

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Saturday Informed of His Imminent Visit to Tehran But Did Not Reveal the Date of His Visit

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun Arrived in Tehran on Sunday Afternoon for High-Level Talks and Was Welcomed by Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami

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Removal of JCPOA-Related Sanctions Not Sufficient

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A source close to the Vienna discussions says a possible U.S. removal of sanctions merely related to the 2015 agreement with Iran is not enough, and that all sanctions, including those re-labeled under the administration of former president Donald Trump, will have to be terminated.

"It is not sufficient to only remove the JCPOA-related sanctions. Trump's sanctions imposed under other labels need to be removed as well," the source told Press TV Sunday, referring to the nuclear deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Further, the anti-Iran sanctions imposed by the administration of former president Barack Obama under the so-called Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) and the visa program will have to be terminated, the source added.

"In addition to the Trump-era sanctions, the United States must also remove the Obama-era sanctions that are in violation of the JCPOA." On Friday, envoys from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries — Britain, France, Russia, and China plus Germany — wrapped up four days of talks in the Austrian capital aimed at removing sanctions on Tehran and discussing other issues.

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Electrical Problem Blamed for Incident at Natanz Nuclear Site

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has said an incident took place at the electricity distribution network of Shahid Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan nuclear facility in Natanz.

"Fortunately, the incident did not cause any human injuries or pollution," Behrouz Kamalvandi said on Sunday, adding that the cause of the incident is under investigation and that further information will be announced later.

Natanz is a uranium enrichment center located in the city of the same name in Iran's central province of Isfahan.

It is among the sites being monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On July 2, 2020, an explosion was reported in a shed under construction at the Natanz complex, but it caused no casualties and failed to stop enrichment work at the facility.

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Travel Ban Placed to 39 Countries As COVID-19 Death Toll Soars



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami said on Sunday that Iran placed travel ban on 39 countries amid the fourth wave of coronavirus pandemic in Iran.

Eslami said that all tourism agencies must comply with the Coronavirus National Headquarters regulations banning any tour to Turkey, as normal flights to and from Turkey are still operating because of trading issues.

Iran's Khuzestan Province has gone red in terms of coronavirus spread, he said, adding that travels to and from Iraq was prohibited due to the health situation in Khuzestan province.

He further said that teams are settled on border crosses to do coronavirus tests to stop infected people on entry.

He added that the ban on UK flights is still in place and that it wasn't still known when Turkey tours would resume operation.

Meanwhile Coronavirus Headquarters member said on Sunday that the Iraq passenger travel ban has been extended until April 20 due to intensified virus spread.

Hossein Qassemi, Secretary of Security-Social Committee in Coronavirus Headquarters said that the decision to extend the passenger travel ban to and from Iraq was taken to avoid negative impacts on civil projects.

According to the decision, the official said, only those who have residence authentication, educational, healthcare, and investment visas and business persons with business visas can cross the Iran-Iraq border.

Later yesterday, Health Ministry spokeswoman announced in her presser that in the past 24 hours, 258 COVID-19 patients had lost their lives, the highest daily toll since early December, bringing the total death toll to 64,690.

"According to definitive laboratory findings from yesterday to April 11, 2021, 2,070,141 people in the country have been infected with the coronavirus, and 1,710,974 of the total infected people recovered," Sima Sadat Lari stated.

She added that newly diagnosed patients with COVID-19 were 21,063 cases, out of whom 2,780 patients were hospitalized. 4,392 COVID-19 patients are in critical condition.

"So far, 13,673,466 COVID-19 diagnosis tests have been conducted across the country," the Health Ministry spokeswoman noted.

According to the latest analysis, 257 cities are in red, 129 in orange, 51 are in yellow, and 11 are in the blue zones. Health Minister Saeed Namaki, in a televised news conference, warned about more fatalities in the coming week if Iranians fail to adhere to health protocols.

On Saturday, authorities were forced to impose fresh nationwide restrictions after lack of control over travels during the Persian New Year holidays last month led to an explosive rise in COVID-19 cases.

Starting Saturday, all regions across Iran will undergo various degrees of restrictions based on how they have been classified under a color-coded scale denoting the severity of outbreaks.

Iran's coronavirus map looks like a sea of red as more than 250 cities, including all 32 province centers, are now classified "red", indicating the highest level of severity.

Iran Exporting Radiopharmaceuticals to Europe, India

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's nuclear chief has highlighted the country's achievements in the field of nuclear medicine, saying Iran is now exporting its homegrown radiopharmaceuticals to several countries in the world.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said India, Lebanon, Iraq, and some European countries are among customers of Iranian radiopharmaceuticals. In the near future, he said, Iran will turn into a major exporter of radiopharmaceuticals in a wider scale, as the number of Iranian-made radiopharmaceuticals is increasing every year.

Speaking in a televised interview on Saturday marking the National Day of Nuclear Technology, Salehi referred to Lutetium-177 as one of the domestically-developed pharmaceuticals unveiled on Saturday, and said every single dose of Lutetium-177 can cost prostate cancer patients 15,000 euros if they are bought from other countries.

He said Iran is prepared to move forward in the nuclear industry, and is on the verge of industrializing nuclear energy.

"Iran is now competing with Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan, and India," he said, highlighting the country's design and development of research reactors. "Based on the law approved by the Parliament, we should prepare and install 1,000 IR-6 centrifuges, and we are working on that... Today we have increased our uranium enrichment capacity to 16,500 SWU, and we are moving forward with slow and calculated steps," he added.

According to Salehi, Iran currently has 15 types of centrifuges including IR-8, IR-9, IR-S, IR-5, and IR-7 as well as a full cascade of IR-6 which has been launched.

Salehi's comments came a few hours after the Iranian president 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, etc.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

There Is No Cheap Oil

Media attack and hype regarding Iran and China's economic cooperation agreement by the domestic and foreign currents, and especially by those who western blood is boiling in their veins and have engaged a country with their imported delusion in their minds despite all rational reasons, assigns one to stand against these mischievous distortions which are seen among the news reports by disclosing the truth in order to make aware the dear and resistant people of this revolutionary country against these mischievous inductions.

The first induction of doubt regarding this cooperation agreement of the Chinese investment and cooperation with Iranian companies, while it has only been signed in size of an 18-page outline MoU, is being tied to the oil sale which is totally wrong and skeptical. The issues of investment and oil sale are two totally different issues and they are apart.

China today needs to buy oil around 800,000 barrels per day and it does it based on the short term contracts and its payment is through different means. But when it comes to the investment, the issue becomes totally different. The truth is that today in the world there is tough competition over attracting more foreign investment and those countries are more successful that they prepare the domestic grounds for attracting more foreign investment.

Nearly one of the main factors in all countries, that they have improved their economies and industries to reach the industrialist countries in recent decades, has been the success in attracting foreign investment; from China and South Korea to Malaysia and Turkey and even in the Persian Gulf states. The U.S. and European governments have a large number of laws and regulations for easing the attraction of foreign investment. The interesting part is that all efforts of President Hassan Rouhani's government, which created void and chimerical noise on the JCPOA document, were to pave the grounds for foreign investment from Western countries through anti-security and anti-Islamic threats; more interesting is that the most important goal of the U.S. for imposing economic sanctions against Iran was to hinder foreign investment in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In this condition it is very strange that some people in the country in tune with enemies of the Islamic establishment interpret foreign investment as selling the country. In the issue of China's investment there is essentially no issue under the title of oil trade wherein the issue of cheap oil has been raised. **See Page 7**

Araqchi Deplores U.S. Desire to Maintain Sanctions on Iran

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - One big obstacle to the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal is the American desire to keep the sanctions on Iran in place, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said.

In an interview with Japan's NHK on the sidelines of the latest round of the JCPOA Joint Commission in Vienna, Araqchi said the biggest obstacle in the course of efforts to revive the JCPOA is Washington's desire to maintain sanctions.

He also said the U.S. must lift all sanctions imposed under Trump, not only those related to the nuclear deal.

"Our position is actually that if the U.S. is interested to come back to the JCPOA, they should not only lift all JCPOA-related sanctions, but also all sanctions imposed or re-imposed or re-labeled during Trump administration," the Iranian diplomat stressed.

Araqchi also noted that the best outcome would be a conclusion within five or six weeks, citing Iran's willingness to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect nuclear facilities to some extent until late May.

