour of keeping the 2014 World Cup winner, saying "everyone knows how I feel about Jerome and what quality he has".
Although Salihamidzic later said Flick agreed with the decision, Bayern's head coach suggested otherwise in the press conference after Wednesday's defeat. Flick refused to answer when asked if it was the right decision to let Boateng leave, saying: "I have to answer the questions here professionally, but I don't have to answer everything because I don't want to."

