

**Health Ministry Announced
On Tuesday That the Number of
Deaths From the Coronavirus
In Iran Exceeded 77,532 With
310 More Iranians Who Died From
The Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

IRAN NEWS

**Secretary General of World Forum
For Proximity of Islamic Schools
Of Thought Hamid Shahriari Said
The Missiles Shot by Palestine
Against Zionists' Settlements are
The Least Response to 70 Years of
Israeli Crimes**

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Palestinian Resistance Groups Hail Ayatollah Khamenei for His Support

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Several Palestinian resistance groups have written separate letters to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, thanking him for his firm stances on supporting the cause of Palestine, which were expressed in the Leader's speech on the occasion of International Quds Day.

In their letters and messages on Monday, five Palestinian resistance groups and movements lauded the position taken by the Islamic Republic and Ayatollah Khamenei on supporting the resistance of the Palestinian people and rejecting the recognition of the Zionist regime. The groups stressed their resolve to continue anti-Israel resistance until the final freedom of Jerusalem al-Quds, noting that statements made by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution during his Quds Day speech delineate the roadmap to the liberation of Palestine.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Fatah al-Intifada group, Palestinian Popular Struggle Front and the Palestinian Forces Coalition commended the role of Iran as the axis of unity and resistance among Muslim countries.

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Zionists Committing Crime Against Humanity in Gaza

VIENNA (IP) - Speaking at the 30th session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran to international organizations in Vienna, strongly condemned the recent attacks of the Zionist regime on Palestinian people.

Iranian representative to International Organizations in Vienna, Kazem Gharibabadi said: "The determination of the international community to eradicate terrorism in all its forms, especially at this time when we are witnessing horrific terrorist attacks against government officials and scientists, especially General Ghasem Soleimani as the flag bearer in the fight against terrorism, and martyr Fakhri Zadeh, a nuclear and defense scientist, is a vital necessity."

Gharibabadi added: "Today, we are once again witnessing the horrific terrorist acts of the Israeli regime against innocent Palestinians, especially women and children, including in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli regime's policies and actions against terrorism, including its widespread and systematic attack on the Palestinian civilians, which is a serious violation of fundamental human rights as well as the principles of the UN Charter, are a crime against humanity and a serious threat to peace and international security."

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Iran Non-Oil Export Hits 46% Growth



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN (MNA) - President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said that the country exported \$5.6 billion worth of non-oil goods and commodities to foreign countries from March 21 to May 15, 2021.

Speaking at 23rd meeting of Representatives Board of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) on Tue., Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi said that Islamic Republic of Iran imported 4.5 million tons of products, valued at \$5.6 billion, since the beginning of the current year (started March 21) up to May 15, showing a 28 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Some 15.5 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$5.6 billion, was exported from the country from March 21 to May 15, 2021, registering a 46 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year, Mir-Ashrafi reiterated.

According to the statistics, totally 145.7 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$73 billion, were exported and imported from/to the country last year (from March 21, 2020 to March 20, 2021), IRICA president added.

He went on to say that 10,343,000 tons of commodities, valued at \$5.762 billion, were exchanged between Iran and its trader partner in the first Iranian month of Farvardin in the current year (from March 21 to April 20), showing a 32 and 62.5 percent hike both in terms of weight and value respectively.

Electricity Projects Worth \$80m Open in 3 Provinces

TEHRAN (MNA) - Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian inaugurated 10 electricity projects worth 3.36 trillion rials (\$80 million) in 10 provinces on Tuesday, in the seventh week of the ministry's A-B-Iran program in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

The said projects were put into operation in Fars, Kerman, and Kermanshah provinces through video conference, IRIB reported.

Two solar power plants, some substations, and improvement and development of electricity network facilities were among the inaugurated projects.

Speaking at the event, Ardakanian said the government plans to inaugurate 290 water, electricity, and sewage projects by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2021).

"Since the beginning of the 1400 year (March 20, 2021), 35 projects worth 8000 billion Tomans have been put into operation so far, and we hope that these projects will be completed by the end of the year," he added.

These projects include 4 reservoir dams, several thermal and renewable power plants, treatment plants, and water supply projects to rural areas.

He said the private sector had played an important role in investing in these projects.

Of the projects, four belong to Kerman province, three projects to Kermanshah province, and three projects to Fars province.

In Kerman province, four electricity projects worth 170 billion Tomans, and two solar power plants with an investment of 15 billion Tomans, including the 132 kV substation in Rigan County, were inaugurated.

Also, three electricity projects in Fars province with a credit of 130 billion Tomans were put into operation.

Another three projects were inaugurated in Kermanshah province with a credit of 36 billion Tomans, which will add 450 MW to the country's electricity network.

The first phase of the A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 20, 2020).

During the first phase, 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials were put into operation across the country.

In the second phase of the program that was carried out in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), 250 water and energy projects worth 500 trillion rials were inaugurated.

The third phase of the program was officially started in early April and like the previous phases, the Energy Ministry is planning to inaugurate numerous water and electricity projects in various provinces every week.



ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Can You Believe the U.S. Really Leaving Afghanistan?

In the news and among the reports, every day we hear that the U.S. is determined to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and at the same time the U.S. statesmen warn against the violence and insecurity in this Asian country but can anyone believe the U.S. troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan?

If we turn the pages of the history book and have a look at the history of the U.S. performance in other countries, we notice this point that Americans will not leave any country unless they strengthen their position there either by bringing a pro-West government into power or Americanizing the people in that country. So political analysts are skeptical on the U.S. decision on leaving Afghanistan.

The U.S. statesmen claim that the U.S. and Western troops withdrawal from Afghanistan will lead to violence and clashes in the country and to prove their claim, they point to the recent blasts in the country.

The United States has vowed several times, under various different presidents, that it would soon end the war on Afghanistan. However, a full withdrawal of American troops has never materialized. Do you think this time it will happen? Political analysts cast their doubts and believe this time it will not also happen.

Now this time President Joe Biden is pledging again that the country is set to end its longest war in history by September the 11th. He has claimed, "I'm now the fourth, United States president to preside over American troop presence in Afghanistan, two Republicans, two Democrats. I will not pass this responsibility onto a fifth. The Afghans have the right and responsibility to lead their country. And that more and endless American military force could not create or sustain a durable Afghan government."

But this is not the first time that Biden is making such a promise. And since former President George W. Bush launched the war, back in 2001, all American leaders have announced a soon-to-happen full withdrawal.

The Afghans, like other nations in the region, have been suffering the consequences and impact of the brutal U.S. presence for almost two decades now. Despite the Americans' claim of bringing security and peace, the Americans have not fulfilled their responsibility to Afghanistan, their responsibilities to ensure a strong government, the rule of law and democracy in Afghanistan, and ensure that people's concerns relayed from terrorism, drugs, intervention by other countries.

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50% Increase In Russian Exports To Iran in Q1

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Russian customs statistics show that the country's exports to Iran increased by 50 percent in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year.

Russia exported more than \$614 million to Iran in the first three months of the year. Russian imports from Iran also increased by 14 percent in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year, reaching \$290 million.

Thus, Russia's exports to Iran have more than doubled its imports from the country.

Last year, the two countries had more than \$2.2 billion in bilateral trade, six percent more than in 2019: one-third of that was the share of Iran's exports to Russia and two-thirds of that share of Russian exports to Iran.

Despite the increase in Trade between Iran and Russia over the past two years, Iran still has a half-percent share in Russia's total foreign trade.

Russia exported \$92 billion in the first quarter of this year and imported \$62 billion. One-third of Russia's foreign trade was with the European Union, one-third with OECD countries, including China. China alone has an 18 percent share in Russia's total foreign trade.



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MPs Underline Lifting Sanctions as Iran Definite Policy

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Some 200 Iranian lawmakers in a statement on Vienna talks stressed real lifting of sanctions and its verification as the main condition for Iran compliance with JCPOA commitments.

Iranian Parliament has not accepted any categorization of sanctions that would lead to maintaining part of the economic pressure on the Iranian people and preventing economic benefits, and seriously calls for the complete, verifiable and irreversible lifting of the US sanctions, the statement reads.

It is believed that if sanctions are not lifted 100%, no sanction has been lifted, it added.

Global Conscience Awakened Against Pervaded Barbarism in 21st Century

TEHRAN (IP) - Government Spokesman said that the global conscience has awakened against the pervaded barbarism in the 21st century.

Ali Rabiee, in his weekly presser on Tuesday, said that these days in Palestine, the sky is lead in the morning and orange at night, adding that the Israeli Regime, regardless of the most basic principles, treaties, and resolutions of the world, is committing its crimes against the oppressed people of Palestine in a shameful and oppressive way.

“Once again, the Palestinian issue has become a global moral dynamic,” he stated.

Rabiee added: “Today we see that the voice of support for justice and freedom of the Palestinian people is heard from five continents of the world. Today, as the global conscience has wakened against this pervaded barbarism in the 21st century, we continue to stand by the Palestinian people in support of this global cause and to uphold the rights of these oppressed peoples in accordance with international law and norms.”