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Flight to UK Still Banned Due to COVID-19

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development said that flights to UK are still prohibited due to COVID-19 concerns.

Mohammad Eslami broke the news in an interview with IRNA on Sunday and reiterated that given the dire consequences behind spread of COVID-19, flights to UK are still prohibited.

Turning to the restriction and prohibition of tour and travel agencies' activities to neighboring Turkey, the roads minister stated that all tour and travel agencies are duty-bound to fully observe instructions defined by the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters.

Iran-China Strategic Document To Foil Westerners' Plots

TEHRAN (MNA) – Providing some details of the Sino-Iranian document, an Iranian lawmaker stressed that the agreement meets the interests of the Iranian nation, foiling the plots of the enemies and Western countries.

Seyyed Mahmoud Nabavian provided some details of the Iran-China strategic document and stressed that it is in favor of the interests of the Iranian nation.

Referring to restrictions caused by sanctions on Iran's oil sales, Nabavian said, "Oil and energy sector is one of the important issues in the agreement, according to which China guaranteed to buy Iran's oil for up to 25 years."

According to Nabavian, developing oil fields, refineries, and petrochemical products, as well as equipping oil, gas, and petrochemical reserves are also stipulated by the agreement.

Building power plants in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria in a joint effort by Iran and China is also part of the agreement, he said.

The United States, Britain, France, and Germany are seeking to prevent Iran from selling its oil and to prevent Iran's oil revenue return the country, he said, adding, "In this regard, the return of oil money to the country and the facilitation of banking relations is another important issue mentioned in the agreement." Concluding this agreement with China foils the plots of the enemies and western countries, he stressed.

Referring to industrial cooperation with China in the framework of the agreement, the Iranian lawmaker said, "Iran, in cooperation with China, can manufacture



automobiles in free its zones so as to export them to countries in the region."

Iran and China are also expected to cooperate in the military and defense fields, elsewhere in his remarks he said.

In other words, the defense industries of these two countries are supposed to move forward together, which will be in favor of the Iranian nation, he explained.

Referring to the cooperation between Iran and China in the political, regional, and international arenas, Nabavian said that if the United States drafts an anti-Iranian resolution at UN Security Council, China, as a strategic part for Iran, can use its veto.

Iran, Armenia Unveil Postage Stamp



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran and Armenia unveiled a commemorative stamp of Saint Thaddeus Church on Sunday on the sidelines of a joint online stamps exhibition.

Head of the Iran Post Ramezan-Ali Sobhanifar, Armenian Ambassador in Iran Artashes Toumanian, Armenian parliamentarian of Majlis, and some other Iranian and Armenian officials attended the ceremony.

Iranian commemorative stamps of Nowrouz and a selection of Armenian stamps were put on display in the online event.

Qara Kelisa (meaning the Black Church), also known as the St. Thaddeus Church, in Chaldoran County, northwestern Iran is one of the most ancient and most notable surviving Christian monuments of Iran that carries great significance for the country's Armenian Orthodox community.

Armenians regard Qara Kelisa as the world's first church and were constructed in 68 BC by one of the apostles of Jesus, Saint Thaddeus, who traveled to Armenia, then part of the Persian Empire, to preach the teachings of Christ.

The church is composed of two parts: a black structure, the original building of the church from which it takes its name, and a white structure, the main church, which was added to the original building's western wing in 1810 CE.

An ancient chapel two kilometers northwest of the church is said to have been the place where the first Christian woman, Sandokh, was martyred. The chapel is believed to be as old as Qara Kelisa.

The structure was inscribed along with two other monastic ensembles of the Armenian Christian faith; namely, St. Stepanos and the Chapel of Dzordzor.

The church was added to UNESCO's World Heritage list on July 7, 2008.

Iran and Armenia had already unveiled and published a commemorative stamp of the Blue Mosque in Yerevan.

Iran, Kuwait Affirm Joint Campaign Against Drug-Trafficking



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police Chief and his Kuwaiti counterpart, in a video-conference meeting on Sunday, reaffirmed joint campaign against drug-trafficking.

Iran's Anti-Narcotics Police Chief Brigadier-General Majid Karimi mentioned the increasing volume of production of narcotics in Afghanistan and the volume trafficked from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Iran.

Iran has seized 1,150 tons of different types of narcotics in 2020 and 217 tons in the first quarter of 2021, according to Karimi saying that the drugs were mostly destined to the Persian Gulf states.

Karimi emphasized holding regular meetings and acceleration of sharing information by Iran and Kuwait, reaffirming Iran's readiness to expand joint campaign.

He made it clear that special officers have been appointed on contact points for Iran and Kuwait.

Kuwaiti Anti-Narcotics Police Chief Mohammad Qabazard noted that a part of narcotics traffic to Kuwait pass through Iran and this necessitates increasing cooperation between the two states.

He said that Kuwait was also ready to improve interaction and cooperation between Anti-Narcotics bodies of the both countries.

Presidential Hopefuls' Final List to Be Announced on May 26-27

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian Interior Ministry will announce the final list of the candidates for the upcoming presidential election on May 26-27.

According to the spokesman of the Election Headquarters, the registration of volunteers to contest Iran's 13th presidential election will start on May 11 and will go through May 15.

The registration process will be held at the country's Election Office, which is located within the Interior Ministry's premises in Tehran.

After the vetting process is conducted by the Guardian Council, the Interior Ministry will announce the names of qualified candidates on May 26-27.

Then, the candidates will be allowed to start their election campaign up until June 17, a day before the election.

The candidates are expected to be political and religious personages who fulfill the fourfold criteria of being of Iranian origin, being a national of the Islamic Republic, being prudent and capable of taking on leadership duties, and being religious and believing in the Islamic Republic's principles and its official religion.

The election is scheduled for June 18.

Gasoline Exports Rose Nearly 5-Fold in Year to March

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's customs office (IRICA) has posted a record five-fold increase in the value of the country's gasoline exports for the year to late March.

IRICA figures covered in a Saturday report by the semi-official Fars news agency showed gasoline shipments sent from Iran to other countries in the year to March 20 had generated \$2.913 billion in hard currency revenues for the government, an increase of 358 percent against the previous year.

The volume of the shipments also rose by over 618 percent to 7.8 million metric tons over the same period, showed the figures.

Iran was a net importer of gasoline about a decade ago when international sanctions imposed on the country over its nuclear program forced the Oil Ministry to expand domestic output capacity to respond a growing demand for fuel.

Increased gasoline exports from Iran in recent years have come despite a harsh regime of American

sanctions targeting the country's energy sector. The bans have affected direct sales of crude but have hardly hampered exports of petrochemicals and refined products from Iran.

In a clear defiance of the illegal US bans, Iran has supplied several major gasoline cargoes to Venezuela to help the South American country cope with Washington's economic pressure policy.

IRICA figures showed that Iran had maintained a smooth supply of petrochemicals to customers in Asia and elsewhere in the calendar year to late March. That comes despite restrictions imposed on trade around the world to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

However, petchem shipments from Iran declined by 23 percent in value terms over the period to reach nearly \$13.8 billion. Shipments also dropped by 13 percent in volume terms to just over 47.6 million tons, showed IRICA figures.

Iran Air Urges Boeing Seeking to Honor Its Commitments

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran Air Managing Director said on Sunday that Iran Air has sent a letter to Boeing seeking the U.S. Company to honor its commitments to Iran.

Alireza Barkhor said that Iran Air sought to revive contract for buying airplanes from Boeing.

Iran Air sent a letter to Boeing demanding the airplane manufacturing company to carry out its commitments and respect human rights of Iranians, he added.

Iran has demanded the U.S. Company, Boeing, to provide Iran Air with the good airplanes, suitable and safe parts as per a contract signed in 2015.

Earlier on Saturday, Iran's Road and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami said that Boeing should be held accountable for delay in carrying out its contract with 'Iran Air'.

Eslami pointed out that Iran reserves the right to take legal action against Boeing for delay in carrying out the contract with Iran.



Iran Air and other companies that have contracts with Boeing reserve the right to hold the U.S. Company accountable for failure to fulfill obligations of the contracting party, he noted. Iranian companies have the right as per the contract to pursue their contract, he further noted.

