

President Hassan Rouhani Said That The Government Is Aiming to Carry Out National Vaccination Campaign And Blamed Global Vaccine Supply Systems for the Stalemate in the COVID-19 Vaccination

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Health Ministry Announced On Tuesday That 395 More Iranians Lost Their Lives Due to The Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing the Total Deaths to 67,525

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Pakistan to Spare No Effort to Strengthen Relations With Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that his country will spare no effort to further strengthen relations with Iran.

Shah Mehmood Qureshi who had traveled to the UAE before leaving for Iran released a video message on Tuesday on the occasion of his third official visit to Iran and thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for its full support to Pakistan.

"Iran has supported us not only as a neighbor and brother of Pakistan, but always and in all circumstances, and we appreciate Iran's positions and support," said Qureshi.

Pakistani FM noted that he will hold talks with senior Iranian officials on the latest developments in the region, diplomacy on Afghan peace, development of bilateral relations, especially the expansion of trade and border cooperation.

"Iran, like Pakistan, is an important player in the region in Afghanistan issue, and participation in the peace process is very important for both countries," he added.

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Finance Minister Gets 2nd Warning From Majlis

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis lawmakers were not happy with Finance and Economic Affairs Minister's answer to their questions and showed the second yellow card to him and in case he gets another one, he can be impeached.

According to reports, Farhad Dejpasand attended the Majlis session to answer the questions regarding the performance of his ministry about some issues like privatization and the stock market. Lawmakers after listening to his remarks did not become happy and showed their dissatisfaction by voting against and showing the second yellow card.

The minister in Majlis session announced that over 1.27 quadrillion rials (about \$30.2 billion) worth of government properties and assets have been transferred to the private sector during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), IRIB reported.

Dejpasand said during the previous year 350 trillion rials (about \$8.33 billion) of the revenues earned from the privatization program was directly injected into the treasury of which 320 trillion rials (about \$7.6 billion) was earned from offering the state-owned companies' shares through exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

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Resistance Front Dealing Successive Blows to Foes



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Quds Force Brigadier General Esmaeil Qaani said the front of resistance continues to take outstanding actions against the enemies constantly.

General Qaani delivered a speech at the funeral of his deputy, Brigadier General Mohammad Hejazi, in Iran's central city of Isfahan on Tuesday.

General Hejazi passed away on Sunday after years of suffering from the effects of chemical weapons used during the Iraqi war of the 1980s on Iran.

He was a veteran of the Iraqi war under former dictator Saddam Hussein on Iran, which lasted eight years. After the war, he served as the commander of Iran's Basij volunteer force for ten years and as the deputy commander of the IRGC for a year.

In his address, General Qaani said various fronts of the resistance forces, from Iran to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen keep to the path of late Iranian commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani and his followers.

Every day, the resistance forces take a fundamental action against the enemies of the Revolution and Islam, including the U.S. and the bloodthirsty Zionist regime, Qaani added.

He also emphasized that the resistance front will proceed with such a dignified course vigorously.

Qaani named Hejazi as one of the leaders fighting against the Pahlavi regime before the Islamic Revolution and one of the pioneers protecting the Islamic Revolution in the Iran-Iraq war.

He added that Cmdr. Hejazi's bravery and measure have always been approved by Muslim world leaders including the Lebanese Hezbollah Resistance Movement Seyed Hassan Nasrallah and the current head of Hamas's political bureau Ismail Haniyeh and the named leaders have condoled Leader Ayatollah Khamenei over his demise.

Emphasizing that the resistance fronts in all Islamic countries, including Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, etc., are taking basic action against the enemies every day, Qaani said commanders are being trained in the front to follow Martyrs Solemani and Hejazi.

In remarks in May 2020, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said Iran will "support and assist any nation or any group who opposes and fights the Zionist regime" of Israel.

Bulgarian Companies Interested in Entering Iran Market

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Bulgaria's Ambassador to Tehran Nikolina Kuneva in a meeting with the Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mining and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari said her country's companies are eager for cooperation with their Iranian counterparts.

In the meeting held on Monday, the two sides stressed the need for the expansion of mutual trade ties, the TCCIMA portal reported. Speaking in the meeting, Khansari put the two countries' annual trade value at \$110 million, saying that this figure is mostly related to the imports of Iran from the European country.

Noting that the development of economic relations with Bulgaria is important for Iran, the official continued: "Cooperation in the field of industry and especially in transportation can be an incentive to develop relations between the two countries." According to Khansari cooperation between the private sectors of the two countries would lead to the expansion of trade ties.

He also pointed to the technical and engineering services as one of the suitable fields of cooperation saying: "Due to the connections that the Tehran Chamber of Commerce has with the engineering system of Tehran province, it can invite reputable Iranian companies in this field to participate in construction projects in Bulgaria or to transfer technical and engineering experiences to the country."

Kuneva for her part underlined the expansion of cooperation between the two sides' private sectors as a prerequisite for increasing and diversifying the two countries' trade and suggested holding video conferences between the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the TCCIMA for acquaintance and exchange of views between the two sides.

She said that the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is ready to introduce Bulgarian companies that are interested in cooperating with Iranian companies during these video conferences.



ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

E-Gov't to Help Fight Against Corruption

According to the statistics have been released recently, Iran does not enjoy a good position in terms of developing the e-government despite hypes by the ITC ministry and as per reports, the country has slumped three places in the new ranking of the UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI) and now it ranks 89th.

The EGDI assesses e-government development at a national level and is based on three components: online service index, telecommunication infrastructure index and the human capital index. According to the UN, e-government is a key factor in order to advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Human Capital Index (HCI) based on data provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and one-third from the Online Service Index (OSI) based on data collected from an independent survey questionnaire, conducted by UNDESA, which assesses the national online presence of all 193 United Nations Member States.

E-government (short for electronic government) is the use of technological communications devices, such as computers and the Internet, to provide public services to citizens and other persons in a country or region.

The e-government is one of the most important events in the lives of the people which is formed through using the information technology and telecommunication and its implementation has had huge impact in running and leading the countries as well as the personal lifestyles. So the process for developing and implementing the e-government is a comprehensive and dynamic process.

The importance of developing the e-government and its implementation in the recent two decades in the country has always been one of the national policy-making and legislative issues and claiming the second place in the region in terms of the e-government is understandable in this context.

According to the Fifth Development Plan, the indexes for developing the e-government should be devised in a way that Iran moves to the second place in this field in the region by the end of the plan.

Despite the significance of the e-government, statistics released by the ITC ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran show that e-government in the country is not in the good and favorable condition despite some claims and works, and Iran's place in the EGDI ranking has improved from 106th in 2016 to 89th in 2020 but the last ranking shows it has slumped three places comparing to 2019. Despite this improvement in recent years, the average index of development of the e-government is higher in the world and Iran needs to work harder to improve it.

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Araqchi Rejects Notion of Temporary JCPOA Agreement

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi (foreground) and Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's envoy to international organizations in Vienna, are seen in the Austrian capital, which is hosting negotiations on potential revival of the Islamic Republic's 2015 nuclear deal with world countries. (Photo by IRNA)

Iran's senior negotiator to underway talks aimed at potential revival of the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic Republic and world countries, roundly rejects the notion that the country could settle for any "temporary agreement" while taking part in the negotiations.

Countering false reports in some Western media outlets, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi insisted that the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries featured no talking points such as a "temporary agreement" or similar subject matters, IRNA reported on Tuesday. The P4+1 refers to Britain, France, Russia and China plus Germany -- the remaining members of the nuclear deal, which is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

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IRGC Navy Rescues 8 Fishermen in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps naval forces have saved the lives of eight Iranian sailors whose fishing boat sank near Qeshm Island, an official said.

Deputy director of the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran in the southern province of Hormozgan said on Monday that timely action by the IRGC Navy servicemen saved the lives of sailors.

A fishing boat with 8 crew members on board had a technical accident 2 miles south of Qeshm island at around 4 pm local time on Monday, the official noted, saying the doomed boat sent out a mayday signal as it was sinking. An IRGC Navy vessel picked up the distress signal and rescued all fishermen from the water, he added.

Tehran Not Interested In Step-by-Step Plan To Restore JCPOA

TEHRAN (MNA) – According to Leader's instructs, Iranian diplomats are not interested in a step-by-step plan to restore the JCPOA and to achieve results in Vienna talks, the government spokesman said.

Addressing his weekly presser on Tuesday, Ali Rabiee answered some questions over the ongoing Vienna talks aimed at reviving JCPOA.

Technically speaking, it is possible to lift all sanctions violating the 2015 nuclear deal, and to fully revive this agreement in a short period of time, he said, expressing hope to achieve this desirable result through constructive negotiations.

He went on to explain, "In a short period of time, the US government can return to its commitments under the deal and the Islamic Republic of Iran will also verify it in a short time; then it will return to its commitments immediately."

Rabiee also expressed Iran's firm stance towards a step-by-step plan to restore the JCPOA, saying, "According to Leader's instructs we are not interested in such method to achieve results in Vienna talks."

He also spoke about the Iranian government's efforts to revive the JCPOA. The government has no goal but to lifting sanctions and to witness its positive impact



on the lives of the people, and also to fulfill the Leader's wishes, he added.

