

Health Ministry Spokesman Said On Sunday That 405 More Iranians Died From the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing the Total Deaths to 66,732

IRAN NEWS

The Head of the Institute for Internal Security Studies of the Israeli Regime Acknowledged That Iran's Nuclear Program Was Very Strong and Extensive

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New Understanding Emerging Among JCPOA Parties

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Seyed Abbas Araqchi says a new understanding is emerging following days of talks in Vienna, but the path ahead is not an easy one.

"Today, almost three days the JCPOA Joint Commission started its work, we once again convened a meeting of the Joint Commission to review the progress of talks held so far both in the field of sanctions removal and nuclear issues," Araqchi said after the conclusion of a fresh round of talks among Iran and the P4+1 in Vienna.

He said the participants reviewed the reports presented by the working groups and held good discussions within the Joint Commission.

"It seems that a new understanding is being developed and there is now common ground among all [the sides] on the final goal," he added.

Araqchi said the path that must be trodden is a little bit more familiar now.

"However, the path ahead will not be an easy one. The differences have not been settled yet. There are some serious disagreements that need to be decreased during next negotiations," he noted. **See Page 7**

Vienna Talks Pursuing Clear Picture of Sanctions Lifting

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations said that what is being pursued and discussed in Vienna is to create a clear picture of the lifting of sanctions.

Referring to the ongoing talks in Vienna between Iran and the P4+1, Kazem Gharibabadi on Sunday said, "What is being pursued and discussed in Vienna is to create a clear picture of the lifting of sanctions."

"Identifying and listing sanctions lifting measures is necessary for this transparency, as well as assessing the seriousness of the U.S. in its claim to return and full adherence to the JCPOA and its compliance with the declared policy of the country," he added.

"The basis for negotiating team is also based on the principles set by the Leader as the Establishment's policy in this regard," the Iranian diplomat underlined.

"The Vienna negotiating delegation regularly reports the results of the talks to senior officials of Iran for review and decision-making," Gharibabadi added.

According to the latest reports, consultations between the negotiating delegations of Iran and the P4+1 in Vienna continue today in various formats and levels. Expert working groups will also continue to discuss the two areas of sanctions and nuclear issues.

National Army Day Marked With Unveiling New Achievements



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran marked its National Army Day by parading the latest military achievements, including home-grown air defense systems, inside selected military bases across the country due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Iranian military units on Sunday held a motorcade parade in the capital Tehran where various types of unmanned aerial vehicles, tanks, anti-aircraft batteries, advanced missile systems and different kinds of electronic warfare systems were put on display.

Army chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, and commanders of the army's air force, navy and ground force as well as senior commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) were present to oversee the parade.

"The army has always stood with the people. Forty-three years ago, we supported the Iranian nation and we continue to do so," Mousavi told Press TV.

Military authorities, however, decided to cancel march-pasts in compliance with the coronavirus restrictions.

The Army's air defense division unveiled three domestically-developed missile systems, including Zolfaghar low-altitude missile system that enjoys great mobility and can connect to electro-optic systems.

Majid missile system used for intercepting and downing low-altitude targets as well as cruise missiles, and Khatam artillery fire control system capable of striking various aerial targets at low altitudes were showcased as well.

Damavand strategic and long-range system, which is used for downing various aircraft as well as cruise and ballistic missiles, was also displayed.

The National Army Day was included in the Iranian calendar after a historic letter from the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, in 1979, in which he voiced his strong support for the Army and ordered its troops to hold nationwide parades on April 18 every year.

Meanwhile in his message on the occasion of the National Day of Army, President Rouhani stressed that Iran's military institutions recognize their mission and responsibility more professionally than ever.

Stating that Iran's national security depends on preserving its territorial integrity, President Hassan Rouhani stressed: "Today, along with the experience of the imposed war (Iran-Iraq war) and the legacy of the holy defense, Iran's military institutions recognize their mission and responsibility more professionally than ever."

In his message on the occasion of (April 18), the Army Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he added: "Every nation is proud of its powerful army and every army is proud of its zeal and great nation; nations are defenseless without armies, and armies are defenseless without people, and governments without these two are "without capital" and altogether a solid barrier [against the enemies]."

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ViewPoint

Vaccine Is Not the Only Solution

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Every day we face some news and reports regarding the COVID-19 vaccines that Iranian officials are to import or the related bodies are working on producing the domestic-made vaccine and the controversy on the issue is on the rise.

One should know that COVID-19 is a modern day disaster which has rattled the world and it has killed more than 3 million people worldwide and damaged economies, and most countries especially the rich ones are investing in producing vaccines and so far some companies have been able to send their vaccines into the markets and other ones are in the lines but no one is sure of their one hundred person effectiveness.

American, European, Chinese and Russian made COVID-19 vaccines have rolled into the market but they have faced different reactions from the world. Of course, politicizing the matter has worsened the case as some countries have taken offensive stand against Russian and Chinese made vaccines and also some have taken the same stand against the American and European made ones.

In Iran since the first day when manufacture of different types of vaccines was announced, the reactions were the same and some jumped to defense of domestic made vaccines, some backed European and American ones and others defended Chinese and Russian made vaccines. Unfortunately the issue has been politicized and it has led to some disputes even among the related health bodies in the country.

After outstanding efforts by the health officials in the country to contain the wave of the pandemic in the first three peaks, the number of infected people and even the death toll of COVID-19 in the country fell sharply. Some lockdown measures and observing the sanitary protocols like social distancing, wearing face mask and washing hands were essential in the fall in the number of the infected.

But a carelessness and indifference both by the public and the officials triggered another wave in surge in the number of the infected, and the daily death number once again became 3-digit and officials sounded warning about the future and they again started the blame game.

Regarding the return of the fourth peak of the virus and the rise in the number of the casualties, unfortunately officials have started to criticize each other for their inefficiency and every organ tries to acquit itself and put the blame on the others but the truth is that all of us should be blamed: people for their not observing the sanitary protocols and officials for their lax attitude and not imposing appropriate lockdown measures for the New Year holidays and not providing vaccines till the domestic-made vaccines are rolled into the market. **See Page 7**

Ukraine Politicizing Plane Crash Amid Tensions With Russia

TEHRAN (kraine) - An informed official close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) says Ukraine has tried to politicize the January 2020 accidental downing of its passenger plane near Tehran in an attempt to mount pressure on Russia amid tensions between the two neighbors.

The official, whose name was not released, told Nour News on Sunday that Ukrainian officials had offered that Iran announce a technical glitch in its Russian-made Tor-M1 anti-aircraft defense system as the cause of the tragedy.

The Islamic Republic, however, rejected the proposal due to its non-compliance with the reality of the incident, after which Ukraine pursued the path of politicizing the issue, he added.

He also highlighted Iran's firm resolve to create transparency in all aspects of the plane crash, emphasizing that any attempt seeking to politically exploit the incident is inhuman and contrary to legal and technical procedures.

On January 8, 2020, the Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752, en route to Kiev and carrying mostly Iranians, crashed minutes after takeoff near the Iranian capital, killing all the 176 on board.

The plane was shot down by Iran's air defenses, which mistook the aircraft for a military target amid tensions between Tehran and Washington following the US assassination of top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq days earlier.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian security official explained that Kiev also wanted to evade accusations regarding its role in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. Therefore, he said, Ukraine sought to blame both the MH17 and PS752 crashes on a problem in the Tor-M1 battery.

The official further stressed that Kiev wanted to increase pressure on Moscow amid the conflict in Crimea. Relations between the two sides deteriorated when the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea rejoined Russia following a referendum in 2014. More than 90 percent of the participants in the referendum voted in favor of that unification.

Iran Reports 61% Surge In Aluminum Output

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's aluminum production in the year to March rose 61% from the prior year to nearly half a million tons, according to a report by the country's state-run metals and mining conglomerate IMIDRO.

The report covered by the official IRNA news agency on Saturday said that total output in four major aluminum smelters in Iran had reached 0.4468 million tons, up from 0.2783 million tons reported for the year to March 2020.

It said the Iranian Aluminium Company (IRALCO) had the highest share of production at 185,000 tons. It was followed by Al Mahdi, Iran's largest aluminum smelter on the Persian Gulf which includes Hormozal smelter, at 165,000 tons.

Production at Salco, a smelter set up in late 2019 in southern Iran, topped 72,100 tons while Iran Alumina Company churned out 25,400 tons, showed IMIDRO figures.

Production in four smelters rose by 38% to 41,000 tons in the final month of the fiscal year compared to the month to March 20, 2020, said the report. **See Page 7**

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Rouhani Voices Support for Zimbabwe Against U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's President in a message to his Zimbabwean counterpart, stressed that Tehran will spare no efforts in assistance to Zimbabweans to overcome the problems and the consequences of the U.S. unilateral sanctions.

