

Iran's Health Ministry Announced On Sunday the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Exceeded 76,936 With 303 More Iranians Who Died From the COVID-19 Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani Said That the Islamic Republic Is Ready To Cooperate With the Regional Countries in the Mechanism of Creating Collective Security

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Iran to Continue Supporting Palestine

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Islamic Republic will continue to render support for the Palestinian people and their resistance in the face of relentless acts of aggression and crimes by the Zionist enemy in the Holy Quds and the Gaza Strip.

Brigadier General Esmail Qaani made the remarks in a phone call with head of the political bureau of the Hamas resistance movement Ismail Haniyeh on Saturday.

According to a statement issued by Hamas, the two sides discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has been bombarding the blockaded Gaza Strip for the past several days.

At least 139 Palestinians, including 39 children and 22 women, have been killed and about 1,000 others injured since Monday.

Hamas' military wing on Saturday vowed to continue to fire rockets at central Israeli-occupied territories after the Israeli military destroyed Al Jalaa tower in Gaza, which housed a number of media outlets.

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Zarif Calls for an Institutionalized Campaign Against Zionist Regime

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday urged the need for devising an institutionalized legal and political campaign against the "apartheid Zionist regime" at regional and international levels.

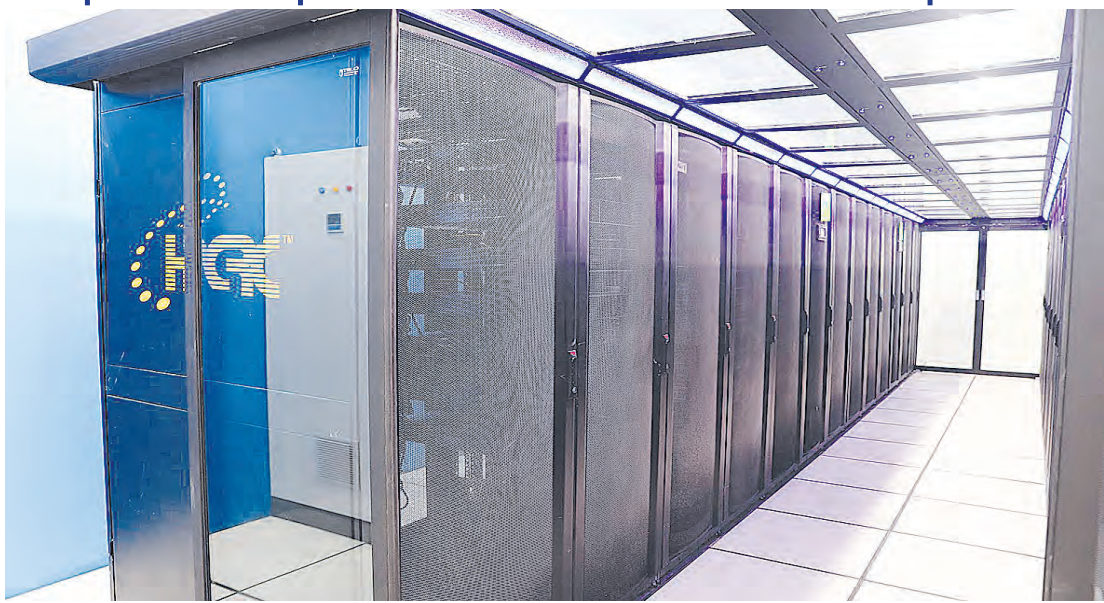
Zarif was addressing a virtual emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss the latest atrocities of the Zionist regime against the Palestinian people.

The full text of Zarif's speech at the meeting follows: "Allow me to begin by thanking you for organizing this timely meeting as we witness the most heinous crimes being perpetrated against our brothers and sisters by Zionist forces in occupied Palestine.

Innocent men, women and children are being massacred by the deadliest and most sophisticated weapons. Homes are being demolished while their residents are trapped inside. Whatever remains of the infrastructure in Gaza—including power and water supply—is effectively destroyed.

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Iran Launches 'Simorgh' Supercomputer, 2nd One in the Pipeline



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi says the country will name its next homegrown supercomputer after Maryam Mirzakhani, the late Iranian math genius.

Azari Jahromi made the remarks in a tweet on Sunday, when the country launched a homegrown supercomputer named "Simorgh", which is a benevolent, mythical bird of prey in Iranian mythology and literature.

Simorgh's current processing power is more than one petaflops (i.e. one thousand million million (1015) floating-point operations per second).

This supercomputer will support businesses with the goal of developing artificial intelligence. It is able to do various tasks including Big Data Analysis, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), and Genetic Data Analysis.

Jahromi tweeted, in mid-August 2019, promised that Simorgh would be "100 times more powerful than previous ones."

The name "Simorgh" derives from an ancient Iranian mythological bird, very like the Phoenix in other lore, that is gigantic, universally benevolent, and unilaterally female. This represents an interesting symbol for Iran's supercomputer—a replete sort of union between the country's past and its dream for the future.

Iran is making a big play at present to compete in the ever-deepening trenches of global information technology.

In his tweet, the ICT minister vowed that the next supercomputer, whose development began today, will be named "Maryam" in memory of Mirzakhani.

He said the capacity of "Maryam" will be 100 times more than Simorgh. Maryam Mirzakhani, the internationally-renowned Iranian mathematician and the first female winner of Fields Medal, died of breast cancer in July 2017.

The 40-year-old mathematician, a professor at Stanford University, was the first Iranian woman elected to the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in May 2016, in recognition of her "distinguished and continuing achievement in original research."

With past honorees, including renowned physicist Albert Einstein, and inventors Thomas Edison, and Alexander Graham Bell, being a member of the organization is considered to be as one of the highest achievements for scientists in the United States.

Hamas Chief's House in Gaza Bombed

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli warplanes have bombed the home of the Hamas leader in Gaza City, as Tel Aviv's latest aggression against the besieged enclave enters the seventh day.

The aircraft attacked Yahya Sinwar's home in the early hours of Sunday, but it was not immediately clear if anyone was inside the house.

The attack shows the Israeli regime is looking for a face-saving exit from its latest adventure - which has seen Gaza-based resistance groups respond with unprecedented missile barrages and gain international legitimacy - by claiming victory through a big hit.

The attack on Sinwar's home came only a day after Israeli fighter jets bombed the house of a member of Hamas's political bureau in the Gaza Strip.

Local sources said Khalil al-Hayya's house in the northeastern al-Tufah neighborhood of Gaza City was destroyed on Saturday morning as Israeli aircraft fired several missiles at it. He was apparently not in the house at the time of the airstrike.

At least 26 Palestinians, including ten women and 8 children were killed and more than 50 others were injured in the latest Israeli airstrikes targeting the al-Wehda Street in central Gaza city, health officials said Sunday.

One of the air raids killed a Gaza neurologist and left his wife and daughter wounded, Palestinian medics and relatives said.

Resistance fighters responded by firing fresh barrages of rockets at Tel Aviv and the southern city of Beersheva. "After threatening to fire rockets at Tel Aviv, Hamas has fired a heavy barrage of rockets from Gaza into central & southern Israel," the Israeli military wrote in a post published on its Twitter page early on Sunday.

The sound of sirens was heard all over the southern and central Israeli cities, including Ashdod, Ashkelon and Beersheva, followed by explosions.

Settlers dashed for bomb shelters as alerts warning of incoming rockets blared. Israeli medical staff said around 10 people were injured while running for shelters.

On Saturday, Israel destroyed 12-story al-Jalaa building in Gaza City, which houses the offices of US news agency the Associated Press and Qatar-based broadcaster Al Jazeera.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Muslims Need to Unite Against Zionists' Crimes

These days the world is watching the Zionists' crimes which they kill innocent Palestinian civilians and children, and no major action by the world is taken to stop these atrocities but issuing some statement and contacts with the savage Israeli officials.

On Saturday, an official with Iran's Judiciary Branch reacted to the silence and inactivity of some Arab countries in the face of Zionists' crimes and violation of human rights in the occupied lands specially Gaza.

Ali Bagheri Kani, Secretary-General of Iran's Human Rights Office took to Twitter to criticize Zionists' crimes in the occupied lands specially Gaza. He also reacted to the silence and inactivity of some Arab countries in the face of such inhuman crimes.

Holding an extraordinary summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is the slightest thing that Islamic governments can do for the oppressed Palestinian people, said Bagheri in his tweet.

Today, the Arab states who stabbed Islamic Ummah in the back and extended a hand of friendship to the criminals under the pretext of peace, are responsible for the blood of children and the cries of the Palestinians who are helpless.

Referring to his meeting with the Syrian envoy, he said, "Today, the coalition of resistance is stronger and the Zionist regime is weaker than ever, I told in a meeting with the Syrian envoy."

Meanwhile the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada said the so-called advocates of human rights who keep silent on Israel's brutality against the Palestinian people are complicit in the Tel Aviv regime's war crimes.

"Unfortunately, silence of the so-called advocates of human rights in the face of the Zionists' barbaric attacks and massacre of the defenseless Palestinian people, particularly women and children, indicates their complicity in war crimes," the conference's secretariat said in a statement.

But these statements are not enough for stopping the Zionists from committing their crimes and they savagely attack Gaza Strip and destroy the infrastructures and kill the innocent civilians.

The Palestinian resistance fighters have been responding to Israel's aggression through massive barrages of rockets and missiles and they have also brought drones into the equation but it is not enough by itself.

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Iraq Intends to Buy Russian Defense Systems

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - While Washington is still the main obstacle to the purchase of Russian defense systems, Iraqi parliament's Security and Defense Committee announced Baghdad's decision to buy advanced defense systems soon.