The government sees reviving JCPOA as a national issue that should not be used as a tool in presidential debates, he stressed.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to the recent Iran achievements in 60% uranium enrichment, saying, "60% enrichment in Natanz nuclear site proved Iran's technical ability to respond to any act of sabotage against its nuclear facilities."

"Vicious acts cannot undermine Iran's scientific progress in the peaceful nuclear industry", he added. He also said: "We are not willing to give concessions outside the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and it is technically possible to lift sanctions that violate JCPOA and fully revive this agreement in a short time."

Rabiee stated in a press conference held online today: "Contrary to some claims, the U.S. government can return to its commitments in the short term, and we can verify and return to our commitments quickly."

Majlis Speaker Urges More COVID-19 Restrictions by Gov't



TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker of the Parliament in the parliamentary open session in his pre-agenda speech on Tuesday said that Islamic Iran was struggling with hardship resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak with all cities and counties being classified as Red zones.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf went on to call on the government to take more measures in controlling and lockdown procedures so that the rising trend of the fatal disease would be stopped or at least decreased.

He also called on the Iranians from different walks of life to pay attention to the fact that the parliament and the government support those who have been harmed due to difficult economic conditions.

According to Qalibaf, to reduce gatherings like the commissions, the parliament will not hold a public session, but the representatives will not go to the provinces. The foreign policy commissions, Energy economy; Health and their board continue about the situation in the country in the market, nuclear fields, corona, health issues.

Extending his condolences on the passing away of Brigadier General Hejazi to the honorable people of Iran and the Commander-in-Chief of Iran's Armed forces, calling Martyr Hejazi a revolutionary and pious who had been present on the fronts of the holy defense in the war and as the defenders of the holy shrines.

Qalibaf said: "Martyr Brigadier General Hejazi standing along with Martyr Soleimani and tried to participate in the progress of the country and the resistance."

Iran Welcomes Iraqi Mediation to De-Escalate Regional Tensions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi said on Tuesday that Tehran acknowledged Iraqi Government mediation to de-escalate regional tension.

Masjedi said in an exclusive interview with IRNA that U.S. military presence in Iraq is not in the interest of nations in the region and the resolution passed in Iraqi parliament last year clearly demands U.S. exit from Iraq.

Masjedi underlined that Iran also supports expansion of ties between Iraq and the Arab World as Baghdad deserves to restore its political status among Arab states.

Some West Asian states which tried to escalate the situation with Iran in the past years have indicated that they were willing to deescalate, the diplomat said.

Asked about Iran's stance regarding the upcoming elections in Iraq, the ambassador underlined that Iran respects Iraqi people and their votes and it would also support the next government to be formed by the parliament.

Citing the unrest in Iraq last year, Masjedi said that the early election was necessary and of high importance.

He said that Iran-Iraq relations were excellent as officials from both countries frequently visited at the highest level including Iran's judiciary chief met Iraqi counterpart as well as the President, Prime Minister and Parliament Speaker last year. According to Masjedi, Iran will continue to export gas and electricity to Iraq, but Tehran expects Iraqi Government to improve payment of its debts.



Zarif, Indonesia President Discuss Mutual Relations, Global Issues

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Indonesian President Joko Widodo have discussed the expansion of mutual relations and leading international developments.

In a Monday meeting in Jakarta, Zarif voiced Iran's readiness to improve cordial ties with Indonesia and hailed the country's principled stance on the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorses the deal. He said Tehran and Jakarta enjoy growing trade ties and have agreed to improve cooperation in the economic sector through the Iran-Indonesia Joint Economic Commission.

Great to be back in Jakarta for talks with Pres @jokowi & FM Marsudi (@Menlu_RI); enhancing bilateral ties coordinating closely on regional & global issues.



The Indonesian president, for his part, stressed the importance of his country's ties with Iran and said both sides should hold consultations on ways to boost trade ties given their high potential. Earlier in the day, Zarif met with his Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi, during which the top Iranian diplomat stressed the need to speed up the finalization of a preferential tariffs agreement with Indonesia, expressing Tehran's readiness to continue negotiations in this regard.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Widodo paid an official visit to Tehran in December 2016 and held talks with senior Iranian officials, including President Hassan Rouhani. During the trip, Iran and Indonesia signed over a dozen basic agreements to promote cooperation in a variety of areas in what could indicate a significant opening in trade relations between the two countries.

60% Uranium Enrichment Signals Iran's Authority Against Enemies

TEHRAN (IP) – The representative of the Jewish Iranians in the Islamic Consultative Assembly stressed that 60% Uranium enrichment is the beginning of Iran's authoritative stance against the United States and its allies.

Homayoon Sameh Yeh Najafabadi, the representative of the Jewish in the Parliament, of Iran, referring to the enrichment of 60% of the uranium in the country said: "The start of uranium enrichment at 60 percent sent a message to the West that they had made a mistake about Iran and should reconsider their position."

"Uranium enrichment up to 60% is the beginning of a new era in establishing ties with the West, and they should know that it will no longer be a soft one and that their actions will be met with a strong and decisive response," he highlighted.

The Jewish MP in Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly said: "Another message of 60% enrichment to the West is that they cannot ignore the knowledge behind Iran's nuclear program."

"According to Najafabadi: "From now on, Iran's positions and responses to the actions of the West will be firm and authoritative."

On Friday, 16 April, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi stated that the Iranian scientists had achieved 60% enriched uranium.

Following the recent sabotage attack on the Natanz nuclear facility in Iran, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) announced the installation of new centrifuges and an increase in the level of uranium enrichment up to 60%.

Fallahzadeh Appointed as IRGC Quds Force Deputy Commander

General Fallahzadeh Appointed as IRGC Quds Force Deputy Commander

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Upon approval by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Fallahzadeh was appointed as the new deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force.

One day after the passing away of IRGC Quds Force Deputy Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Hejazi, Ayatollah Khamenei approved a proposal from IRGC Chief Major General Hossein Salami to appoint Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Fallahzadeh to the vacant post.

Fallahzadeh served as the IRGC Quds Force's deputy for coordination before taking the new job.

He has also the experience of commanding many provincial IRGC divisions and construction bases.



Iranians' Rights Violation Be Pursued in Int'l Bodies

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iranian Judiciary Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi stressed on Monday that the violation of rights of the Iranian citizens in other countries should be pursued in international bodies and ordered the High Council for Human Rights to investigate the received reports in the provincial civil rights offices.

Ayatollah Raisi made the remarks in the Supreme Judicial Council.

Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Ali Bagheri Kani said in the meeting that Iran had already criticized Europe for updating its sanctions list by adding 11 new Iranian names to its list two days after Europe's move.

Kani also said that the 11-page letter was delivered to the Portuguese ambassador in Tehran, whose country is the rotating head of the Council of the European Union.

He added that the letter lists several examples of violations of the human rights of Iranian citizens by members of the European Union and demands the officials of the body to respect the rights of Iranian nationals and people and to recompense them for their losses.

Kani went on to say that the letter describes some European countries' behavior towards Iranian people as a crime against humanity that has led to the murder of some Iranian children who suffered from special diseases.

He also said that the letter also mentioned the illegal oppressive sanctions, especially on food and medical equipment, as well as the tragic condition of Iranian prisoners in the European jails.

Iranians Resisted U.S. Maximum Pressure on Their Own

TEHRAN (IP) – President Hassan Rouhani says that the Iranian people have resisted the U.S. maximum pressure and no one helped them.

In a meeting with a group of philanthropists on Monday, Hassan Rouhani said: "The Iranians did not bow down and resist the maximum pressures of the enemy, and all countries, even American officials and the former government, have acknowledged it."

The Iranian president also said: "They wanted to surrender Iran within six months to a year, but they could not."

Rouhani added: "No one helped Iran, even when we faced the coronavirus outbreak, in such circumstances, the enemy continued its pressure."

"The fourth wave of the coronavirus outbreak, which we and other countries are facing now, is not comparable to previous waves," the president added.

Rouhani noted: "Nevertheless, the Iranian people resisted and helped each other."

Iran, Afghanistan Review Latest Developments

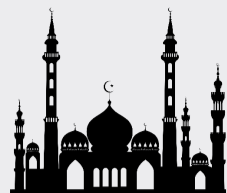


KABUL (IRNA) - Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan deputy foreign minister reviewed the latest developments reaffirming Iran's support to Afghanistan government.

The Afghan foreign ministry announced that Meerwais Nab met with Bahador Aminian at the Afghan foreign ministry and discussed about the latest developments in Afghan peace process and strengthening Tehran-Kabul relations, IRNA reported.

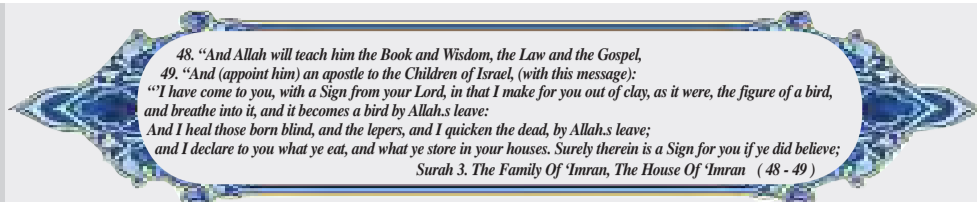
Meerwais Nab appreciated Iran's cooperation on strengthening the regional consensus to support the Afghan peace process. Nab said that Afghanistan Government supports withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, adding that it will be the beginning of a new chapter in security, political and development of cooperation of the international community with Afghanistan.