President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday congratulated the independence anniversary of the Republic of Zimbabwe, stressing: "I'm sure that with four decades of independence, the Zimbabweans are able to overcome the problems and the consequences of the US unilateral sanctions on the path where the Islamic Republic of Iran will spare no efforts in their assistance."

60% Enrichment Iran's Decisive Response To Enemy's Plot

TEHRAN (PressTV) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf says Iran's recent decision to start enriching uranium to 60 percent purity was a "decisive response" to a plot to undermine Tehran's position in Vienna talks.

Qalibaf made the remarks Sunday, less than a week after Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of its plan to start the 60-percent enrichment, under which 1,000 advanced centrifuges will be installed at Natanz nuclear site.

The decision followed an act of sabotage at the facility, which is among the sites being monitored by the IAEA under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Qalibaf said the 60-percent enrichment lies within the framework of Article 1 of the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed last December by the Iranian parliament.

The 60-percent uranium enrichment, which was made possible in a short time, shows that the interval between decision-making and action in the country's nuclear industry has reached the minimum, he added.

"Today, it can be said that we will achieve whatever we want with the grace of God Almighty in a short time," Qalibaf said.

"The important enrichment achievement proved to our enemies that Iran's nuclear



industry has become indigenous and that any uncalculated action and pressure on Iran's national determination for scientific progress is ineffective."

The 60-percent enrichment, Qalibaf said, was "a decisive response to the enemy's scheme meant to weaken the country's upper hand in the negotiation process".

Representatives of the remaining signatories to the JCPOA have been meeting in Vienna to try to remove the unilateral UN sanctions on the Islamic Republic and discuss other steps needed to bring the U.S. into line.

Qalibaf said the higher enrichment indicated that acts of sabotage do not pose a threat to Iran's nuclear activities, but practically provide "a unique opportunity" for progress.

"I also emphasize that a response to the terrorist attack in Natanz is an indispensable necessity and that it will be delivered in due time," he added.

Iran to Receive Arrears From Iraq

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iraq has reached settlement on payment of arrears to Iran but the process takes about a month before trade between the two neighboring countries returns to normal, said the co-chairman of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce.

The agreement was reached in early March, said Hamid Hosseini speaking to IRNA.

Hosseini said that Iraq has been given exemption and can pay back its debts to Iran regardless of the sanctions.

He added that following the talks between Iran and Trade Bank of Iraq, the bank announced that Iranian traders can continue their trade with the blocked money.

Hosseini went on to say that Iranian and Iraqi companies could cooperate with each other with Euros, dollars, or dinars.

According to the instructions, Iranian companies can make their purchases from Iraq and when the goods enter the international waters 90% and when the goods are being unloaded 10% of the Iranian money blocked in the Iraqi bank will be freed.

In the first 11 months of the Iranian year 1399 (ending on March 20), Iran exported 103.090 million tons of goods with the value of \$31.198 billion and imported 30.818 million tons of goods with the value of \$34.321 billion.

Iraq stands second among trade partners of Iran. Iran exported 1.57 million tons of goods with the value of \$477 million to its western neighbor in the 11-month period.

India Has Fulfilled Undertaking to Develop Chabahar

CHABAHAR (IRNA) - India is just an operator in southern Iranian port of Chabahar and it is also committed to develop and equip the strategic port, a senior provincial official said on Sunday.

For the time being, 19 percent of Indian company's commitment has been fulfilled, Director-General of Ports and Maritime Organization of the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchestan Behrooz Aqaei told IRNA.

Based on mutual agreement, the Indian side is committed to provide Chabahar with 85-million-dollar worth of strategic equipment, said Aqaei adding that \$16 million from the total figure has been invested up to now.

He made it clear that India as a foreign operator has an important role to play in connecting Chabahar to global shipping network. The investment agreement with India is the model of the build-operate-transfer (BOT) agreement for 10 years.

Chabahar is the first Iranian port which has attracted foreign operator, Aqaei underlined.

He further pointed to the May 2016 landmark transit trade agreement on Chabahar Port between Iran, India and Afghanistan and said the agreement has well highlighted key role of Chabahar as a safe and low-cost route in transit of goods in the region.

According to agreement with New Delhi, India is just an operator and it has no role to play to manage the Iranian port, Aqaei said.

Indian investment of a country in Chabahar creates no obstacle for other states to take part in development projects of the port, he added.

He added that next shipment of port equipment from India will arrive at Iranian port this year.

Pakistan Eyes Developing Border Marketplaces With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Development of border marketplaces with the Islamic Republic of Iran has been put atop agenda of Pakistan government.

Minister for Defense Production of Pakistan Zubaida Jalal Khan, who is the High Representative of Pakistan to follow plans related to the establishment of new border crossings with the Islamic Republic of Iran, said that the development of joint border marketplaces between the two countries has been put atop agenda of Islamabad.

During her visit to Balochistan province and visiting cities bordering with the Islamic Republic of Iran, she discussed Pakistan government's efforts to strengthen bilateral trade with Iran and develop joint border marketplaces with the province's trade and trade officials.

The second official border crossing point of the two neighboring countries of Iran and Pakistan, Iran's 'Rimdan' Border Crossing and Pakistan's 'Gabd' Border Crossing, was officially inaugurated on December 20, 2020 in the presence of Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami and Ms. Zubaida Jalal Khan Minister for Defense Production of Pakistan.

This was the first step in establishing a new official border between Iran and Pakistan in 1999. After Mirjivah border, Iran's 'Rimdan' Border Crossing as the second official border with Pakistan started its trade and business activity.

Iran, Serbia to Improve Cooperation, Int'l Consultation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Serbia have signed a memorandum of understanding to improve bilateral cooperation and hold consultation on regional and international issues.

The MoU was signed by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his visiting Serbian counterpart Nikola Selakovic in Tehran on Saturday.

According to the MoU, Iran and Serbia would expand cordial relations based on the principles of equality, sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, mutual respect and common interests.

It also stressed the importance of holding periodic meetings and consultations between the two countries on bilateral, regional and international issues.

Tehran and Belgrade also agreed to make joint efforts to solve regional and global crises through political and diplomatic ways. The top Serbian diplomat arrived in Tehran earlier in the day and held a meeting with his Iranian counterpart.

During the meeting, Zarif pointed to historical relations between the two countries and the importance of Balkan countries in Iran's foreign policy and urged continuation of cooperation in various political, economic, trade and cultural fields by using innovative mechanisms.

The Serbian foreign minister, for his part, said the signing of the MoU would play an effective role in the expansion of relations given the two countries' high capacities, particularly in economic and industrial sectors.

Zarif and Selakovic also stressed the importance of holding the 16th session of the two countries' joint economic committee to bolster mutual relations, particularly in economic fields, issues related to the U.S.' unilateral and cruel sanctions, regional developments, cooperation in international circles and the fight against the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile on Sunday, President Hassan Rouhani in meeting with Selakovic stressed the need to further Tehran-Belgrade cooperation in the international forums.

The president said Iran-Serbia relations are excellent.

President Rouhani underlined the importance of making efforts to deepening bilateral ties in various areas, political and economic fields in particular.

Iran has always supported national unity in Serbia, the president noted.

Islamic Republic of Iran believes that peace, stability and security should be ensured in Balkans and all races and ethnic groups should follow policy on peaceful coexistence, the president said, adding that the fight against terrorism and establishment of peace need all-out efforts from countries.

Touching upon the issue of pandemic, the president expressed Iran's readiness to have scientific cooperation with Serbia in combat against the deadly virus.

Referring to willingness of the new US administration to return to the 2015 nuclear deal after removal of the sanctions, Rouhani said the friendly states should make use of opportunity to be created after changes in the international arena.

For his part, the Serbian foreign minister said his country has always been determined to preserve friendly ties with Iran.

Serbia always supports Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Iran's peaceful nuclear purposes, he added. He further hoped that problems related to the international nuclear agreement would be removed soon.

He called for Belgrade's enhanced cooperation with Tehran.

FM Denies Distorted Reports Quoting Informed Sources

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has refuted the rumors and "distorted" reports on nuclear talks that quote "informed sources".

"The latest news of nuclear negotiations are merely disseminated through the official channels of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, and the head of the Iranian negotiating team," Khatibzadeh said on Saturday in response to reporters who asked about such rumors.

The spokesman urged media outlets to avoid paying attention to certain reports that try to kick up a fuss by quoting "informed sources".

In similar remarks, Iran's chief negotiator Seyed Abbas Araqchi had earlier criticised certain media outlets for quoting "informed sources" in their reports about the Vienna talks, saying such allegations confuse the other parties participating in the talks, and undermine Iran's strategy in the negotiations.

Over 90% of Candidates Approved

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Interior ministry in a statement on Saturday announced that over 90 percent of the candidates have been approved.

The statement added that more than 90 percent of the candidates have been approved, adding that the candidates who have not been qualified at this stage have the right to protest.