The spokesman also called on the nations and the competent international community to unite against the shameful apartheid of the Israeli regime.

In another part of his speech, he said that the issue of purchasing the vaccine and importing it from all countries and companies is possible, and supporting domestic production of the vaccine has been discussed in the last few meetings of the government’s economic headquarters in the presence of the Minister of Health.

Rabiee stated: “Fortunately, with the pursuit of all members of the government and the unremitting efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in addition to the close cooperation of the Central Bank and with the pursuit of the Ministry of Health today, we have achieved promising and reliable results.”

He said: “Today I announce that the government has transparently and fairly followed the vaccination of age groups with a specified priority and has arranged the facilities for its implementation,” adding: “The government in order to implement health justice, from the very first days dealt with some abuses seriously, and today the vaccination program is being followed transparently and fairly, and this process will continue until the very end.”



The government spokesman added: “Today, I am pleased to announce that with the measures that have been considered, about 15 million elderly people and people at risk will be vaccinated soon.”

Rabiee said: “The collective efforts of the government have created an order that the process of import and domestic production in several centers in the coming months, will be such that all Iranians no longer have to worry about vaccination. This is the commitment of the government to the people, and certainly, the future government, taking advantage of these achievements, will continue this process with the created infrastructure.”

He underlined: “All this happened in a situation where we were facing the most severe sanctions and economic war.”

The government spokesman said that the statistics of the five countries with the highest rate of vaccination in the world show that these countries are the manufacturers of vaccines, adding: “This fact shows that Iran’s investment in producing vaccines domestically has been correct and strategic. With the mass production of Iranian vaccines, which will soon be included in the general vaccination program, Iran will become one of the countries in the world with the highest rate of vaccine injection.”

Iran Urges preparing Tehran-Rome Ties to Enter New Era

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign minister called for getting the required preparations to enter a new era in Tehran-Rome ties.

Mohammad Javad Zarif met and held talks with the President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Senate Vito Rosario Petrocelli. The two sides met in Rome on Tue.

During the meeting, Zarif called for the removal of existing barriers and the preparation of relations for entering a new era of economic cooperation.

Referring to the 160-year-old relations between the two governments, he made a positive assessment of the areas of cooperation with Italy, especially in the economic sector and cooperation between the small and medium-sized companies of the two sides.

Elsewhere, in his remarks, Zarif pointed to the dangerous regional situation caused by the actions of the Zionist regime and condemned the hostile measures against the Palestinian people.

He also stressed the importance of political and parliamentary relations between Iran and Italy.

The Foreign Minister also explained the views of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the situation in Yemen and Afghanistan.

The Italian official, for his part, stressed the importance of relations between the two countries, as well as the interest in expanding parliamentary cooperation, and assessed the capacity of cooperation between the two countries beyond the current level.

Int’l Conference on Recent Developments in Railway Engineering Opens

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The 17th International Conference on Recent Advances in Railway Engineering kicked off here yesterday by Road and Urban Development Minister.

Addressing the two-day conference, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and the CEO of Iranian Railways Mr. Saeed Rasouli said the development document on education in the railway is being prepared in collaboration with Shahid Beheshti University where the attention has been paid more on making the education and research applicable in the railway.

Rasouli said with the Supreme Leader’s supports, the country is witnessing laying good track for developing the rail industry, and the rail scientific and technologic advances in compliance with the Outlook Document have reached a favorable point due to the great efforts of university students and teachers.



He reiterated with reliance on the capabilities of the domestic experts and producers, the company can take an important step towards qualitative and quantitative developments.

He said the Railway Faculty has trained many educates due to the rise in demands of this industry and it enjoys highly scientific capacities.

Rasouli reiterated that the connection between the industry and the university can undo many ties and issues. He said the development document of education is in the pipeline in collaboration with Shahid Beheshti University where research and applied education have been regarded very much.

He added that in six very important issues the company is working with University of Science and Technology. He said the company uses the achievements of the previous editions of the conference and ready to use the papers which are presented in this conference.

Zionist Atrocities Not To Go Unanswered



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Judiciary Chief Hojjatolleslam Ebrahim Raesi on Monday condemned the Zionist brutalities against “the defenseless people of Gaza”, saying such atrocities will not go unanswered.

“The worrying news of the plight of the Palestinian people hurts the heart of every viewer and listener,” Raesi said.

The senior official said that the killing of the women and children, as well as destroying the buildings, especially in the most populated areas, once again proved the inaction of the UN Security Council and other international organizations in the face of the Palestinian issue.

This bitter incident has disappointed the Palestinian people from the so-called human rights organizations more than ever, Raesi said, adding that the U.S. and other Western countries will never take a step to restore the lost rights of the Palestinians.

The Judiciary chief said that those countries that gave the occupying regime of Israel a virtual legitimacy by seeking to normalize relations with this regime, certainly are accomplices in the killing of innocent Palestinian children and women.

Iran Matured in Manufacturing Advanced Aircraft Engines

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief of Staff of Iran’s Armed Forces said that with the efforts of its committed specialists and scientists, Iran has reached maturity in utilizing thousands of aircraft, UAVs and missiles with Iranian-made engines.

Accompanied by Iranian Minister of Defense Brigadier General Amir Hatami and Commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh, Chief of Staff of Iran’s Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri attended the Ministry of Defense Air Force Organization and visited the national engine production line. Referring to the importance of the engine as a vital and important issue in the field of aircraft and missiles, Bagheri said, “Aircraft engines are one of the most important parts that few countries in the world are able to produce.”

“Iran, with the efforts of its committed specialists and scientists, has reached a maturity that has been able to enter the serious field of design and production of advanced aircraft engines by relying on internal capacities and operate thousands of aircraft, UAVs and missiles with Iranian engines,” he added. “Undoubtedly, increasing the country’s defense power is a key component of strengthening and the aircraft engine design and production industry is also one of the main components of this issue,” Gen. Bagheri noted.

Resistance Strategy to Stop Crimes of Tel Aviv Regime

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Chief of Iran’s Strategic Council on Foreign Policy Kamal Kharrazi named Resistance as the main strategy to stop crimes of the Zionist regime. “The only way to completely defeat this criminal regime and change the apartheid regime to a democratic one is to continue the resistance of the Palestinian people and the support of the freedom-seekers of the world for Palestinians’ struggles,” he said.

“The UN Security Council has once again shown its inefficiency due to the sabotage of the United States and the pro-Zionist powers,” he added noting that what is happening in Palestine today is not a purely Islamic or Arab issue.

He said that Iran regards respecting the wish of Palestinians as the only solution to the country’s situation, adding that today, the idea of dissolving the apartheid Zionist regime and forming a single democratic government is the dominant idea in the world.

Referring to more than seven decades of Zionist atrocities in the land of Palestine, Kharrazi stressed that the only way to completely defeat this criminal regime and convert it to a democratic one is to continue the resistance of the Palestinian people and the world freedom fighters’ support for their struggles.

Foreign Actors Do Not Guarantee Security, Rights of Nations

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran’s Secretary of High Council for Human Rights said rental security provided by foreign actors could not guarantee the security and rights of nations.

Attending the webinar ‘Girls’ Human Rights and Sustainable Peace and Security on Monday, Ali Bagheri Kani pointed to the 20-year presence of the US and NATO in Afghanistan and said not only did they fail to establish security in the country, but also systematic terrorist incidents were happening in the country.

Pointing to the fact that the U.S. and NATO are responsible for the blood of the innocent girl students martyred in Afghanistan, Baqeri Kani said: “The atmosphere ruling the world’s human rights is not based on facts, because the actors who dominate the world’s political, media, and legal arenas direct them according to their own interests and needs.”

With regards to the presence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, he noted that the clearance of the country from ISIS terrorists was the fruit of domestic security formed based on Islamic resistance discourse.

Afghanistan’s ambassador to Tehran Abdolghafour Lival appreciated Iran’s support for the Afghan people and said the Iranian nation and government had been standing by Afghanistan’s people in all stages of establishing peace and civil society.



Conditions for Presidential Candidates “Transparent”

TEHRAN (IP) - The secretary of the Guardian Council about the examination of the qualifications of the presidential candidates said that we only act according to the law, and the law determines the conditions of the presidential candidates.

“The candidate for the presidential election must be a manager, tactician, and pious,” Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, pointed out.

Emphasizing that the condition of piety is one of the main criteria in examining the qualifications of presidential candidates, the secretary of the Guardian Council said: “A person who has piety means that he fulfills all the duties and does nothing else.”

In the end, Ayatollah Jannati said: “People should know that we are carrying a heavy burden. Examining a person whose eligibility is confirmed means that a person is religious and performs his religious duties and does not commit sins.”

Baku Determined to Expand Ties With Tehran

TABRIZ (IRNA) - Consul-General of Azerbaijan Republic in Tabriz said on Tuesday that his country was determined to expand its ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran in all areas.