According to Iraqi media, Iraq's parliament, in the 2021 budget, allocated funds for the purchase of advanced military equipment in order to keep pace with the progress of the world's armies.

The Deputy Chairman of the Security and Defense Committee in the Iraqi Parliament, Nayef Al-Shammari, announced on Saturday that the government will contract in the coming months to purchase an air defense system, AW journal reported. He said in a press statement, that the fiscal budget for 2021 included allocations to provide the armed forces with modern equipment to keep pace with the development in the armies of the world.

He also indicated that the committee had held several meetings with the Minister of Defense and the Commander of Air Defense in this regard.

He added that the government will contract during the next few months with important companies to provide Iraq with a modern air defense system.

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Iran to Vaccinate 14m Citizens Against COVID-19 by End of June

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Health Saeed Namaki said on Sunday that the country will vaccinate some 13 to 14 million citizens against COVID-19 by the end of June.

Namaki said that these 14 million people will comprise those above 60 and those having special diseases which he said are the main people who succumb to the COVID-19.

Some 162,000 doses of vaccine have been injected by the Health Ministry bases across the country over the past 24 hours which is a record, the minister said, adding that higher records will be set in the coming days.

He said that all the target groups will get vaccinated according to a national plan for vaccination and then will be the turn of other groups of people.

Majlis Speaker Urges Collective Action to Avert Genocide in Palestine

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf called on regional leaders to join hands to halt the Zionist regime's massacre machine and prevent an Israeli genocide against Palestinians.

Speaking at a parliamentary meeting on Sunday, Qalibaf denounced the illegitimate Israeli regime as the "chief evil" whose acts of aggression against Palestinians have reached the worst level with the purpose of genocide against people of Palestine.

Condemning Tel Aviv's continued crimes and ruthless direct military attacks against defenseless people of Palestine in residential areas, the Iranian speaker said, "It is necessary for all leaders in the region to assist the resistance forces as soon as possible and prevent a genocide against the oppressed people of Palestine."

He further emphasized that Iran supports the resistance of Palestinians and welcomes the popular uprising against Israel in the occupied territories, adding, "We'd welcome any measure to stop the Zionist crime machine."



Israel has been bombarding the blockaded Gaza Strip for the past several days. At least 139 Palestinians, including 39 children and 22 women, have been killed and about 1,000 others injured since Monday.

Iran Corresponds With Russia On Caspian Seals Death

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran's Department of Environment said on Sunday that it was in correspondence with Russia to find the reason behind death of 170 Caspian seals in recent days.

Deputy Chief of the Department of Environment for marine ecosystems Davood Mirshekar said that deaths have been seen among Caspian seals in recent years, adding that recently 170 seals washed up dead in the Russian shores of the Caspian Sea.

He said that the department was in correspondence with Russia through Iran's Foreign Ministry to find out the reason behind the deaths, hoping that the Russian side would soon deliver proper answer.

Iran is developing a national plan of action to protect the endangered species so that measures in this regard become integrated and coordinated among different national agencies and NGOs, Mirshekar stated.

Among challenges endangering Caspian seals, Mirshekari named fishing, industrial contamination entering the Caspian Sea, spread of pathogens especially viruses, hunting Caspian seals, reduction of ice level, moving of icebreakers in breeding places, lack of preserved coasts for seals, and unawareness among fishers.

He also said that Iran has established a search and rescue center for Caspian seals which is active in regional level. A 2006 statistics estimated the population of Caspian seals to be 100,000 but they have become a critically endangered species as their population he decreased by 90 percent.

Caspian seals are the only mammal species in the sea and play an important role in ecologic balance.

Iraq Can Be Replaced With Other States for Transiting Goods to Iran

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi on Saturday said that Iraq can be replaced with other countries for transiting goods to Iran.

Tehran and Baghdad share many commonalities for cooperation, the ambassador noted, adding that Iraq could become one of the largest transit destinations in the region and a bridge between west and east.

Iraq can connect to China through Iran railways and boost its strategic importance in the region, he further noted.

Iraq's production volume may be low, he said, adding that it has an edge in transiting goods produced by other states, including Iran.

Currently, there is no insecurity along the 1,400 km border between Iran and Iraq, he underlined.

Shocked Israeli Regime Fully Encircled by Resistance Front

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Zionist regime of Israel is caught off guard and fully encircled by the resistance front.

"Incidents over the past days in the occupied territories well displayed the resistance [front]'s capability in confronting the Zionists' military power and revealed the Zionist regime's faulted defense system," the IRGC deputy commander for political affairs, Brigadier General Yadollah Javani, said on Saturday.

The Zionist regime is under pressure both from inside the occupied territories and from international public opinion, he added, noting that the situation is changed in favor of Palestine and the resistance front.

"The Zionist regime has no capability at all to change the situation in its own favor, and based on realities on the ground, the process of the Zionists' decline has gained momentum," the IRGC commander said.

"Those claiming to be human rights advocates complicit in Israeli war..."

Javani added that the fake and usurping Israeli regime has been facing unprecedented developments in the occupied territories and the Gaza Strip during recent days.

The regime has forcefully occupied territories and is now under pressure from the main owners of these lands, he said, adding, "The future belongs to the Palestinian people and the resistance front and the Zionist regime has no fate but destruction."

He emphasized that resistance front in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and the entire region fully supports the Palestinian people in their confrontation with the Israeli regime.

Gaza and other Palestinian territories have been simmering with anger over Israel's land grab policies in occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as well as the regime's desecration of the al-Aqsa Mosque complex, the third holiest site in Islam.

President Urges Attracting Foreign Investment in FTZs



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – President Hassan Rouhani called for plans to attract foreign investment in the country's free trade zones.

In comments at a meeting of the Administration's Economic Coordination Headquarters on Sunday, Rouhani said an economic boom in the free trade zones of Iran would require mechanisms to enhance and attract foreign investment.

He also stressed the need for trust-building programs, creating flexibility for marketing, and continued participation in regional and international markets in order to develop the free trade zones.

The president explained that Iran's successful partnership in the world trade and a boost to the exports need conditions that are compatible with the world trade norms and the regional and international organizations.

Increased motivation for investment in Iran and reduction of the political tensions will contribute to production and exports and help the country's transition from the oil-based and state-run to the generative economy, he added.

In January, Rouhani inaugurated 60 economic and infrastructural projects in six different free trade and industrial zones and special economic zones of Iran.

Japan Envoy Meets Iran Agriculture Minister

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – On Saturday, Ambassador of Japan to Iran met with Kazem Khavazi, Iran's Minister of Jihad-Agriculture.

In this meeting, both sides confirmed the good cooperative relationship between Ministry of Jihad-Agriculture and the Government of Japan as well as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for many years,



and a meaningful exchange of views was held on further cooperation in the field of agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Japan has implemented a number of projects in Iran in areas such as irrigation, human resource development related to rice production, raising farmers' incomes, and promoting the fisheries industry in Chabahar. Efforts are being made to further deepen cooperation in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries fields.

Iran to Use Drive-In COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Tehran Task Force for Combating Coronavirus states that the 'drive-in COVID-19 vaccination' plan is a long-term process because in the future public vaccination will also be implemented as well, but right now the plan includes vaccinating the elderly who are mainly physically disabled.

The first round of the 'drive-in COVID-19 vaccination' plan was aimed at vaccinating the group of 85-year-old and above, and this round includes the age group of 75 and above, added Alireza Zali in an exclusive interview with Iran Press on the sidelines of the 2nd round of the plan implemented at Tehran's Velayat Park.

Regarding Tehran's COVID-19 status, Zali stressed: "Tehran is going through the fourth wave of the disease with mild pace, compared to other cities."

The latest status of hospitalization indicates that hospitalizations are decreasing, he said. "We also had 890 new patients infected with COVID-19 yesterday, 162 of whom were in intensive care units."

The number of outpatients was about 900 people, so Tehran has a relatively better situation than other cities in the country, stated the head of the Tehran Taskforce for Combating Coronavirus.

Zali expressed hope to witness more decline in the coming days.

The method is promisingly helpful to cut down and prevent crowds, he noted.

The drive-in vaccination centers will provide Tehran residents with the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine after registration, and to take the second injection, they would be informed.

The inauguration of the 2nd round of drive-in COVID-19 vaccination center in Velayat Park-Tehran was held on Sunday in the presence of Alireza Zali, the Head of the Tehran Task Force for Combating Coronavirus.

MPs Call for Uprooting Zionists, Americans From Region

TEHRAN (MNA) – "The United States and the Zionist regime are cancerous tumors that need to be uprooted to prevent them from spreading to the entire body of the Islamic world," the Iranian lawmakers said in a statement in support of Palestine.

A total of 25 lawmakers in the Iranian Parliament issued a statement on Sunday to express their support for the Palestinians and the Quds resistance.

The lawmakers said in their statement the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran awakened the Islamic countries and led the Muslim nations to rise up against the Western powers and Global Arrogance's plots against the region.

The statement further described the Zionist and their American allies in the region as "cancerous tumors" against which the Islamic Revolution directed the Muslim nations to uproot them in the region.

It also added that the young generations in the Islamic world, be Sunnis or Shias, from across the region have joined the Resistance Front led by Iran to put an end to the fake and child-killing regime of Israel.

Muslim youth have learned that as long as this disease exists, promoting the culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom against the usurpers and aggressors is the only way to heal the old wounds of the Islamic world and Islam's beloved region of Palestine as Imam Khomeini said, the statement further noted.

The MPs went on to reiterate the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for the Palestinian resistance in line with the guidelines of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei who had said "We support anyone who stands against the Zionist regime."

They concluded their statement by underlining that they will spare no efforts in support of the Resistance's cause, adding that "Through parliamentary relations with other countries, we will try to create a regional and international consensus against the brutal Zionist regime, and free the Holy Quds from the occupation of usurpers and prepare the ground for the emergence of the savior of the world [Imam Mahdi]."