He outlined significance of expanding cooperation between Afghanistan and Iran in line with establishing peace in the country and in the entire region. Ambassador Aminian reaffirmed Iran's commitment to continue comprehensive cooperation with Afghanistan, especially in line with the success of peace talks, preservation of the constitution and the achievements of the past two decades with Afghanistan.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:03
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:01
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:52
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:23



Iranians Purchase Over 8,700 Houses In Turkey in 2020

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari has warned over the flight of capitals from the country for buying real estate in other countries and called for finding a solution.

Speaking in the meeting of board of representatives of the TCCIMA, Khansari said that according to the latest reports, Iranians bought 7,189 properties in Turkey in 2020 and some 1,600 more in the first quarter of 2021.

He said the country should work on this woe why the capitals are flying from the country for buying houses and properties in other countries.

He added that Iranians rank first among foreign buyers of real estate in Turkey and Russians and Iraqis are trailing Iranians, respectively. He noted some Iranians have also purchased houses and properties in countries like Tajikistan and Georgia, reiterating that this is an ill which threatens the economy.

Khansari noted the ratio of investment to the amortization was negative in 2019 and it was one of the main reasons for the flight of capitals from the country.

He said the only remedy for the national economy is production and production needs real support and removal of hurdles, expressing hope that the recent actions of Majlis and the government would not be a show-off and election campaign slogan.

Khansari went on to say that government's meddling in economy is the most important hurdle in way of production and as long as these interferences and engagements are not halted, there will be no growth in production.

He also criticized the government for launching several headquarters for the control of the prices, saying that while Iran is among the world top ten chicken producers, the



government has set up a headquarter for organizing the chicken market in the country, noting that while production of chicken is in the control of the private sector, its pricing and import of raw materials are in the control of the government.

Khansari went on to say that sudden orders and regulations are hurdles in way of the production and if the country wants to materialize the slogan of the year, there needs a strong determination.

He noted that with protecting the production through removing hurdles, the country should safeguard the domestic capitals and prevent the flight of capitals.

He also noted that the private sector companies have signed agreements for import of 6m doses of COVID-19 vaccines for vaccinating the workers.

He added that some experienced companies have taken action to import the vaccines despite vaccines have been mostly pre-sold and the market is almost empty of vaccine.

Khansari went on to say that the goal behind this move is to help the workers especially in the production field and expressed hope the owners of the businesses would accept the cost of the vaccines and vaccinating their staff.

He said the chamber and some related bodies have forecast 39 percent inflation rate for the current year and in case the government faces budget deficit, the figure may soar.

Iran Trade Exchange With Caspian Sea States Hit \$2.5b

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman of the Customs Administration of Iran said on Monday that the country had \$2.525 billion dollars of non-oil trade with the Caspian Sea countries in the Iranian year 1399 (ended March 2020).

Noting that the weight of the traded goods has been 6.242 million tons, Ruhollah Latifi said Iran exported 3.125 million tons of goods with the value of \$1.856 billion to Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan, among which Azerbaijan ranked first with about 1,003,087 tons (\$510,987,242).

Latifi added that Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan ranked second to fourth.

He added that in the same period Iran imported 3,117,266 tons of goods with the value of \$1,203,847,104 from these countries, among which Russia ranked first with 2,933,485 tons (\$1,070,256,262).

He went on to say that Iran's trade balance with these countries was over \$117 million dollars.

Iran Joins Group of States Producing Steam Turbine Rotor

TEHRAN (MNA) - Islamic Republic of Iran joined group of top five countries manufacturing steam turbine rotor. Accordingly, the first steam turbine rotor was unveiled at Be'sat Power Plant in presence of Iranian Minister of Energy.

This 82.5 MW steam turbine rotor has been manufactured by expert engineers of Iran Power Plant Repairs Company.

About €3 million worth of foreign currency was needed to import this type of steam turbine rotor in the country but considerable foreign currency was saved with manufacturing this steam turbine rotor in the country.

The specification of the said steam turbine rotor is as follows: the nominal speed of this turbine is 3,000 Round per Minute (RPM), the number of blade stages is 19 rows, the number of blades is 2,539, the nominal input steam pressure is 86.18 bar and the nominal input steam temperature is 510 °C.

For manufacturing this steam turbine rotor, 75,000 man/hours have been hired in various fields of metallurgical engineering, mechanics, procurement, machining, prefabrication, non-destructive tests and dimensional control.

With manufacturing this steam turbine rotor, Islamic Republic of Iran was placed among five manufacturers of these rotors.

In addition, Iran Power Plant Repairs Company was introduced among the top companies in the field of manufacturing turbine rotors worldwide.

Iran, Second Country to Produce Recombinant Flu Vaccine

TEHRAN (IRNA) - An Iranian knowledge-based company managed to produce the recombinant vaccine for seasonal influenza.

The United States was the only country that used this method for the production of seasonal influenza vaccine, said Amir-Hossein Abdolghaffari, the head of the company.

Abdolghaffari said that there are two methods to produce vaccines for seasonal influenza: egg-based technique and recombinant technique.

The latter was only used by the US and the rest of the world used the former, he said, adding that his country managed to produce the vaccine through the recombinant method.

He said that Iran needed 3-3.5 million doses a year, but new studies show that the number will grow, hoping that the new vaccine will come on the market by the end of summer.

Abdolghaffari added that all the necessary tests have been conducted on the new vaccine and the clinical studies of it started last year and are still in progress.

He went to say that 430 people have received the vaccine and the results have been satisfactory.



Eight Energy Projects Inaugurated Nationwide

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Eight utility projects in three provinces with the value of 175 billion Toman inaugurated on Tuesday in the presence of the energy minister through a video conference.

The projects for supplying electricity to 62 villages in 16 provinces were inaugurated by Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian in a ceremony on Tuesday.

The projects were inaugurated in the framework of the ministry's "A-B-Iran" program in Ardebil, Ilam, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Kerman, North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Mazandaran, Qazvin, Kermanshah, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, Lorestan and Yazd provinces.

The most important part of today's projects was unveiling the first Iranian-made 82.5 MV rotor turbine in Tehran with a value of 35 billion Toman, while the imported sample cost about 90 billion Toman.

The previous producer of the turbine rotor was the American company 'General Electric', and although Iranian engineers did not have access to the know-how, they could develop by reverse engineering.

Hard work in six months in various engineering sections put Iran among the five countries in the world that can make this turbine rotor.

Two water treatments in Chaharmahal Bakhtiari, two solar power plants, and two distribution line projects in Isfahan were put into operation.

According to the weekly schedule by the energy ministry (every week, A, B, Iran), 62 villages in 16 provinces benefited from electricity.

Speaking at this meeting, Iranian energy minister Ardakanian called the projects a capital for the country, especially in the sanction period.

Referring to the fact that our region is in a condition which whether has no rain or a lot of rain, Ardakanian added that it had been fully scheduled and we can manage this condition well.

The minister had announced last month that electricity will be supplied to the villages with less than 10 families in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

The minister said that power supply to these villages and also supplying electricity to the nomadic areas through mobile solar panels are among the major priorities of the ministry's A-B-Iran program.

A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), during which the minister made several trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

Villages are often mentioned as some keys to the development of countries, and the allocation of a proper amount of budget to rural development always brings fruitful economic results.

In Iran, where villages account for generating 20-23 percent of the value added in the country, development of rural areas has been always a top agenda of the governments' activities.

The sustainable economic, social, and cultural development of the villages is one of the major priorities of the current government, and many projects implemented and underway in this regard have led to outstanding development in the rural regions.



9% Surge in Annual Sponge Iron Output

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures by Iran's main metals and mining conglomerate IMIRDO shows the country boosted its output of sponge iron, a main steel ingredient, in the year to March amid efforts to prevent massive sales of iron ore to steel producers in Asia and elsewhere.

Iranian iron mills churned out a total of 30.52 million metric tons of sponge iron in the year to March 20, an increase of 9% compared to the previous calendar year, according to a Monday report by the official IRNA agency which cited IMIDRO figures.

The Mobarakeh Steel Company was responsible for a bulk of the production at nearly 7.3 million tons, said the report. It added that production had risen by 9% to 2.676 million tons in the final months of the year compared to the month to late February.

Sponge iron or what is technically known as direct reduced iron (DRI) is a main feedstock used alongside steel scrap to produce various steel products in electric arc furnaces.

Iran is a leading producer of DRI in the world as it came second to India in 2019 with an annual production of nearly 28 million tons.

Iron mills had recorded a 6% increase in sponge iron output year on year on in late March 2019. Increased output of steel ingredients has helped boost Iran's own steel production amid government efforts in recent years to prevent rising iron ore sales to producers in other countries.

IMIDRO data suggests Iran plans to inaugurate seven major iron mills across the country in the year to March 2022 to add another 0.8 million tons of capacity to its DRI production.



Iran-Turkey Flight Route Hit Hard by Coronavirus Surge

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Number of flights between Iran and Turkey has declined to record lows amid a surge in coronavirus cases in the two countries.