In a meeting with the deputy governor-general of East Azarbaijan Province of Iran, Consul-General of Azerbaijan Republic Ali Naqi Huseynov said that Baku was ready to expand cultural, art, and tourism relationship with Iran, alongside economic relations.

He said that Azerbaijan Republic has allocated a fund for Karabakh region, recently reclaimed by Azerbaijan army and freed from Armenian occupation, to let powerful foreign companies participate in reconstruction of the region.

There are several roads and railways and air transportation infrastructures under construction in Karabakh region, Huseynov stated, adding that there was also a great capacity for investment in solar and hydro energy in the area.

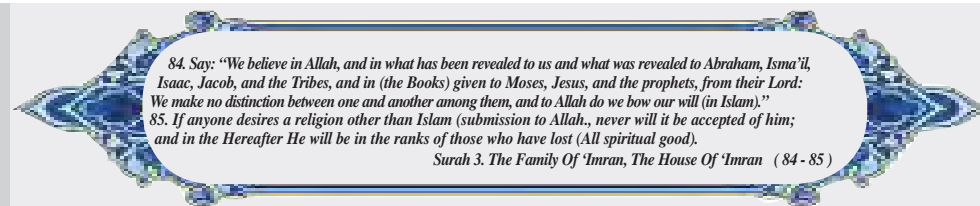
Deputy Governor-General of East Azarbaijan Province Ali Jahangiri, who is also Secretary of Department for Trade Promotion with Azerbaijan Republic, said that participation in reconstruction of Karabakh would play an important role in stabilizing regional communication and economic development.

He underlined that the presence of Iranian companies in reconstruction of Karabakh would serve as a proper opportunity to expand economic and trade ties between the two countries.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:25
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:15
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:56



NIOC Welcomes Foreign Investors

TEHRAN (Shana) – A senior official with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) voiced the company's keenness to welcome foreign investors in Iran's oil and gas projects.

Speaking to Shana, the Deputy NIOC CEO for Development and Engineering Affairs, Reza Dehghan, said Farzad "B" Field will be developed by the Iranian company Petropars, but the National Iranian Oil Company always welcomes the presence of foreign investors along with Iranian contractors.

"The negotiations with the Indian side for the development of this field took more than a decade and Iran tapped all its available capacities to complete these negotiations, but despite long and numerous rounds of talks and showing great flexibility on the part of the National Iranian Oil Company, the negotiations did not come to fruition," he said.

He added: "Since procrastination in joint fields is not allowed, the National Iranian Oil Company decided to determine the fate of this field by handing it over to one of the Iranian exploration and production companies, and this was in line with the head of agreement (HOA) for developing the field that was signed last year with the Petropars Group."

The official further said that NIOC would welcome presence of foreign investors in its projects, "and the Indian side can act as a partner of Petropars in this project if it seeks cooperation."



On Monday, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a contract worth \$1.78 billion with Petropars Group for the development of Farzad B Gas Field in the Persian Gulf.

The deal was signed in a ceremony held in the presence of Iranian Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh in Tehran.

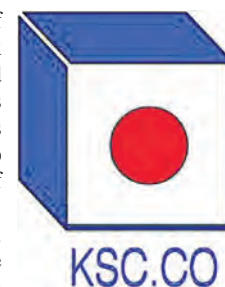
Mohammad Meshkinfam, the CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company, on behalf of the National Iranian Oil Company, and Hamid Reza Masoudi, the CEO of Petropars Group, signed the document.

The purpose of this buyback contract is to achieve a daily production of 28 million cubic meters of sour gas over five years.

KSC Feted With National Energy Management Award

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Khorasan Steel Complex Company (KSC) announced the improvement of this giant industrial company's position among the top companies in the field of energy management.



According to the reports, Mr. Kasra Ghafoori announced the achievement of Khorasan Steel Complex Company as the third national steel pole in the National Energy Management Award and said that the company improved its position in the evaluations and rankings and won the two-star silver statue of the event.

He said the company in compliance with its social responsibility regarding national resources, assets and commitment to the general policies of the company in the field of managing the territorial resources achieved this success after improving its position in the evaluation process conducted by the secretariat of the National Energy Management Award.

He reiterated that the achievement is the outcome of commitment of his colleagues in managing energy consumption especially in the consuming industries like steel industry by having a serious share in the productivity of resources.

Ghafoori noted besides attaching importance to the increase of production, the company safeguards the national interests. He then hailed responsible efforts of his colleagues in appropriate employment of resources.

The company in this year's edition of the event improved its position in the rankings by improving the level of energy management and won the two-star silver statue of the competition in the energy-consuming process category.

ABFA Wins Top Awards in PR Festival in Isfahan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Isfahan Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) won top awards among the 31 participating companies and organizations in the 16th Cultural Festival of Public Relations in Isfahan Province.

According to the evaluation and votes of the jury of the Cultural Festival of the Public Relations of Isfahan Province, Isfahan's ABFA topped in the categories of digital public relations, media communications, event management, polling and information seeking categories and won the creativity award.

Meanwhile the company was ranked excellent in the categories of social responsibility, creating content, planning and evaluating effectiveness and it was ranked top in the categories of innovation, leading activities and research.

It is noteworthy that in this event which was held in presence of the governor general of Isfahan Province, four awards in the creativity category, 12 statues in the excellence category, 21 statues for top public relations and six honorary diploma dubbed "Dynamic" were awarded to the public relations in Isfahan Province.



A Charity Run By Women

family counseling sessions before the dowry is donated. Previously, the consultations were in person, but now they are held online, and finally the brides are sent to Mashhad.

How many people have received services since the day the charity was launched?

350,000 people are currently receiving services. Many have received services and some have become self-sufficient and gone. Most of them are women heads of households. Some of the men under cover are incurable. We give dowry to some grooms. But 70% of the population we cover is female-headed.

What help is given to these people?

Wherever there is a representative on our behalf, it should be about every loved one who comes; Do research. That's why we have a research team. They do the research first. Then the service begins. In the case of incurable patients, we have treatment branches. For example, in Tehran, we have 20 treatment branches that treat incurable patients from different provinces and receive accommodation and medical services, medicine and treatment, surgery, transportation, and return to their hometown. About students, we pay for school and bags and shoes and accessories. We tell the benefactors to use any guild you have for service. For example, we have a philanthropist whose job is facilities and he says I have no money to pay. We say no problem, you can use your art and industry to help the needy.

Do you have any plans for less prosperous provinces, such as Khuzestan or Sistan and Baluchestan?

Since the beginning of the Corona debate and the Supreme Leader's remarks on the Relief Relief Exercise, we have had 14 Relief Relief Exercises in each province. We have a license from the Ministry of Interior, and this ministry has introduced the Abshar-Atefeh as the National Committee for Social Support throughout the country. In March 1999, Khuzestan turned red several times in terms of corona and people faced living problems. All benefactors and branches of Abshar-Atefeh were mobilized and about 20,000 support packages of living basket worth 12 billion Tomans were sent to Khuzestan.

What support program is being implemented in Hormozgan?

The Abshar-Atefeh has had jihadist conferences for several years. These conferences are held 3-4 times a year in less privileged provinces. In Sistan and Baluchestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, we are working on construction repairs, Mehr housing and even the construction of toilets for clients. We sent more than 300 series of dowries and 3,000 health and living packages from Tehran province, which is a deprivation camp in the country. More than 200 toilets are under construction, which will be inaugurated on June 26, this year, in the name of supporting the families of prisoners.

How much has the National Committee been able to contribute to the richness of your advocacy work?

We have been trying since the National Committee for Social Welfare was handed over to the Abshar-Atefeh; Expand the

work. Some benefactors come with us to different provinces and attend. The main task of this committee is to hold coordination and meetings with philanthropists and charities. The principle of our work is to network the benefactors of the country.

How did you select and recruit your co-workers?

Most troops volunteer. That is, they work as a dedication to their time. Most of our troops are young. For example, in a family, an educated person, we attracted him, which is a kind of job creation. The International Cascade of Emotions Charitable Foundation is the largest social entrepreneurship. Of course, we pay for those who do not devote time. In addition, we create jobs for families and heads of households, and we have many trainings such as carpet weaving or sewing. In some provinces, they produce handicrafts and even some foodstuffs such as saffron and honey, and we buy this and put it in a support basket. This creates a cycle of product production by clients and their self-sufficiency and the return of social assistance to the target community.

What is the future plan of the Abshar-Atefeh to increase assistance to the target community?

Since 1998, the Abshar-Atefeh has become an international title. That means we can have representation in other countries. For example, we can have a representative office in Oman or Turkey. This will attract Iranian philanthropists living in other countries. The principle of our program for other countries is to be able to attract the aid of Iranians living abroad or to provide the Iranian experience to those countries. Currently, 2% of our philanthropists are abroad and we expect this number to reach 20%.

Can you get help from government agencies and go to charity?