Veteran Politician Akbar Torkan Dies at 69

TEHRAN (IFP) - Akbar Torkan, a former minister of defence and transport and a chief advisor to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, has passed away at the age of 69.

Torkan died in the early hours of Sunday, May 16, 2021, according to his son.

Torkan was a mechanical engineer and politician who served as President Rouhani's chief adviser from 2013 to 2018.

He served as the head of Iran's Construction Engineering Organization from 2014 to 2017. He was also the Minister of Defence and Minister of Roads and Transportation during the eight-year presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

A graduate of Sharif University of Technology, Torkan served as the governor of Hormozgan and Ilam provinces after the revolution in 1979.

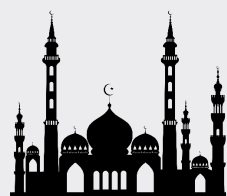
Even though he was a civilian, he served as the head of the Defence Industries Organization during wartime. Torkan was known as one of the "trusted members of Rouhani's inner circle", and for his liberal views on the market economy.



Iran Must Make Most of Neighbors' Potentials

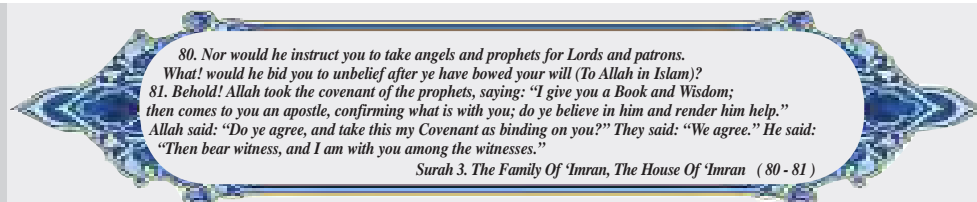
TEHRAN (MNA) – Stressing that the Islamic Republic of Iran does not need JCPOA, an Iranian parliament member added, "Iranian officials need to learn from the past and make the most of the potential of neighboring countries."

"Iranian negotiating team must keep in mind that Westerners never treat us honestly", said Iranian lawmaker Jafar Ghaderi. "We should not be optimistic and hope that they will keep their promises and words", he stressed. Saying the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are seeking any opportunity to create problems and restrictions for us, he said, "In this situation, instead of focusing on reviving JCPOA and negotiating with the West, the government should immediately prepare the strategic document agreements between Iran and China."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:24
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:17
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:56



80. Nor would he instruct you to take angels and prophets for Lords and patrons.
What! would he bid you to unbelief after ye have bowed your will (To Allah in Islam)?
81. Behold! Allah took the covenant of the prophets, saying: "I give you a Book and Wisdom;
then comes to you an apostle, confirming what is with you; do ye believe in him and render him help."
Allah said: "Do ye agree, and take this my Covenant as binding on you?" They said: "We agree." He said:
"Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses."
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (80-81)

Exporters Do Not Happy With Devaluation of National Currency

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran's Export Confederation Mohammad Lahooti rejected some allegations that exporters support devaluation of the national currency against dollar because of their own profits.

Speaking to ILNA, Lahooti said that it is said exporters are happy with the rise in the value of dollar and devaluation of rial in recent days is not true and it is a mere accusation against exporters because exporters seek stability in the forex market and no exporter is happy with the sudden rise in the price of the dollar for his profit.

He added that unfortunately with the rise in the price of dollar in the market, the prices of the goods also soar but when the price of the dollar falls, one can see no fall in the price of the goods.

Lahooti added therefore, if the exporter sells his goods existing in his warehouse with higher prices due to the rise in the price of dollar, he will lose major part of his profits when he wants to provide raw material with higher prices. He noted that so exporters prefer stability in the forex market and they prefer the rise of forex price in accordance with the trend of the inflation and other economic variants, and they want no commanding on fixing the price of the forex.

He added that the artificial reducing the value of the dollar will lead to the fly of capitals and the purchase of the properties in the neighboring countries as well as the rise in smuggling goods into the country because of the cheaper price of the foreign goods.

Lahooti noted that for this reasons any exporter is opposed to the sudden slump of



the forex price and it does not mean he is opposed to the national currency gain value because all wealth and assets of a producer and exporter is in national currency rial and definitely with strengthening the value of the national currency, purchase power of any Iranian will increase.

Reacting to the report of ministry of industry, mine and trade on the 80 percent rise in non-oil exports in the current year, Lahooti said that this rise is in comparison with the same period last year when the borders were closed due to the lockdown and therefore it is natural that we see such a rise but the non-oil exports have not increased so much in comparison to the pre-pandemic era.

He added if the country sees rise in the exports, it is because of the new regulations of the ministry and the central bank over the repatriation of the forex into the country as well as some new incentives.

Lahooti reiterated that sudden regulations will harm exports and stability in the regulations and easing the hurdles are major points for boosting the exports.

He noted that some issues like the FATF as well as the political grounds should be resolved for achieving the dreamy target of \$250b exports.

IMF Enjoys Weekly Growth in Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 631,879 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$400m, showing 2% and 4%



of growth in volume and value of trades respectively.

According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold on its mineral and industrial trading floor 232,884 tons of commodities worth almost \$207m.

On this floor there were 191,824 tons of steel, 6,880 tons of copper, 660 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 33,000 tons of iron ore concentrate, 400 tons of coke and 3kg of gold bars traded.

The next trading floor was the IME's oil and petrochemical with 396,578 tons of commodities sold on it, valued at more than \$193m.

Items traded here were 203,300 tons of vacuum bottom, 64,162 tons of bitumen, 55,680 tons of polymeric products, 28,984 tons of chemicals, 40,500 tons of lube cut, 1,927 tons of base oil, 150 tons of insulation, 500 tons of slop wax, 80 tons of argon and 1,000 tons of sulfur.

Also, on its side market, the IME saw trade of 2,417 tons of various commodities.

Iran Increasing Gas Production at Turkmenistan Border



TEHRAN - Managing Director of Iran's East oil and Gas Production Company (EOGC) has announced the production of 16 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas - 43 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) - in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) in the Khangiran operational region and Shorijeh storing reserves (at areas bordering Turkmenistan).

According to Farshid Kheibari, EOGC's production goals for the mentioned year were realized by 104 percent and even in some days the output exceeded 63 mcm/d, Shana reported.

EOGC was established in December 1998 in line with the policy of decentralizing the management in Iran's oil industry.

The company is operating projects mainly in the east of the country. Currently, it is active in Khorasan Razavi province and is in charge of production from Mozdouran sour gas reservoir as well as Shourijeh B, Shourijeh D, and Gondbadli sweet gas reservoirs in the northeastern city of Sarakhs.

Referring to the need for accelerating the implementation of gas storage development projects as strategic projects in the oil industry, Kheibari also announced the storage of 1.856 bcm of gas in the Shourijeh D reservoir in the previous year.

"Due to the increase in the country's gas consumption and in line with the Oil Ministry programs for providing sustainable gas for domestic and industrial sectors during winter, as well as the need for gas imports, especially in the northeast of the country, last year we managed to store 1.856 billion cubic meters of gas in Shourijeh D in the first eight months of the previous year (March 20-November 20, 2020)," Kheibari explained. "A total of 2.5 billion cubic meters of gas was reproduced during the previous year's cold season, which compared to the same period of the preceding year increased by about 28 percent in terms of storage and 18 percent in terms of reproduction," he added.

Sustainable energy supply in the north and northeast regions which are significantly far from the main centers of gas production in the south of the country and the need to reduce dependence on gas imports has always been one of the main concerns of the Oil Ministry. In this regard, according to NIGC plans, the capacity of the two storage facilities, Sarajeh and Shourijeh, is planned to increase to over seven billion cubic meters in near future.

Global Planemakers on Path to Return to Iran Deals

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's transportation minister Mohammad Eslami says two global planemakers Airbus and Boeing have started works to return to contracts they signed with the country several years ago and before the United States imposed its sanctions on Tehran.

Eslami said in remarks published on Saturday that Airbus and Boeing have been waiting for the results of ongoing talks in Austrian capital Vienna on Iran's nuclear deal as they seek to resume their contractual obligations regarding Iran.

"The plane-manufacturing companies are returning from the previous path and beginning to implement the terms of the contracts," Eslami was quoted as saying by semi-official Tasnim news agency.

Iran had placed orders for purchases of 200 brand new planes from Airbus and Boeing after it signed a nuclear deal with global powers in 2015.



However, the plane contracts came to halt in 2018 after the US Treasury banned the two planemakers from supplying the jets to Iran.

Eslami did not elaborate in his interview with Tasnim what clear steps the two global

planemakers had taken to revive their contracts with Iran. He said that Iranian airlines that are parties to the plane purchase deals had written to Airbus and Boeing to force them to return to the contracts or face legal actions.

"It has been emphasized in these correspondences that the plane-manufacturers should honor their obligations," said the minister, "The companies are waiting for developments in Vienna."

Iran took delivery of only three Airbus planes and 13 short-haul airliners from French jet maker ATR in August 2018 just before the U.S. sanctions were enacted.

Iranian airlines have relied on overhauls and chartered jets to perform their flights over the past years.

Cryptocurrency Mining Using Household Electricity Faces Heavy Fines

TEHRAN (MNA) - Energy Ministry's spokesman for the electricity sector said that those cryptocurrency miners, who use household electricity, will have to pay a heavy fine if identified.

In addition to paying the mentioned fines, those miners must also compensate for the damages they cause to the electricity network, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi added.

This year, electricity supply is facing two issues: reduction in the power generation of hydropower plants due to reduced rainfall and mining cryptocurrency using household electricity.