Iran's civil aviation authority (CAO) said on Monday that flights between Iran and Turkey had dropped by 95% after the two neighbors agreed earlier this month to enforce strict screening measures on air travelers to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

CAO spokesman Mohammad Hassan Zibakhsh said, however, that demand for travel to Turkey from Iran had also declined in light of a ban imposed by Iran on chartered flights and tours operating on the Turkish route.

Zibakhsh said airports in Iran had processed only 12 flights to and from Turkey since Sunday, adding that the figure represents a tiny portion of the air travel capacity between the two countries.

That as the Iranian government has resisted calls for imposing a blanket ban on flights to and from Turkey.

The Iranian health ministry has designated passenger arrivals from western neighbors including Turkey as a potential source of infection with the so-called British variant of the coronavirus.

The variant has caused a fresh surge in number of coronavirus cases in Iran as health authorities has struggled to cope with higher rates of death and hospitalization in recent weeks.

Zibakhsh said that travelers arriving from Turkey should pass through strict screening measures, adding that all incoming passengers above eight will have to provide proof of negative PCR tests carried out within 96 hours before their arrival.

He said additional tests will be enforced on passengers coming from countries with high rates of coronavirus infections.

The Iranian health ministry said on Monday that the coronavirus had been responsible for 398 deaths reported across Iran over the past 24 hours.

Persian Leopard Spotted in Firuzkuh Heights

TEHRAN (MNA) - A Persian leopard has been spotted at the heights Firuzkuh, Tehran Province, the head of the city's department of environment said.

Dariush Farrokhi, the head of Firuzkuh's department of environment said on Tuesday that the executive officers of the department managed to observe and photograph a leopard while patrolling the natural areas of the city.

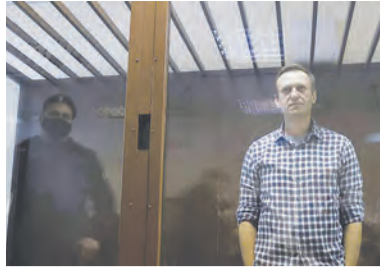
Noting that the presence of this leopard in this area indicates the suitability of the habitat for its life, he added that previously, these leopards were observed and photographed many times during the patrols in these areas.

Navalny Transferred to Russian Prison Hospital

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been transferred to a prison hospital, supporters and officials said on Monday, 20 days into a hunger strike that has led the United States to warn Moscow of serious repercussions if he should die in jail.

Navalny's lawyer Alexei Liptser said after visiting him in the hospital of penal colony No. 3 in the city of Vladimir, east of Moscow, that his health was deteriorating and he had again been denied access to his own doctors.

"All the symptoms that he had before, they remain the same. Numbness in the arms and legs, back pain - they aren't going away...The situation is only getting worse," Liptser told Reuters.



Germany's Greens Make First Bid for Chancellery

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The co-leader of Germany's Greens, Annalena Baerbock, said on Monday she would run to become chancellor in September's elections, the first time the left-leaning party has sought the top job in its 40-year history.

Baerbock, a former champion trampolinist who has seen support for her party rise over the past year, said she would offer a "new start" and focus on investing in education, digital and green technologies.

Analysts said the chance of an outright win for the ecologist party was still a long shot - though the Greens have become a formidable force that has profited from voters' fatigue with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives.



French Police Warn Macron About Rising Violence



MONTPELLIER (Dispatches) - French police warned President Emmanuel Macron about rising levels of street violence, as he toured crime hotspots on Monday following a string of shocking assaults.

A spate of violent attacks in recent months has made fear of crime a top political issue ahead of presidential elections next year in which Macron is expected to seek a second term.

"We are faced with young people who are more organised, and more heavily armed," a policewoman named Ludivine told Macron in Montpellier.

Macron was driven around a poverty-racked part of the southern city in a police car where he spoke to officers and observed drug-dealing spots.

"We are dealing with career criminals, always the same ones, around 50 of them in Montpellier," the police officer said.

Another officer said that anti-police violence had been normalised during the anti-government "yellow vest" revolt which began in 2018.

Macron asked if police had observed a difference since the protests which often saw demonstrators battle security forces on the streets.

"Yes, demonstrators have become more professional. They don't hesitate in getting physical with us," another officer told the French president.

Security has become a top political issue in France 12 months ahead of the presidential election.

In an interview with the right-wing Le Figaro newspaper on Sunday, Macron acknowledged that physical assaults had increased.

"Since 2017, even though France has seen a fall of between 18-25 percent in violent thefts, burglaries and vehicle theft, it has had a major increase in physical assaults," he said.

Macron singled out the rise in violence against police officers, firefighters and medics as being of particular concern.

He has promised to honor a target of recruiting 10,000 extra police officers by 2022 and his government has drafted controversial new legislation aimed at protecting and reinforcing the police.

Several recent crimes have shocked the country.

Alain Francon, one of France's most prolific theatre directors, was stabbed in the throat near his hotel in central Montpellier in March by a man who told police he objected to Francon looking at him.

In January, a 15-year-old schoolboy was left in a coma after being repeatedly kicked by a gang in a well-heeled neighbourhood of the capital in an assault that captured national media attention for days.

Pakistan Opens Talks With Those Behind Violent Anti-France Protests

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan on Monday opened negotiations with radical Islamists after they freed 11 police abducted during week-long anti-blasphemy protests against France in which four officers were killed, the interior minister said.

Most main businesses, markets, shopping malls and public transport services were closed in major cities in response to a strike call by the Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and its affiliated groups.

Pakistan's PSX 100 stock exchange opened 500 points down in the morning though recovered later in the day.

The police officers were abducted during clashes outside TLP headquarters in the eastern city of Lahore, which according to the group also killed its three members. Photographs of the police officers, with their heads, legs and arms heavily bandaged, were posted on social media by their captors. "They've released the 11 policemen they had held hostage," Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said in a video statement.



World Can Bring Pandemic Under Control Within Months

GENEVA (Reuters) - The world can bring the global COVID-19 pandemic under control in the coming months provided it distributes the necessary resources fairly, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) told a news briefing on Monday.

Global climate change activist Greta Thunberg, joining the briefing as a virtual guest from Sweden, took a swipe at "vaccine nationalism" and said it was unethical that rich countries were prioritising their younger citizens for vaccination ahead of vulnerable groups in developing countries.

"We have the tools to bring this pandemic under control in a matter of months, if we apply them consistently and equitably," said the head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

However, he also expressed concern over the "alarming rate" at which COVID-19 is spreading in those aged 25-59 worldwide, possibly due to much more contagious variants.

"It took nine months to reach one million deaths; 4 months to reach 2 million, and 3 months to reach 3 million."

Thunberg said that whereas one in four people in high-income countries had now been vaccinated against COVID-19, only one in more than 500 people in poorer countries had received a shot.

"Vaccine nationalism is what is running the vaccine distribution," she said. "The only morally right thing to do is to prioritise the people who are most vulnerable, whether they live in a high income or a low income country."

Thunberg also drew a direct link between the pandemic and the environmental destruction that she said made it much easier for dangerous viruses to leap from animal populations to humans.

"Science shows we will experience

more frequent, devastating pandemics unless we drastically change our ways and the ways we treat nature ... We are creating ideal conditions for diseases to spill over from one animal to another and to us," she said.

He said negotiations with the TLP were under way.

"There have been two rounds of the talks and there will be another later in the evening," Religious Affairs Minister Nour-ul-Haq Qadri told parliament. "We believe in negotiations and reconciliation to sort out issues."

The government outlawed the TLP last week after it blocked main highways, railways and access routes to major cities, assaulting police and burning public property. Four police officers were killed and more than 500 wounded.

The violence erupted after the government detained TLP leader Saad Hussain Rizvi ahead of a planned countrywide anti-France campaign to pressure the Islamabad government to expel the French ambassador in response to the publication of cartoons in France last year depicting the Prophet Muhammad. The TLP has presented four main demands in the talks with the government, officials from both sides said. They included expulsion of the French ambassador, release of the TLP leader and around 1,400 arrested workers, lifting the ban on the group and the dismissal of the interior minister.

Local Uprisings Emerge to Challenge Myanmar's Army

YANGON (Dispatches) - Sleeping by their makeshift barricades, knots of young men at Tahan in the western Myanmar town of Kale had not expected an attack in the pre-dawn darkness.

Armed with a few hunting guns made by village blacksmiths, catapults, some airguns and Molotov cocktails, they were no match for forces hardened by decades of conflict and equipped with combat weapons.

The first barrage of shots and rocket propelled grenades from Myanmar's army, known as the Tatmadaw, came around 5 a.m. on April 7, the protesters and residents of Kale said.

By evening, the one-sided battle was over, the sandbag barricades had been cleared and 13 people were dead, three people involved in the armed group told Reuters. Soldiers deployed on street corners and remain until now.

"So many people on our side were wounded that we couldn't do anything and had to retreat," Aung Myat Thu, one 20-year-old protester in Kale, told Reuters from there by messaging app.

Although the resistance in Kale was quickly crushed, it points to a new phase of bloodshed in Myanmar after the Feb. 1 coup, with some protesters now seeking to take up arms against the junta's forces.

The junta did not respond to requests for comment.