We like synergy. We do not expect the Friday prayer leader of the podium if he believes in the transparency and goodness of the Abshar-Atefeh. The foundation of charity is the people of the institution, and the foundation of the non-governmental organization cannot take money from the government, but if there is spiritual synergy and the executive apparatus helps, this good deed will be achieved better and we will provide more services to deprived families.

In the Abshar-Atefeh, how do you make transparency for both the people and the benefactors and the officials?

Transparency is different everywhere in the country. In Sistan and Baluchestan, face-to-face communication works better. In big cities, this transparency must be through the media. We tell the media to publish the news of the titles and donations we have given, and for the benefactors to see this and to be sure in what ways the donations they have given will be spent. So far, we have had good synergies in radio and television, various news agencies and media. Inviting philanthropists is also in the direction of transparency when we deliver the goods to the client. In Lorestan, the Friday prayer leader and our representative went to 800 clients' houses and delivered the donated goods themselves. We have transparency in the form of tracts, banners, media news and maneuvers in the cities,

and we invite people, philanthropists and officials to come and see what has been done.

What have you done about your media activities?

All over the country, each of our agencies has a site. When you do a Google search for the Abshar-Atefeh, all the agencies are visible. We report the number of goods and aid paid on a monthly basis. A benefactor who wants to know where the money he has given has been spent, we will report to him in writing. We even have philanthropists who come in person and file and deposit money directly into the accounts of female-headed households or orphans or the incurably ill. We have the site at: www.absharatefeh.org. Individuals can select and refer to any of the branches.

You have more than 7,000 female colleagues. What are the challenges of managing women? What do half a percent of your male colleagues do?

The task of the deprivation camp is to support 17 lesser provinces. We do not pay these women, and the families who work with us as clients are only rewarded. So far, we have 2,500 female staff in Tehran province and more than 152 agencies are located in Tehran province. We have 700 representatives across the country, all of whom are women. Mr. Ma's co-workers are the driver or executive co-worker. Of course, there are some of our deputies who do not receive anything as salaries at all. It is appropriate to thank the benefactors and benefactors. We have benefactors who give their sustenance to the needy, and these works are very valuable.



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Bank Name: Sepah Bank (formerly Ansar)
Night number: IR770630187875907720500001
website :www.absharatefeh.org

Etihad Airways Suspends Flights to Israel

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) -The UAE's national carrier Etihad Airways announced Monday it was temporarily suspending flights to Israel where the main airport near Tel Aviv has come under rocket fire from Gaza.

The United Arab Emirates normalized ties with Israel last year in a U.S.-brokered deal, making it the third Arab nation to do so after Egypt and Jordan. Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan subsequently followed suit.

"Etihad Airways has temporarily suspended passenger services to Tel Aviv in response to the ongoing conflict," the Abu Dhabi-based carrier said in a statement. "Etihad is monitoring the situation in Israel and continues to maintain close contact with authorities and security intelligence providers."



Russia Partially Halts Punitive Twitter Slowdown

MOSCOW (Reuters) -Russia partially halted a punitive slowdown of Twitter on Monday after it deleted a large portion of content deemed illegal by Moscow, but warned other U.S. internet platforms to comply with local legislation or face similar penalties.

State communications watchdog Roskomnadzor has since March impeded the speed of Twitter for not removing banned content quickly enough, and threatened to block it entirely, part of a wider drive by Moscow to tighten its control over the internet. On Monday, however, the watchdog said it no longer planned to block the service and the slowdown would only remain on mobile devices.



U.S. Blocks Third Draft UN Statement on Mideast Violence



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United States on Monday blocked -- for the third time in a week -- the adoption of a joint UN Security Council statement calling for a halt to Israeli-Palestinian violence and the protection of civilians, diplomats said.

The text drafted by China, Tunisia and Norway was submitted late Sunday for approval Monday by the Council's 15 members, as Israeli jets continued to pound the Gaza Strip and the death toll from a week of violence passed 200.

The United States indicated that they "could not currently support an expression" by the Security Council, one diplomat told AFP.

The text, obtained by AFP, called for "de-escalation of the situation, cessation of violence and respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, especially children."

It voiced the Council's "grave concern" at the Gaza crisis and its "serious concern" regarding the possible eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem, opposing "unilateral actions" likely to further escalate tensions.

The draft also welcomed international efforts to de-escalate the situation, without reference to the United States, and reiterated the Council's support for a negotiated two-state solution allowing Israelis and Palestinians to "live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders."

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric underlined the importance of taking a consolidated position on the conflict.

"I would really restate the need for a very strong and unified voice from the Security Council, which we think will carry weight," he told a press conference.

The UN General Assembly will hold an in-person debate on the Israeli-Palestinian clashes at 1400 GMT on Thursday, assembly spokesman Brendan Varma said.

The Security Council has held three emergency meetings on the escalating violence in the past week, the latest on Sunday, without reaching a common position -- with Israel's main ally the United States accused of obstructionism.

President Joe Biden's administration has insisted that it is working behind the scenes, including through a visit to the region by an envoy, and that a UN statement could backfire, according to diplomats.

At a news conference in Copenhagen on Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Israel and Palestinians to "protect civilians, especially children" -- and defended Washington's move to block a UN Security Council statement calling for an end to the hostilities.

"We're not standing in the way of diplomacy," Blinken stressed.

The U.S. refusal to endorse a joint Security Council statement has been met with disbelief by its allies.

Russia Warns West Against Arctic Encroachment Ahead of Talks

MOSCOW (AFP) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday warned Western countries against staking claims in the Arctic, as global warming makes the region more accessible and a site of global competition.

Lavrov's comments came ahead of a ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council that comprises Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland on Wednesday and Thursday in Reykjavik.

"It has been absolutely clear for everyone for a long time that this is our territory, this is our land," Lavrov said at a press conference in Moscow.

"We are responsible for ensuring our Arctic coast is safe," he said.

As climate change makes the Arctic more accessible, global interest in the region's natural resources, its navigation routes and its strategic position has grown among members of the Arctic Council as well as China.

President Vladimir Putin in recent years has made Russia's Arctic region a strategic priority and ordered investment in military infrastructure and mineral extraction, exacerbating tensions with Arctic Council members.



Biden Administration Approved \$735m Arms Sale to Israel

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden's administration approved the potential sale of \$735 million in precision-guided weapons to Israel, and congressional sources said on Monday that U.S. lawmakers were not expected to object to the deal despite violence between Israel and Palestinian militants.

Three congressional aides said Congress was officially notified of the intended commercial sale on May 5, as part of the regular review process before major foreign weapons sales agreements can go ahead.

The sale was first reported by the Washington Post.

Congress was informed of the planned sale in April, as part of the normal informal review process before of the formal notification on May 5. Under U.S. law, the formal notification opens up a 15-day window for Congress to object to the sale, which is not expected despite the ongoing violence. The sale of Joint Direct Attack Munitions, or JDAMs, made by Boeing Co (BA.N), was considered routine at the time, before the start last week of the fiercest hostilities in the region in years. There were no objections at the time by the Democratic and Republican leaders of the congressional foreign affairs committees that review such sales, aides said.

Asked for comment, a State Department spokesperson noted that the department is restricted under federal law and regulations from publicly commenting on or confirming details of licensing activity related to direct commercial sales like the JDAMs agreement. "We remain deeply concerned about the current violence and are working towards achieving a sustainable calm," the spokesperson said. Strong support for Israel is a core value for both Democratic and Republican members of the U.S. Congress, despite calls from a few of the most progressive Democrats to take a tougher stance against the government of Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu.

U.S. law allows Congress to object to weapons sales, but it is unlikely to do so in this case. Because Israel is among a handful of countries whose military

deals are approved under an expedited process, the typical window for objecting will close before lawmakers can pass a resolution of disapproval, even if they were inclined to.

Separatist Parties Agree on New Catalan Gov't

BARCELONA (AFP) - More than three months after regional elections, Catalonia's two main separatist parties said Monday they had reached agreement on forming a ruling coalition, heading off the looming threat of another vote.

Although the wealthy northeastern region's pro-independence parties boosted their showing in the February 14 elections, the main factions were unable to agree on a government due to deep disagreements over strategy.

The pact between the leftist ERC and the hardline "Together for Catalonia" (JxC), which have ruled in a regional coalition since 2015, emerged ahead of a May 26 deadline for appointing a new regional leader.

"We have managed to avoid a repeat election that nobody wanted and to reach a good agreement on forming a strong, unified government," said ERC leader Pere Aragonès, who will serve as president of the region of 7.8 million people.

"We are beginning a new stage with this agreement on a pro-independence government... in which we can again move forward towards a Catalan republic," he told a news conference. This time around, the coalition will be led by ERC as it won one more seat than JxC in the election in which the separatist parties secured 52 percent of the vote, handing them 74 of the parliament's 135 seats.

ERC has advocated a more moderate approach to independence based on negotiation with Madrid, and

Aragonès, who has served as acting Catalan president since September, said this approach would continue.