Over 298,000 people enrolled to compete in the municipal and rural council elections that are an increase of more than 8,000 compared to the previous period and more than 32,000 compared to the fourth period, it noted.

It further noted that over 8 percent of the candidates are women that is an increase of 2 percent from the previous period.

The sixth round of Iran's municipal elections will be held on June 18 alongside the country's presidential elections.

Producing Laptops, Smart Phones Part of Iran-China Cooperation Document

TEHRAN (MNA) – Cooperation in the production of mobile phones, tablets, and laptops has been mentioned in Iran-China strategic document, an IT and Communication Technology expert said.

Mohammad Amin Ahmadlou, the IT and Communication Technology expert affiliated with Iran Think Tanks Network provided Mehr News Agency with some details of the cooperation document between Iran and China in the field of information and communication technology and cyberspace.

It seems that this document emphasizes the cooperation of the two countries in the field of information and communication technology in several different layers, he said.

According to Ahmadlou, cooperation in the production of mobile phones, tablets, and laptops has been mentioned in Iran-China strategic document.

Cooperation in the field of computer and mobile operating systems, software, browsers, antivirus, and other areas also seen in this section.

Tehran to Host EAEU Exclusive Expo in Mid-May

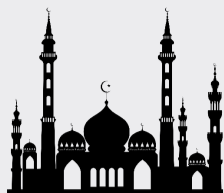
TEHRAN (DMNA) - Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has said an exclusive exhibition of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states' economic capabilities is planned to be held in Tehran on May 17.

According to Hamid Zadboum, the mentioned exhibition will be held if the coronavirus pandemic conditions get better in the country, the TPO portal reported.

Zadboum pointed to the Eurasia exhibition as a platform for representing the two sides' export capacities, saying: "Hosting this exhibition is a great opportunity that can facilitate negotiations to achieve free trade with the union."

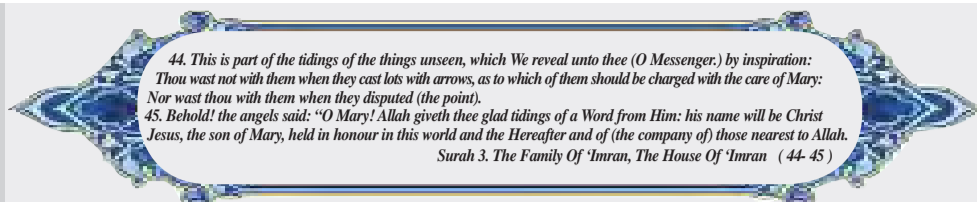
Referring to the importance of the Eurasian exclusive exhibition for the Islamic Republic, the TPO head noted that official invitations have been sent to Eurasian authorities to attend this major event.

"Although the volume of trade between Iran and the five Eurasian Economic Union member states is not compatible with the two sides' existing capacities, Iran's trade with Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus is constantly improving and we have joint economic committees with all these countries," he said.



PRAYER TIME

- Noon (Zohr) 13:03
- Evening (Maghreb) 20:00
- Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) 04:56
- Tomorrow's Sunrise 06:25



Tehran, Belgrade Determined to Expand Trade, Industrial Ties



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Serbian Foreign Minister Nikola Selaković and the head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Hamid Zadboom have called for expansion of cooperation in industry, mine, joint venture investment and trade.

The decision was made in Zadboom meeting with Selaković in Tehran. They called for enhanced cooperation on industrial, energy, agriculture sectors in order to use existing capacities. Describing Serbia's progress in economy as significant, the Iranian official said the European states is among few countries, which could revitalize its economy appropriately. He further noted that the Iranian tradesmen are keen on expanding trade ties with Serbia, calling for finalizing an agreement for developing trade and economic relations. Serbia and Iran can sign a preferential trade agreement to pave the way for signing a free trade accord in the future, he said, adding that Serbia is considered as the gateway for European markets, and that the Iranian market with over 80 million population is a proper opportunity for cooperation. Pointing to the negative impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic on international trade and in particular businesses between Serbia and Iran, he expressed hope that the two sides will try to hold the 16th Iran-Serbia Joint commission in Tehran in 2021 in the best way.

He said that the U.S.-imposed cruel sanctions on Iran decreased the Islamic country's foreign trade. As to Iran's advantage in the West Asia region and the capacity of being neighbor with 15 countries, Zadboom said that Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are important markets, and that there are plentiful trade opportunities in the region. For his part, Serbian FM underlined that fact that the existing capacities of both countries in economic and industrial sectors can pave the ground for expansion of trade ties. Selaković evaluated the Iran-China 25-year Cooperation Program as positive and described it as a ground for expansion of future economic developments in the future. The two sides exchanged views on cooperation in house-building, spare parts, tyre, agricultural machinery, bus-manufacturing, food-industry, clothing, health and petrochemical sectors. They also discussed cooperation in information technology and energy, deciding that diplomatic bodies of both countries should exchange views on agreed issues.

MAPNA Ready to Install Advanced Power Plant Transformer



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The operation for constructing the biggest indigenized power plant transformer equipped with ODAF system ended on April 12. According to reports, the transformer was manufactured by Arya Transfo Industrial Group at the order of MAPNA Group. The capacity of the transformer is 385 mega-volt amperes and its voltage is 245 kilovolts. Of the characteristics of this transformer, one can point to its indigenized cooling system, special design of coiling, lower waste, higher output and lower price comparing to its foreign likes. All stages of design and manufacture of this transformer carried out in short period of 70 days and in accordance with the international standards and new technology of this industry. Order for manufacture of the transformer was part of the strategy of MAPNA Group for indigenizing the power plant products with the support of the domestic industries. The transformer is tasked to convert the low voltage produced electricity into the electricity with higher voltage and transfer it to the national network.

Providing Financial Support For Production in Free Zones

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council and Advisor to President Hamid Reza Momeni paid a visit to Salafchegan Special Economic Zone and inspected deployed production units in this region. Speaking to reporters on the sideline of his visit, Mr. Momeni felicitated the beginning of Holy Month of Ramadan and said due to the slogan of the year "Production, Supports and Removing Hurdles", the secretary of the council has taken massive actions to materialize this slogan in supporting production units and financing them in the free and special economic zones. Momeni pointed to some problems in way of the production created by the executive bodies in the country, adding that there are some problems in laws and regulations and everybody knows the hurdles in eight free zones of the country. He added that to support the production units financially, the council has had talks with the banking officials, noting that they are striving to minimize the hurdles by end of the current month through talks with the executive bodies.



Sotoudian The chairman of the board of directors of «Fooladsazan Joybar» company : Today it is Necessary to Move Towards The Production of High Value-Added Products



Fooladsazan Joybar» company announced its readiness to produce all kinds of alloy steels and meet part of the needs of the country's consumers for such products. Dr. Hamidreza Sotoudian, Chairman of the Board of Directors, stated the following: «Joiibar Steel Manufacturers Company is currently producing various types of alloy steels. Factory using smelting furnaces, Visiam casting unit, Cockley casting, all kinds of vertical and horizontal slabs equipped with a laboratory, heat treatment furnaces to achieve suitable physical and mechanical properties and rolling unit, alloy rebars from 30 to 300 mm diameter, sheet Alloys from 30 to 100 mm thick, types of alloy ingots in sizes 100 and 150, types of industrial parts used in the automotive industry, types of car discs and shock absorbers, types of alloy parts in the oil and refinery industry, mining industries and types of industrial valves, it is produced. In response to the question of what positive features the services and products of this company have compared to the others, he stated: Jouybar Steelmakers Company, by employing highly experienced forces with high technical knowledge and thinking power, was able to achieve the advantage that in First of all, the cost of goods produced in the company is much more competitive than other manufacturers, while this group has a high flexibility in producing a variety of quality products based on customer needs in any requested tonnage. Sotoudian also pointed out some problems and obstacles to the progress of manufacturers and in response to the question of what possible problems the company is facing in order to expand its activities and what solutions do you suggest to solve it, he added: «Our biggest concern in the industry Alloy steels are a weak executive, regulatory and support structure of the country in the production path. For two years now, the leader of the revolution has been warning about the prosperity and leap of production, and this is a very wise nomination that shows the attention of the highest official of the country to production and the need to support it. According to him, the problems of export promotion and the need to plan and facilitate it, as well as how to supply raw materials, which has become very difficult today, are among the major concerns of producers, including the company. The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Joybar Steel Company said: «Today, industrialized countries have started to produce high value-added steel products because energy and manpower are expensive in these countries, and costs and raw materials are high and production of low value-added products is costly.» That is why lower value products are produced in third world countries, especially in the Middle East, where energy is cheaper. He believes that if we want to have a specific production, we must use the technology and the structure formed along with advanced software along with high-thinking human resources, while we do not have high technology in this field in the country, but on the contrary in We have a software and IT system and human resources with high technical knowledge, expertise and experience in the country in the steel industry, which can be successful in the field of technology with the same mindset. In the end, Sotoudian stressed that the country's steel industry should move in the direction of producing a product with an added value of over one thousand dollars in the country.