Unauthorized mining of cryptocurrencies creates problems in supplying electricity due to the damage to the local power grid and transformers, Mashhadi Rajabi noted, adding continued activity of these miners will definitely make the power supply more difficult and there is a possibility of blackouts due to the damage they cause.

Following the Iranian government's approval of cryptocurrency mining as an industrial activity in 2019, numerous companies started mining cryptocurrency across the country thanks to the extremely low-cost electricity, and now Iranian power plants started to see this industry as an opportunity to increase their revenues.

In January 2020, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade issued 1,000 plus licenses for cryptocurrency mining units. With cryptocurrency mining taking a toll on Iran's electricity industry, energy authorities voiced concerns about the enormous pressures exerted by such activities on the electrical grid, so some power plant companies proposed to offer their excess electricity exclusively to the cryptocurrency miners.

Gov't Taking Serious Measures To Manage Water Resources

TEHRAN (MNA) - Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian has said his ministry is taking serious measures for reforming the country's water structure and for managing water resources, IRNA reported.



Speaking in a meeting with water officials from the country's drainage basin regions, Ardakanian said: "Currently, the Ministry of Energy is moving towards the establishment of a governance system with a focus on drainage basin territories."

Mentioning the measures taken by the ministry in this regard, the official added: "very good measures have been taken for reforming the country's water structure in a short period of time and the rest of the way will be passed with determination, responsibility, commitment, and a professional approach."

Touching upon the ministry's program for establishing fixed territories for the country's drainage basins, the official said: "When we have fixed boundaries, the territory of rivers and water resources is clear, and we can move towards a system of governance in such specific regions; we need to move in a direction where we could be able to establish an organization of drainage basins..... this is a method and experience that has been done in the world and works perfectly."

"Some prerequisites are necessary in order to reform the country's water structure, preliminaries such as the implementation of water shortage adaptation plans in the provinces, passing the bill of the comprehensive water law, the integration of urban and rural water and sewage companies, etc.," Ardakanian explained.

Although we need such prerequisites to change the structure, establishing these prerequisites also requires some preparation, he added.

According to Ardakanian, the formation of expert committees in drainage basin regions is one of the most essential steps that must be taken to be able to benefit from the existing capacities of water organizations in those regions.

Home Vacancy Costing Iran Dearly

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An economic expert has defended a new law adopted in Iran that seeks to impose hefty taxes on empty properties as he insists home vacancy is costing the country dearly with nearly \$200 billion worth of assets left outside of the productive cycle of the economy.

Mohammad Reza Yazdizadeh, a tax expert and economic lecturer, said in remarks published on Saturday that taxing empty homes would help the Iranian government attract the financial resources it needs to gradually distance itself from crude export revenues.

"\$200 billion is five times the capital the country needs to become free of selling raw crude oil," said Yazdizadeh, adding that the figure is half what Iran is expected to earn within the next 25 years from an economic partnership deal it recently signed with China.

Speaking to semi-official Mehr news agency, the economist said that his valuation of empty homes in Iran is based on estimates by government agencies and other sources.

He said taxing empty homes would generate enough funds for the government at a time it struggles to diversify the economy and distance itself from traditional sources of revenue.

Iran's law on empty homes was enacted in October after the country's Guardian Council, a body which vets legislation by the parliament, gave it its final approval.

The law is a first in Iran where the number of vacant homes is believed to have reached above 2.5 million.

Experts believe the tax would help improve the renting market in Iran especially in large cities where landlords normally charge exorbitant prices for leasing their properties.

Ethiopia Postpones Elections Indefinitely

ADDIS ABABA (Dispatches) - The head of Ethiopia's election board said Saturday it would be impossible to hold a planned June 5 vote due to mounting logistical issues and postponed it without giving a new date.

"The vote will not happen on June 5 ... we can't tell you the date as the board has to examine the inputs it received from parties," said election board chairwoman Biruktan Mideksa.

She cited a plethora of logistical delays, such as finalising voter registration, training electoral staff, printing and distributing ballot papers.

"Practically, it became impossible to deliver all these at the originally slated dates."



Foreign Fighters Still in Libya in Breach of Ceasefire

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - United Nations chief Antonio Guterres has said foreign fighters and mercenaries remain in Libya in breach of a ceasefire agreement last year, calling for their withdrawal and an end to violations of the UN arms embargo.

In a report to the UN Security Council, Guterres said on Friday the smooth transfer of power in March to a new interim Government of National Unity (GNU) "brings renewed hope for the reunification of the country and its institutions and for a lasting peace". However, he said progress must continue on the political, economic and security tracks to enable elections to go ahead late this year.



Thousands Rally Across Europe to Back Palestinians



LONDON (AFP) - Thousands of protesters marched in support of Palestinians on Saturday in major European cities including London, Berlin, Madrid and Paris, as the worst violence in years raged between Israel and militants in Gaza. In London, several thousand protesters carrying placards reading "Stop Bombing Gaza" and chanting "Free Palestine" converged on Marble Arch, near the British capital's Hyde Park, to march towards the Israeli embassy. Packed crowds stretched all along Kensington's High Street where the embassy is located.

Organizers claimed as many as 100,000 people had gathered for the demonstration though London police said they were unable to confirm any figure. "The group is spread across a large area which makes it impossible to count them," a Metropolitan Police spokesman said.

"Officers are engaging with a group of people who have gathered for a demonstration in central London this afternoon," the police said in a separate statement, adding that a plan was in place to curb the spread of Covid-19.

"This time is different. This time we will not be denied any more. We are united. We have had enough of oppression," Palestinian Ambassador Husam Zomlot told the demonstrators.

"Today we are saying enough, enough with the complicity," he added.

Simon Makepeace, a 61-year-old accountant told AFP he had joined the protests because "the whole world should be doing something about it, including this country".

He was critical of the United States, which he said was unfairly backing Israel, and urged Washington to "make peace and stop what's happening".

Azadeh Pyman, a 50-year-old scientist said she had been raised on the Palestinian cause by her parents and grandparents.

"I'm not Palestinian originally but my heart bleeds for Palestinians," she said. "I think it's the cause that will go from one generation to another generation, until Palestine is free."

In Madrid, some 2,500 people, many of them young people wrapped in Palestinian flags, marched to the Puerta del Sol plaza in the city center. "This is not a war, it's genocide," they chanted. "They are massacring us," said Amira Sheikh-Ali, a 37-year-old of Palestinian origin.

"We're in a situation when the Nakba is continuing in the middle of the 21st century," she said, referring to the "catastrophe", a word used by Palestinians to describe Israel's creation in 1948 when hundreds of thousands fled or were driven out.

"We want to ask Spain and the European authorities not to collaborate with Israel, because with their silence, they are collaborating," said Ikhlal Abousousiane, a 25-year-old nurse of Moroccan origin.

The marches came amid the worst Israeli-Palestinian violence since a 2014 war in Gaza. Thousands marched in Berlin and other German cities following a call by the Samidoun collective.

Chileans Vote for Body to Rewrite Dictatorship-Era Constitution

SANTIAGO (AFP) - Chileans went to the polls Saturday to elect 155 people who will re-write the country's dictatorship-era constitution in a bid to address deep-seated social inequality that gave rise to deadly protests in 2019.

Over two days on Saturday and Sunday, some 14 million people are eligible to vote in what many consider to be Chile's most important election since its return to democracy 31 years ago. "Let the voice of the people be heard today in this historic election," President Sebastian Pinera said on Twitter before casting his ballot.

Chile's constitution dates from 1980, enacted at the height of dictator Augusto Pinochet's 1973-1990 rule, and is widely blamed for blocking equitable progress in a country ranked as one of the most unequal among advanced economies.

This inequality was one of the main drivers of protests that began in October 2019, resulting a month later -- after 36 deaths -- in the government agreeing to a referendum on a new constitution.

That plebiscite, initially scheduled for April 2020 but delayed due to the pandemic, finally took place on October 25 last year.

And the outcome was unequivocal: 80 percent voted for a new constitution to be drawn up by a body made up entirely of elected members. This weekend, more than 1,300 candidates are in the running to become a part of history.

Analysts say the election will be a battle between candidates from leftist parties and rightist ones, with independents not expected to draw any meaningful support.

Parties on the left broadly seek greater state control of mineral and other natural resources -- mostly privatized since the dictatorship -- and more public spending on education, health, pensions and social welfare. Those on the right, with a nod to the need to boost social support, largely defend the capitalist, free market system they thank for Chile's decades of economic growth.

In a world first, half the candidates are women -- by design -- as will be the 155-member drafting group that will have nine months to come up with a new founding law for Chile, which will be approved or rejected next year in a mandatory national vote.

Seventeen seats on the constitution-writing "convention" are reserved for indigenous representatives. Voters will this weekend also elect regional governors, mayors and local councilors -- usually a litmus test for presidential elections, next due in November.



Sadr Mobilizes Thousands at Baghdad Pro-Palestinian Rally

BAGHDAD (AFP) - Thousands of supporters of firebrand Shiite Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr on Saturday rallied in the capital Baghdad to denounce deadly Israeli assaults on Palestinians in the occupied territories.

"Jerusalem is ours. Death to Israel," read signs they held up as they flooded Baghdad's iconic Tahrir Square, holding a huge Palestinian flag above their heads.

"The world is against Palestine but God backs it," read another sign carried by the protesters who also waved the Iraqi flag and held pictures of Sadr.

The rally came as Israel pounded the Gaza Strip on Saturday with air strikes, killing 10 members of an extended family and demolishing a 13-storey building housing international media outlets.

That coincided with clashes in the occupied West Bank as Palestinians marked the Nakba, or "catastrophe" when more than 700,000 of them were expelled or fled from their land during the 1947-1948 conflict surrounding the creation of Israel.