With ERC's 33 mandates and the 32 held by JxC, the coalition will hold 65 of the parliament's 135 seats but will be backed in parliament by its smaller separatist ally the far-left, anti-capitalist CUP, which holds nine seats.

In October 2017, Catalonia's separatist government staged an illegal referendum then made a short-lived declaration of independence, triggering Spain's worst political crisis in decades and the exile or jailing of the main independence leaders.

Since then, the issue of dialogue with Madrid has been a huge point of friction, particularly for JxC whose leader Carles Puigdemont, who was Catalan president at the time, fled into exile in Belgium after the failed breakaway bid.

JxC, which dominated the previous coalition, has been very wary of ERC for distancing itself from plans to stage another break from Spain and seeking talks on a negotiated solution with Madrid.

"Dialogue (with Madrid) is not our strategy," JxC's secretary-general Jordi Sanchez recently insisted.

An initial bid to have Aragonès appointed at the end of March collapsed when he won just 42 votes, falling far short of the 68 needed for an absolute majority.

But Monday, Sanchez said the agreement "brings together the two main outlooks of pro-independence movement".



Erdogan Urges Pope to Help End Gaza Conflict

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday urged Pope Francis to help rally the world to adopt sanctions against Israel for its "massacre" of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The phone call between Erdogan and the pontiff came as Turkey presses ahead with a furious diplomatic push to help end bloodshed that has claimed the lives of 197 Palestinians and 10 people in Israel since May 10.

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Erdogan told Pope Francis that "Palestinians will continue to be subjected to a massacre unless the international community punishes Israel... with sanctions", the Turkish presidency said.

The pope's messages were of "great importance to mobilize the Christian world and the international community", the Turkish statement added.

The pope on Sunday said the loss of innocent lives in the violence was "terrible and unacceptable", warning that the conflict risked "degenerating into a spiral of death and destruction".

Erdogan, who has vocally championed the Palestinian cause during his 18-year rule, has spoken out repeatedly against Israel's actions, accusing it of waging "terrorism" last week.

He told the pope on Monday that "all of humanity should be united against" Israel.

"The savagery caused by Israel threatens regional security," he added.

The Turkish push for sanctions against Israel included a phone call on Monday between Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and his British counterpart Dominic Raab.

Cavusoglu told Raab it was "essential that the international community should give a stronger reaction" to Israel's aggression, a Turkish foreign ministry source said.W





Aghdasieh (\$2500)
260sq.m, 3bdrs
balcony, pkg
marble fl
fireplace
Nicely Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Farmanieh bldg (\$10000)
5storey bldg
20bdrs, S/p
S, J, pkg lots
enough pkgs

Parsian

Dibaji Apt (\$1700)
2bdrs, S/p, & F.F

Apt (\$2200)
Zaferanieh
240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, pkg, F.F

Vanak Villa (\$2800)
800sq.m, 4bdrs, yard

Jordan (\$1500)
2bdrs, 130sq.m

Vali-e-Asr office
200sq.m (\$25 per sq.m)

Kamranieh (\$2200)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, & F.F

Niavarna Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m, 5bdrs, & yard

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Bitcoin Hits 3-Month Low

LONDON (Reuters) -Bitcoin rallied from a three-month low on Monday in a volatile session that saw investors initially selling and then buying cryptocurrencies in the wake of Tesla boss Elon Musk's tweets about the carmaker's bitcoin holdings.

In his latest tweet, Musk said "Tesla has not sold any bitcoin". That seeming clarification came after weekend tweets hinted that Tesla was considering or may have already sold some of its massive holdings.

Musk has boosted crypto markets with his enthusiasm for the asset class, but has lately roiled trade by appearing to cool on bitcoin in favour of its one-time parody, dogecoin. The gyrations are beginning to spook even steely traders.



China's Factory Output Slows as Bottlenecks Crimp Production

BEIJING (Reuters) -China's factories slowed their output growth in April and retail sales significantly missed expectations as officials warned of new problems affecting the recovery in the world's second-largest economy.

While China's exporters are enjoying strong demand, global supply chain bottlenecks and rising raw materials costs have weighed on production, cooling the blistering economic recovery from last year's COVID-19 slump.

Factory output grew 9.8% in April from a year ago, in line with forecasts but slower than the 14.1% surge in March, National Bureau of Statistics data showed on Monday. Retail sales, meanwhile, rose 17.7%, much weaker than a forecast 24.9% uptick and the 34.2% surge in March.

NBS spokesman Fu Linghui said while China's economy showed a steady improvement in April, new problems are also emerging, notably the rise in international commodity prices.

"The foundations for the domestic economic recovery are not yet secure," Fu told a news briefing in Beijing on Monday.

"For companies as a whole, price increases are conducive to the improvement of corporate efficiency, but the pressure on downstream industries needs to be paid attention to," he added.

China's factory price inflation hit its highest pace since October 2017 in April. That could rise further in the second and third quarters, according to a report from the central bank last week.

The slower growth rates in the April activity indicators were also due in part due to the fading base effects as year-on-year comparisons rolled away from very sharp declines seen when the coronavirus shut down much of the country in early 2020.

In the factory sector, motor vehicle production growth fell sharply to 6.8% from 69.8%, due in part to the base effect as well as critical shortages of semiconductors used in car systems.

Growth in the production of cement slowed in April, and coal production fell on year, although aluminium and crude steel output hit record highs, helped by firm demand.

"China's economy shows signs of unbalanced recovery: strong exports and domestic investment on one hand, but weak consumption on the other," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, in a note.

Sectors related to travel, leisure and entertainment are large employers and still held back by COVID-19 uncertainty, he said.

Home appliances sales growth dropped particularly sharply in April from the month before, falling from 38.9% growth on year in March to 6.1%, NBS data showed.

Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics, in a note said month-on-month retail sales growth fell well below its pre-pandemic pace. "Looking ahead, we think the rebound in consumption should gather pace again in the coming months as the labor market continues to tighten," he said.

China's economy expanded by a record 18.3% in the first quarter and many economists expect growth will exceed 8% this year.

Exports accelerated in April, thanks to strong demand for Chinese goods amid a brisk U.S. economic recovery and stalled factory production in other countries. However, April also saw factory activity slow amid supply bottlenecks and rising costs and policymakers have acknowledged some of the recent weaknesses seen in the economic recovery.

"The cost of production has definitely increased, leading to a decrease in profits," said the manager of an automobile accessories factory in China's eastern Zhejiang province, surnamed Xu.

Sales are increasing but relatively slowly, and the factory plans to decrease production accordingly, he said.

A top decision-making body of the ruling Communist Party

World Economic Forum Cancels 2021 Meeting Planned for Singapore

ZURICH (Dispatches) - The World Economic Forum said Monday that it has canceled a summer version of its annual meeting that was due to take place in Singapore.

"Regretfully, the tragic circumstances unfolding across geographies, an uncertain travel outlook, differing speeds of vaccination rollout and the uncertainty around new variants combine to make it impossible to realize a global meeting with business, government and civil society leaders from all over the world at the scale which was planned," the organization said in a statement.

The event, which brings together politicians and business leaders from around the world, had already been rescheduled twice and had been moved to Singapore from its usual location of Davos, Switzerland. The summer event had been planned for the middle of August.

WEF said that the meeting will instead take place in the first half of 2022, with a final location and date to be determined later this year. Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of WEF called it a difficult decision.

"Ultimately the health and safety of everyone concerned is our highest priority," he said in the statement.

Covid-19 cases in Singapore have climbed in the past few days. In a preliminary update on Monday, Singapore's health ministry said it confirmed an additional 21 locally transmitted infections, 11 of which were not linked to previous cases. That takes Singapore's cumulative Covid cases to more than 61,600 and 31 deaths, data by the health ministry showed.

More broadly, concerns have grown across the world over a new variant of the virus first discovered in India. Countries like the U.K., despite having a successful vaccination program, are carefully monitoring the data to see how transmissible the new strain is, and whether it will derail plans to fully reopen the economy.



Japan Economic 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 percent this quarter, less than half the 4.7 percent 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 percent 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 percent 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 percent growth from 3.9 percent, 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 percent 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 percent 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.

Relations and Sustainable Development

By: Majid Talimi, Senior Expert on Mass Communications and Media
On the Occasion of the Public Relations and Communications Day



Modern public relations in today's society is like a full mirror reflecting the rightful public expectations and demands from the organizations and bodies which have been set up and organized to serve them, and the field of the public relations in this juncture demands a real challenger.

Today the role of communications and the public relations in the social sustainable development and strategy of the organization is considered as effective, and the position of the public relations as the managerial tool based on the scientific and professional moves is considered as the new characteristics of the public relations in the communications era, and the stylish public relations as a main ring of communication between managers, staff and the society has a very important responsibility.