Foolad Sazan Joybar Company
Manufacturer of
Sheets, Rebars and Alloy Parts

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18cm18	16Mncr5		
50NiCr13	60WCrv7	115CrV3	100Cr6
56NiCrMoV7			21CrMo10
509CrV4	55Cr3		
Si52	70Cr2		
Stainless steel .304 . 316.Duplex			
VcN	1.7131		

Sheets from 30 to 100 mm thick
Rebar from size 50 to 100 mm

Factory: Mazandaran province, Joybar industrial town, unit 720
Phone:+98(11) 42564095 Fax: +98(11)42564097 Mobile:+98-9124237129

Navalny Could Suffer Cardiac Arrest Any Minute

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny risks cardiac arrest "any minute" as his health has rapidly deteriorated, doctors warned Saturday, urging immediate access to Russia's most famous prisoner.

On March 31, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent -- who was imprisoned in February -- went on hunger strike to demand proper medical treatment for back pain and numbness in his legs and hands.

Navalny is serving two and a half years on old embezzlement charges in a penal colony in the town of Pokrov around 100 kilometres (60 miles) east of Moscow.



Salvini Sent to Trial on Migrant Kidnapping Charge

PALERMO (Reuters) - Matteo Salvini, leader of Italy's right-wing League party, must stand trial on charges of kidnapping over his decision to prevent more than 100 migrants from landing in the country in 2019, a judge ordered on Saturday.

Salvini, who was interior minister at that time, left the migrants stranded at sea until prosecutors ordered the seizure of the ship and the evacuation of the people on board. The trial will begin in the Sicilian capital of Palermo on September 15. Salvini, who has built much of his political fortune on an anti-immigration campaign, could face up to 15 years in prison if found guilty at the end of a tortuous, three-stage judicial process.



Russia Beefs Up Warship Presence in Black Sea



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Two Russian warships transited the Bosphorus en route to the Black Sea on Saturday and 15 smaller vessels completed a transfer to the sea as Moscow beefs up its naval presence at a time of tense relations with the West and Ukraine.

The reinforcement coincides with a huge build-up of Russian troops near Ukraine, something Moscow calls a temporary defensive exercise, and follows an escalation in fighting in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian government forces. Russia's relations with Washington, which cancelled the deployment of two of its own warships to the Black Sea last week after fierce Russian protests, are at a post-Cold war low.

Moscow expelled 10 U.S. diplomats on Friday in retaliation for the expulsion of the same number of Russian diplomats from the United States over alleged malign activity.

Russia has also temporarily restricted the movement of foreign warships "and other state ships" near Crimea, which it annexed from Ukraine in 2014, a move condemned by both Kyiv and Washington. Two Russian Ropucha-class landing ships from Russia's Northern Fleet, capable of carrying tanks and of delivering armour and troops during coastal assaults, transited the Bosphorus on Saturday, a Reuters reporter in Istanbul saw.

More Russian naval reinforcements in the form of two more landing ships, this time from Russia's Baltic Fleet, are expected to imminently transit the Bosphorus.

The RIA news agency on Saturday also reported that 15 smaller vessels from Russia's Caspian Flotilla have completed their transfer to the Black Sea as part of an exercise. In a further sign of heightened tensions in the region, a ship carrying logistics trucks and equipment for NATO forces in Romania transited the Bosphorus on Friday evening, the same Reuters reporter saw. In St Petersburg, Russia's FSB security service briefly detained a Ukrainian diplomat, Ukraine's foreign ministry said on Saturday.

The Interfax news agency earlier cited the FSB as saying Oleksandr Sosonik was taken into custody when he tried to obtain classified information from Russian law enforcement databases during a meeting with a Russian citizen.

Protesters Shot Dead by Police At Bangladesh Power Plant

DHAKA (Dispatches) - At least five people have been shot dead and dozens injured when police opened fire at workers demanding a pay rise at a Chinese-backed coal-fired power plant in southeast Bangladesh.

They were protesting over unpaid wages, working hours and alleged discrimination.

Azizul Islam, Banskhali police chief, said about 2,000 protesters threw rocks and bricks at police, who responded with gunfire on Saturday.

Four bodies with bullet wounds were taken to Banskhali's main hospital, a doctor there said, adding that 12 wounded were being treated.

Insulting Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) Should Be Same as Denying Holocaust

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Western governments should treat people who insult the Prophet Mohammed the same as those who deny the Holocaust, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said Saturday.

Speaking after a week of violent protests in Pakistan by a radical Islamist party outraged by French government support for magazines publishing cartoons of Mohammed, Khan said insulting the prophet hurt Muslims around the world.

"We Muslims have the greatest love & respect for our Prophet," he tweeted.

"We cannot tolerate any such disrespect & abuse."

The group Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was banned Thursday after days of violent protests during which four policemen were killed.

The radical party has orchestrated a months-long campaign for the expulsion of the French ambassador to protest against President Emmanuel Macron's defence of the cartoons' publication.



Prince Philip Laid to Rest in Windsor

LONDON (Dispatches) - Prince Philip has been laid to rest in a funeral ceremony that honoured his lifetime of service to the United Kingdom, the crown and his wife of 73 years, Queen Elizabeth II.

The widowed British monarch, setting an example amid the coronavirus pandemic, sat alone at the ceremony on Saturday, dressed in black and with her head bowed in prayer.

Her family said Prince Philip's death on April 9 at the age of 99 left a "huge void" in the queen's life, robbing her of the man she called her "strength and stay".

The Duke of Edinburgh was honoured at Windsor Castle in a service that was steeped in military and royal tradition but also pared down and infused with his own personality.

The entire royal procession and funeral took place out of public view within the grounds of the castle, a 950-year-old royal residence 30km (20 miles) west of London, but was shown live on television.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Andrew, Duke of York attend the funeral [Yui Mok/Pool via Reuters]

Coronavirus restrictions meant that instead of the 800 mourners expected in the longstanding plans for Philip's funeral, only 30 people were allowed inside the castle's St George's Chapel, including the queen, her four children and her eight grandchildren.

Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, sat opposite the monarch alongside his wife, Camilla. Prince Andrew was two seats to the queen's left. Prince William and his wife, Kate, sat directly opposite from his brother Prince Harry, who had travelled back from California without his pregnant wife Meghan.

Al Jazeera's Neave Barker, reporting from Windsor, said: "We knew that because of the pandemic this would be a pared-back pageantry, but it was nevertheless very, very powerful from start to finish."

He also said the prince was a divisive character. "For some his throw-away comments were seen as racist, sexist and somewhat out of touch with the sentiment of modern Britain," he said.

More Than 3m People Died of Coronavirus

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The global death toll from the coronavirus has topped a staggering three million, with cases more than 140 million, amid repeated setbacks in the vaccination campaign and a deepening crisis in places such as Brazil, India and France.

The number of lives lost as of Saturday, as compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Kyiv (Ukraine), Caracas (Venezuela) or Lisbon (Portugal). It is higher than Chicago's population of 2.7 million and equivalent to Philadelphia and Dallas combined.

And the true number is believed to be significantly higher because of possible government concealment and the many cases overlooked in the early stages of the outbreak that was first reported in Wuhan, China, towards the end of 2019.

When, in January this year, the world passed the bleak threshold of two million deaths, immunisation drives had just started in Europe and the United States.

Today, vaccination is under way in more than 190 countries, though progress in bringing the virus under control varies widely.

While the campaigns in the US and the United Kingdom have hit their stride and people and

businesses there are beginning to contemplate life after the pandemic, other places, mostly poorer countries but some rich ones as well, are lagging behind in putting shots in arms and have imposed new lockdowns and other restrictions as virus cases soar.

"This is not the situation we want to be in 16 months into a pandemic, where we have proven control measures," said Maria Van Kerkhove, one of the World Health Organization's COVID-19 experts.

In Brazil, where deaths are running at approximately 3,000 per day, accounting for one-quarter of the lives lost worldwide in recent weeks, the crisis has been likened to a "raging inferno" by one WHO official.

A more contagious variant of the virus has been rampaging across the country.

As cases surge, hospitals are running out of critical sedatives. As a result, there have been reports of some doctors diluting what supplies remain and even tying patients to their beds while breathing tubes are pushed down their throats.

Taking cues from President Jair Bolsonaro, who has likened the virus to little more than flu, his health ministry for months bet big on a single vaccine, ignoring other producers. When bottlenecks emerged, it was too late to get large quantities in time.



Myanmar Releases Prisoners for New Year

YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's junta released 23,184 prisoners from jails across the country on Saturday under a New Year amnesty, a Prisons Department spokesman said, though few if any democracy activists arrested since a Feb. 1 coup were thought to be among them.