Majlis Assessment on U.S.-EU Pressure on Iran in JCPOA Talks

TEHRAN - In a report, the Research Center of the Iranian Parliament described in detail the U.S.-European effort to force the Iranian negotiating team to retreat from Iran's definite policy.

In a report published on Sunday, the Research Center of the Iranian Parliament examined the first round of the JCPOA talks in Vienna and announced that it was the beginning of a campaign to moderate Iran's position.

The assessment of the Vienna meeting shows that the United States and Europe are designing and implementing a process to force the Iranian negotiating team to retreat, despite the Leader's recommendations, the report said.

According to this plan, the simultaneous and parallel return of the two sides will replace the first return of the United States to the JCPOA; Instead of lifting all sanctions, Iran should agree to the removal of some parts of the sanctions, and eventually, real verification should become a set of symbolic and formal actions in a short period of time, it added.

The report went on to say that some estimates are emerging among Western countries that Iran has accepted a kind of simultaneous return to the JCPOA and superficial verification and that Iran must now be put under political and media pressure to accept the lifting of some parts of the sanctions. From the U.S. point of view, Iran must fulfill all its commitments and in return be satisfied with the minimum implementation of U.S. commitments. Iran's presidential election and the setting a deadline for an interim agreement between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency in June this year is not the right justification for hastening negotiations, the report stressed.

The passage of time should not be used as a tool to press Iran to violate its definite policy recommended by the Leader, it noted. The report highlighted that the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is not negotiable and no justification can moderate the pillars of this policy.

Shariatmadari Elaborates On Iraq Visit Agenda

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Mohammad Shariatmadari said on Sunday that signing five-year agreement on exchange of labor forces and job opportunity are atop the agenda of his visit to Iraq.

Speaking to IRNA upon his arrival in Iraq, Shariatmadari said that Iran is keen on maintaining cooperation with Iraq by opening joint venture in the framework of five-year agreement with Iraq.

He added the ministry has put on its agenda opening Iran's exports markets in neighboring states.

He described exchange of labor forces with Iraq as a professional issue, saying Iranian embassy in Baghdad will soon have an attaché on labor issues. He said that his trip will mainly focus on real economic issues on petrochemical, pharmaceutical and construction materials.

Meanwhile in a meeting with Shariatmadari, the Iraqi Finance Minister called brotherly and permanent relations with Islamic Iran as pillars of Iraq's economy.

Ali Abdul Amir al-Allawi on Sunday met Shariatmadari and stressed that one of the pillars of the Iraqi economy was strong fraternal and permanent relations with Iran. Shariatmadari, for his part, also stressed the need to develop economic relations between the two countries and expand cooperation, especially in new and digital technologies and skills training.

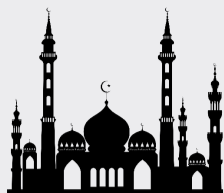
Meanwhile according to Shariatmadari, Iran seeks to expand bilateral cooperation with Iraq in the framework of a long term 5-year document which has been finalized.

He said the ministry in the New Year will focus its attention on expanding Iran's export markets, especially in neighboring countries.

He went on to say, "Iran seeks to expand its bilateral cooperation with Iraq in the framework of a long terms 5-year document which is also considered as a roadmap for our cooperation."

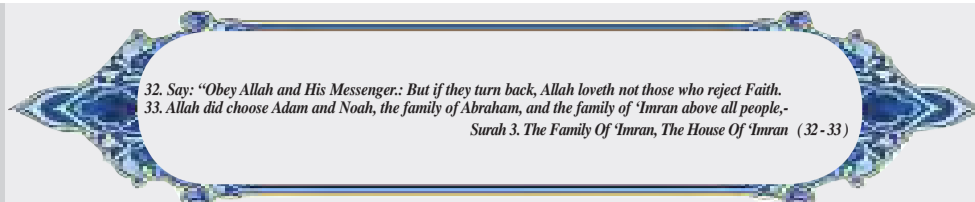
The signing of a five-year document with the Iraqi Ministry of Labor had been on Iran's agenda for some time, the Iranian Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare said and announced that Tehran and Baghdad have finalized this document.

The minister also expressed hope that with such long-term documents these collaborations between the two countries will be further developed and strengthened.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:53
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:33



Tehran, Sofia to Cooperate in Labor Relations, Fight Poverty

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Islamic Republic of Iran and Bulgaria will cooperate in the fields of labor relations and fight against poverty.

The Director General of Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare for International Affairs broke the news on Sunday and reiterated that the two countries of Iran and Bulgaria will focus on broadening bilateral labor ties and also fight against poverty.

For this purpose, a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked by the labor ministers of Iran and Bulgaria, Ali Hossein Shahrivar added.

He further pointed out that signing and sealing this cooperation agreement will strengthen and enhance mutual ties between Islamic Republic of Iran and Bulgaria as well.

The director general described the cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Bulgaria at 'satisfactory and proper level' and stated that bilateral relations between the two countries will also be developed through exchanging information, sharing experiences, organizing conferences and tutorial workshops, etc. Shahrivar said: By exchanging information and experiences, study courses, conferences and workshops jointly, the relations between the two countries are also developing in the specialized fields related to the two ministries."

He added, "The two sides will cooperate in the job, employment, professional training for



employed and unemployed people and dispatch of the workforce, technical protection and health, development of social security and pension system."

"The fight against poverty as well as policies related to the rights of people with disabilities will be included in MoU," noted Shahrivar.

In addition to cooperating in the field of labor relations, the two countries also will cooperate with each other in the fields of active employment policies, vocational and technical training for employed and unemployed people and sending labor in the field of support and social assistance for vulnerable groups, technical protection and health, social security development and pension system.

Exchanging information and experience in the field of policies and measures to fight poverty as well as policies related to the rights of people with disabilities were among the other topics of cooperation between the two countries, he added.

ESCO Rail as an Iranian-Made Product Is "Proud"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) Mr. Mansour Yazdizadeh and his assistants met and conferred with the Vali-e Faqih's representative to Isfahan Province



Ayatollah Seyed Yousef Tabatabai Nejad last week.

In the meeting, Ayatollah Tabatabai Nejad said that it is expected in the New Year which coincided with the beginning of Sha'baniyah eids and being named by the Supreme Leader as the year of production, supports and removing hurdles, necessary actions would be taken by the government for full utilization from all production capacities of ESCO.

He added that production of rail by this gigantic industrial complex has been a very good and valuable action and labeling the Made in Iran on these products are very proud.

He added that Islam considers haram any trade and relation with those who are at war with our religion or try to dominate us but it has encouraged relation and trade with others.

Ayatollah Tabatabai Nejad also said creating hurdle in way of exports is of the major woes for producers, adding that the country's marketing policies in the field of exports should be revised.

Then Mr. Yazdizadeh, for his part, briefed the Ayatollah of the performance of the company last year and said last year despite different problems like lack of access to the raw material due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, the company succeeded in materializing the pick-up in production qualitatively, and new and important products were added to its basket of production. He noted that at the top of them was production of 50,000 tons of rail which led to 300 kilometers of all-Iranian railways.

He then pointed to the measures of the company regarding the decrease in water consumption, expressing hope that the company would see quality and quantity growth in its products with endeavors of its hard-working staff.

MSC Determined In Fight for Eradicating Deprivation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Head of public relations department of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) in meeting with the mayor and members of city council of Allameh Majlesi underscored the strong determination of the company in eradicating deprivation from the region.

Mr. Hadi Nabatinejad said the base of the company is to support and eradicate deprivation in the current economic and coronavirus-hit condition, and this is the approach of the management of the company. He said most influential people have emphasized working in the town of Allameh Majlesi and relieving the concerns.

He added that in meetings with officials of the town of Mobarakeh, attention on the needy people of the region as well as people of Allameh Majlesi has been prioritized.

Nabatinejad noted that MSC with great distance comparing to other private sector companies has done activities regarding its social responsibilities and it has massive supports in this regard. He then called for plans and programs to be prepared by the bodies which need the supports and aids of MSC.