The junta-controlled Global New Light of Myanmar

newspaper said 18 rioters were arrested in Kale after attacking security forces with homemade weapons. "Some of the members of the security forces were seriously injured," it said

Despite the early setbacks, disparate groups are trying to source better weapons, sharpen tactics, share intelligence and get training from some of the two dozen or so existing ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, several opposition politicians said. "Some small defence units have been formed across the country, in the community, villages or wards," said Moe Saw Oo, a spokesman for the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), a body representing ousted lawmakers that has set up a rival national unity government.

"At the same time, we are in coordination with ethnic armed organisations about the establishment of a proper defence force," he said.

Over 700 people have been killed and more than 3,000 have been detained by security forces cracking down on the nationwide protests that have raged since the military deposed the civilian government led by Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1.

Even as the fighters in Kale retreated, other groups have sprung up elsewhere. Acts of sabotage, such as the burning of administrative buildings and attacks on businesses linked to the army have broken out in the main city of Yangon and the second city of Mandalay.



Cuba Gets New Leader as Last Castro Retires

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba marked the end of an era Monday with the transfer of power from the Castro clan, in charge for six decades, to the communist country's first-ever civilian leader, Miguel Diaz-Canel.

As Raul Castro, 89, enters retirement, he handed the all-powerful position of first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba to Diaz-Canel, 60, already Cuba's president since 2018.

"April 19, an historic day," tweeted the new leader, lauding the all-powerful PCC's "founding and guiding" generation for handing over the reins.

Diaz-Canel's election at a party congress, though pre-determined, marks a watershed for the country of 11.2 million people, many of whom have known no leader other than a Castro.

Fidel Castro, still revered as the country's father and savior, led the country from 1959 to 2006, when he fell ill and his brother Raul took over. Fidel Castro died in 2016.

Diaz-Canel and some other members of the new PCC executive were born after the revolution led by the Castro siblings in the 1950s, leading in 1959 to the overthrow of dictator Fulgencio Batista.

The PCC congress was held 60 years after Fidel Castro declared Cuba a socialist state, setting up decades of conflict with the United States, which has had sanctions against the country since 1962. It also marked six decades since the failed Bay of Pigs invasion by anti-revolutionary Cuban exiles, backed by the CIA. The change at the top is not expected to yield any major policy shifts.

Diaz-Canel, a suit-and-tie wearing, tech-savvy Beatles fan, remains a staunch party disciple.

And a new constitution passed in May 2019 made it clear that the country's commitment to socialism was "irrevocable."

In his final address to the party last Friday, Castro affirmed a "willingness to conduct a respectful dialogue and build a new kind of relationship with the United States."

But he stressed the country would not renounce "the principles of the revolution and socialism" as he urged the new generation to "zealously protect" the one-party dogma.



Shanon
(adviser)

Brand new, Lux Aghdasieh (\$2600)
320sq.m, 4bdrs
indoor pool, Sauna
Jacuzzi, yard
Large balcony
marble floor
Nicely Furn

Pasdaran Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green garden
Fully Furn

Parsian

Mahmoodieh (\$1500) 130sq.m, 2bdrs, S/pool, S, J, balcony, F.F
Andarzgoo (\$2500) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/pool, S, J, balcony, F.F
Elahieh Apt (\$1600) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/pool, S, J, balcony, F.F

Jordan (\$2000) 400sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, F.F

Shahrak-e-Gharb (\$1300) 200sq.m
Vanak Apt (\$2000) 280sq.m, 4bdrs
Both with yard, pkg, fireplace, & F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
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Global Commodity Price Spike to Have Limited Impact on China's Prices

BEIJING (Reuters) - The gains in global commodity prices are not sustainable over the long term and their impact on China's domestic prices will be limited and controllable, the country's top economic planning agency said on Monday.

Price trends in China will be influenced by external factors as commodity prices rise, but the domestic market and government policy would provide support to the stabilisation in prices, Meng Wei, spokeswoman at the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), told reporters at a regular briefing.



Asian Economy to Grow 6.5% in 2021

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - The growth rate of the Asian economy in 2021 is expected to reach at least 6.5 percent, according to a report released by the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Sunday.

The figure represents a significant rebound from the 1.7-percent contraction registered last year, said the report titled "Asian Economic Outlook and Integration Progress," citing data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

South Asia will see its economy grow 9.7 percent this year, the fastest growth in the region, the report said, citing the IMF.

East Asia is expected to see its economic growth hit 6.5 percent during the same period, the report showed.

The report attributed the relatively high growth rate to effective epidemic control and orderly production and work resumption in China and the Republic of Korea, among other factors.

The Asian economy has taken up a growing share of the world economy. Measured by purchasing power parity, the region's economy is expected to account for 47.9 percent of the world's total in 2021, up from 45.3 percent registered in 2017, according to the IMF data the report cited.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Asian economy has presented many highlights and opportunities, according to the report.

Asian economies have introduced new measures to promote the digital economy, advancing digital infrastructure construction and international digital cooperation, among other initiatives.

The digital economy has helped promote production resumption, stabilized the economic situation, and become a new driving force for Asia's economic growth in the future.

The economic and trade cooperation among Asian countries has continued to deepen. By February 2021, 186 regional trade agreements were in force, accounting for 54.9 percent of the global total, the report said, citing data from the World Trade Organization.

In particular, the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in November last year will further accelerate the Asian economic integration, said the report.

Poverty in Iraq Has Increased With Dinar's Devaluation

ERBIL (Dispatches) - Iraq's poverty rate has increased slightly after the devaluation of Iraqi dinar, the spokesperson for the ministry of planning told state media on Monday, announcing recovery plans to reduce it.

"After the dollar exchange rate rose, the inflation index rose by 4.9 to 5 percent, while the primary poverty indicators rose to between 26 and 27 percent," Abdul Zahra al-Hindawi told Iraq's al-Sabah newspaper on Monday.

The spokesperson added that the Ministry has "completed preparing a reform and recovery plan that responds to the challenges, taking into account the complicated crisis the country is facing, that is the economic crisis and the health crisis, what resulted in the increase of poverty rates, high prices and inflation." The plan will be executed between 2021 to 2023.

According to Hindawi, at the beginning of the pandemic poverty rate increased to 31.7% but as the curfew lifted it led to a decrease to 25%, adding that the number of poor in Iraq is "less than 10 million."

The ministry in January published that the population of Iraq has reached 40.1 million people, more than half of which are between the ages of 15 and 64 years old.

Iraq has been gripped by an economic crisis, exacerbated by a drop in oil prices and the global coronavirus pandemic, which has left many unemployed. The country has almost exclusively relied on oil revenues since the US invasion in 2003. In June last year, Kadhim stated that the country currently gets 94.7 percent of its income from oil sales.

Oil prices dramatically dropped because of reduced demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Baghdad has had to borrow money to pay its civil sector and has introduced austerity measures cutting salaries and pensions, which sparked protests across Iraq.



The price of Brent crude oil hit \$62 per barrel on February 13, the highest it has been since the global oil price crash of last year - which was good news for the Iraqi economy that is heavily dependent on oil.

The World Food Program (WFP) representative in Iraq told state media on Thursday that "about 3 million people in Iraq suffer from insufficient food consumption."

Iraq's poverty rate stood at about 20 percent before the coronavirus pandemic - but the World Bank Group in November also estimated the poverty rate in Iraq will increase by seven to 14 percent, calling on Baghdad to introduce urgent economic reforms. Iraqis entered the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan with a feeling of dread as they are faced with sharp price rises, a decline in the buying power of the dinar and rising unemployment.

Britain to Look Closer at Creating Digital Currency

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain stepped up efforts on Monday to look at the case for a digital pound in response to the challenge posed by cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin, and outlined plans to make its financial market more attractive after Brexit.

"We're launching a new taskforce between the Treasury and the Bank of England to coordinate exploratory work on a potential central bank digital currency (CBDC)," Britain's finance minister Rishi Sunak told a financial industry conference.

"Alongside this we will set up a new financial market infrastructure 'sandbox' for firms innovating with technologies like distributed ledger technologies," he added.

The BoE said that it and the government had not yet made a decision on whether to introduce a CBDC in the UK, and that it would engage widely with stakeholders on the benefits, risks and practicalities of doing so.

Any digital currency would be designed to exist alongside physical cash and existing bank deposits, rather than to replace

them, the central bank said.

The taskforce will monitor developments overseas to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of global innovation on digital currencies, it added.

China is a front-runner to launch a CBDC, which could help authorities modernize financial systems, meet the threat from cryptocurrencies and speed up domestic and international payments.

Last week, the European Central Bank said it was studying an electronic form of cash to complement banknotes and coins but any launch was still several years away.

Since Britain's departure from the European Union's orbit on Dec. 31, the financial sector has faced restrictions on serving EU customers, and the British government is seeking to make London a more attractive global financial center.

The government will propose removing restrictions inherited from the EU, including who can trade shares in London and the double volume cap.

Turkish Economy To Grow by 5% in Q1

ANKARA (Dispatches) - In the light of leading indicators, the Turkish economy is forecast to grow by 5% in the first quarter of 2021, the country's treasury and finance minister said on Monday.

Speaking during a televised interview with news channel NTV, Lutfi Elvan said this year will mark more positive developments regarding the gross domestic product (GDP) and Turkey will see a double-digit growth rate in the first quarter due to the base effect.

Economic activities, industrial boom, and export potential have been progressive in 2021, he said.

The minister underlined: "It is clear that we need to move in a very controlled and moderate way to ensure financial stability."