Since the time the public relations has been put forward as one of the pillars of management and some part of the media system, its significance, regarding communication responsibility of organizations, enterprises and cultural and social bodies, has found a new manifestation. And regarding this point that the public relations unit functions as a direct link between the senior manager

of the organization with the outside environment of the organization, the public relations as one of the important communication pillars of the organization with its addressees and other beneficiaries, it has great task in the process of transparency and social activities, exchange of information, materialization of the principle of responsiveness of the organization and dissemination of information for the awareness of the public and monitoring the performance of the statesmen and the executive organization.

By the way, the public relations body in the organizations can both provide the ground for attracting better and more efficient resources than the surrounding, and helps restoration of link with the individuals and the internal sections of the organization for providing the ground for participation of the staff, increase of commitment to the plans, creating integrity and encouraging the individuals to accompany and have effective and constant cooperation in implementing the main strategies of the organization.

To achieve a developed and excellent society, attention to the three major processes and creating coordination and efficient communication among them can be the sign of a strategic thought. To organize the society's affairs either in the low executive level or in the macro level in the sense of policy-making and planning either in the development level which are raised as the strategic policies, all should be invited to participate in all of the three processes.

In the first level, creating speculation and speculating, based on the values accepted nationally, socially and organizationally, explains the directions of the social moves. In the second level, the speculation is the option that the raised speculations are purged based on the desired development and the remarkable speculation is put forward. And finally in the highest level, the issue of creating balance among the speculations is put forward which leads to expressing the strategic policies.

Therefore, the public relations is expected, during its

choosing the speculation, to take into consideration the development of the social understanding and political and national balance when it comes to create balance between the speculations, and instead of taking eliminative attitude, it should pursue constructive and stabilizing methods and think of the bright prospect of development, perfection and national unity than its individual or group interests.

It is noteworthy to mention that indexes of economic, social and cultural development of a society depend on the mechanisms like fair distribution of information, enlightenment of the public opinion, people friendly and respecting humans' rights for increasing the level of the popular participation that it is the public relations' mission.

From the Islamic view points, the issue of human communication is an important and significant issue and the issue of human and social communication in the Islamic logic enjoys a high place that in most of prayers and religious rituals and ceremonies, the dimension of human communication with others has been strongly intermingled with the dimension of human's communication with God. If one has a glance at the important religious ceremonies and events like Hajj and Namaz (saying prayers), he can see well how the link of human communication with God or with the society has been interwoven. It is for this reason that in the view and logic of Islam, the issue of communication, in its common sense that one of its indexes will be in the public relations, has a very important and valuable place.

On the role and position of the communications and the public relations in the country, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution says, "The public relations should find out what vacuums have made necessary their existence. Love of serving in some individuals and organizations causes them to seek more extensive realm for their activities and therefore some interferences would happen in different sections. Some believe the public relations should tell all the truth about their organizations because people expect to know all of them. And some believe besides telling the truth, the public opinions should be reflected and conveyed to those organizations. Some believe that the public relations should tell only promising and good things to the public and avoid telling bad and frustrating issues. The public relations should choose their own style from these tastes. They should clarify what the public anticipate from them. People should be dealt sincerely and honestly."

Accordingly, activists in the communications and public relations by explaining their scientific and operational position can take effective steps in sustainable development of Islamic Iran and it is hoped activists in this field, both by employing the recommendations of the Supreme Leader and employing scientific principles and professional ethics and with an audience-centered and responsiveness approach, try to materialize the second step of the revolution and achieve favorable outlook through employing effective communication methods.

France to Lend Sudan \$1.5b to Pay off IMF Debt

PARIS (Dispatches) - France will lend Sudan \$1.5 billion to help the African nation pay off its massive debt to the International Monetary Fund as it emerges from decades of authoritarian rule, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday.

"President Macron will confirm later today that France will provide the \$1.5 billion bridge loan to clear Sudan's arrears to the IMF," Le Maire said at the opening of an international conference aimed at helping Sudan in its transition to democratic government.



Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok is attending the Paris conference, seeking help in paying off a \$60 billion foreign debt bill and also hoping to secure investment deals.

Hamdok is pushing to rebuild and reform a crippled economy and end Sudan's international isolation under former strongman Omar Al-Bashir, whose three decades of rule were marked by economic hardship and international sanctions.

"Re-building an attractive and resilient market takes time, but today, I hope we will convince private investors that the fundamentals for business are fully there," Le Maire said.

Iran, Slovenia to Further Develop Cooperation in Beekeeping Industry

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Slovenian Ambassador to Tehran Christina Radi said Iran and Slovenia have reinforced cooperation in beekeeping industry focusing on technical training, health and exchanging knowledge.

In a message on the occasion of the World Bee Day, Radi expressed hope for improving the situation for implementing projects.

She expressed Slovenia tendency for providing technical support for Iran beekeepers and to follow up their cooperation with the international community.

He hailed Iranian beekeepers' progress and referred to signing MoU between two countries in the field of beekeeping.



OPEC's Oil Exports Surging By 1m Bpd In May

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC's oil exports have jumped by 1 million barrels per day (bpd) so far in May, while the OPEC+ group started easing the production cuts by 350,000 bpd this month, tanker tracker Petro-Logistics said on Monday.

At the ministerial meeting in early April, the OPEC+ group decided to gradually return over 1 million bpd to the market between May and July. The OPEC+ collective oil production is set to rise by 350,000 bpd in both May and June and by more than 400,000 bpd in July. Additionally, Saudi Arabia will also gradually ease its extra unilateral cut of 1 million bpd over the course of the next few months, beginning with monthly production increases of 250,000 bpd in both May and June. Overall, OPEC+ is expected to return to the market as much as 2.1 million bpd by July.

The decision from early April signaled the confidence of the leaders of the OPEC+ alliance that the market would be able to absorb that much supply as vaccination programs are accelerating and people start traveling more. OPEC+ and all analysts expect global oil demand to rebound strongly in the second half of 2021 and nearly reach pre-crisis levels by the end of the fourth quarter this year.

Goldman Sachs said at the end of April that it expects global oil demand to realize "the biggest jump in oil demand ever" the next six months. The investment bank sees oil demand jumping by 5.2 million bpd over the next six months.

Despite the recent bearish concerns surrounding India's COVID crisis, OPEC, investment banks, and the International Energy Agency (IEA) are optimistic that global oil demand is set for a strong rise this year.



The excess oil inventories of the past year have been all but depleted, the IEA said last week, noting that "The widening supply and demand gap paves the way for a further easing of OPEC+ supply cuts or even sharper stock draws."

COVID Crisis May Delay Oil Offloading Operations In India



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The alarming situation with the spread of the coronavirus in India has started to affect operations at some of India's ports, which could lead to delays in oil offloading and discharge of vessels and disrupt other trade operations.

The Karaikal port declared force majeure between May 10 and 24, saying its operations "are being severely affected" due to the full curfew in the state of Tamil Nadu. Karaikal operations, including but not limited to unloading, loading, receipt, and dispatches, are being affected, the port operator said in a notice this week.

Disruption to port operations could affect oil and other trade if the situation persists.

The port of Visakhapatnam is also seeing the disruption of cargo operations, with a force majeure until May 19, G. Veeramohan, president of the Vizagapatnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told Bloomberg.

Indian state-run refiner Hindustan Petroleum Corporation uses Visakhapatnam for crude oil imports. The company's import operations are not affected because it uses an offshore facility for tanker unloading, Hindustan Petroleum's chairman Mukesh Kumar Surana told Bloomberg.

India continues to fight the COVID resurgence, with the infections now spreading to rural areas. Daily new cases are now below last week's peak of over 400,000, but on Friday the country reported a third consecutive day of more than 4,000 deaths.

Due to the COVID crisis, Indian fuel demand plunged by 9.4 percent in April compared to March, according to official data cited by Press Trust of India on Wednesday.

The slump in oil demand amid local lockdowns and curfews has been a concern to the market in recent weeks. Gasoline and diesel prices in India hit record highs this week, adding another concern about demand in the world's third-largest oil importer.

UK Plastics Sent for Recycling in Turkey Dumped and Burned

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has become the latest destination for British plastic waste, which ends up dumped, burned or left to pollute the ocean, a Greenpeace investigation has found.

More than half of the plastic the British government says is being recycled are sent overseas, often to countries without the necessary infrastructure to do so. The UK exported 688,000 tons of discarded plastic packaging in 2020, a daily average of 1.8m kilos. Just 486,000 tons were recycled in the UK.

China was a key destination, but since it banned the import of many types of plastic in 2017, Turkey has emerged as the main receiver of British plastic waste. UK exports to the country increased from 12,000 tons in 2016 to 209,642 tons in 2020, about 30% of the UK's plastic waste exports.

Instead of being recycled, however, Greenpeace investigators in Turkey found plastic waste from leading supermarkets dumped, burned, piled into mountains and left to spill into rivers and the sea.