Providing National Fuel Basket Amid Coronavirus Pandemic



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 called stresses of this virus a big problem and said the company has held several virtual education courses for families of the staff focusing on boosting skill to curb the stress against the COVID-19 in the past year which will help them in the current condition. Dadvar went on to say that preparation of restaurants, mosques, transportation, gathering halls and administrative affairs offices for confronting this virus has begun since months ago and by providing necessary infrastructures, most meetings are held online. 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 reiterated all angles for better implementation of social distancing plan in the Persian Gulf Star Refinery have been taken into consideration, adding that in the past one year and through conducting different maneuvers, the company has learned the defects of this plan and by amending them, today the social distancing plan is carried out with more confidence and if the doctor finds it necessary the personnel to stay in quarantine before entering the refinery, he will be kept in some places with full facilities for two weeks and then he can return to the refinery. 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.

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.

Saudi Executes Three Soldiers for High Treason

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia on Saturday executed three soldiers for "high treason", the defence ministry said, in a rare public announcement that accused them of colluding with an unspecified enemy.

The executions come as a Saudi-led military campaign intensifies in neighbouring Yemen and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, consolidates his grip on power.

The soldiers were convicted of "the crime of high treason in cooperation with the enemy" in a way that threatens the kingdom and its military interests, the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.



Mexico Reports 2,192 New Coronavirus Deaths

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexico's government on Saturday reported 2,192 new confirmed coronavirus deaths, one of its biggest one-day tolls during the pandemic, after consolidating data from last year to include deaths that were not confirmed at the time.

The figure was far above the daily averages reported by the health ministry in recent weeks.

Mexico's health ministry said two-thirds of the 2,192 deaths reported on Saturday occurred in 2020 and at the time were not marked down as coronavirus fatalities. They were subsequently reviewed by experts.



Erdogan Calls for End to "Worrying" Developments in Eastern Ukraine



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday called for the "worrying" developments in eastern Ukraine's Donbass region to come to an end after meeting his Ukrainian counterpart in Istanbul, adding Turkey was ready to provide any necessary support.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy held more than three hours of talks with Erdogan in Istanbul as part of a previously scheduled visit, amid tensions between Kyiv and Moscow over the conflict in Donbass.

Kyiv has raised the alarm over a buildup of Russian forces near the border between Ukraine and Russia, and over a rise in violence along the line of contact separating Ukrainian troops and Russia-backed separatists in Donbass.

The Russian military movements have fuelled concerns that Moscow is preparing to send forces into Ukraine. The Kremlin denies its troops are a threat, but says they will remain as long as it sees fit.

The United States says Russia has amassed more troops on Ukraine's eastern border than at any time since 2014, when it annexed Crimea from Ukraine and backed separatists in Donbass. On Friday, Turkey said Washington will send two warships to the Black Sea next week.

Speaking at a news conference alongside Zelenskiy, Erdogan said he hoped the conflict would be resolved peacefully, through dialogue based on diplomatic customs, in line with international laws and Ukraine's territorial integrity.

"We hope for the worrying escalation observed on the field recently to end as soon as possible, the ceasefire to continue and for the conflict to be resolved via dialogue on the basis of the Minsk agreements," Erdogan said. "We are ready to provide any support necessary for this." Major combat in Donbass ended with a truce agreed in the Belarusian capital Minsk in 2015, whose implementation France and Germany have helped to oversee. Sporadic fighting continues despite repeated attempts to implement a ceasefire.

Zelenskiy said the positions of Kyiv and Ankara coincided on threats in the Black Sea and the response to those threats, and added he briefed Erdogan "in detail" on developments in Donbass. "We discussed in detail the issues of security and joint counteraction to challenges in the Black Sea region and it is worth noting that the visions of Kyiv and Ankara coincide both regarding the threats themselves and the ways of responding to these threats," he said.

NATO member Turkey has forged close cooperation with Russia over conflicts in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as in the defence and energy areas. But it has criticised Crimea's annexation and supported Ukraine's territorial integrity. It has also sold drones to Kyiv in 2019.

Erdogan said on Saturday that Turkey and Ukraine launched a platform with their foreign and defence ministers to discuss defence industry cooperation, but added this was "not in any way a move against third countries".

Kyrgyzstan Votes on Constitution Boosting President's Powers

BISHKEK (Dispatches) - Voters in Kyrgyzstan went to polls on Sunday for a constitutional referendum widely expected to see President Sadyr Japarov's powers expanded while allowing him to run for office a second time.

Japarov, a 52-year-old populist, has brushed aside political opponents since coming to power on the back of an October political crisis in which he was first released from jail by supporters, beginning a dizzying rise to the leadership.

He confirmed his dominance by posting a landslide victory in a presidential election in January. In a parallel poll, voters also indicated a preference for presidential over parliamentary rule, boosting his drive to overhaul the constitution.

Japarov's proposed amendments promise a presidency in line with Kyrgyzstan's Central Asian neighbours, ending a decade-long experiment with a mixed system. The draft new constitution would reduce the size of the country's parliament by 25 percent to 90 seats and give the president the power to appoint judges and heads of law enforcement agencies.



Japarov and his supporters hope the strengthening of the presidency will make the country more stable after its leaders were toppled by violent revolts in 2005, 2010 and 2020.

But local critics have dubbed the draft document a "khanstitution" for its expansion of presidential powers. Emil Dzhuraev, a Bishkek-based political analyst, said the proposed changes will centralise power in the office of the president. "To such an extent that, basically no national-level institution will be able to do anything without the participation or the sign off on it by the president," Dzhuraev told Al Jazeera.

In Bishkek, Dukot Yyndybaev, a small business owner, told Al Jazeera the reforms could be a step backwards in the path to full democracy.

"Kyrgyz people have a strong will towards freedom," he said. "We don't tolerate backward steps away from democracy. There are more serious issues to be solved in the country than the constitutional referendum, such as unemployment. It is better not to destroy what we have achieved so far."

The U.S., German, French and Dutch embassies as well as the EU delegation in Benin all called for calm and for the vote to go ahead in a free and transparent manner.

More than 4.9 million people are eligible to vote across 15,531 polling stations.

The electoral commission's president Emmanuel Tiando told AFP Saturday that despite delays in dispatching electoral material to the north, there was "nothing preventing this election from taking place".

Talon's backers have rejected accusations the election will be fixed, saying all the conditions are there for a fair vote.

"I don't understand what Talon is doing... if the president has issues with opponents, he should spare the people," said Philomene M'Betti Tapa, a resident of the northwestern town of Boukoumbe.

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Miss
SHANON
Contract manager
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
+989121907875
Tel : 88510081
FAX : 88506474

Parsian

Mahmoodieh (\$2000)
160 sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
gym, Sauna
yard, pkg
new bldg
marble floor
Fully Furn

Darrous (\$3500) Villa
800sq.m
4bdrs, nice yard
large balcony
parquet floor
enough pkg lots
Semi Furn
renovated

Elahieh Apt (\$ 1700)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, & F.F

Kamranieh (\$1800)
220sq.m, 3bdrs, pkg, & F.F

Darrous, 3bdrs, & F.F (\$1200)
Jordan, 4bdrs, & F.F (\$2200)

Elahieh bldg - Villa
4unites + Villa, total 14bdrs, yard, pkgs

Tajrish office (\$4000)
50sq.m, balcony, tel, & internet

Shahrak-e-gharb Apt (\$1000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, yard, & balcony

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Bitcoin Flirts With All Time Highs

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bitcoin approached all-time highs on Saturday, climbing back above the \$60,000 (£43,768) threshold for the first time in almost a month.

The cryptocurrency, which has been up and down over the last few weeks, jumped to more than \$61,000 before retreating slightly. It is currently 4.8% higher

on the day at \$60,820.

It came as Ethereum, the second-largest cryptocurrency in the world by market cap, also hit a record, climbing to \$2,190 for the first time in its history.

In late February, Bitcoin saw a retreat to as low as \$43,000 amid uncertainty in the traditional markets over stimulus expectations and their positive effects on US bond yields.



World Bank to Commit \$2b to Vaccines In Developing Countries by End-April

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The World Bank Group will have committed \$2 billion in financing by the end of April for COVID-19 vaccines in some 40 developing countries, World Bank Managing Director of Operations Axel van Trotsenburg said on Friday.

The \$2 billion is part of a pool of some \$12 billion that the World Bank has made available overall for vaccine development, distribution and production in low-and middle-income countries, van Trotsenburg told a World Bank forum.

David Malpass, the World Bank's president, said in separate remarks to the lender's development committee that the bank expects this to expand to \$4 billion worth of commitments in 50 countries by mid-year.