He recalled that Turkey's economy was one of two economies among G20 countries which achieved post GDP growth with China.

Touching on the COVID-19 pandemic, he said the outbreak is one of the most important events in the last century, devastating the world economies.

All countries have faced serious problems and a very high amount of borrowings have occurred in this period, he said, adding global debts have increased by \$24 trillion during the pandemic.

Elvan said the world economy will also post a significant GDP growth in 2021 due to the base effect and this growth will reflect positively on Turkey, especially on the export side.

Mentioning supply chains problems globally, he stressed that it is obvious that a multipolar supply system should be created instead of a China- and Far East- based supply center.



Turkey has significant advantages at this point with its strategic location, human sources, dynamic population, and strong financial structure, the minister stated.

All transactions available in Turkish Central Bank's balance sheet Speaking about the \$128 billion foreign exchange reserves of the Turkish Central Bank, Elvan said all the movements can be seen clearly and transparently in the bank's balance sheet. "The bank used required reserves and foreign exchange trading from time to time to ensure financial stability and to make the monetary transmission mechanism work better."

Touching on a protocol signed between the Treasury and the Central Bank in 2017 to coordinate foreign exchange transactions, he said the bank carried out foreign exchange buying and selling through the treasury accounts under the protocol and it was legitimate.

Russia Resilient to Latest Sanctions, But Risks Remain



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's economy can withstand the latest U.S. economic sanctions but, with the door to further measures on sovereign debt left open, the specter of more damaging sanctions looms large, ratings agencies said.

The U.S. government last week blacklisted Russian companies, expelled Russian diplomats and barred U.S. banks from buying sovereign bonds from Russia's central bank, national wealth fund and Finance Ministry. The United States warned Russia that more penalties were possible but said it did not want to escalate.

Fitch Ratings said it did not believe those measures would undermine Russia's macroeconomic and financial stability, or impede debt service payments, but warned that sanctions remained a top risk for Russia's credit profile. "The executive order provides the authority for the U.S. government to expand sovereign debt sanctions on Russia as appropriate, and Fitch still considers sanctions a key risk to Russia's rating," Fitch said in a note.

Last week's sanctions targeted Russia for alleged U.S. election interference, cyber hacking, bullying Ukraine and other actions, but new threats have emerged, including the deteriorating health of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and a diplomatic spat with the Czech Republic over a 2014 explosion at an ammunition depot.

Ukraine on Monday called on European Union member states to impose new sanctions on Russia.

After the sanctions were announced last week, the rouble clawed back losses and Russian bond yields, which move inversely to their price, fell. But the move to target Moscow's main funding avenue could have far-reaching consequences, analysts said.

Moody's rating agency said Russia's low borrowing needs would mitigate the negative of narrowing government finance options and increase the state's already high dependence on domestic borrowing - foreigners have already cut exposure to Russia's OFZ treasury bonds to six-year lows.

is currently in the midst of a deadly wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its economy shrunk by a record 5.8% last year. The Biden administration, meanwhile, is considering paying Brazil to protect its environment.

But not so long ago, both Brazil's economy and its Amazon were prospering.

In 2014, Brazil was closing out nearly a decade of continuous economic growth. Per capita GDP - the total value of the economy divided among the population - had grown by 400% in just 10 years and economic inequality was falling to record lows in a country that long had the world's largest gap between rich and poor. Between 2004 and 2014, some 35 million Brazilians joined the ranks of the middle class.

As Brazil's economy thrived, deforestation in the Amazon slowed. Deforestation levels in 2012 were one-sixth of what they were in 2004. Back then, falling deforestation rates were hailed as a testament to the country's prowess in environmental policymaking.

But after nearly a decade of researching and writing about Amazon forest loss, I've become convinced that Brazil's successes in reducing deforestation a decade earlier likely had just as much to do with basic economics as environmental policy. Forest loss in the Amazon has long reflected Brazil's economic health.

For much of the late 20th century, when Brazil's economy boomed, the federal government redirected public investment to the Amazon. Many of these investments - the massive land distribution programs of the 1980s, road projects and the enormous public subsidies for farming and ranching - were closely associated with forest loss. So, in the 20th century, when Brazil's economy boomed, deforestation often followed.

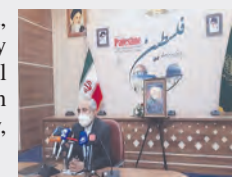
Today, however, forest loss in Brazil's Amazon tends to be more closely associated with international demand for commodities like soybeans, beef and gold than with government investments. And for farmers, prices for these commodities don't just rise and fall with global demand. They also rise and fall inversely to Brazil's economic health.

Iran to Mark Quds Day's Rally Online

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran will mark annual International Quds Day's rally in an online event rather than marching through the streets due to the spread of coronavirus, COVID-19, in the current year.

Deputy Coordinating Council of Islamic Development Organization (IDO) Nosratollah Lotfi broke the news on Tue. in a get-together

meeting held for marking "International Quds Day" and said, "Given the current situation of coronavirus pandemic in the country and sharp rise in spread of the virus in various parts of Iran, we will not have any march for Quds Day until middle of the next Iranian month of Ordibehesht (which falls on May) and consequently, car march has also been canceled."



Remittances Help Cushion Central Asia From Pandemic Hit

LONDON (FT) - Remittances from Russia are helping to ease the economic impact of the pandemic on central Asian nations, which are recovering from their first recession in a quarter of a century but have been hit by a drop in gas revenues from China and the slow pace of vaccination.

Earnings sent home by central Asian workers in Russia dropped 25 per cent in the first half of 2020 when the virus first took hold, but have since begun to rise again, according to the IMF.

Millions of central Asians live and work in Russia, and the cash they send home is one of the region's biggest earners, accounting for up to 30 per cent of GDP in some countries. By the end of last year the number of labor migrants living in Russia or entering for seasonal work had shrunk to 6m, from between 9m and 11m in most years, according to official data.

Subir Lall, deputy director of the Middle East and central Asia department at the IMF, called the recovery in remittances "crucial", adding that the cash migrants send home "can serve as a lifeline for the poorest countries". He added: "This illustrates the stabilising role that remittances can play after an [economic] shock."

According to the World Bank, last year was central Asia's first recession since the end of the Soviet system in the mid-1990s.

Central Asia and the Caucasus experienced a 1.9 per cent drop in economic output in 2020, according to the IMF. The fund expects the region to expand 3.7 per cent this year and 4.1 per cent in 2022. However, it will underperform the average for emerging markets of 6.7 per cent and 5 per cent growth respectively.

The IMF blamed the underperformance largely on the slow rollout of inoculations. The fund expects a maximum of just 20 per cent of people across the region to be vaccinated in the near term except in Kazakhstan, which has the capacity to dose 60 per cent of its population given its domestic vaccine production facilities. So far, Kazakhstan has vaccinated 0.6 per cent of the population.

Given the low capacity for vaccine storage and distribution, broad vaccine coverage is not expected until 2023, according to the IMF.

The economic recovery is also being held back by a fall in revenues earned from China, the region's biggest trading partner. Gas is the single largest commodity that central Asia sells to China and prices plunged last year.

According to Petr Grishin, chief economist for eastern Europe at VTB Capital, Uzbekistan's total exports to China fell 27 per cent year on year in US dollar terms in 2020.

That illustrates how one of central Asia's traditional economic strengths — its natural resources — may be weakening as a driver of growth.

Peter Burian, special representative for central Asia at the EU, warned that "for too many years the countries of the region were relying on their economic growth on exceptionally high commodity prices, export of minerals or revenues of remittances [from] labor migrants mostly working in Russia".

But central Asia's lack of development progress means that it is "still one of the least integrated and connected regions" in the world, he said — which "prevents the region from fully benefiting from its strategic location as a gateway between Europe and Asia, not only east-west, but also north-south".

There are signs that this is changing, however, he added: "Most of the countries realise that business as usual is not an option and it's not sustainable."



Lall called on central Asian economies to do more to encourage private sector activity to boost their economic resilience. "The state has to rearrange itself in many countries and modernise... as an enabler and facilitator for the private sector... not as a gatekeeper," he said.

Private sector involvement in central Asian infrastructure projects, such as ports, airports, railways and energy production, is "a way out of the impasse in public spending in many countries", said Alain Pilloux, vice-president at the EBRD, which invested \$1.5bn in central Asia last year.

Several central Asian economies, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have reached a critical level of indebtedness and cannot afford to increase public spending despite greatly needing additional infrastructure and social spending, he said.

Central Asia's two largest economies, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, have begun to speed up privatisation, which analysts expect to support their growth.

They "enjoy supportive demography... governments with a strong developmental mentality and a very rich resource base", Grishin said. "Growing at 5 per cent per year... is achievable for both of them."

One area in which the state should play a key role is in the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies, Lall argued: "It is money well spent, including by the state... [a country] can leapfrog [other nations] in terms of technology and adaptation."

He urged central Asian nations to "take advantage of the opportunity" to reconstruct their economies after the pandemic "in a way that reduces poverty and inequality".

Uzbekistan has been trying to do so. The country's finance minister Timur Ishmetov said that "technological changes in the last decade [can] help countries with abundant natural resources use them in a more efficient way, which would lead to more inclusive growth".