Saturday was the first day of the traditional New Year in Myanmar and the last day of a five-day holiday that is usually celebrated with visits to Buddhist temples and rowdy water throwing and partying in the streets.

Pro-democracy activists called for the cancellation of the festivities this year and instead for people to focus on a campaign to restore democracy after the military's ouster of the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Suu Kyi is among 3,141 people arrested in connection with the coup, according to a tally by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) activist group.

"These detainees are mostly from before Feb. 1 but there are also some who were imprisoned after," Prisons Department spokesman Kyaw Tun Oo told Reuters by telephone.

Asked if any of those being freed might have been detained in connection with the protests against military rule, he said he did not have details of the amnesties.

While the military was freeing the thousands of prisoners, it was also seeking 832 people on warrants in connection with the protests, the AAPP said.

Among them are 200 people, including several internet celebrities, actors and singers who have spoken out against the coup, wanted on a charge of encouraging dissent in the armed forces, which can carry a three-year jail term.

Two of them, the married couple of film director Christina Kyi and actor Zenn Kyi, were detained at the airport in the main city of Yangon on Saturday as they were trying to leave on a flight to Bangkok, the Irrawaddy news site reported.

A spokesman for the junta did not answer calls seeking comment.

Myanmar has been in upheaval since the coup, which the military defended with accusations of fraud in a November election won by Suu Kyi's party, though the election commission dismissed the objections.



Shanon
(adviser)

Nice view, & cozi
Zaferanieh (\$2200)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
parquet floor
Large balcony
pkg, & gym
Semi Furn

Niavaran Villa
(\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
green yard

Parsian

(\$1500)
Fereshteh Apt
200sq.m, 3bdrs
indoor pool, Sauna
marble floor, & F.F

Farmanieh (\$1800)
220sq.m, 3bdrs
marble fl
pkg, F.F

Aghdasieh bldg
6storey, 12unites
32bdrs, roof garden
enough pkg lots, yard
2 seperate entrances

Shahrak-e-Gharb (\$1000)
120sq.m, 2bdrs, yard, F.F

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

Vanak Office (\$2000)
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Boeing Suffers More Electrical Issues With 737 Max

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - An electrical fault that grounded dozens of Boeing (BA) 737 Max jets last week has caused fresh concern after engineers found similar issues elsewhere in the cockpit.

Just days ago the aviation company told 16 of its operators that its most-sold model should not be flown until the "production issue" is addressed.

It said at the time that it was working alongside the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on the issue, which does not affect its entire fleet.

Boeing said it was not related to the flight-control system that suspended its planes previously.



China Opens Its Borders to Multi-Billion Dollar Gold Imports

BEIJING (Reuters) - China has given domestic and international banks permission to import large amounts of gold into the country, five sources familiar with the matter said, potentially helping to support gold prices after a months-long decline.

China is the world's biggest gold consumer, gobbling up hundreds of tons worth tens of billions of dollars each year, but its imports plunged as the coronavirus spread and local demand dried up.

With China's economy rebounding strongly since the second half of last year, its appetite for gold jewelry, bars and coins has also recovered, and since January domestic prices have been higher than global benchmark rates, making it profitable to import bullion.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC), the nation's central bank, controls how much gold enters China through a system of quotas given to commercial banks. It usually allows enough metal in to satisfy local demand but sometimes restricts the flow.

In recent weeks it has given permission for large amounts of bullion to enter, the sources said.

"We had no quotas for a while. Now we are getting them ... the most since 2019," said a source at one of the banks moving gold into China.

Around 150 tons of gold worth \$8.5 billion at current prices is likely to be shipped, four sources said. Two of the sources said the bullion would be shipped in April. Two others said it would reach China over April and May.

The bulk of China's gold imports typically come from Australia, South Africa and Switzerland.

The size of the shipments signals China's dramatic return to the global bullion market.

Since February 2020, the country has on average imported gold worth around \$600 million a month, or roughly 10 tons, Chinese customs data show.

In 2019 its imports ran at about \$3.5 billion a month, or roughly 75 tons. The People's Bank of China did not respond to a request for comment.

China's absence made little difference to gold prices early in the pandemic when Western investors fearful of economic catastrophe stockpiled vast amounts of bullion -- traditionally seen as a safe asset -- pushing it to a record high of \$2,072.50 an ounce.

But the investor interest drifted away as vaccines and government stimulus revived economic growth, with prices sagging to around \$1,750.

India's demand for bullion has also rebounded from a pandemic-induced slump, with record-breaking imports in March of 160 tons of gold, an Indian government source told Reuters this month.

China and India typically account for some two fifths of the world's annual demand for gold. Their recovery is "critical in setting the floor for gold" and should stop prices from falling further over the coming months, said Suki Cooper, an analyst at Standard Chartered.

Oman Becomes Fourth PGCC Country to Introduce VAT

OMAN (Dispatches) - Oman introduced a 5 percent value-added tax (VAT) on Friday, the fourth Persian Gulf Cooperation Council country to implement a so-called consumption tax.

It followed the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia tripled its VAT rate to 15 percent last July to help fund its coronavirus relief efforts.

Oman has predicted it will raise OMR400 million (\$1.04 billion) from the tax this year, equivalent to 1.5 percent of GDP, as it looks to narrow a widening fiscal deficit.

In June 2016, all six GCC states signed the Common VAT Agreement, pledging to introduce a 5% VAT rate. Kuwait's parliament has pushed back the implementation date several times but the International Monetary Fund said last year that it expects it to be introduced by 2022. Qatar is expected to go ahead with VAT in the second or third quarter of this year and is said to be close to finalizing its tax administration system, Dhareeba.

Omanis had 6 months to prepare for the introduction of VAT, which may be followed by the Gulf's first income tax in the coming years.

Goods and services exempt from VAT include financial services, health care, education, local passenger transport, bare land, resale of residential real estate and residential rents. Zero-rated goods and services include all exports, basic foodstuffs, medicine and medical equipment, investment in gold, silver and platinum, crude oil and derivatives and natural gas, among certain transport goods.



\$80b Unforeseen Economic Crisis Set to Hit

CAIRO (Dispatches) - The blockage of the Suez Canal by the container ship Ever Given is estimated to have cost the global economy some \$13 billion.

The Egyptian Government wants a billion dollars from the ship's owners just for the trouble it caused.

But the Ever Given's undoubted shock to world trade is not the only crisis engulfing the global economy.

This time the item threatening financial upheaval is as small as its impact is large and could make the Suez blockage will be a mere drop in the ocean, or rather, canal.

Around \$80bn has already been wiped off the global bottom line of car companies alone because of an unexpected worldwide shortage of semiconductor chips and the economic damage could get far worse than that.

Scores of jobs might be lost and the price of phones, console, cars and other everyday items could rise.

Australia could suffer more than others given the country has no domestic microchip manufacturing capacity. One expert has said it amounts to a "sovereign capability risk".

The issue has a lot to do with the pandemic, is partly about China and a bit to do with bitcoin.

But mostly, it's due to the fact that the supply of this vital worldwide component rests largely on just two companies. "Semiconductors have become ubiquitous. Everyone relies on them and demand is increasing exponentially," James Rabeau, a physics professor and deputy director of Sydney University's Sydney Nano Institute, told news.com.au.

"They're integral to most high technology devices - phones, computers and cars. You can have nearly 100 different microchips in cars to run various electronic functions and sensors."

The semiconductor industry had some hiccups in its supply chains due to the pandemic. It has happened in almost every industry at some point in the past 12 months - remember when the shelves of Kmart were practically bare?

As well as issues with shipping chips, there has also been a huge hike in demand for them as people splashed out on home offices to keep themselves functioning during the day and games consoles to entertain themselves at night. But the biggest issue is the structure of the industry and its inflexibility.

"While it is easy to blame the pandemic for this situation, the truth is that the global semiconductor supply chain had this coming for some time," wrote tech consultant and Cambridge University visiting fellow, Hamza Mudassir on website The Conversation.

By some accounts, Taiwan's TSMC accounts for more than half the \$110bn annual revenues of the semiconductor manufacturing industry. In second place, South Korea's Samsung is on about 20 per cent. Between them, their foundries or fabrication plants - chip speak for factories, make more than two thirds of the world's semiconductors.

"The entry barriers into semiconductor manufacturing are astronomically high," said Mr Mudassir.



IMF Not to Let Venezuela Access Its Share of New SDRs

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund won't hand over \$5 billion of special drawing rights to Venezuela to bolster its reserves as part of a massive injection of resources to member nations, due to an ongoing dispute over whether President Nicolas Maduro is the legitimate leader of the country.

Venezuela in theory would be among the biggest recipients in terms of percentage of gross domestic product of a proposed \$650 billion in special drawing rights that the IMF is planning to give countries to boost global liquidity. This is part of an effort to help emerging and low-income nations deal with mounting debt and Covid-19.