But public health officials at the same forum warned that a race between the coronavirus and the vaccines meant to stop it could be lost if the pace of vaccinations in the developing world did not pick up.

World Health Organization (WHO) director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that existing vaccines could be rendered ineffective if the virus continues to spread and mutate.

"Even those countries who have high coverage of vaccines will not be secure because the new variants that may not be stopped by the vaccines we have, will invade the countries that may have even 100% coverage in a few months," he said.

Tedros called for more political will to boost production of COVID-19 vaccines and share supplies, including through stalled intellectual property waiver on vaccines through the World Trade Organization.

The WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property, or TRIPS waiver was the "elephant in the room" holding back vaccine production, Tedros said, adding that it was meant for emergencies such as the coronavirus pandemic.

"We haven't seen any emergency like this in our lifetime. If we cannot use it now, then when are we going to use it?" Tedros asked. "The mother of all these bottlenecks is lack of political will."

China Fines Alibaba Record \$2.75b for Anti-Monopoly Violations

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China slapped a record 18 billion yuan (\$2.75 billion) fine on Alibaba Group Holding Ltd on Saturday, after an anti-monopoly probe found the e-commerce giant had abused its dominant market position for several years.

The fine, about 4% of Alibaba's 2019 domestic revenues, comes amid a crackdown on technology conglomerates and indicates China's antitrust enforcement on internet platforms has entered a new era after years of laissez-faire approach.

The Alibaba business empire has come under intense scrutiny in China since billionaire founder Jack Ma's stinging public criticism of the country's regulatory system in October.

A month later, authorities scuttled a planned \$37 billion IPO by Ant Group, Alibaba's internet finance arm, which was set to be the world's biggest ever. The State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) announced its antitrust probe into the company in December.

While the fine brings Alibaba a step closer to resolving its antitrust woes, Ant still needs to agree to a regulatory-driven revamp that is expected to sharply cut its valuations and rein in some of its free-wheeling businesses. "This penalty will be viewed as a closure to the anti-monopoly case for now by the market. It's indeed the highest profile anti-monopoly case in China," said Hong Hao, head of research BOCOM International in Hong Kong.

"The market has been anticipating some sort of penalty for some time ... but people need to pay attention to the measures beyond the anti-monopoly investigation."

Italy's Economy Seen Growing 4.1% This Year

ROME (Reuters) - Italy's virus-hit economy is expected to grow 4.1% this year and 4.2% in 2022 in an "uncertain ascent from the abyss", the country's business lobby Confindustria said on Saturday.

The Italian economy shrank by a post-war record of 8.9% last year, and Confindustria said even such "historically high" growth estimates would not make up for last year's losses. "At the end of 2022 the economy will have barely bridged the gap opened in 2020 by the pandemic," Confindustria said as it announced its latest economic forecasts.

The national business association cautioned, however, that its estimates were based on expectations for progress on vaccinations in both Italy and the rest of Europe, and hinged on the coronavirus being "contained in an efficient way".

"Given the great uncertainty (of this), the risks related to the GDP (gross domestic product) estimates are high, both on the upside and the downside," the report added.

The group said it had cut its initial growth estimates for Italy, published in October, by 0.7 percentage points for this year due to weaker-than-expected growth in the final quarter of 2020 and the first three months of 2021.

It said it saw Italy's deficit at 7.8% of GDP this year and at 4.8% in 2022. Hikes in government spending to support the economy drove the country's deficit to 9.5% of GDP at the end of last year. Italy has registered more than 113,000 COVID-19 deaths since the outbreak first emerged in February

last year, the seventh-highest in the world.

Mario Draghi's government expects GDP to expand by 4.1% this year and 4.3% in 2022, three sources close to the matter told Reuters in March.

Rome's official estimate, made by the previous government in January, envisages a deficit-to-GDP ratio of 8.8% this year, based on an economic growth forecast of 6%.

The new deficit and debt targets, along with multi-year GDP growth forecasts, will be issued in the Treasury's Economic and Financial Document, expected to be approved next week.

The European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the Bank of Italy all currently see Italian growth below 4% this year and next.

Turkey Looking at Strong Economic Partnership With India

NEW DELHI (KNN) - Turkey is considering a major trade and economic partnership with India as in times of pandemic, they are focussing on virtual trade delegation programs to maintain engagement with India.

Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) apex body of exporters from Turkey recently concluded a virtual business mission with India to reduce the effects of COVID-19 on exports.

The India virtual trade delegation program, organized by TIM under the coordination of the Ministry of Trade, was opened by Deputy Minister of Trade Gonca Yılmaz Batur, Turkish Ambassador to New Delhi Şakir Özkan Torunlar, TIM Chairman İsmail Gülle.

Stating that in 2020, Türkiye-India foreign trade volume reached 5.7 billion dollars, TIM Chairman İsmail Gülle said, "The Türkiye-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was put into the agenda on early 2010s and initiatives started with the Joint Working Group. We believe that finalizing and implementing the agreement will have a strong impact on bilateral trade relations. In the January-February period, our exports to India increased by 9 per cent compared to the same period of last year to 173.4 million dollars."

TIM Chairman İsmail Gülle stated that Türkiye sees India as a friendly country that is taking firm steps towards becoming a global power with its growing economy, wide market, military power, experience in space and information technology,



rich human resources, long-established history, and cultural heritage. Reminding that diplomatic relations, established after India gained its independence in 1947, have come to present-day with strength.

"In the economic sphere, the Türkiye-India Joint Economic Committee, established in 1996, the joint committees on agriculture and tourism, the Double Taxation Prevention Agreement signed in 1996 and the Mutual Assistance Agreements signed in 2015 have been the main mechanisms that strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries," he added.

He further said that Türkiye looks forward to stronger partnerships with India, which is expected to be the fifth-largest economy in the world in 2025 and the third largest in the world in 2030 adding, "As the field workers of Türkiye's foreign trade, we want to make the best use of business opportunities in India within the framework of the win-win principle."

Deputy Trade Minister Gonca Yılmaz Batur said that increasing the variety of products is important for both countries to further develop our commercial relations. She also said that India-Turkey Business Forum is being planned this year.

Turkish Ambassador to New Delhi, Şakir Özkan Torunlar who delivered a speech during the opening ceremony of the virtual delegation, said "Turkish exporters should concentrate on the products that the Indian market needs, instead of products that are being produced in India, and form partnerships with Indian companies."

Aramco Sells Minority Oil Pipe Stake in £9b Deal

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Aramco has agreed a \$12.4bn (£9b) deal with a consortium of investors that would give the group a minority stake in Aramco's pipeline assets.

The deal announced on Friday by Aramco and the group led by EIG Global Energy Partners is for a 49% share.

State-owned Aramco will retain a 51% stake in the pipeline arm, as well as full ownership and operational control of the network.

Under the plans, Aramco will lease the usage rights of its pipelines to the newly formed Aramco Oil Pipelines Company.

The new venture is valued at \$25.3bn, with the group retaining rights to 25 years of tariff payments for oil transported through the kingdom's crude network. This will not affect Aramco's oil production, the company said.

Washington-based private equity firm EIG beat off a number of other bidders to land the deal, including Apollo Global Management and Global Infrastructure Partners. Fellow asset managers Blackrock and Brookfield were also in the running at one point, according to Reuters. It is the biggest deal the firm has announced since its record-breaking initial public offering (IPO) in 2019.

While Aramco did not specify which other firms were part of the consortium, it is believed EIG is holding discussions with Mubadala, the UAE sovereign wealth fund, about joining the investor group. The coronavirus pandemic took a heavy toll on the company, with profits slumping 45% in March 2020. It reported a 50% profits plunge in its half-year report in August last year.

Shares in the company shed most of their gains at the onset of the crisis since its blockbuster \$29.4bn listing in December 2019. But they have been in a mostly uphill recovery since September 2020.

It comes after the company unveiled its profit declined 44.4% to \$49bn, This was down from \$88.2bn in 2019 and \$111.1bn in 2018. There was a 30.7% decline in oil revenues last year for the Saudi government.

Last month it reported its sales were hit by a decline in energy demand due to the COVID crisis and lower crude oil prices.

The world's largest oil producing firm produced the equivalent of 9.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in 2020.

Oil prices have yo-yoed in the last year since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, after demand in China collapsed by 20% in February after the country and the world's biggest importer locked down for COVID.