Greenpeace examined 10 locations around the southern Turkish city of Adana in March and published the data on Monday in its report, Trashed. It found plastic packaging from Tesco, Asda, Co-op, Aldi, Sainsbury's, Lidl and Marks & Spencer dumped, left in bags or burned. Plastic rubbish from retailers such as B&Q, Debenhams, Poundland and Spar was also found.

Plastic bags and packaging from the supermarkets as well as Lucozade and Fanta bottles were dumped in fields, near rivers, on train tracks and by the roadside, Greenpeace investigators found. In many cases the plastic had been burned. The waste was in bags piled high on top of each other, many of which were ripped open.

Other plastic waste was spilling into waterways and floating downstream. On the Mediterranean coast, investigators found more British plastic strewn across the beach, including the wrapping from a pack of Andrex toilet paper.

The British waste had been exported recently. It included a coronavirus antigen test and a packet with a use-by date of August 2021.

Greenpeace is calling on the UK government to enact the



environment bill, and use the powers within it to ban all plastic waste exports. It wants to see an immediate ban on all plastic waste exports to countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, such as

Malaysia, and on mixed plastic waste to OECD countries such as Turkey.

As well as the impact of pollution, Interpol said last year that the huge increase in plastic rubbish being sent to Turkey and other countries was causing an explosion in the illegal waste trade.

Nihan Temiz Atas, the biodiversity projects lead at Greenpeace Mediterranean, who is based in Turkey, said: "As this new evidence shows, plastic waste coming from the UK to Turkey is an environmental threat, not an economic opportunity. Uncontrolled imports of plastic waste do nothing but increase the problems that exist in Turkey's own recycling system."

Other European countries have also chosen Turkey as the main receiver of their rubbish. About 241 lorryloads of plastic waste come to Turkey every day from across Europe, 20 times more than was imported in 2016.

UK and EU rules say that plastic waste should not be exported to countries unless it is going to be recycled. Turkey's recycling rate, however, is 12%, the lowest of any OECD member.

"As far as we can see from the data and the field, we continue to be Europe's largest plastic waste dump," said Atas.

The Turkish government has imposed a crackdown on plastic waste imports, announcing a ban on imports of many types of plastic waste from January.

UK trade data, however, suggests the move has had little impact. The country sent more plastic waste to Turkey in January 2021 than it did in the same month last year, up from 12,400 to 14,500 tons. The figure for February 2021 was 30,300 tons, more than double the amount for the same month in 2020.

UK government trade data shows that Malaysia was the second destination for British plastic waste, receiving 65,000 tons in 2020, followed by Poland, which received 38,000 tons.

Russian Businesses Start Counting Cost of EU Carbon Border Tax

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian companies stand to be among the biggest losers from the EU's proposed carbon tax on imports, prompting accusations of protectionism from Moscow.

The levy, known as the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) and designed to hit countries making insufficient efforts to combat climate change, would result in huge surcharges for Russian groups seeking to access the EU market, according to analysts and officials.

Estimates of the potential costs vary from \$3bn a year, according to the Russian natural resources ministry, to a KPMG forecast of about \$60bn between 2022 and 2030.

The European Commission is due to detail its proposals in July. Negotiations with the European parliament and member states could then take months, if not years, to conclude.

The tax would initially target a limited number of imports including iron, steel, cement and fertilisers, EU officials told the Financial Times, and would be based on the equivalent carbon price paid in Europe.

Brussels has stressed the CBAM will comply with World Trade Organization rules — whereby imported goods cannot be held to higher standards than those produced domestically — and will only apply to countries that do not match the EU's internal carbon pricing systems.

But as Europe's biggest supplier of carbon-intensive goods worth nearly €10bn in 2019, Russia is expected to be hit hardest. Alongside Turkey, it is one of just two G20 countries without a domestic carbon tax and no emissions trading system.

Moscow has accused the EU of using its climate policy to recoup financial losses inflicted by the pandemic.

"It appears that some of our partners cannot resist the temptation to instrumentalise the climate agenda for the benefit of their economies," said Artyom Bulatov, deputy head of the European co-operation department at Russia's foreign ministry, at a conference last month.

"We took note of the plans to use the CBAM as an additional source of income for the EU budget . . . And frankly speaking it goes fully in line with protectionism in the trade sphere."

The recrimination comes as bilateral trade between the EU and Russia has dropped since Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the sanctions imposed by Brussels. Russia, long seen as an outsider in global climate action, stepped up when it joined the Paris agreement in 2019. But while the EU and U.S. have pledged to hit net zero by 2050, Russia's commitment to reduce its carbon footprint to 70 per cent of the 1990 level by 2030 effectively allows for an increase in emissions.

Speaking at a U.S.-hosted global climate summit in April, Russia's president Vladimir Putin vowed to "significantly" reduce accumulated net emissions by 2050. But for Europe this still falls short.

"Russia is not ambitious enough," said Laurent Bardon, head of the trade and economic section at the EU delegation to Russia. "There is indeed a risk that Russia and the EU would diverge, with the risk that it would become an irritant."

Meanwhile in Europe, the carbon price under the EU emissions trading system has soared to €50 a ton, leading to business calls for an urgent imposition of the border tax. EU companies argue they risk suffering the brunt of the bloc's climate-cutting targets, while those outside the EU are spared the costs of doing business in the single market.

Can You Believe the U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

They failed to fulfill the promises they have made to the Afghan people, these forces are not useful to Afghanistan, because their presence has not changed the country's security situation.

The withdrawal comes at a time when the Afghan government is vulnerable and a surge in terrorism could be just around the corner. Many are already living in fear amid terrorist attacks in Afghanistan.

Bombings, explosions and families, searching for missing relatives in the ensuing chaos, are parts of the reality that could strike an Afghan on any given day.

So the question is raised why the number of blasts and violence is on the rise in Afghanistan while the U.S. troops are on the verge of the country.

The answer is quite clear. The U.S. is not willing to leave Afghanistan until it has a full control on the ruling government and even the nation and currently the condition is not in its favor and for this reason we see more violence and blasts in this country to justify the U.S. troops' deployment in this country whose people are suffering from years of war and violence that the foreign forces' presence and their interference should be blamed for it.

The United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, as part of the so called War on Terror. While the invasion ended the Taliban's rule in the country back then, it is ending with a deal with the Taliban.

But since then and under the different pretexts, they have continued their presence in this country because they need bases in the region for showing their power, influence and its so-called peace and security-seeking intention.

Now the U.S. troops seem to leave this country but as a proverb says "seeing is believing" and one cannot believe it because the Americans have to be present in this country in different guises either civilian or military, and this is Afghan people who should decide their own fate by not letting foreigners decide their fate.

The West is not trustable and any country should rely on itself than seeking foreign supports.



Palestinian Resistance...

FROM PAGE 1

They hailed the role of Iran's top anti-terror commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated alongside his companions in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq in January 2020, in keeping the Palestinian cause alive.

In his address on the occasion of the International Quds Day, Ayatollah Khamenei said Israel is not a country but a terrorist base against the people of Palestine and other Muslim nations.

"Since the first day, the Zionists turned the usurped Palestine into a terrorist base. Israel is not a country, rather it is a terrorist camp against the Palestinian nation and other Muslim nations," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the issue of Palestine continues to be the most important and active issue for the Islamic Ummah collectively.

"The policies of the oppressive and cruel capitalism have driven a people out of their homes, their homeland and their ancestral roots and instead, it has installed a terrorist regime and has housed a foreign people therein," he said.

"Fighting against this despotic regime is fighting against oppression and terrorism. And this is a collective responsibility," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

Zionists Committing...

FROM PAGE 1

He also noted that silence in the face of such widespread terrorist attacks carried out by the vilest regime means encouraging and tolerating terrorism.

According to Gharibabadi, the international community should not be satisfied with this savagery.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Israeli regime's attacks against Palestinians and call for an immediate and complete cessation of all acts of violence, including military strikes, sabotage and assassinations by the Israeli regime," the ambassador and permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna added.

World Champion Left Out of Olympics Singles

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Table tennis world champion Liu Shiwen has been controversially left out of China's women's singles line-up for the Tokyo Olympics and will instead play doubles and team events.

The 30-year-old won a team title as China swept all four gold medals at the Rio 2016 Games, but she has never won the Olympic singles crown in her trophy-laden career. China announced a six-member squad on Sunday, with reigning Olympic champion Ma Long and world number one Fan Zhendong the two men's singles players.

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Modric to Lead Croatia at Euro 2020

ZAGREB (Dispatches) - Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic named a 26-man squad for Euro 2020 on Monday, comprising players who won silver at the 2018 World Cup and their younger peers and led by veteran Luka Modric.

"Our latest results were not the best, but I'm an optimist. Our first goal is to get out of the group," Dalic told reporters. Croatia have been drawn in Group D, and will play England in London on June 13. Dalic described that opening match as the toughest in the group stage as England "have good quality and we play at Wembley".