"We stand with the Palestinian people for better or worse," Sadr said in a statement delivered by his Baghdad representative Sheikh Ibrahim al-Jabari.

"Israel is trying, by every means possible, to reconcile with Arabs and Muslims through the normalization of ties with countries who are only guided by economic and financial interests," Sadr's message said.

He was alluding to the US-brokered normalization agreements Israel struck last year with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

Experts said Saturday's rally was a show of force by Sadr supporters ahead of early parliamentary elections expected to take place in October. The vote is a central demand of an anti-government protest movement which erupted in 2019 and involved Sadr's partisans.



Myanmar Army Battles Anti-Coup Rebels

YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's army battled local militia fighters in the northwestern town of Mindat on Saturday, residents said, to try to quell a rebellion that has sprung up to oppose the junta which seized power in the Southeast Asian country in February.

The fighting is some of the heaviest since the coup and underlines the growing chaos as the junta struggles to impose order in the face of daily protests, strikes and sabotage attacks after it overthrew elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"We are running for our lives," one resident told Reuters from Mindat, a hill town just over 100 km (60 miles) from the border with India.

"There are around 20,000 people trapped in town, most of them are kids, old people," the resident added. "My friend's three nieces were hit by shrapnel. They are not even teens."

The junta imposed martial law in Mindat on Thursday and then stepped up attacks on what it called "armed terrorists". A junta spokesman did not answer calls requesting comment on the fighting on Saturday.

Army-controlled Myawaddy television said around 1,000 "unscrupulous people" had attacked with small arms and homemade grenades in recent days, and that some members of the security forces were killed and others missing. It said security forces would work day and night to bring order.

Fighters of the Chinland Defence Force retreated as military reinforcements advanced with artillery bombardments and helicopter attacks, a member of a local administration set up by the junta's opponents told Reuters by phone.

Five civilians had been killed in Mindat in the past two days, said Doctor Sasa, minister of international cooperation in a shadow National Unity Government set up to rival the junta.

"The military's use of weapons of war against civilians, including this week in Mindat, is a further demonstration of the depths the regime will sink to to hold on to power," the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said in a statement. "We call on the military to cease violence against civilians."

Myanmar already had some two dozen ethnic armed groups, who have waged war for decades against an army dominated by the Bamar majority.



Duterte Not to Withdraw Ships From Contested Waters

MANILA (Dispatches) - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has rebuffed a call from China to withdraw vessels from disputed areas of the South China Sea and said he would not bow to pressure, even if it jeopardizes his friendship with Beijing.

The Philippines has boosted its presence in contested areas of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including Thitu island, near to Chinese military installation, in defiance of the months-long presence of hundreds of Chinese boats it believes are manned by militia.

Duterte's remarks in a televised address aired on Friday come as pressure builds on him to abandon his pursuit of close ties with China and stand up to what his defence chiefs say are blatant provocations.

"We have a stand here and I want to state it here and now again that our ships there ... we will not move an inch backward," Duterte said.

China last month said the Philippines must "stop actions complicating the situation and escalating disputes" in response to a rare maritime exercise conducted by the Philippines.

"I do not want a quarrel, I do not want trouble. I respect your position, and you respect mine. But we will not go to war," Duterte said.

"I will not withdraw. Even if you kill me. Our friendship will end here." There was no immediate response to a request for comment from the Chinese embassy in Manila.

Duterte has been criticised for refusing to press China to abide by a 2016 arbitration ruling on the South China Sea that went in Philippines' favour.

He drew flak last week for saying the landmark award was just a "piece of paper" he could throw in the trash. In his televised address, he said he "believes in the entirety" of that ruling.



Shanon
(adviser)

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S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Niavaran Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
yard, & F.F

Parsian

Kamranieh Apt (\$2200)
230sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

Elahieh bldg (\$6000)
4storey, 15bdrs, & pkg lots

Velenjak (\$2500) 300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/pool, S, J, balcony, & F.F

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Background: A cityscape with skyscrapers under a blue sky.

Bitcoin Dips Below \$50,000

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tesla Inc.'s Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk doubled down on his attack on Bitcoin's energy demands, calling recent consumption trends "insane."

Musk posted a chart on Twitter from the University of Cambridge showing Bitcoin's electricity consumption has skyrocketed this year. It's the second day he's criticized crypto mining for using fossil fuels and comes after an announcement

that Tesla would suspend car purchases using Bitcoin.

The turnaround by one of crypto's loudest believers took investors by surprise and sent prices tumbling across the board. Bitcoin plunged 15% at one point to below \$50,000 during Thursday's session. Exchange operator Coinbase Global Inc. sank as much as 5.3% and other tokens including Ether and Dogecoin slumped.



UK Missing Out on Global Trade Upswing Due to Brexit

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain is missing out on the global trade upswing due to its departure from the European Union (EU), new research has shown. Although the UK trade deficit came in at just £2.7bn (\$3.8bn) in the first quarter of the year, much smaller than its £6.6bn average in the 2010s, exports to the EU have fallen sharply.

Pantheon Macro, which conducted the study, said the deficit highlighted the fact that UK exporters have lost market share, rather than the lacklustre EU economy. The value of goods exports to the EU fell to £32.2bn in Q1, down from £39.9bn in the last three months of the year. In contrast, exports to non-EU countries rose to £41.3bn from £40.9bn over the period.

According to Eurostat, the value of imports from the UK in February was 22.5% below its 2020 average, far exceeding the 3.4% shortfall reported by the ONS.

By March, the value of goods exports to the continent had returned to £12.7bn, slightly above last year's £12.1bn average.

However, exports across the globe are booming, and most other countries are exporting more successfully to Europe than Britain. Eurozone imports from countries that are members of the EU, but not the Eurozone, were 13% above their 2020 average in February.

On the same basis, imports from countries under the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) were up 6%.

"Given the similarity between these countries and Britain, it's reasonable to assume that UK exports would have fared similarly well, absent Brexit," Pantheon Macro said.

Exports account for around 30% of UK GDP.

It added: "The main driver of the narrowing of the trade deficit, was a huge fall in imports, from both EU and non-EU countries. This appears to have been linked to the 11.9% quarter-on-quarter decline in business investment in Q1, which was spurred by the lockdown."

Towards the end of last year, many British companies also stockpiled goods from the bloc amid concerns of a no-deal Brexit as London continued to work towards an agreement with Brussels.

As some firms are still sitting on stockpiled goods, imports are likely to revert to average during the second quarter of the year.

Pantheon Macro added that imports from the UK were already falling in 2019, before the outbreak of COVID-19, despite the boost to competitiveness from sterling's weakness. "Businesses in the EU already had begun to re-jig supply chains in anticipation of new trade frictions," it said.

The cost of complying with additional customs checks also plays a part, and rules of origin will continue to make it more attractive for multinationals to relocate production to the EU from the UK.

"We remain particularly concerned that the eventual recovery in services exports, once COVID-19 restrictions on international travel have been lifted, will be constrained by new trade rules." When travel is permitted, Brits may soon have to apply for and pay for a visa if they wish to work and provide services in a member state. In addition, many member states may not recognise British professional qualifications.

Indonesia's Economic Growth Rate Believed to Reach 7%

JAKARTA (ANTARA) - Indonesia's economy is believed to clock a nearly seven-percent growth in the 2021 second quarter following an upward trend in the realization of foreign direct investments and consumer confidence index, a minister stated.

"Our economic growth rate indicates a positive trend. It is expected to reach seven percent," Coordinating Minister for Economy Airlangga Hartarto noted in a press statement that ANTARA quoted in Jakarta on Saturday.

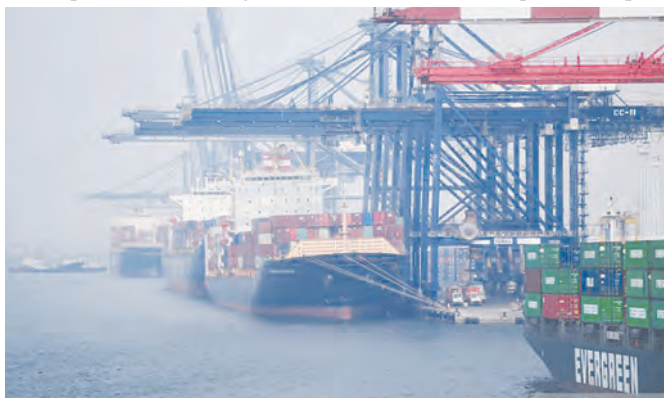
As of March 2021, the realization of foreign direct investments had reached 54.6 percent, while the consumer confidence index of those, with expenses below Rp5 million, was recorded at 90.1, or had inched towards the normal zone of 100, the minister stated.

A positive trend was also apparent in the growth of Indonesia's exports and imports, gross fixed capital formation (GFCF), and the government spending, Hartarto pointed out.

A surge in the prices of commodities, such as palm oil, rubber, nickel, copper, and coal had also bolstered the government's endeavors to facilitate economic recovery.

Hartarto stated that the rising prices of those commodities had helped to improve the economic conditions of several regions during the first quarter of 2021.

A positive trend was observed in the economic conditions in the islands of Sumatra and Java, with growth rates of 0.86 percent and 0.83 percent respectively, the minister pointed out. Similarly, certain parts of eastern Indonesia, such as Sulawesi and Papua, had clocked growth rates of 1.2 and 8.97 percent respectively, Hartarto remarked.



Coronavirus infections initially surfaced in the Chinese city of Wuhan at the end of 2019.

Since then, COVID-19 has spread to over 215 countries and territories, including 34 provinces of Indonesia, with a substantial rise in the number of deaths.

The Indonesian government officially confirmed the country's first cases on March 2 this year.