In March 2020 a price war, between Saudi Arabia and Russia over how to respond to a drop in demand, sent shockwaves across the oil markets and added to black gold's struggles.

Pakistan On-Track to Become 23rd Biggest Economy



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan is set to become the world's 23rd biggest economy by 2040 based on its predicted gross domestic product (GDP) rank which currently sits at 39th position, according to a United States intelligence report, which is issued every four years.

According to the recent 7th edition of the "Global Trends" report by the US intelligence agency, Pakistan is on track to become the world's 23rd largest economy by 2040. Currently, the position according to the GDP is 39th, meaning that the country will move 16 places by the next to decades.

The corporate author, US National Intelligence Council publishes such reports to guide the policymakers and other stakeholders to have certain expectations and make policies accordingly.

The structural factors for such a forecast include economic, environmental, technological, and demographic indicators that impact societies all over the world.

However, the report also, "examines how these structural forces interact and intersect with other factors to affect emerging dynamics at three levels of analysis: individuals and society, states, and the international system."

According to the report, the most certain trends during the next 20 years will be major demographic shifts as global population growth slows and the world rapidly ages. Some developed and emerging economies, including in Europe and East Asia, will grow older faster and face contracting populations, weighing on economic growth.

However, "populous countries that most likely will still be below the median age threshold in 2040 are Afghanistan, Egypt, and Pakistan."

Karachi is poised to become the 4th largest city in the world by 2035, with a population of 23.1 percent.

"Global economic activity has been tilting toward Asia during the past 40 years, reflecting its higher rate of economic growth in comparison with the rest of the world," along with poverty alleviation in the region.

MP Bashes French Envoy For Meddling in Iran Affairs

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An Iranian lawmaker lashed out at the ambassador of France for interference in Iran's internal affairs and comments about the purpose of the JCPOA-related negotiations.

Speaking at a parliamentary session on Sunday, member of the Iranian Parliament's presiding board, Alireza

Salimi, warned the French ambassador in Tehran not to interfere in the domestic affairs of Iran.

"The ambassador of France has said 'we would push the Vienna and the JCPOA negotiations to results so that we'd be able to interfere in Iran's elections'. Such interventionist comments do not match Mr. ambassador," the lawmaker added.



Pakistan Urges World to Help End Rights Abuses in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan has urged the international community to take cognizance of the unabated human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and play its role in resolution of the dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Addressing the weekly briefing on Friday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said the extra-judicial killings by the Indian occupation forces continued unabated in IIOJK during the past week as well.

He said ten more Kashmiris were martyred in Pulwama and Shopian districts of IIOJK; and out of these seven were martyred on Thursday. The spokesperson said that Pakistan has repeatedly called for independent investigations under international scrutiny, into the extra-judicial killings of all innocent Kashmiris.

He said, "We have also consistently underscored the need for unhindered access to the UN human rights bodies, international human rights organizations and media to assess the human rights situation in IIOJK."

The spokesperson said, "We are also concerned over the continuing military siege, incarceration of Kashmiri leadership, unprecedented restrictions on fundamental freedoms of the Kashmiri people and ongoing efforts to change the demographic structure of the occupied territory."

Talking about the recent visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Islamabad, the spokesperson said that Pakistan and Russia have agreed to intensify efforts to deepen cooperation in a myriad of sectors.

"During the delegation-level talks, the two sides agreed on the need to intensify efforts to deepen cooperation in all areas, including economy and trade, energy, counter-terrorism, security and defence, education, and people-to-people exchanges," said Chaudhri.

"The visit provided both sides an opportunity to review the whole gamut of bilateral relations and share their respective perspectives on key regional and international issues," Chaudhri added.

He said that underscoring the importance of energy sector cooperation, Foreign Minister Qureshi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to early commencement of the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline project. In the regional context, the FO spokesperson added, views were exchanged on matters related to South Asia, West Asia, Gulf region, Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific.

"The foreign minister underscored Pakistan's desire for peace in Afghanistan and its continued support for the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. He also appreciated Russia's role in the ongoing Afghan peace process."



"The Foreign Minister noted with appreciation the close cooperation between Pakistan and Russia at the multilateral fora including the UN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)." The two ministers, he maintained, also discussed the potential of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), of which China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project.

"During the call on the prime minister, bilateral relations and issues of regional and global importance were discussed," he said.

The Premier, he added, underscored his desire for expanding cooperation with Russia, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, industrial modernization, railways, aviation, security and defense sectors. "He also stressed the importance of a negotiated political settlement in Afghanistan. He appreciated Russia's support to the Afghan peace process including through the recent meeting of the Extended Troika in Moscow."

He further said that during the 10th summit of the D-8 hosted by Bangladesh in a virtual mode, the PM underscored the mobilizing of finances and resources to recover robustly from the economic and health crises induced by Covid-19, and actions to expand intra D-8 trade from currently around US\$100 billion to US\$ 500 billion by 2030.

There Is...

FROM PAGE 1

China's eager for investment abroad is not confined only to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The People's Republic of China, according to the data published by the American Enterprise Institute, has invested over 2.1 trillions of dollars in different countries worldwide only in the past 15

years; from rich countries like Switzerland and the U.S. to the African countries like Congo. According to the data released by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in only 6 years (2013 to 2019), China has invested \$62b in the railways sector in 34 countries.

The active economic presence of China has not meant expanding its political influence in those countries but the nature of these investments will be a haven for economic security. China's investments in Africa has led to huge number of analysis in the media that even experts believe with these investments, the fourth industrial revolution would happen in Africa, and this is said while there are no enough infrastructures for materializing this development. For preparing infrastructure developmental plans for Africa, China and India have turned into macro policies in changing the structures of the agro, industrial and educational services.

The American business magazine Forbes in its different analysis says China is the biggest partner of Africa and its annual trade volume with Africa stands at \$200b. Accordingly, over 100,000 Chinese companies are active in Africa. The most exports from Africa to China in 2019 were from Angola, South Africa and Republic of Congo. Africa accounts for 20 percent of China's need of cotton. Africa possesses half of the world magnesium reserves which is used in the steel industry and Democratic Republic of the Congo by itself possesses half of this amount of magnesium reserves. China needs all of these resources.

The details of Iran-China 25-year document has not been yet revealed. American newspaper The New York Times in an article had claimed that China's president had offered the proposal for the agreement some five years ago (2016). The draft of this agreement was signed on June 24, 2020 in Beijing. It is said the Chinese are to take \$600b of their overseas forex reserves into Iran in the span of 25 years and they are to have the same amount of investment in Iran in cooperation with companies and organizations both in private or public sectors.

The required guarantee for taking capital gains could have been the sale of oil. Now if they want they can take their capital gains in cash otherwise they can buy oil instead of their cash or else, they will be free to invest their profits in expanding their investment in those sectors.

That Iran enjoys having ready infrastructure, independent land, skilful and educated workforce as a valuable guarantee as its oil, has sweetened investment for the Chinese. So inducing the idea of oil for investment of the type of selling cheap oil is a big lie which is used to ruin the agreement and to put the pressure on the public opinion.

Removal of JCPOA-Related...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's top negotiator Abbas Araqchi said there was no agreement yet on how the sanctions would be removed and their removal would be verified.

The Islamic Republic says it has to verify any step taken by the US to undo its past wrongs.

The source speaking to Press TV on Sunday specified that the minimum time required to verify the sanctions relief is three to six months and that Iran will not agree to a temporary lifting of the sanctions or their waiver.

The source underlined the need for a "definite" removal of the coercive measures, saying the U.S. envoy would return to Washington empty-handed from the next round of Vienna talks scheduled for next Wednesday if America refuses to accept Iran's conditions.

Meanwhile, Press TV has independently verified through Iranian sources close to the Vienna talks that Iran will by no means give its consent to a suspension, ceasing or temporary waiver of the sanctions for a period of 120 or 180 days.

A U.S. delegation had traveled to Vienna this week, but it did not have Iran's permission to attend the discussions.

During the negotiations, two expert-level working groups discussed the sanctions Washington might remove as well as the nuclear curbs Tehran might observe, and reported their conclusions to the JCPOA Joint Commission.

Brazil Building New Giant Christ Statue, Taller Than Rio's



RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - A giant new statue of Christ being constructed in southern Brazil will rise even higher than the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue that overlooks Rio de Janeiro.