Warriors Top Grizzlies For No. 8 Seed

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Stephen Curry scored a game-high 46 points en route to his second NBA scoring title and Jordan Poole stalled a rally with a late 3-pointer Sunday afternoon as the Golden State Warriors held off the visiting Memphis Grizzlies in San Francisco for a 113-101 win to claim the No. 8 position in this week's play-in tournament.

With Curry scoring 17 of his 46 points, the Warriors appeared to take command of the game in the third quarter, but Dillon Brooks led a Memphis comeback. Before fouling out, Brooks contributed 13 points to a 22-5 flurry that made it 91 all with 6:32 still to play.

The Grizzlies went up by two twice after that, before Poole nailed his momentum-changing 3-pointer. The loss ended Memphis' five-game winning streak and landed the Grizzlies in the No. 9 spot in the play-in, where they will host 10th-seeded San Antonio on Wednesday.



Lakers 110, Pelicans 98

LeBron James scored 25 points as Los Angeles won in New Orleans on the final day of the regular season, but was unable to avoid the play-in round.

James left the game midway through the fourth quarter, slightly favoring the injured right ankle that sidelined him 26 games down the stretch.

But the victory wasn't enough for the defending NBA champions to avoid the Western Conference play-in tournament. Portland defeated Denver to claim the sixth seed so the seventh-seeded Lakers will host eighth-seeded Golden State in a play-in game Wednesday.

Jazz 121, Kings 99

Jordan Clarkson scored 33 points and made six 3-pointers and Bojan Bogdanovic added 18 points to lead Utah past Sacramento and the league's best regular-season record.

Rudy Gobert added 13 points and 16 rebounds. Mike Conley chipped in 11 points, nine assists and six rebounds. Utah clinched the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference and will have home-court advantage throughout the playoffs.

Terence Davis scored 20 points to lead the Kings. Damian Jones chipped in 19 points. Buddy Hield added 13 points, nine assists and seven rebounds for Sacramento, which rested several key players: De'Aaron Fox, Tyrese Haliburton, Harrison Barnes, Marvin Bagley III and Richaun Holmes

Timberwolves 136, Mavericks 121

Anthony Edwards closed his push for NBA Rookie of the Year with 30 points, and

Minnesota dominated Dallas nearly wire-to-wire for a season-ending win in Minneapolis.

Edwards capped his debut season with his eighth game of 22 or more points over the final nine. He is in contention to be Minnesota's first Rookie of the Year since teammate Karl-Anthony Towns, who won the award in 2016.

Dallas, which locked up the No. 5 seed and will play the Los Angeles Clippers in the first round of the playoffs, shot 16-of-38 from 3-point range, including Kristaps Porzingis making 4 of 5. Porzingis finished with 18 points.

Heat 120, Pistons 107

Precious Achiuwa had 23 points and 10 rebounds to lead Miami to a road win over Detroit in the regular-season finale.

With little to no incentive to win the game, each team rested several starters. Miami already had the No. 6 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs clinched going into the game, while Detroit was looking to clinch the league's second-worst record and enhance its odds of winning the first pick in the NBA draft lottery.

Saddiq Bey scored 22 points and Josh Jackson scored 17 points off the bench for Detroit.

76ers 128, Magic 117

Tyrese Maxey had 30 points, seven rebounds and six assists to lift host Philadelphia over Orlando in game in which the 76ers rested all of their starters.

Since the Sixers have had already secured the top seed in the Eastern Conference playoff race, Joel Embiid, Ben Simmons, Danny Green, Seth Curry and Tobias Harris sat the game out.

Isaiah Joe scored 17 points, rookie Paul Reed added season highs of 17 and 12 rebounds, and Shake Milton contributed 15 points and nine assists for the Sixers, who improved to 49-23. George Hill added 14 points.

Argentina Ready to Host Copa America

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina is ready to host the Copa America, President Alberto Fernandez confirmed, despite the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic that has killed more than 70,000 people in his country.

The tournament is due to kick off on June 13 even as the coronavirus is ravaging the continent and despite the delicate political situation in co-host Colombia, which is convulsed by anti-government protests.

"We were consulted and said yes. With all due care. This would be a Copa America for television, that must be said. Under those terms we would be willing to honor our commitment," Fernandez said in a statement to television channel C5N Argentina.

"The rest depends on how everything evolves and what Colombia is also going to do."

Argentina is going through its worst phase since the pandemic began, passing 3.3 million infections this weekend with a total of 70,552 deaths.

"We agreed with CONMEBOL to hold the Copa America and we are going to do it with the applicable restrictions," Fernandez said, referring to the South American football governing body.

Fifteen River Plate players had to be dropped at the last minute for the superclasico against Boca Juniors for the Argentine League Cup on Sunday after they tested positive for the coronavirus.

CONMEBOL has started vaccinating footballers for the Copa America thanks to 50,000 doses donated by Chinese state pharmaceutical company Sinovac.

At the moment, matches will be played in the Argentine cities of Cordoba, Santiago del Estero, Mendoza and Buenos Aires, and in Colombia's Barranquilla, Medellin, Cali and Bogota.

The opening Copa America match will be played at the Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires between Argentina and Chile on June 13.

The final is scheduled for July 10 at the Barranquilla Metropolitan Stadium in Colombia.



Djokovic Admits Long Shot to Beat Nadal at Roland Garros

ROME (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic admitted that he's "a long shot" to win Roland Garros where he would likely have to dethrone rival and 13-time Paris champion Rafael Nadal.

Djokovic may be world number one, but it's Nadal who is the undisputed king of clay in the French capital where he has lost just twice in 102 matches since 2005.

On Sunday, Djokovic again felt the full, raw power of Nadal on clay as the Spaniard clinched a 10th Italian Open title with a 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 win in the final.

In the pair's 57th meeting, the victory also took Nadal level with his Serb rival on 36 Masters 1000 titles.

"Going into Paris brings me a good sensation," insisted Djokovic despite a roller-coaster

clay court swing which yielded a round-of-16 exit in Monte Carlo and a semi-final loss on home ground in Belgrade.

Nadal, by comparison, has two titles in Rome and Barcelona but sobering quarter-final losses in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

"I actually now started to feel like I actually want to feel on clay," added Djokovic.

"So I think if I manage to play the way I played last night (against Lorenzo Sonego in a three-set semi-final) and today, I think I have a good chance to go all the way in Paris.

"Of course it's a long shot."

Djokovic has 18 Grand Slam titles to his name -- two behind the record of 20 shared by Nadal and Roger Federer.

However, only one of those has been captured at Roland Garros, in 2016 when Nadal withdrew with a wrist injury after the second round.

Djokovic was swept aside by Nadal in the 2020 final.

German FA Chief Resigns Over Nazi Comment

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Departing German FA president (DFB) Fritz Keller said the association "must change" on Monday as he officially resigned over comments he made comparing his deputy to a notorious Nazi-era judge.

"I am giving up my position as president so the DFB can make a far-reaching and necessary new start," said Keller in a lengthy statement on the federation's website, after announcing his plan to step down last week.

While accepting "personal responsibility" for his controversial comments, the departing president also slammed the "desolate leadership situation" at the scandal-hit federation and called for wide-reaching reforms.

"The DFB has to change. It has to win back its credibility and trust in its integrity," he said, adding that his resignation alone would "not solve the problems inside football and the DFB".

Keller sparked outrage and calls for his resignation after likening DFB vice-president Rainer Koch to Roland Freisler, the infamous head of the Nazi party's court in the 1940s, during a meeting last month. The 64-year-old later apologized to Koch, acknowledging that his words were "totally inappropriate, notably towards the victims of Nazism", and officially stepped down Monday after facing a DFB tribunal to explain his comments.

The scandal also exposed what appeared to be a fierce power struggle between Keller and his deputies at a federation which has lurched from crisis to crisis in recent years.



Federer Expects Battle to Get Back to the Top

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Roger Federer said Monday he expects to return to the top tier of tennis even though the next generation of players will have gained ground during his lengthy injury lay-off.

Federer begins his comeback-proper on Swiss home soil in Geneva on Tuesday, with the 39-year-old tennis legend starting a run of tournaments including the French Open, Halle, Wimbledon and then the Tokyo Olympics.

Federer returned to the courts in March, having been out for more than a year following two knee surgeries, winning his first match in Qatar before losing his second.

Doha was his first appearance since January 2020 and an Australian Open semi-final defeat to Novak Djokovic. "I'm just concerned about where my game is at. The guys on tour are all in a good rhythm. The level that everybody is producing in great. I want to achieve that as well again," Federer told reporters.

His old rivals Djokovic and Rafael Nadal played out a two-hour 49-minute final in Rome on Sunday, with Nadal claiming a 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 victory to match the Serbian world number one's record of 36 Masters 1000 series titles.

"I'm excited about the comeback, that's what my focus needs to be on and not about trying to be at the same level as Rafa and Novak right now," Federer said.

But the 20-time Grand Slam title winner added: "I believe I will be part of the top tier." Federer said he was impressed by the level of tennis on show during his absence from the tour.