Some Republicans in Congress, including Senators Pat Toomey and John Kennedy, have urged U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to oppose the creation of the reserves, saying they would reward Maduro, among other U.S. adversaries.

But Venezuela won't be able to access the assets, which most nations will receive via a transfer to their central banks if they are approved as expected by the Fund's board of governors in the coming months, according to the IMF. That's because the U.S. and more than 50 other countries regard opposition leader Juan Guaido as the nation's legitimate leader, following sham presidential elections in 2018.

"The ongoing political crisis in Venezuela has led to a lack of clarity in the international community -- as reflected in the IMF's membership -- regarding official government recognition," IMF spokesman Gerry Rice said in reply to questions from Bloomberg News.

Venezuela isn't able to access its existing SDR holdings and won't be able to use new ones "until a government is recognized," Rice said.

The decision is the latest setback for Maduro's regime, which has been largely cut off from a global financial network due to U.S. sanctions. After seven years of economic contraction following a collapse in global oil prices, the IMF's handout of \$5.1 billion would have been equivalent to 81% of the nation's existing international reserves.

Maduro administration officials are considering whether to invite IMF officials to inspect the government's economic data -- a step known as an Article IV evaluation -- in an effort to mend the relationship following a 14-year data blackout that left most economists guessing the depths of the nation's monumental collapse, according to three people with knowledge of the matter.

S. Korean Economy to Grow 3.5% in 2021 on Brisk Exports

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's economy is expected to grow in the mid-3 percent range this year on resilient exports, a leading private think tank said.

Asia's fourth-largest economy is likely to expand 3.5 percent on-year this year, a sharp turnaround from a 1 percent contraction in 2020, according to the Korea Economic

Research Institute (KERI).

KERI's latest projection is higher than the 3 percent forecast made by the Bank of Korea in late February.

The think tank under the Federation of Korean Industries, the lobby for South Korea's family-controlled conglomerates, attributed its rosy growth outlook to improving overseas shipments stemming from a recovery in the global economy.

KERI also said the most critical risks to South Korea's growth path will be the country's measures to cope with a new coronavirus wave and the pace of its vaccine rollout.

South Korea's exports are projected to climb 5.1 percent on-year in 2021, compared with a 0.1 percent on-year decline in 2020.

Corporate capital spending is predicted to swell 5 percent this year on aggressive investments in chip, IT and environment-friendly sectors.

Construction investment is forecast to increase 1.7 percent on-year, compared with a 0.1 percent on-year decline in 2020.

Private consumption, which accounts for the bulk of domestic demand, is predicted to grow only 2.2 percent, a drastic turnaround from a 5 percent fall in 2020, due to a resurgence of COVID-19 and rising household debt.

South Korea's consumer prices will likely increase 1.1 percent on-year in 2021, a tad higher than the previous year's 1 percent gain, according to the think tank.

U.S. Keeps India, 10 Others in the Currency Practices Monitoring List



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The United States on Friday placed 11 countries, including India, China, Japan, South Korea, Germany and Italy in the currency practices monitoring list.

Other countries named by the Department of Treasury in its quarterly report to Congress, the first under the Biden administration, are Ireland, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Mexico.

All except Ireland and Mexico were covered in the December 2020 report, which was under the previous Trump administration.

As directed by Congress, Treasury has established a monitoring list of major trading partners that merit close attention to their currency practices and macroeconomic policies.

An economy meeting two of the three criteria in the 2015 Act is placed on the Monitoring List.

These are a persistent, one-sided intervention in the foreign exchange market that occur when net purchases of foreign currency are conducted repeatedly, in at least six out of 12 months, and these net purchases total at least two per cent of an economy's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over a 12-month period.

As a further measure, the Treasury will add and retain on the Monitoring List any major US trading partner that accounts for a large and disproportionate share of the overall U.S. trade deficit even if that economy has not met two of the three criteria from the 2015 Act, it said. In its report, the Treasury said that a number of economies have conducted foreign exchange market intervention in a persistent, one-sided manner.

"Over the four quarters through December 2020, five major US trading partners -- Vietnam, Switzerland, Taiwan, India and Singapore -- intervened in the foreign exchange market in a sustained, asymmetric manner with the effect of weakening their currencies," it alleged.

5.9-Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Southern Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - An earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale has jolted an area close to the city of Bandar Ganaveh in Bushehr province, southern Iran.

According to the National Seismological Centre of the University of Tehran's Institute of Geophysics, the earthquake hit an area 28km away from the port city of Ganaveh and 91km from the provincial capital, Bushehr, on Sunday at 11:11 a.m. local time.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10km, was determined to be at 29.76 degrees latitude and 50.72 degrees longitude.



China Accuses U.S., Japan of Sowing Division

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has accused the United States and Japan of sowing division after they said they would counter China's "intimidation" in the Asia-Pacific region and referred to Taiwan in a joint statement for the first time in over 50 years.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga called for "peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait" in the statement, after talks at the White House on Friday that also covered the region's other major flashpoints.

It was the first time that the leaders of the two countries had mentioned Taiwan in a joint statement since 1969. Observers in Beijing said it was Japan's strongest political challenge to China since ties were normalized in 1972, and could bring relations to their lowest point since then.

The Chinese embassy in the U.S. expressed "strong concern and firm opposition" to the joint statement and vowed that China would resolutely defend its national sovereignty, security and development interests.

"These comments have gone far beyond the scope of normal development of bilateral relations. They are harmful to the interests of a third party, to mutual understanding and trust between regional countries, and to peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific," an embassy statement said.

"It cannot be more ironic that such attempt of stoking division and building blocs against other countries is put under the banner of 'free and open'."

China topped the agenda of Friday's meeting, Biden's first face-to-face with a foreign leader since taking office in January.

"We committed to working together to take on the challenges from China, and on issues like the East China Sea, the South China Sea as well as North Korea to ensure a future of a free and open Indo-Pacific," Biden told a joint news conference in the White House Rose Garden.

Although no major agreements on China were announced, both sides underscored the importance of "peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait" in the joint statement released after the meeting. They also expressed "serious concerns regarding the human rights situations" in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

Biden and Suga also highlighted their commitment to tackle the risks from North Korea's nuclear programme, work together on climate change and Covid-19, and invest more in 5G, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, genomics and semiconductor supply chains.

U.S. delegation visits Taiwan as Beijing warns of military action against the island US delegation visits Taiwan as Beijing warns of military action against the island

Suga told the press conference: "We agreed to oppose any attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China seas and intimidation of others in the region."

Lu Xiang, a specialist in U.S. affairs at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said he felt Japan must clarify its position as soon as possible or expect to see its economic interests suffer and diplomatic ties go back to square one.

"This is the most serious political provocation to China since Sino-Japanese bilaterals were established," Lu said.



"We do notice Suga's comments on the Taiwan issue are not as strong as Biden's so Japan must explain what it really means otherwise this could regress relations with China back to when diplomatic ties were normalised," Lu said.

"Japan can't expect to maintain its economic interests with China while hurting China's security."

"Japan has long been under the US sway when it comes to geopolitical autonomy but we wish to see Japan to maintain its strategic autonomy like we do with Europe, especially when it comes to important agenda such as Taiwan. "Otherwise, it will not only damage the relationship with China but also contribute nothing to regional peace."

The last time Taiwan was mentioned in a US-Japan joint statement was in 1969 when president Richard Nixon met Japanese prime minister Sato Eisaku.

Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the normalization of relations between China and Japan.

"This is very serious as it has breached the commonly accepted bottom line over Taiwan issues between China and Japan [for over a decade]. I think it has basically exhausted whatever that was left of China and Japan's bilateral political foundations," Shi said.

Taiwan unveils new amphibious assault and transport ship for service in the South China Sea Taiwan unveils new amphibious assault and transport ship for service in the South China Sea

Last month, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi met in Tokyo where the two nations "committed to oppose China's coercion and destabilising behaviour towards others in the region".

On Monday, the People's Liberation Army sent 25 warplanes to Taiwan's air defence identification zone "It indicates the geopolitical strategic confrontation between China, Japan and the U.S. will intensify. It also means the ideological opposition between China and US military allies will escalate," Shi said.

Vaccine Is Not the...

FROM PAGE 1

As most of domestic and foreign experts believe and say, vaccine is crucial but it is not by itself enough for not contracting the virus. The effectiveness of the vaccines vary but they help people to be immune against the severe disease and even those who are vaccinated may contract the virus but slightly.

Almost all experts have reiterated that people should observe sanitary protocols even after vaccination in order to curb this deadly virus. No matter which type of vaccine is used, all of them just would slow down the pace of the virus and observing the health protocols are more crucial.

Hopefully, Iranian-made COVID-19 vaccines are to come into the market by July and officials are trying to import other types of vaccines to help the public, and some people are better to stop politicizing the issue of the vaccine for the sake of lives of the nation.