Uzbekistan, central Asia's most populous country, enjoys rising domestic demand for resources and their products, prompting it to expand processing capacities and create more value-added goods.

Green recovery and integration can take the region a long way, Pilloux said: "This pandemic is the incentive to speed up reform."

E-Gov't to...

FROM PAGE 1

The outbreak of coronavirus has been a good opportunity for the country to improve the infrastructures and facilities for the e-government. The e-government is the best way to combat financial corruption, evading tax payments, transparency and rent-seeking and if the government



improves it, then the number of financial offences and irregularities in the country will drop or will be easily traced.

Despite the slogan of the government for improving the virtual life, combatting the corruption and improving the e-services, it has failed to improve the condition in the world ranking while the pandemic has been the best opportunity for it.

According to the EDGI ranking, South Korea is the top country in the Asia in terms of its e-government and the second one in the world after Denmark. The EDGI assesses e-government development at a national level and is based on three components: online service index, telecommunication infrastructure index and the human capital index. So revenues of the countries are the key factor in achieving the higher places in the e-government rankings.

So the governments have to take practical actions to boost Iran's place in the rankings and currently the country is not in a good position in terms of information and telecommunication field and its position is totally in contradiction with what has been stipulated in its developmental outlook plans.

Since the world is moving towards smartization, focusing and investing in the information and technology sector for connecting the smart cities is a must and lack of attention or indifference to it will lead to irreparable damages in the long term and it will help the financial irregularities and other financial offences to increase and it will harm the Islamic Republic of Iran and its people's image which are model country for progress and fight against injustice.

Pakistan to...

FROM PAGE 1

Appreciating the constant support of Iranian officials, especially the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, to the Muslims of the subcontinent and the support of the positions of the Government of Islamabad, he said, "The trip to Tehran will be a good opportunity for bilateral consultations and adjustment of the positions of the two brother countries on regional developments."

"We will also talk to the Iranian officials about bilateral trade, especially the plan to build border markets, which the Iranian side has welcomed and will continue to do," Qureshi noted.

The Pakistani Foreign Minister added that his country will spare no effort to further strengthen relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Qureshi arrived in Tehran yesterday evening for a three-day visit.

Finance Minister...

FROM PAGE 1

He as previously announced that offering the shares of state-owned companies, which are planned to be privatized, will be sped up.

He has also said that the government should amend its policies and methods of setting the prices and transferring the shares in the process of privatization.

In Iran, the implementation of the privatization plan aimed at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in the domestic economy, and reducing financial and management burden on the government has been under the spotlight over the past decade.

The law on the implementation of the general policies of Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the state-owned firms each year. Under the present interpretation of Article 44, some state-owned companies have been privatized to reduce their financial burden on the country's budget and also increase their productivity.

Although downsizing the government has been on the agenda for many years, but a number of factors have been hindering the privatization trend in the country, among them, the government's high interference in the management of the transferred companies is a challenging one.

S. Korea's Growth Estimated To Have Recovered



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's first-quarter economic growth is widely estimated to have recovered to pre-pandemic levels on a rapid rebound in exports and investment, experts said Monday.

South Korea's gross domestic product came to 468.8 trillion won (\$419 billion) in the fourth quarter of 2019, about a month before the new coronavirus hit Asia's fourth-largest economy. As the economy shrank 1 percent on-year in 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the country's GDP dwindled to 463.4 trillion won in the October-December period last year.

Optimism about South Korea's economic growth for the January-March period comes on the back of rising overseas shipments and corporate capital spending.

Presiding over a meeting of economic ministers, which was also attended by several business leaders, President Moon Jae-in said South Korea's first-quarter GDP has already bounced back to the pre-pandemic level or is estimated to have done so on a faster-than-expected recovery in exports and investment.

According to a central bank estimate, a 1.3 percent gain in first-quarter GDP means the country's economic growth has rebounded to the level before the coronavirus outbreak.

South Korea's economy contracted 1.3 percent and 3.2 percent in the first and second quarter of last year, respectively, before expanding 2.1 percent in the third quarter and 1.2 percent in the fourth quarter.

The Bank of Korea (BOK) is scheduled to release its advance estimate of South Korea's first-quarter economic growth on April 27.

South Korea's exports hit a record high in the first quarter as shipments of chips and autos remained robust amid the pandemic, according to the Korea Customs Service.

Japan Firms Brace for Further COVID Hit

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese companies think the country will suffer a fourth round of coronavirus infections, with many bracing for a further blow to business, a Reuters monthly poll showed.

Japan has so far seen far fewer COVID-19 cases than many Western countries, but concerns about a new wave of infections are rising fast.

A delay in vaccinations versus other Group of Seven advanced countries and a lacking sense of crisis among the public will trigger a new wave of infections, some firms wrote in the poll.

The Corporate Survey found almost all Japanese companies anticipated a new wave of infections in Japan. Many expected it to peak in May, around the time of the Golden Week holidays, which would diminish hope for a domestic demand-led recovery.

If the new wave of infections led Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government to issue a fresh state of emergency, which



entails business restrictions and penalty, that would hurt sales at 59% of firms, the April 2-13 survey found.

"Restaurant and tourism industries have been so exhausted that I'm concerned a new wave of infections will deal a body blow," a chemicals maker manager wrote in the survey.

A wholesaler said a new wave of infections and a state of emergency

would make companies more cautious about spending and output.

The survey, which was conducted for Reuters by Nikkei Research, canvassed 482 large and midsize non-financial Japanese corporations on condition of anonymity so that they could express opinions freely. About 240 firms responded.

Although global demand and domestic consumption have helped the world's third-largest economy emerge from the slump, hardest-hit industries such as restaurants and hotels remain under pressure.

Araqchi...

FROM PAGE 1

The talks were launched on April 6 with the aim of potentially revitalizing the deal and returning the United States to it. Washington left the JCPOA in 2018 and restored the economic sanctions that the accord had lifted. Tehran returned the American side and others' non-commitment to the deal with remedial nuclear measures that it is entitled to take under the JCPOA's Paragraph 36.

The Islamic Republic has insisted that it would only stop its adherence to the JCPOA paragraph once the U.S. lifted all the sanctions in one step and after Iran has verified that the sanction relief has actually taken place.

Araqchi underlined that Iran only uses the talks to discuss the potential of that "final step" towards elimination of the oppressive sanctions. Therefore, any rumors suggesting the likelihood of a modus vivendi or a step-for-a-step attitude towards the nuclear deal's restoration were to be ruled out, the official again insisted.

The negotiator also reminded an advisory by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, in which the Leader recently warned against Iran's entanglement in drawn-out negotiations.

Nor would the Islamic Republic try to rush its desired result, Araqchi said, adding that the country treads carefully while engaging in the talks and strives to safeguard its interests and definitive positions.

The Iranian diplomat said the negotiating team reports constantly to Tehran, where any decisions concerning the process and result of the negotiations are taken. Over the recent days, some remarks have been made by some diplomats attending the talks, including Araqchi himself, pointing out that the negotiations were "progressing well."

Addressing a press conference in the Iranian capital on Monday, however, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh underscored that the talks were tough and had not reached any final conclusion yet.

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Sharma Topples Jabeur For First WTA Title

CHARLESTON (Dispatches) - Australian Astra Sharma, ranked 165th in the world, rallied to beat 27th-ranked Ons Jabeur 2-6, 7-5, 6-1 on Sunday to win her first WTA title at Charleston, South Carolina.

Sharma, who beat a top-30 player for the first time in three attempts, broke Tunisian top seed Jabeur three times in the third set to give herself a chance to serve out the match, which she did in style with a love game.

Froome Struggles as Moscon Wins

INNSBRUCK (Dispatches) - Italian Gianni Moscon won the first stage of the Tour of the Alps on Monday as his former Ineos teammate Chris Froome finished more than five minutes off the pace.

Froome is targeting a start on the Tour de France in June on his long journey back from life-threatening injuries suffered in a high-speed crash into a wall at the Criterium du Dauphine two years ago.

The world's top paid cyclist -- on a 5.5 million euros (\$6.6 million US) a year deal with Israel Start Up Nation, Froome came to this five-day race on the back of a disappointing Tour of Catalonia.

Adebayo Hits Buzzer-Beater as Heat Top Nets

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Bam Adebayo's step-back, 13-foot jumper from the baseline at the buzzer lifted the Miami Heat to a 109-107 victory at home against the Brooklyn Nets in a matchup of short-handed teams on Sunday afternoon.

Adebayo finished with 21 points, 15 rebounds and five assists to help the Heat snap a three-game losing streak despite playing without Jimmy Butler, who sat out with a sprained right ankle.

Landry Shamet scored a career-high 30 points and made 7-of-12 3-pointers to lead the Nets, who lost Kevin Durant early to injury and were already without James Harden (hamstring). Durant scored the Nets' first eight points before exiting the game with 7:57 left in the first quarter with what was diagnosed as a left thigh contusion.

Goran Dragic finished with 18 points, eight rebounds and seven assists and Dewayne Dedmon totaled 10 points and 10 rebounds off Miami's bench. Kendrick Nunn made five of the Heat's 16 triples and finished with 17 points while Ariza had 15 points and nine rebounds.

Hawks 129, Pacers 117

Trae Young collected 34 points and 11 assists and Atlanta used a fast finish to secure a win over visiting Indiana.