Since the early phases of this COVID-19 pandemic, which is undeniably recorded as a huge crisis in human history, the Indonesian government is sentient of its wide-ranging impacts on public health and the economy.

Hence, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) has made repeated calls to maintain a balance in pushing the brake and accelerator pedals for ably addressing the public health and economic crises.

Japan Q2 Economic Growth Forecasts Cut Sharply

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's economy is set to grow much slower than previously hoped this quarter, hobbled by extended emergency measures put in place to halt a rise in coronavirus infections, a Reuters poll showed.

It is likely to expand an annualized 1.7% this quarter, less than half the 4.7% projected last month, according to the poll of 33 economists conducted May 6-13.

Nearly all of the economists polled believe the government will compile an extra budget to support the world's third-largest economy, with 60% expecting it to come before the end of the third quarter. A surge in infections due in part to new variants led to the government's decision to extend a state of emergency in Tokyo and three other areas until the end of the month and to expand it to two more prefectures, hitting consumer spending and broader activity.

"The pace of recovery appears to have been sluggish since the start of the year," said Yusuke Shimoda, senior economist at the Japan Research Institute.

"But it's hard to imagine Japan's economy will fall into a deep contraction as attempts to suppress people's movements have become less effective." The economy likely shrank around 4.5% on an annualized basis in the first quarter, the poll showed. Preliminary GDP data is due on Tuesday.

For the full year, expectations have been revised down to a 3.6% growth from 3.9%, with economists also noting the slow pace of Japan's vaccination program compared to other countries. For the next fiscal year, economists expect on average 2.4% growth.

"The vaccine rollout is pretty awful if you look at it from a global context. It's far behind that in Europe," said Takumi Tsunoda, senior economist at Shinkin Central Bank Research Institute.

Japan has inoculated just 3% of its population, the lowest rate among the Group of Seven nations. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has faced growing calls from lawmakers, including ruling party

heavyweight Toshihiro Nikai, to increase spending to support the economy. But he has so far expressed caution due to Japan's huge public debt and as the government has already compiled three pandemic-specific packages worth a combined \$3 trillion.

Projections for the size of the economic package showed 12 economists expect it to range between 5 trillion yen to 10 trillion yen (\$45 billion - \$90 billion), 11 expect a package of 10-20 trillion yen while nine forecast 5 trillion yen or less. Some economists said the timing of the extra budget would depend on the timing of a lower house election that has to be held by late October. In years with major elections, Japan's government typically rolls out a stimulus package before or around the election to appeal to voters.

Eighty percent of analysts in the poll expected the Bank of Japan's next policy move to be an unwinding of stimulus with most not expecting this to happen until 2023 or later. That was roughly on par with last month's poll.

Pakistan Economic Growth Projected to Be 3%

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's economic growth rate is expected to be three percent this fiscal year, said Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Dr. Reza Baqir.

Governor SBP Dr. Reza Baqir said that the economy is moving in the right direction, and will perform better in the years to come, next fiscal year the economy will grow by four percent.

Talking to Khaleej Times, the governor said that despite the challenging environment of the world, Pakistan's economy has the potential to move forward. SBP Governor said that Pakistan's economy has the potential to grow at a high rate.

He said that despite coronavirus pandemic, economic indicators are strong this year.

"We have strong economic indicators this year despite the Covid-19 pandemic challenges and this is a good omen for the economy. The government ensures more than Rs2 trillion stimulus to steer the economy out of Covid crisis by supporting the businesses through much-needed liquidity and funds distribution at grass root level," Dr Baqir said. Baqir informed that the central bank offered Rs450 billion liquidity under its Temporary Economic Refinance Facility (TERF) to the private sector to absorb the coronavirus shock, while another Rs240 billion was provided as working capital to avoid layoffs and job losses.

"The central bank also offered a Rs900 billion cushion to banks to ensure relief to distress businesses in deferment and restructuring of principal payment and mark-up charges. These are some of the measures which helped the economy to bounce back quickly to meet global demand after the lockdown period," Dr Baqir said.

German Minister Expects 4% Post-COVID Growth

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German economy will grow between 3 and 4% this year as coronavirus restrictions are lifted, the country's economy minister said.

"By 2022, Germany will have recovered its old strength," Peter Altmaier predicted in comments to German tabloid Bild on Saturday.

It is a positive forecast for Europe's largest economy that shrank by almost 5% last year as entire sectors were put on hold amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Altmaier's comments come as nationwide, the number of infections per 100,000 inhabitants over seven days fell to 87.3 on Saturday — 100 infections per 100,000 is the level at which German states can begin removing certain restrictions.

"Our measures are taking effect, millions of people have been vaccinated, the infection numbers are dropping, the dynamic of the pandemic has been broken. That is why more and more regions are beginning to open. Step by step we are returning to normality," Altmaier told Bild.

He said he was hopeful that summer vacations could go ahead in Germany and Europe "if we are careful."

He added as vaccinated and recovered people got their rights back, "the light at the end of the long coronavirus tunnel has been reached."

Altmaier remained cautious, saying that: "decisions still need to be made about when all sectors can re-open."

While he praised Germany's economic stimulus package, he said some hard-hit sectors would need to see an extension of state aid.

The German government has generally been less optimistic than other forecasters, such as research institutes. In mid-April, several think tanks — including the prestigious Ifo institute — forecast a common growth prediction of 3.7%.

On May 19, restaurants, hotels, theaters, and sport facilities are set to reopen, admitting visitors who show proof of a negative COVID test. These reopening plans will coincide with the elimination of quarantine rules for arriving tourists, enabling vaccinated and tested visitors to enter the country, as well as those who have recovered from COVID-19.

Their predictions were based on the likelihood that mass inoculations could accelerate a return to normality.

Ifo said that business morale had improved only slightly in April. While this was partly attributable to coronavirus, the institute said, it was also because of a semiconductor shortage that has dogged the motor vehicle industry.

Spain Seeks Enriched Economic Links With Kazakhstan



NUR-SULTAN (EFE) - Spain's No. 2 diplomat called here Friday for a deepening of economic ties between her country and Kazakhstan, pointing to the potential of boosting Spanish exports to the Central Asian nation in areas such as agriculture, renewable energies and infrastructure.

"Spain is a country that imports many goods from this country and is a good customer of Kazakhstan, and now is the time to balance this relationship and work for more Spanish investment here and for more balanced trade between the two countries," Spanish Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Cristina Gálach told Efe in Nur-Sultan.

Amid the economic disruptions caused by Covid-19, bilateral trade plunged nearly 41 percent last year to \$1.4 billion and Kazakh exports to Spain accounted for \$1.2 billion of that total. "And that is why we are looking at new sectors in the economy that are going to take on an even greater role after the pandemic," Gálach said at the start of a two-day visit to Kazakhstan.

For many years, she said, Spain and Kazakhstan have had "a very deep strategic relationship" with a strong economic dimension, as reflected by the presence here of major Spanish companies including Talgo, Airbus Defence & Space, Indra, Inditex, Maxam and Glovo.

"What we think is that with the halt because of the pandemic in terms of travel and a certain slowdown in the development of this relationship, the time has come to deepen and to revitalize it," Gálach said.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerlan Alimbayev, Gálach said that the two countries are ready "for a deeper economic, trade and investment relationship."

The secretary pointed to the export of food and agricultural products, "where Spain is a pioneer and has an excellent competitive position," as well as to her country's strengths in the areas of renewable energy and infrastructure.

Gov't Lifts Steel Ingots Export Ban

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced a list of production units allowed to export steel ingots, billets, blooms, and slabs.

The Director-General of the Mining sector of the Ministry of Industry sent a letter to the Director-General of the Export and Import Regulation Department, to announce the list of units allowed to export steel ingots (billets, bloom, and slabs), Trend reports citing Fars News Agency. Accordingly, these units have registered information in the Mercantile Exchange and have offered their products, which will be sent to the customs.



APEC Members Urged to Embrace Inclusive Growth

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is calling on Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation member economies to explore new rules to advance inclusive growth in the Asia-Pacific region and the world, a senior government official said.

APEC needs to accelerate regional integration, so that growth can benefit all groups. It is crucial to further liberalize and facilitate trade and investment, with the vision of achieving a regionwide free-trade agreement, said Wang Shouwen, vice-minister of commerce.

Wang said that China supports the formulation of an action plan for the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 that would set out specific programs for inclusive growth.

The vision identified inclusive growth as one of the three economic drivers for the next two decades. More opportunities will emerge for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and women to contribute to and benefit from economic growth, further tapping into the region's growth potential, he said.

Wang made the remarks at a seminar in Tianjin on advancing economic inclusion through trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region.

Rodrigo Yanez Benitez, vice-minister for trade of Chile's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has made the challenges of inclusive growth more urgent than ever.

"We need to direct our efforts to promoting inclusive trade policies that can enable a swift and sustainable economic recovery, and to mitigate these effects so that the pandemic does not limit entrepreneurship, innovation and women's economic empowerment, among many others," he said.

As the global economy still faces many uncertainties such as unilateralism, the Chilean official urged APEC members to remain true to their fundamental belief that regional cooperation, open markets, integration, innovation and inclusive, secure and sustainable growth are key for regional development.

With many APEC countries taking fresh measures to deal with the impact of the pandemic, Liu Chenyang, director of the APEC Study Center of China at Nankai University in Tianjin, said it would be practical for APEC economies to advance the digital economy, and make it a new driver for inclusive growth in the coming years.

He said it is vital for developing economies to tackle the digital divide and unlock the innovative force of the digital economy and e-commerce in introducing women and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises into the global value chain.

China has already ratified the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and will favorably consider joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, said Wang from the Ministry of Commerce.