In such conditions, people and officials should remain united and work together to overcome the problems rather than blaming each other. So far over 66,000 people have lost their lives in the country and we should not let the number increase through sticking to unity and observing the health protocols because vaccine is not the only solution and it will take time all of the people to be vaccinated in the country. Officials should not waste the time by emphasizing the domestic or foreign made vaccines and they should use whichever is effective and useful no matter what politically biased people say.

By the way, health officials and the national anti-Coronavirus headquarters should do their best to provide vaccines for the people either the domestic or foreign ones because the winner of this effort will both the government and the nation and in case of defeat, all together will be losers and blaming each other is vain.



National Army Day...

FROM PAGE 1

The message reads: "Undoubtedly, the legitimacy of armies lies in their sacrifice, patriotism, and loyalty toward the national security, order, national unity, and territorial integrity. But the relationship of armies to nations is more strategic than the relationship of armies to governments. Governments need nations to stay in power, but when a nation is dissatisfied with a government and turns away, the armies must choose between nations and governments and decide and choose. The armies are armed, but their weapons target the enemies of the nations, not the nations. Armies are, of course, administratively part of governments and states, and therefore must obey governments by law. It is a democratic principle that the soldier obeys the commander. But it is also clear that the armies must support a government that has not betrayed its people."

The president also stated in this message: "Forty-three years ago, when the Iranian nation turned away from the monarchy and made a revolution against the dictatorship, the Pahlavi turned to the army in a delusion for its survival and asked it for a coup against the revolution and in fact, the army made its final choice and sided with the nation, because the army is ultimately part of the nation's boundless sea, and this is the difference between the Iranian army and other armies in the region."

Natural Gas Leading Source of EU's Energy Emissions

PARIS (AFP) - Gas power plants overtook lignite coal plants in 2020 to become the European Union's largest single source of emissions from energy, an analysis of the bloc's Emissions Trading Scheme showed.

Gas plants produced 231 million tons of carbon dioxide across the continent in 2020 according to the analysis conducted by energy think tank Ember.

Emissions from coal plants meanwhile plunged, with lignite emissions falling 23 percent in 2020 compared with 2019.

Charles Moore, Ember's European program lead, said gas was now the biggest emitter thanks to cheaper renewables and carbon pricing squeezing coal out of the market.

But he warned that nations investing heavily in gas infrastructure risked losing out as the price of renewables such as wind and solar continues to fall over time.

"Nations making short-term decisions to switch coal for gas have ignored the mega-trend from fossil fuels to renewables," Moore told AFP.

"Investments in new large gas plants now, with normal lifetimes of 25 years, will already become stranded assets in the 2030s."

If emissions from hard coal power plants are factored in, total coal power emissions in the EU are now 58 percent below levels registered in 2013.

The analysis showed that overall emissions from the power sector was responsible for just over 50 percent of the total emissions covered by the Emissions Trading Scheme, down one percent from 2019.

In absolute terms, power sector emissions fell 140 million tons, or 17 percent, year-on-year in 2020.

While emissions from lignite and hard coal combined were higher than natural gas, they were considered as separate fuels in the analysis given the divergence on cost and emissions intensity.

Low gas prices last year and robust carbon pricing meant that gas was cheaper even than the historically inexpensive lignite last year.

In 2020 gas plants accounted for 33 percent of power sector emissions in the ETS, up from 16 percent in 2013.

Gas in 2020 was the largest emitting fuel used in 11 EU countries, the analysis found, including in Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, Malta, Latvia and Ireland for the first time.

Moore said that Eastern European nations lobbying the European Commission to designate gas as a sustainable fuel had "not yet understood the pace of change" in renewable energy prices.

Europe on Alert as Russia Steps Up Aggressive Spying

PARIS (Dispatches) - Three years after the mass expulsion of Russian diplomats from the West over the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, Moscow's representatives in Europe are coming under scrutiny again following a raft of new spy scandals.

From Austria to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, Russian diplomats have been expelled from several European countries in the past few months over Moscow's increasingly aggressive spying tactics.

The issue has become all the more acute over alleged cyber attacks by Russia on the United States, which Moscow has dismissed as nonsense but prompted the EU to issue a strong statement of solidarity.

Italy was the latest country to send Russian envoys packing earlier this month after a navy captain was caught handing over classified documents to a Russian agent.

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio summoned Russia's ambassador to Rome and expelled two diplomats over what he called a "hostile act".

While Russia routinely shrugs off espionage allegations as part of an "anti-Russian campaign" orchestrated by the US or Britain, analysts say that covert Russian activities in Europe have hit a new post-Cold War peak.

For Mark Galeotti, a professor at University College London who specialises in Russian affairs, 2014 marked a turning point, with the uprising in Ukraine that forced out a pro-Moscow government and was seen by Russia as a Western plot.

"The Russian intelligence community is now operating with a war-time mindset. They think they are in an existential struggle for Russia's place in the world," he told AFP.

New Understanding...

FROM PAGE 1

"As we have repeatedly announced, Iran is not at all interested in and does not seek protracted and lengthy negotiations," Araqchi said, adding that the talks will be continued for as long as necessary.

"We believe the talks have reached a stage where the sides can now start working on preparing a joint text. They can start drafting the text at least on sectors on which they share views," the Iranian chief negotiator said.

Araqchi said the Iranian delegation has presented its own text both in the fields of nuclear measures and sanctions removal to all the P4+1 countries.

"We believe that the texts we have presented can act as a basis for negotiations and a final agreement," he said. "Of course the final agreement should not be necessarily similar to our texts, but these texts will serve as a basis for negotiations."

Araqchi said the texts presented by Iran can provide the basis for a deal that both meets the demands of Iran and those of the opposite side about Tehran's return to its commitments as per the JCPOA. "We believe now it is time to start drafting the text at least on the sectors on which there is consensus," he added.

Meanwhile participants in the high-profile negotiations in Vienna say progress has been made during the talks which aim to restore the US-abandoned Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly called the Iran nuclear deal.

"After intensive talks we have taken stock in the Joint Commission. Progress has been made in a far from easy task," the European Union's Deputy Secretary General and Political Director of European External Action Service Enrique Mora said on Saturday.

Mora made the remarks in a tweet after the conclusion of a meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA that he chaired in the Austrian capital, and which was attended by diplomats from Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany.

Mora said "more detailed work" is needed to revive the pact, stressing all participants should remain committed to the same objective of returning the

United States to the JCPOA and the deal's full implementation.

Russia's Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov also said after the meeting that the participants took note with satisfaction of the progress made so far. Ulyanov added that the participants voiced determination to continue negotiations "with a view to complete the process successfully as soon as possible." He also announced the continuation of work by the two expert-level working groups that have been set up with the task of lifting the US sanctions against Iran and bringing Tehran to full compliance with its nuclear obligations under the deal.

The Chinese envoy to the talks said earlier that all participants had agreed to accelerate work on issues, including sanctions the United States should lift.

"All parties have agreed to further pick up their pace in subsequent days by engaging [in] more extensive, substantive work on sanctions-lifting as well as other relevant issues," Wang Qun told reporters.

Iran Reports...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran has seen an increased activity in its metals and mining sector since the United States imposed sanctions on the country's crude exports in 2018.

Reports suggest that exports of metals have been responsible for a significant portion of government's hard currency revenues in recent years.

A senior IMIDRO official said in early March that the metals and mining sector in Iran had expanded by at least six percent over the last calendar year despite a global slowdown in the sector because of the spread of the coronavirus that forced closures at mines and production facilities around the world.

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

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
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Smalling Very Shaken After Armed Robbery

ROME (Dispatches) - Roma's former England defender Chris Smalling said Saturday he and his family were "very shaken up" after being threatened by armed burglars during a robbery at his home in the Italian capital. The 31-year-old centre-back was forced to open a safe and hand over watches and jewellery at gunpoint in the early hours of Friday morning. "I'd like to thank everyone for your well wishes and support," Smalling said in a post on Twitter.

Newcastle Boost Survival Bid

LONDON (Dispatches) - Newcastle moved closer to Premier League survival after Joe Willock's late goal capped a thrilling 3-2 win against 10-man West Ham that dented the visitors' bid for a top four finish in the Premier League. Steve Bruce's side had squandered a two-goal lead in the closing stages at St James' Park, but Willock came off the bench to snatch a priceless winner. Newcastle are nine points clear of the relegation zone with just six games remaining in a turbulent season on Tyneside.

Messi Scores Twice as Barca Win Copa del Rey

MADRID (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi scored twice, including a stunning solo goal, as Barcelona blew away Athletic Bilbao to win the Copa del Rey on Saturday, consigning their opponents to a second final defeat in two weeks.

The cup was won and lost in a whirlwind 12 minutes in Seville, which saw Barca score four times to clinch an emphatic 4-0 victory, with Messi at his devastating best.