A head and outstretched arms were added this week to the statue, which has been under construction since 2019 in the city of Encantado, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

Completion of the monument is scheduled for late this year, according to the Association of the Friends of Christ, which is coordinating the work.

"It is a day for celebration, for devotion," said Gilson Conzatti, a local councillor and son of Adroaldo Conzatti, the politician who conceived the idea. The elder Conzatti, who was the city's mayor, died in March from complications of Covid-19.

The statue, to be named Christ the Protector, will stand 43 meters (140 feet) tall, including its pedestal, making it one of the world's tallest statues of Christ with outstretched arms.

It will measure 36 meters from hand to hand, and will have an interior elevator and an observation deck near the top.

Christ the Redeemer, in comparison, measures 38 meters high, pedestal included, and spans 28 meters hand to hand. It will mark its 90th birthday this October.

Encantado, a city of 22,000, lies 145 kilometers (90 miles) northwest of the state capital Porto Alegre. The project is intended both to inspire faith and encourage tourism to the area, its promoters say.

A father-son team of sculptors, Genesio and Markus Moura, are overseeing the work.

The project's budget of 2 million reais (\$350,000) is being entirely financed through donations, according to the volunteer-based Association of the Friends of Christ.

The group is continuing to raise funds. Its website even features the raffle of a car.

Britain Is Bouncing Back Into the Same Old Economy

LONDON (Guardian) - In some government circles, the excitement before Britain's opening-up and return to something like normality is making ministers giddy.

Grant Shapps says everyone may start booking a foreign holiday now that he is at work revamping last year's colour-coded map of the world. With a traffic-light system of testing and quarantine rules in place, it is likely that nowhere will be out of bounds for Britons to visit. Inside No 10, last year's recession is forgotten and the possibilities during the second half of the year are considered to be almost boundless.

Just the thought of public gatherings and nights at the theatre has allowed the prime minister to relax back into his pie-and-a-pint bonhomie, setting aside the accusations of bungling and lying so eloquently laid out in Peter Osborne's book *The Assault on Truth*, or the way Brexit seems to be hastening the breakup of Britain's union of nations.

In recent weeks, every forecast of economic growth has acquired a healthier glow. Last week, the International Monetary Fund added its voice to those saying the global economy – and the UK's in particular – would enjoy a broader and faster expansion than previously estimated. The UK is expected to grow by 5.3% in 2021 and by 5.1% in 2022, making it the fastest-growing G7 country at the end of the forecast period.

Senior figures at the Bank of England have fuelled the prime minister's sense that a period of unalloyed jollity, singing and dancing is within sight by using phrases such as "coiled spring" to describe the strength of the bounce-back. Investment bank economists and business groups paint a similar picture: one where Britain looks like a hive of activity, wheeling and dealing its way to prosperity in a way that boosts the traditional measure of national income – GDP.

Last week's Halifax house price data showed that traditional markers of success remain paramount inside Downing Street. House prices gained 1.1% in March compared with February, taking them 6.5% higher than they were in March 2020 – well ahead of February's average 0.4% inflation rate and median annual pay settlements of 1% in the three months ending 28 February, according to XpertHR.

The Treasury has pumped house prices higher with taxpayer-funded concessions on stamp duty that mean the £500,000 tax-free threshold will remain until 30 June and until 30 September at £250,000, before returning to its original level of £125,000.

The booming shares of the big housebuilders show what we have known for decades: that government subsidies for home purchases are channelled into property-industry profits via higher prices. It is the same old Tory practice of favouring an industry that makes donations to its election war chest, cloaked in PR messages about turning Generation Rent into Generation Buy.

Building on flood plains continues apace and housing density, not biodiversity, remains the highest priority of the housing minister, Robert Jenrick.

Meanwhile, the government has scrapped its most ambitious and costly measure to tackle climate change, the £1.5bn green homes grant, and halved the science research budget for universities, leaving a £2bn hole in research funding overall.

Councils are kept on a shoestring budget, and grants for "levelling up" are not only shovelled out by the Treasury as short-term fixes, preventing local groups from making plans beyond one year, but have become tainted as yet another way to favour Tory electoral ambitions.

Electrical Problem...

FROM PAGE 1

Kamlavandi said at that time that the incident was "an act of sabotage".

Meanwhile a lawmaker in the Iranian Parliament said that incident in the electricity distribution network of the Natanz Enrichment Facility is suspected of sabotage and infiltration.

"This incident on the anniversary of National Nuclear Technology Day and during Iran's efforts to force the West to lift sanctions is highly suspected of sabotage and infiltration," wrote a member of the Iranian Parliament's Energy Commission Malek Shariati Niasar on Sunday in a tweet.

"Today, after being informed about this incident, we are following the dimensions and details of the issue in the parliament, and after conclusion, the results will be announced," he added.

Fortunately, the incident did not cause any human injuries or pollution.

Araqchi...

FROM PAGE 1

"Iran's retaliation in response to violations of the JCPOA, such as the production of 20 percent uranium and the use of high-performance centrifuges, will not stop at this stage, and if the United States lifts all sanctions, we will live up to our commitments," he underlined.

The JCPOA Joint Commission held a four-day round of talks in the Austrian city of Vienna, with representatives of Iran, Russia, China, France and the UK in attendance.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

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info@irannewsdaily.com
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Rose Clings to Masters Lead

AGUSTA (AFP) - Justin Rose carried a one-stroke lead into Saturday's third round of the Masters with major winners Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas on his heels and thunderstorms in the forecast.
Play began with light winds and overcast morning skies at Augusta National with Rose teeing off at 2:20 in the final group alongside American Will Zalatoris.
"Day three plays pretty difficult here at Augusta National," Rose said. "You just have to keep hitting the shots."

De Rossi Hospitalized With COVID

ROME (Dispatches) - Former World Cup winner Daniele De Rossi, now a member of Italy's coaching staff, has been hospitalized in Rome with Covid-19, according to multiple media reports on Friday.
The 37-year-old former Roma captain was one of four members of Italy's staff who were infected during recent 2022 World Cup qualifiers, in an outbreak which has also hit eight players.
After a week, De Rossi's condition with a persistent fever and cough required more in-depth tests which revealed pneumonia, Gazzetta Dello Sport and Sky Sport reported.

Ten-Man Leeds Stun Man City

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City's march to the Premier League title stalled on Saturday as 10-man Leeds beat the runaway leaders 2-1, while Liverpool climbed into fourth place after Trent Alexander-Arnold's late strike sealed a 2-1 win against Aston Villa.
City are counting down to their third title in four seasons, but Stuart Dallas's stoppage-time strike leaves them still needing 11 points from their last six games to clinch the crown.
Their first defeat in seven matches in all competitions came after Pep Guardiola made seven changes following their midweek Champions League quarter-final first-leg win over Borussia Dortmund.
With Kevin De Bruyne on the bench at the Etihad Stadium, City were blow their best against lively Leeds and now turn their attention to cup competitions next week.
They have a 2-1 lead to defend in the second leg at Dortmund on Wednesday before Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Chelsea at Wembley.
"We did not create enough for the forwards. It is part of the game," Guardiola said.
"When they defend in the way they were you have to stop them running and we did not do that. The best moment we had in the game we make a mistake behind and we tried but could not score.
"We are going to rest and prepare two days for the game in Dortmund and decide on how we are going to play."
Leeds took the lead against the run of play three minutes before half-time.
Helder Costa broke down the left and passed inside to Patrick Bamford.
Northern Ireland midfielder Dallas took Bamford's lay-off on the edge of the area and hit a firm low shot that left Ederson rooted to the spot as it rebounded in off the post.
Moments later, Leeds defender Liam Cooper was dismissed for a foul on Gabriel Jesus.
Referee Andre Marriner initially booked Cooper after he caught the Brazilian on the knee, but changed his decision to a red card after reviewing the incident on the pitchside monitor.
City equalised in the 76th minute when Bernardo Silva flicked the ball into the path of Ferran Torres and the Spaniard clipped his shot past Illan Meslier.
But in the first minute of stoppage time, City were caught by brilliant Leeds counter.