"As the two major pathways leading to the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific, the



RCEP and the CPTPP have both made substantial progress. China encourages APEC members to work together to make progress in the FTAAP, to benefit people in our region," he added.

Business leaders said China's signing of the RCEP and interest in the CPTPP offer great opportunities for international companies to expand their presence in China and its partner economies.

China's CPTPP entry would support the growth of "interregional trade, cross-border e-commerce and related industries", and create a more stable and open investment environment for global companies investing in the Asia-Pacific region, said Johnny Chou, chairman and CEO of Best Inc, an integrated supply chain and logistics services provider in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

The Chinese company has already benefited from growing business transactions in the APEC region. Supported by more than 5,000 overseas employees, it has established service branches in Japan and Australia, and logistics network in five countries, including Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia.

"We are encouraged to see more global collaboration and improved business ties between China and other parts of the world," said Farrell Wang, managing director of Consumer Health at Johnson & Johnson China, a United States-based pharmaceutical company.

Muslims Need to...

FROM PAGE 1

The world community and especially Muslims should come to the rescue of the Palestinian people who are losing their lives by the Israeli air attacks. Any passivity will lead to more crimes in Palestine. Unfortunately world powers have been passive in stopping



Israel from such a crime and they just, in their telephone calls with Israeli officials, call for self-restraint while the Zionists are themselves the culprit of the crime and they should be accounted for recent conflict in the region which has led to the loss of at least 150 Palestinians.

Bagheri Kani in his statement and referring to his meeting with the Syrian envoy, said, "Today, the coalition of resistance is stronger and the Zionist regime is weaker than ever, I told in a meeting with the Syrian envoy."

Referring to the stray Syrian missiles hit near the most sensitive Zionist center (Dimona), Bagheri Kani said that the Zionists know that if the Resistance uses guided missiles the situation would be worse.

According to Bagheri Kani the only way to stop the Zionists is the language of force and Muslims' unity and no one can stop the Zionists through dialogue unless the Zionists feel the serious threat of Palestinians and Muslims' firm reactions.

Muslim states should put aside their fear and passivity and take a practical action for saving the Palestinians and for the liberation of occupied lands from the Zionists' claws, otherwise these atrocities will never end and Israeli forces can continue their crimes under the world arrogance support whenever they wish.

Now Muslims are seeing the true animal nature of Zionists and will realize how bad and dangerous the normalization of ties with Israel has been for the region.

The Islamic Republic has supported and will continue support for the Palestinian people and their resistance in the face of relentless acts of aggression and crimes by the Zionist enemy in the Holy Quds and the Gaza Strip and other Muslim states should join the Iran's camp in supporting the Palestinians.

Zarif Calls for...

FROM PAGE 1

We are facing blatant and systematic violations of human rights, humanitarian law and international law.

The massacre of Palestinian children today follows the purported "normalization." This criminal and genocidal regime has once again proven that friendly gestures only aggravate its atrocities. The sole aim of Israel's hypocritical gestures is to divide Muslims and isolate the people of Palestine. Make no mistake: Israel only understands the language of resistance and the people of Palestine are fully entitled to the right to defend themselves and to defy the bullying of this racist regime.

These barbaric acts have proven once again that the only peaceful path to peace in Palestine is the holding of a referendum among all residents of Palestine, including displaced Palestinians and refugees.

It must not be forgotten that Palestine is not only an Arab or Islamic issue, but also an international dilemma. The crimes committed against the innocent Palestinian people over decades weigh heavy on the conscience of humanity. The international community therefore has a duty to condemn the Israeli regime in the strongest terms and compel it to end the destruction and siege of Gaza.

We should continue to work actively in the United Nations to urgently convene an emergency session of the General Assembly to address this issue.

Moreover, the abhorrent approach of some Western governments in equating victims and culprits compels us to look at our shortcomings in pressing our common cause.

We should devise an "institutionalized" legal and political campaign against this apartheid Zionist regime at regional and international levels.

A professional international watchdog should be established to monitor and report on the crimes perpetrated against Palestinian people. These crimes must be documented and reported with the aim of bringing culprits to justice. We should also pass domestic legislation and a resolution by this organization recognizing that Israel is an apartheid regime.

Furthermore, the criminal acts of Israel should be recognized as genocide and crimes against humanity by both domestic legislation and OIC resolutions.

And, member-states should extend the jurisdiction of their national tribunals to include the prosecution of criminals perpetrating war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in the Palestinian occupied territories.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as always, extends its hand of friendship to all of you. We are prepared to set aside all differences and unite in defending the rights of the people of Palestine by resorting to every legitimate political and legal tool.

Thank you."

WB Extends \$80.5m to Sri Lanka for COVID-19 Vaccination Drive



COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The World Bank on Friday extended \$80.5m to Sri Lanka for its COVID-19 vaccination drive.

"This useful and timely resource will help us ensure equitable vaccine deployment among the eligible populations of Sri Lanka," said Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi, after the agreement was signed with the global financial body.

World Bank, Country Director of Sri Lanka, Faris Hadad-Zervos said: "The World Bank remains responsive to the health priorities of Sri Lanka as well as emergency needs. Effective deployment of the vaccines will help Sri Lanka protect people, build human capital and facilitate inclusive economic recovery."

Sri Lanka has so far inoculated 1.1 million people with the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, of whom 244,000 people have been given the second dose.

The vaccination programme was rolled out in late January after India gifted 500,000 doses of the AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine.

State Minister Sudarshani Fernandopulle said the country was short of approximately 600,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine to complete the second dose.

Sri Lanka has opted for other vaccines due to the delay in AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine from Serum Institute of India.

Fernandopulle said the government had ordered 13 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine from Russia and signed an agreement with pharmaceutical giant Pfizer for 5 million doses of its vaccine.

The Chinese Sinopharm vaccine is currently being administered with 600,000 doses.

Sri Lanka has recorded a spike in the number of people infected with the coronavirus after the health guidelines were disregarded during the Sinhala and Tamil New Year last month.

All public events have been stopped until May 20 as no gatherings are allowed.

The government and authorities have come under increasing fire for failure to order a lockdown to contain the spread of the virus.

"People are dying because of the government's arrogance," said Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya has demanded the government to stop infrastructure projects and diverts funds to check the pandemic.

Turkish Economy Likely Left Robust Q1 Behind

ANKARA (Dispatches) - A notable first quarter, shouldered by stronger than expected activity indicators despite the nationwide coronavirus lockdown and the fiscal tightening in recent months, could provide strength for the Turkish economy going forward, according to analysts and surveys.

The current second quarter is expected to come in even stronger as the country is forecast to log double-digit growth, mostly due to a so-called base effect.

In 2021 as a whole, exports could be the driver and help growth to return to around 5% in a strong rebound from the fallout of the pandemic, according to the government and analysts.

Yet, challenges remain, economists warn. Inflation remains high and much could depend on how the pandemic will affect tourism, a critical sector of the Turkish economy, as the country is preparing to emerge from the 2 1/2-week long lockdown just ahead of the summer season.

Data due later this month will likely show the country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by up to 6%.

This prospect was further signaled by robust activity indices, particularly the reading on Tuesday that showed that the nation's industrial output jumped 16.6% year-on-year in March, far exceeding forecasts.

In the first quarter of 2021, industrial production grew 12.3% year-on-year, the data also showed.

It reflected the ongoing rebound despite renewed pandemic measures. Industrial production for the most part was exempt from the renewed measures, which included lockdowns, and thus was not noticeably affected.

The GDP grew by 6.4% in January, 6.6% in February and 6.5% in March year-on-year, according to a monthly model by BBVA Research.

Just before the reading was published, the rest of the indicators pointed to a growth of around 5.5% in the first quarter, Alvaro Ortiz Vidal, head of Big Data Research and chief economist for Turkey at BBVA Research, told Daily Sabah.

Treasury and Finance Minister Lütfi Elvan on May 6 said the growth in the January-March period could come at a 5.5%-6% rate, stressing the strong performance of exports and industry.

Elvan particularly stressed the activity rebound in the industrial sector, even suggesting that output and trade were in a better state than during the pre-pandemic period.

The headline Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector rose to 52.6 in March from 51.7 a month earlier but was lower compared to 54.5 in January, according to data from the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO) and IHS Markit.

Nonetheless, the reading has managed to stay above the 50 mark that denotes growth.

Iran to Continue...

FROM PAGE 1

"After the bombing of the civilian tower in Gaza, residents of Tel Aviv and the center must be on standby," Abu Ubaida, a spokesman for the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, said.

During the phone call, the IRGC commander hailed the unique and successful performance of the resistance front in its confrontation with the Zionist regime and its defense for the Palestinian people.

Qaani strongly condemned the brutal crimes of the usurping Zionists against the Palestinians, particularly in Gaza and Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem al-Quds.

Haniyah, for his part, pointed to the Israeli regime's crimes in Gaza and the Holy Quds and the savage killing of Palestinian women and children and emphasized that the fight in Jerusalem al-Quds is the fight of all the Palestinian people. He also lauded the Islamic Republic's stance on the need to support the Palestinian people.

Iraq Intends to...

FROM PAGE 1

Al-Shammari also clarified that the contract is exclusively within the purview of the Ministry of Defense, and through the Ministry of Equipping and Armament Department, and that the state will monitor all the contracts that it will enter into.

Citing Iraqi parliamentarians, US media had reported that the Iraqi government was considering moving forward with discussing the purchase of Russian "S-400" air defense systems, but the US State Department announced that it might impose sanctions on it if it decided to buy the Russian systems.

Last year, Moscow had repeatedly affirmed its willingness to meet Iraq's requests with regard to armament and military cooperation.

It is noteworthy that Iraq has been trying to purchase Russian air defense systems since 2017, but the threat to impose economic sanctions by the United States is reportedly what impedes the negotiations.