It remains to be seen if his seventh Copa del Rey triumph is the last trophy Messi lifts in Barcelona colors but if this was to be a final flourish, the 33-year-old crafted a fitting farewell.

"It's very special to be captain of this team where I have spent my whole life and very special to be able to lift this cup," Messi said.

His first goal, and Barca's third, started with the Argentinian in his own half before a charging run down the right and a surge forward into the penalty area gave him the chance for a simple finish.

With the club's new president Joan Laporta in the crowd, Ronald Koeman's first title as Barcelona coach should also significantly boost his chances of remaining in charge beyond the summer.

Koeman took over a team at rock bottom, humiliated by an historic loss to Bayern Munich and wounded by the attempts of Messi to leave the club for free.

But this 31st Copa del Rey success for the club is a testament to progress made and Koeman will hope it not only helps convince Messi to stay but gives Barca momentum now in a neck-and-neck title race in La Liga.

"Despite the changes at the club and the young players, at Barca you have to always fight for trophies," Koeman said.

Messi was sent off when Athletic Bilbao beat Barcelona, also at the La Cartuja, in January to win the Spanish Super Cup but they never looked like pulling off a repeat.

After Athletic lost to their Basque rivals Real Sociedad in last year's postponed final only two weeks ago, lifting themselves for another showpiece in the same stadium and against a tougher opponent was always going to be a big ask.



Barcelona were almost ahead after four minutes as Sergio Busquets played in Messi, who rolled back for Frenkie de Jong but his sidefooted finish came back off the far post. Sergino Dest dragged wide while Inigo Martinez had Athletic's best chance but as he stretched for the bouncing ball, he could only poke over.

Athletic seemed to have played their way into the match before half-time but Barcelona came out with renewed vigour, with Unai Simon making two brilliant saves to deny Antoine Griezmann and then Busquets, both from close range.

But when the resistance gave way, it became a collapse, with goals scored in the 60th, 63rd, 68th and 72nd minutes to leave Athletic's hopes in tatters.

First, Messi slipped in Dest down the right and his cross was diverted in by Griezmann before the second came from the opposite flank, Jordi Alba curled in a cross for De Jong to nod in.

The third was a spectacular from Messi, who started the move in his own half, leaping over one challenge and dodging another.

He took the ball back from Dest and drove down the right wing, away from three opponents and inside.

Messi twice played off De Jong, the second time after motoring forward into the penalty area, where he darted between two last Athletic defenders and slid the finish into the far corner.

His second, and Barca's fourth, was more straight-forward, Alba pulling a cross back for the Argentinian to tuck under a weak right hand from Simon and inside the post. For Athletic, there was no way back.

Flick Wants To Quit as Bayern Coach



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich head coach Hansi Flick dropped a bombshell on Saturday by revealing he wants to leave the club world champions at the end of the season.

Despite Bayern winning six titles over the last 12 months under Flick, he told Sky that he "wants to be released" from his contract, which expires in 2023.

The shock revelation came after Saturday's 3-2 win at Wolfsburg that left the Bavarians seven points clear at the top of the Bundesliga.

The 56-year-old, who steered Bayern to last season's treble which included the Champions League title, told the star-studded squad before making the news public.

"I told the team that I informed the club during the week that I want out of my contract at the end of the season," Flick said. "It was not an easy decision for me."

"It was important that the team heard it from me. 'I want to give my thanks and compliments to the club for giving me the opportunity to coach such a team.'"

The news caps a turbulent week for Bayern who were knocked out of the Champions League quarter-finals on Tuesday by Paris Saint-Germain.

Tensions have been simmering behind the scenes between Flick and Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic over player recruitment.

Ankle Injury

Clouds Kane Double

LONDON (Dispatches) - England forward Harry Kane suffered a worrying ankle injury ahead of next week's League Cup final after scoring twice in Tottenham Hotspur's 2-2 draw away to Everton in the Premier League.

Gylfi Sigurdsson also grabbed two goals for Everton in a result that did little for either side's European hopes.

Kane, expected to lead England's attack in this year's coronavirus delayed European Championships, went off in stoppage time towards the end of the match after rolling his ankle when challenged in the box at an Everton corner.

"It is too early to say something," Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho told Sky Sports when asked afterwards about Kane's injury.

"For him to leave the pitch with a few minutes to go is obviously because he felt something."

"Let me be optimistic and believe that he has time to recover. Let's see."

"It's obvious he's a very important player for us. I cannot say much or speculate."

Kane's 20th league goal of the season put Spurs ahead in the 27th minute at Goodison Park only for Sigurdsson to equalize soon afterwards from the penalty spot.

It was the reverse story in the second half, Sigurdsson getting his second in the 62nd minute before Kane levelled six minutes later.

Spurs remain seventh, five points off the top four having played one game more than West Ham.

Mourinho said of Kane's double: "It was great finishing."

"Two beautiful goals but not a surprise for the ones who see him do it every day in training."

Meanwhile, Mourinho had little time for Paul Pogba's recent criticism of his management style when he was in charge of Manchester United.

Pogba accused Mourinho of "going against players" and making them feel like "they don't exist any more."

Mitchell Injured in Jazz's Comeback Win



UTAH (Dispatches) - Donovan Mitchell scored 22 points before leaving with a sprained right ankle early in the third quarter, and the Utah Jazz rallied in his absence to beat the visiting Indiana Pacers 119-111 in Salt Lake City.

Bojan Bogdanovic led the Jazz with 24 points, and Jordan Clarkson returned from his four-game injury absence to help the comeback efforts with 18 points. Rudy Gobert also contributed 13 points, 23 rebounds and four blocked shots as Utah won for the 13th time in 16 games.

Caris LeVert led Indiana with 24 points and Domantas Sabonis added 22 points, 15

rebounds and seven assists, but the Pacers only scored 42 points in the second half en route to their second loss in three games. Mitchell was due to undergo an MRI exam to determine the severity of the injury. The Jazz also announced that Dwyane Wade had purchased an ownership stake to join majority owner Ryan Smith.

Julius Randle matched his season high of 44 points and also contributed 10 rebounds and seven assists to lead New York Knicks to a 117-109 victory at Dallas Mavericks.

RJ Barrett added 24 points and eight rebounds and Derrick Rose scored 15 points for the Knicks. New York's Nerlens Noel collected 10 rebounds and blocked three shots.

Dallas' Kristaps Porzingis registered 23 points and 12 rebounds. Luka Doncic scored 22 points, matched his career best of 19 assists and grabbed eight rebounds for the Mavericks.

Tsitsipas, Rublev In Monte Carlo Final

MONACO (Dispatches) - Stefanos Tsitsipas and Andrey Rublev will clash in the Monte Carlo final with both men looking to confirm their top 10 credentials with a maiden Masters crown.

With world number one Novak Djokovic and 11-time champion Rafael Nadal already knocked out and world number two Daniil Medvedev forced to withdraw due to a positive Covid-19 test, it's a final few would have predicted.

Greek fourth seed Tsitsipas defeated Dan Evans, the man who stunned Djokovic in the third round, 6-2, 6-1 in his semi-final on Saturday.

Eighth-seed Rublev of Russia, having shocked Nadal in the quarter-finals, beat unseeded Norwegian Casper Ruud 6-3, 7-5. Tsitsipas has yet to drop a set in Monte Carlo this week and is through to his third Masters 1000 championship match.

He finished runner-up in Canada in 2018 and Madrid the following year.

"A lot of beautiful things happened in Monaco, for my family and I would really like to carry on this tradition," Tsitsipas said enigmatically, simply specifying that he would say more on Sunday and that these "things" concerned his mother in particular.

The 2020 ATP Finals champion added: "I know I'll have to raise my level of play to the limits."

"It's more about how much I want the victory. It's a question of pure determination, of willingness to surpass myself to get what I want."



Zidane: 'I'm Not the Best Coach

MADRID (Dispatches) - Zinedine Zidane defended himself on Saturday against accusations he is a lucky coach but again refused to commit to staying at Real Madrid next season.

An impressive week has put Madrid in sight of winning both La Liga and the Champions League, after they beat Barcelona in the Clasicos last weekend before knocking out Liverpool on Wednesday.

Despite sitting one point behind Atletico Madrid, Zidane's team are now favourites to defend the title they claimed last term in the Frenchman's first full season back in charge.

It would add to the 11 major trophies Zidane has already won across his two spells as Real Madrid coach, which includes two league titles and three consecutive successes in the Champions League. Asked if it annoys him when he is called lucky, Zidane said: "I am lucky, it's true, lucky to be here and to coach this great club. Am I a terrible coach? I don't think I am terrible, I don't believe that."

"I'm not the best either, sure, but I enjoy what I'm doing."

Zidane's contract at Real Madrid runs until the summer of 2022 but doubts remain about whether he will continue beyond the current season.

He resigned unexpectedly in 2018 after winning the Champions League and has been linked with taking charge of the French national team and Juventus, where he spent five years as a player.