Clint Capela recorded 25 points and 24 rebounds while Kevin Huerter and Bogdan Bogdanovic each had 23 points for the Hawks, who have won eight of their past 10 games.

Indiana received 29 points and eight assists from Malcolm Brogdon and 18 points and 14 rebounds from Domantas Sabonis. T.J. McConnell came off the bench to score 18 points.

Knicks 122, Pelicans 112 (OT)

Julius Randle had 33 points and 10 assists as host New York won its sixth consecutive game by defeating New Orleans in overtime. Randle added five steals, Derrick Rose scored 23 off the bench and RJ Barrett had 18 as the Knicks defeated the Pelicans for the second time in their past three games.

Zion Williamson had 34 points, nine rebounds and five assists for the Pelicans, while Eric Bledsoe scored 22 points and Brandon Ingram added 19. Steven Adams had 10 points and 14 rebounds as New Orleans lost in overtime for the second consecutive game.

Clippers 124, Timberwolves 105

Los Angeles backed up its standing as the top 3-point shooting team in the NBA, making half of its 42 attempts from long range in routing visiting Minnesota.

The Clippers, who began the night hitting 42 percent from distance, had 104 points by



the end of the third quarter. Paul George led the Clippers with 23 points and added seven rebounds. Kawhi Leonard returned to the Clippers' starting lineup after a four-game absence due to a foot injury and finished with 15 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists in 23 minutes.

Anthony Edwards topped the Timberwolves with 23 points, making 5 of 11 from 3-point range. Karl-Anthony Towns added 16 points and six rebounds.

Hornets 109, Trail Blazers 101

Terry Rozier scored 34 points to help Charlotte snap a four-game losing streak in beating visiting Portland.

Rozier, who took 24 of the Charlotte starters' combined 53 shots from the field, racked up seven 3-point baskets on 13 tries. He also delivered a team-best 10 assists to go with eight rebounds. P.J. Washington also contributed 23 points, eight rebounds and four blocked shots off the bench for Charlotte. Carmelo Anthony pumped in 24 points and C.J. McCollum posted 22 points for Portland. It was the second straight game for the Trail Blazers without injured team scoring leader Damian Lillard. Unlike two nights earlier in a one-point win at San Antonio, the Trail Blazers were unable to overcome his absence this time.

Kings 121, Mavericks 107

De'Aaron Fox poured in a team-high 30 points and Sacramento was never threatened after scoring the game's first eight points while earning a victory over host Dallas to end a nine-game losing streak.

Fox had a double-double with a game-high 12 assists, as did Hassan Whiteside with 12 points and a team-high 10 rebounds as the Kings won for the first time since March 29. Fox hit 12 of his 21 shots from the field en route to his 17th 30-point outing of the season. The double-double was his 11th of the year. Luka Doncic had a game-high 37 points for the Mavericks in the loss. Doncic shot 14 of 27 from the field while making four 3-pointers. Dorian Finney-Smith had 22 points and Jalen Brunson added 20 for the Mavericks, who have opened a five-game homestand with consecutive defeats.

Tottenham Sack Mourinho After 17 Months

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham Lbrought Jose Mourinho's unhappy spell as manager to an abrupt end on Monday just days before they attempt to end a 13-year wait to win a trophy in the League Cup final.

Mourinho was handed the daunting task of replacing Mauricio Pochettino, who had led Tottenham to the club's first ever Champions League final just months prior to his sacking in November 2019.

Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy backed Mourinho's stellar record of winning multiple trophies at Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Manchester United. However, Levy has sensationally cut his losses ahead of Sunday's League Cup final against Manchester City in the hope that Mourinho's departure will lift the gloom that has descended upon a talented squad of players.

Mourinho leaves with Tottenham seventh in the Premier League, five points adrift of the top four.

A shock Europa League exit to Dinamo Zagreb last month means a top-four finish is Spurs' only route back into next season's Champions League.

As evidenced by Tottenham signing up as one of 12 clubs to a breakaway European Super League on Sunday, they now see themselves as part of the continent's elite and can ill afford the economic consequences of missing out on Champions League revenue.

A state-of-the-art new stadium at a cost of £1 billion (\$1.4 billion) was meant to herald a new era of success for Spurs.

Barty Sees Roland Garros Defense as a 'Fresh Start'

PARIS 9(Dispatches) - As Ashleigh Barty prepares for the start of Roland Garros on May 24, she insisted Monday that she does not regard herself as the defending champion. The Australian won her only major singles title in Paris in 2019. The tournament was cancelled last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It's a long time since I've played at the French Open," she said in a teleconference from Stuttgart on Monday ahead of her first match on European clay in almost two years. "It's a fresh start, a fresh start for everyone at that event."

She made clear that her approach was also practical. "If you go into a tournament thinking you're defending your title, it's the wrong way to approach it," she said. "It's a fresh tournament, and it's a new opportunity."

The 24-year-old Barty and American Jennifer Brady crushed American pair Kaitlyn Christian and Sabrina Santamaria 6-3, 6-1 in the Stuttgart doubles round of 16 on Monday. Barty received a bye to the singles second round, where she will face one of two Germans, either Laura Siegemund or Mona Barthel.

After Stuttgart she plans to play on clay in Madrid and Rome before Roland Garros.

She opened her clay-court season by reaching the quarterfinals in Charleston, South Carolina, at the start of the month.

Dortmund, Bayern Reject Super League Plans

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bundesliga Brivals Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich both said on Monday they were against proposals to form a European Super League.

Overnight, 12 of Europe's most powerful clubs announced the launch of the so-called Super League to oversee a new midweek competition, but there are no German clubs involved.

"FC Bayern have not been involved in the plans for creating a Super League," Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said in a statement. "We are convinced that the current structure in football guarantees a reliable foundation."

Man City Wait Nervously on De Bruyne Injury Diagnosis



The 29-year-old's injury is badly timed for City as they try to retain an eight-point lead over

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City said Monday they do not know the "full extent" of the injury suffered by Kevin De Bruyne, but the Belgium midfielder will definitely miss the Premier League leaders' game at Aston Villa on Wednesday.

De Bruyne limped off in the second half of Saturday's 1-0 FA Cup semi-final defeat by Chelsea, which ended City's hopes of a historic quadruple.

second-placed Manchester United, while looking to win the Champions League and League Cup.

City travel to Villa, then play Tottenham in the League Cup final on Sunday before the first leg of their Champions League semi-final against Paris Saint Germain on April 28.

"Manchester City can confirm that Kevin de Bruyne suffered injury to his right foot and ankle in Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Chelsea," a City statement said on Monday.

"The extent of the problem is not yet known. "Kevin will continue to be reviewed but will miss Wednesday's Premier League trip to Aston Villa. "We will bring you further updates on his condition in due course."

De Bruyne, who has scored eight times in 32 appearances this season, has been a pivotal player since he joined from Wolfsburg in 2015, winning seven major trophies with City. He signed a two-year contract extension earlier this month that ties him to the club till 2025.

EFA Chief Hits Out at Greediness, Narcissism of Clubs

ZURICH (Dispatches) - UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin on Monday slammed clubs involved in plans for a breakaway Super League and launched stinging attacks on Juventus chairman Andrea Agnelli as well as Manchester United executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward.

"I've seen many things in my life. I've been a criminal lawyer for 20 years but I've never seen people like that," said the Slovenian as UEFA responded to the news that 12 leading European clubs, including Juve and United, had decided to launch a rival competition to threaten the Champions League. Juve chairman Agnelli had been involved in negotiations with European football's governing body over reforms of the Champions League in his roles both as European Club Association (ECA) chairman and as a member of UEFA's executive committee.

UEFA had in place a plan to expand the Champions League from 32 to 36 clubs, increasing the number of group games for each team from six to 10, largely to appease Agnelli and other top clubs' desire to play more games. But on Sunday night Agnelli resigned from his roles with UEFA and the ECA, just before UEFA approved their new format and just as the Super League announcement was made. "If I start with Ed Woodward, he called me last Thursday evening saying he's very satisfied with and fully supports the reforms and the only thing he wanted to talk about was FFP (Financial Fair Play), when obviously he had already signed something else," Ceferin said.



Fernandes Joins Debate on European Super League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bruno Fernandes joined the heated debate on the European Super League as the Manchester United midfielder appeared to question the controversial plan on Monday.

United are one of 12 clubs to have agreed to join the breakaway league, which aims to replace the Champions League with a more lucrative invitation-only competition.

Manchester City, Arsenal, Liverpool, Tottenham and Chelsea are the other Premier League teams involved, with Barcelona, Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid, Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan also signed up. Criticism of the incendiary scheme has poured in from across football, with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin revealing he wants to ban the "dirty dozen" and their players from its competitions and urging domestic leagues to follow suit.

Portugal star Fernandes became the first player from one of the Premier League sides involved to express an opinion when he shared an Instagram post from Wolves winger Daniel Podence.

Fernandes's compatriot appeared to condemn the breakaway when he wrote of the Champions League: "The ball. The song. The dream. The Zidane's volley. Kaka's solo. Liverpool in Athens. Ole in Barcelona. Cris and Seedorf. There some things we just can't really pay for."

Fernandes replied: "Enorme (enormous)" and then shared the post to his own Instagram Story, including the text: "Dreams can't be buy (bought)."