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Ibrahimovic out of Euro 2020 With Knee Injury

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden international Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been ruled out of Euro 2020 with a knee injury, the Swedish Football Association confirmed on Saturday.

Ibrahimovic sprained his left knee a week ago playing for Italian club side AC Milan who revealed earlier Saturday that medical experts recommended "conservative treatment for six weeks".

Lafay Wins Giro d'Italia Stage Eight

ROME (Dispatches) - Frenchman Victor Lafay of Cofidis won stage eight of the Giro d'Italia on Saturday as Hungarian Attila Valter of Groupama-FDJ kept hold of the overall race lead.

The chief contenders for the 21-stage race, Egan Bernal and Remco Evenepoel, finished together on the eve of a major mountain-top finish Sunday when a shake up is expected.

Lafay bagged his first professional win and a first for Cofidis at the Giro in 11 years after joining a long range escape group of nine riders.

Nadal Brushes Past Opelka Into 12th Rome Final

ROME (Dispatches) - Nine-time champion Rafael Nadal advanced to the Italian Open final for the 12th time on Saturday with a 6-4, 6-4 win over American Reilly Opelka. The Spaniard will play either defending champion Novak Djokovic or Italian Lorenzo Sonego in what will also be his 52nd Masters final.

Playing his 500th clay-court match, Nadal staved off break points in the fourth game of the first set and did not look back to win through in 1hr 32min.

"It's important for my confidence to be back in a final," said Nadal, who exited early in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

"I did what I had to do today, it was not an easy or beautiful match to play. "The work is done," he added.

Two weeks before Roland Garros, Nadal had a tough run to the semi-finals, saving two match points in a 3hr 30min third round battle with Canadian Denis Shapovalov.

But the 34-year-old was rarely troubled by the towering American, who was playing his first Masters semi-final.

Nadal blasted down 11 aces and did not drop serve against a player who had not dropped a set all week.

A break in either set, Opelka's first dropped this week, put the second seed through to a possible fifth final meeting in Rome against five-time winner Djokovic.

Nadal is looking to equal Djokovic's record of 36 ATP Masters 1000 titles on Sunday.

He is also attempting to win 10 or more titles at a single event for the fourth time, after Roland Garros (13), Barcelona (12) and Monte Carlo (11).

Poland's Iga Swiatek ousted fifth seed Elina Svitolina to advance to the Italian Open semi-finals on Saturday.

The reigning French Open champion won 6-2, 7-5 in 1hr 36min against the Ukrainian in the match which had been pushed back from Friday because of rain in Rome.

Swiatek, the 15th seed, will play American



teenager Coco Gauff later for a place in Sunday's final.

Gauff, 17, advanced on Friday to her first clay-court semi-final after world number one Ashleigh Barty retired injured while leading their last eight clash 6-4, 2-1.

The Australian suffered from a recurring right arm issue and chose against taking any risks before the French Open, which she won in 2019, starting on May 30.

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BERLIN (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring Bayern Munich's sixth goal in the 8-2 thrashing of Barcelona in Lisbon last August. Robert Lewandowski, dubbed a "machine" by his wife, has added the Bundesliga record for most goals in a season to the long list of major honors and achievements he has claimed in his illustrious career.

Gerd Mueller's mark of 40 goals in a campaign, set in the 1971/72 season, had withstood the test of time until Lewandowski converted a first-half penalty for Bayern Munich at Freiburg on Saturday.

While Mueller set his record over 34 league games, Lewandowski has scored his 40 goals in 28 matches, due to a knee injury last month and squad rotation.

Lewandowski has scored five Bundesliga hat-tricks this term, including a four-goal haul in a 4-3 win over Hertha Berlin in October.

"I have to be honest, I am astonished. I thought Mueller's record would last for forever," Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said last weekend, after Lewandowski's treble against Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Federer Calls for End to Tokyo Games Uncertainty

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tennis great Roger Federer has called on Olympics organizers to end the uncertainty around the Tokyo Games, with the 20-times Grand Slam winner saying he was still in two minds whether to compete.

The Olympics are set to run from July 23 to Aug. 8 after being postponed in March last year over the coronavirus pandemic.

But Japan, battling a surge of infections, has extended until the end of May a state of emergency in its capital, Tokyo, and three areas.

"Honestly I don't know what to think. I'm a bit between the two," Federer, who won a doubles gold in the 2008 Beijing Games and a silver in singles four years later in London, told Swiss television station Leman Bleu on Friday.

"I would love to play in the Olympics, win a medal for Switzerland. It would make me especially proud. But if it doesn't happen because of the situation, I would be the first to understand.

"I think what the athletes need is a decision: is it going to happen or is it not going to happen?"

"At the moment, we have the impression that it will happen. We know it's a fluid situation. And you can also decide as an athlete if you want to go. If you feel there's a lot of resistance, maybe it's better not to go. I don't know."

Koeman Angered By Criticism

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Ronald Koeman raised a passionate defence of the job he has done as Barcelona coach on Saturday, amid speculation the Dutchman will not be in charge next season.

Koeman confirmed he met with the club's president Joan Laporta this week but was unable to say he was given assurances about his future.

"I cannot explain very much," said Koeman in a press conference. "We have spoken about Barca, the team, the season, the last few results and we agreed to speak again at the end of the season."

Zidane Casts Doubt Over Future as Real Madrid Coach



As a player, he initially announced his retirement from international football in 2004 before coming back for the 2006 World Cup, after which he retired for good.

"You talk about me leaving in 2006 and 2018 and it's like you think I leave because I'm shirking

MADRID (Dispatches) - Zinedine Zidane hinted on Saturday he could leave as coach of Real Madrid at the end of the season, saying he believes "there comes a time when it's the moment to change".

Zidane's contract expires in 2022 but he has repeatedly refused to confirm he will still be at the club next season.

The Frenchman has a history of surprises after resigning as coach unexpectedly in 2018 before making a shock return a year later.

responsibility or that I quit when things get tough," said Zidane in a press conference.

"It's not, the only thing about me is that what I do, I do to the end, and then there comes a time when it's the moment to change. For everyone, not just for me. For the club, for the good of the club, for the people.

"I don't leave because it's easy. It's not like I turn away and don't look back. No, there are moments when you have to be there and there are moments when that's it, it's finished, it's time to change. But for the good of everyone, not just for me."

Zidane spoke warmly about his players, describing his relationship with them as one of "total respect" while adding their time together is "something that will be there forever".

When it was put to him that it felt like he was saying goodbye, Zidane said: "I can only say the same thing. I don't know what will happen. I'm here now, yes, and tomorrow we are going to play. Then we will have one match left.

"The rest, I don't know what will happen. This is Real Madrid. I don't know if it's a strength but I am always about the day to day. It's always been like this."

Leicester Win First Ever FA Cup

LONDON (Dispatches) - Youri Tielemans produced one of the great FA Cup final goals to give Leicester City the trophy the first time in their history with victory over Chelsea at Wembley.

The Belgian settled a closely contested encounter with a spectacular right-foot drive that flew beyond Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga into the top corner from 25 yards in the 63rd minute. It sent manager Brendan Rodgers down the touchline in celebration although Leicester City's fans - inside Wembley as 21,000 supporters formed the biggest attendance since lockdown - had to survive a nerve-jangling closing phase before they could celebrate the win in their first final since 1969.

The Foxes were indebted to two crucial saves from keeper Kasper Schmeichel, who turned former Leicester defender Ben Chilwell's header on to a post then produced an even better stop to turn Mason Mount's powerful shot wide.

And in a final act of drama, Chilwell thought he had equalised in a last-minute goalmouth scramble before it was ruled out by the barest of margins following the intervention of VAR.

Leicester closed out the win to spark emotional scenes as those inside Wembley rejoiced in a landmark victory.

Foxes boss Rodgers had a smile that illuminated Wembley as he joined Leicester City's players in joyous scenes of celebration after the manager and his players had written their name into the club's folklore. Tielemans, the gifted 24-year-old, will claim the glory for the sheer quality of the strike that won this FA Cup final and the rest of his performance oozed the quality that saw him named man of the match.



Late Cuadrado Penalty Helps Juventus To Defeat Inter

TURIN (Dispatches) - Juan Cuadrado scored a late penalty to keep Juventus' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League alive with a dramatic victory over Inter Milan after playing with 10 men for 35 minutes.

The referee awarded two first-half penalties following VAR reviews, before sending off Juve's Rodrigo Bentancur and Inter's Marcelo Brozovic later.

Giorgio Chiellini's own goal to take it to 2-2 was also reviewed by VAR, before Cuadrado won and scored a penalty to put Juve two points above Napoli in Serie A.

Fifth-placed Napoli travel to Fiorentina on Sunday (11:30 BST) and can regain fourth place going into the final matchweek. Cristiano Ronaldo opened the scoring from the spot for Juve, whose league crown was taken off them by Inter this month.

Romelu Lukaku made it 1-1 at the other end with another penalty before Cuadrado's thumping strike deflected in for Juve's second just before the break.

Bentancur's second yellow card meant Juve went down to 10 men and manager Andrea Pirlo brought off star man Ronaldo with over 20 minutes to play.

Chiellini thought he was tugged by Lukaku as he poked in an own goal to make it 2-2 but the referee showed him a yellow card for holding the Belgian following a VAR review.

Just as Juve thought their Champions League qualification hopes had taken a huge blow, Ivan Perisic was deemed to have clipped Cuadrado in the box. The Colombian stepped up to score the winning penalty before Inter's Brozovic was shown a second yellow for a late challenge on the match-winner.

Champions League qualification remains out of Juventus' hands and their final game of the season is against Bologna on Sunday, 23 May.