Dallas raced onto a fine through ball from Ezgjan Alioski and guided a cool finish past Ederson.
It was Leeds' first victory against one of the Premier League's 'big six' clubs since their promotion last season.
Meanwhile Trent Alexander-Arnold's injury time winner ended Liverpool's record run of home defeats to beat Aston Villa 2-1 and move up to fourth in the Premier League on Saturday.
The English champions had lost their previous six games at Anfield and fell behind again when Alisson Becker failed to keep out Ollie Watkins's first-half strike.
Liverpool were then controversially denied an equaliser as a dubious VAR review ruled out Roberto Firmino's reply.
But Mohamed Salah levelled just before the hour mark before Alexander-Arnold responded in style to the criticism he has received of late.
The right-back was dropped from England manager Gareth Southgate's squad last month and was at fault for Real Madrid's second goal as Liverpool lost the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final against the Spanish giants 3-1 on Tuesday.
Victory takes Liverpool back into pole position for a place in next season's Champions League as they leapfrog West Ham, Chelsea and Tottenham.

Sonego to Meet Djere in Cagliari Final



MILAN (Dispatches) - Italy's Lorenzo Sonego staged off a fightback from second-seeded American Taylor Fritz and will meet defending champion Laslo Djere in the final of the ATP tournament in Cagliari.
Sonego was a set and 3-0 up in the semi-final clay-court clash before 23-year-old Fritz rallied but the third-seeded Italian dug deep in the third set to pull through 6-4, 5-7, 6-1 in two hours and 39 minutes.
Sonego will bid to become the first Italian to capture an ATP Tour title on home soil since Filippo Volandri at Palermo in October 2006.
The 23-year-old from Turin takes on clay-specialist Djere who kept his title defence on track by sweeping past fourth seed Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia 6-2, 6-0.
It will be a third ATP final for both.
Djere won his first two on clay in Rio in 2019 and Cagliari last year.
Sonego captured his first crown on grass at the 2019 Antalya Open, but lost on a hard court in Vienna last October.
In the semi-final, Sonego made the break in the fifth game but 32nd-ranked Fritz levelled for 4-4, in the fourth meeting between the pair.

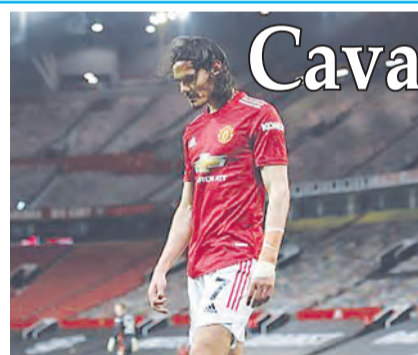
Injury-Hit Bayern Munich Held as PSG Loom

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich were held to a 1-1 home draw by Union Berlin in the Bundesliga on Saturday, three days before their crunch Champions League return leg at Paris Saint Germain.
Teenager Jamal Musiala beat three defenders to give injury-hit Bayern the lead midway through the first half at the Allianz Arena only for Marcus Ingvartsen to equalise for Union four minutes from time.
In Paris on Tuesday, European champions Bayern need to overturn a 3-2 first-leg defeat and against Union started reserve team players Tiago Dantas, on a season-long loan from Benfica, and Josip Stanisic.
The club world champions have nine players sidelined, including injured top-scorer Robert Lewandowski and winger Serge Gnabry, who is quarantined after testing positive for Covid-19.
The home draw trims Bayern's lead at the top of the Bundesliga table to five points ahead of second-placed RB Leipzig, who romped to a 4-1 win at Werder Bremen.

Markram, Klaasen Shine For South Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - Opening batsman Aiden Markram and stand-in captain Heinrich Klaasen made hard-hitting half-centuries for South Africa in the first Twenty20 international against Pakistan at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Saturday.
Markram hit 51 off 32 balls and Klaasen scored 50 off 28 deliveries as a depleted South African team made 188 for six off 20 overs after winning the toss.
Pakistan struck back strongly in the last four overs after South Africa had been well-placed at 159 for three after 16 overs.
Klaasen was captaining South Africa in the absence of the injured Temba Bavuma, while Markram was a late inclusion in a side hit by a spate of injuries.
The Proteas were also without five players whose contracts with their Indian Premier League teams took precedence.

Cavani Undecided Over Future at Man Utd



Unlike most extension clauses it has to be agreed by both parties before it can be triggered and there is speculation that Cavani could move to Argentine giants Boca Juniors.
Solskjaer said he had discussed the matter with the former Paris Saint-Germain forward.
"I've kept in touch with Edi, of course, and we keep an open dialogue," said Solskjaer.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Edinson Cavani remains unsure about his Manchester United future beyond the end of the Premier League season, manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.
The 34-year-old Uruguay international arrived at Old Trafford as a free agent in October on a deal until the end of the campaign with the option of a further year.

"He's still unsure what he wants to do next season, which I find fine.
"It's not been an easy year either for him or the rest of the world this season, so he still wants time to make his mind up."
Cavani came off the bench in Thursday's 2-0 Europa League quarter-final first-leg win at Granada, making his 28th appearance of a season marred by injuries.
He also served a three-match Football Association ban for using a racial term in a social media post. The striker apologised for any unintentional offence caused.
Solskjaer believes Cavani, who has scored seven times for United, will finish the season strongly despite the potential distractions. "I'm very sure that we'll get a good version of Edinson for the rest of the season," said the Norwegian.
"He knows that this is the business end of the season, where we fight for the Europa League trophy and we can see the end line in the league.
"He's been so positive in and around the place, he's been great to have."

Real Madrid Edge Thrilling Clasico

MADRID (AFP) - Real Madrid climbed to the top of La Liga on Saturday after Karim Benzema's flicked finish helped them claim a thrilling 2-1 victory over Barcelona in a wild Clasico at Valdebebas.
Benzema's superb piece of skill and a deflected Toni Kroos free-kick put Madrid in charge and while Oscar Mingueza pulled one back for Barca, they fell to defeat in what could be Lionel Messi's final appearance in this fixture. Victory means Real Madrid go level on points with Atletico, with the top three now separated by a single point.
Atletico, without the injured Luis Suarez, face Real Betis on Sunday.
With Atletico stumbling and both Barca and Real Madrid hitting their stride, this game looked set to define, if not the title, then who would become favourites to be crowned champions in May.
The result was a riveting contest at a rain-soaked Alfredo di Stefano stadium - certainly one of the most exciting Clasicos in years - that saw both teams squander numerous chances, several efforts come back off the woodwork and Casemiro sent off in extra time.
With the last play of the game, Barcelona substitute Ilaix Moriba rattled Real Madrid's crossbar.
Casemiro's red card had also given Messi a free-kick and the chance for a dramatic equaliser but instead the Argentinian made it seven games now without a goal against Real Madrid, with many wondering if his 45th Clasico will be his last.
Messi might yet turn the tide in the eight games still remaining but there is no doubt Madrid are in the groove after backing up beating Liverpool 3-1 on Tuesday with another crucial victory.
They can finish the job in the Champions League at Anfield next week.



Flick, Salihamidzic Can No Longer Work Together at Bayern

MUNICH (AFP) - The relationship between Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick and sports director Hasan Salihamidzic has broken down to such an extent that one may be forced to leave, according to club legends Lothar Matthaeus and Stefan Effenberg.
Holders Bayern face a Champions League exit in the quarter-finals, needing to overturn a 3-2 home defeat to Paris Saint Germain in Tuesday's return leg, but pressure is also building off the pitch.
Friction between Salihamidzic and Flick, which has brewed all season, has boiled over in the last few days. Flick refused to answer any questions about the situation before Saturday's home league game against Union Berlin and former West Germany captain Matthaeus says the situation is untenable.
"They have different opinions, especially about the squad, and I don't think that's fixable anymore, their positions are too far apart," said Matthaeus, who made 410 appearances for Bayern, in his column for daily Bild.
On Friday, Flick, who is under contract until 2023, criticised some of Salihamidzic's recruitment decisions, saying the squad were "stronger" last season when they lifted the Champions League.
In the last week the pair have had a clear difference of opinion over Jerome Boateng.
Salihamidzic has confirmed the 32-year-old will not be offered a new deal when his contract expires at the end of the season, but Flick has made it clear he wants to keep the 2014 World Cup winner.
"One of them has to go," former Bayern captain Effenberg told the t-online website.
"The club is pushing Flick out," he added, even though the 56-year-old is "the best coach at Bayern" who won all six titles available in the last 12 months.

