

**Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That The Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus in Iran Exceeded 78,381 With 187 More Iranians Who Died From the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Secretary of Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaei Said Yesterday That The Israeli Regime's Ceasefire Request Is a Sign of the Authority Of the Palestinian People and Gaza**

VOL. XXVII, No. 7228 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY MAY 23, 2021 - KHORDAD 2, 1400

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## Iran, China Sign Agreement on Asian Cultural Heritage Protection

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China and Iran on Saturday signed a cooperation agreement on Asian cultural heritage protection during an online workshop, the first bilateral agreement between the cultural heritage authorities in the two countries in the last decade.

According to the agreement, the two countries will carry out all-round cooperation in joint archaeology, preservation and restoration of cultural property, conservation, management, and sustainable development of world cultural heritage sites, exchange ideas for exhibitions and preservation technology and the prevention of trafficking of cultural property, Li Qun, head of China's National Cultural Heritage Administration, said at the conference.

"This joint statement is the first bilateral document signed by the cultural heritage authorities of the two countries in the past ten years, marking that the two countries' cultural heritage cooperation has entered a new stage of development and is of milestone significance for the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative," said Li.

Mohammad Hassan Talebian, Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in Iran, also expressed great willingness to promote the development of Asian Cultural heritage with China.

Mohammad Keshavarzzadeh, the Iranian Ambassador to China, also attended the event in Beijing.

## Fourth Wave of Coronavirus Gradually Ending in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Speaking at the meeting of the National Task Force for Combating the Coronavirus on Saturday morning, the Iranian President said the fourth wave of the coronavirus is gradually ending across Iran, and some cities are in the yellow and orange zones.

Hassan Rouhani stated: "When we enter the COVID peak, the instructions are well followed, but when we pass the peak, a false confidence is created in the society, and unfortunately, the protocols are reduced, negligence begins, and this becomes the next wave, and this is the main problem."

He added that the preservation of people's lives is the first priority of the government.

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## Leader Urges Muslim States to Have All-Out Support for Palestine



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has called on Muslim governments to provide military and financial support for Palestine and help the country rebuild the infrastructure destroyed during the recent clashes with Israel.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a Friday congratulatory message on the "victory of the resistant Palestinian nation against the Zionist regime" of Israel.

The Leader said the Islamic world is religiously responsible towards the Palestine issue.

"Muslim governments must honestly step into supporting Palestine and provide military and financial support (which is needed more than ever) and help them rebuild the infrastructure and damages," the Leader noted.

The savage and wolfish enemy correctly understood it is weak against Palestine's rise, the Leader said in his message.

He pointed to the cooperation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem with Gaza Strip, and described it as a test that made Palestine's future roadmap clear.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Israeli regime committed big crimes in Gaza Strip and proved that it can show shameful and insane behaviors, so much so that unite the entire world against itself.

He said both the continuation of those crimes and asking for a ceasefire was considered a failure for Israel, and Tel Aviv was finally forced into conceding defeat.

The Leader also vowed that Palestine will become stronger every day while Israel will get weaker than this.

He said the time to begin and stop clashes depends on the decision of Palestinian leaders, but getting prepared for powerful struggle will never stop.

Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the "Sheikh Jarrah" neighborhood's experience of resisting the Israeli settlers and the Tel Aviv regime, saying that the experience must turn into a permanent instruction for Palestinians.

He also stressed that the Israeli crimes must be prosecuted and legally pursued at the international level, saying that all elements involved in the recent atrocities, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, must be tried at the international courts.

## Luxembourg Court Lifts Seizure on Iran's Assets

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Supreme Court of Luxembourg has upheld ruling in lifting the seizure of Central Bank of Iran's assets meaning that Iran's assets will return home with no judicial roadblock.

Accordingly, Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdol-Nasser Hemmati said based on CBI lawyers' reports following Luxembourg Court of Appeals ruling, the Supreme Court in the appellate phase rejected the objection of the so-called anti-terrorism lawsuit filed in the United States and upheld lifting the seizure of central bank assets in Luxembourg.

Based on the ruling, other Luxembourg courts will be obliged to comply with it, meaning that the judicial barrier to the transfer of central bank assets to the country will be removed.

Last week, Iran's Central Bank said Luxembourg's judiciary system has stopped transfer of Iran's Central Bank (CBI) assets to the US.

The CBI announced on Thursday that according to the Hague branch of the Presidential Center for International Legal Affairs (CILA), the Luxembourg court confirmed the non-enforcement of US domestic laws for their courts and the need to recognize the issued votes from American courts by Luxembourg in the property file of the Central Bank before the Clearstream institute.

The bank said a similar act has been taken by Italy and France in the past.

The notification also added that based on the recent legislative changes in the United States, US courts can directly order the transfer of some assets that directly or indirectly belong to Iranian institutions including the Central Bank of Iran to the United States, regardless of their location.

The law explicitly ignores the national sovereignty of other countries.

It is emphasized in the announcement that the Central Bank of Iran has timely requested the Luxembourg district Court to issue an order banning the transfer of its assets just because of a US decision and by the Clearstream institute.

The Luxembourg court endorsed the request and insisted that any decree of a foreign court must be recognized and declared as effective by the courts of Luxembourg before it can be enforced in the national territory of that country.

## Serial Military Progresses Continue

Iran before the Islamic Revolution and even during the eight-year-Iraqi imposed war was one of the major purchasers of arms from other countries mostly Western and sometimes Russian but it has not turned into a major producers of different light and heavy weapons and it can also export its products to other countries.

On Thursday and in a ceremony Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) unveiled three important and strategic products in the fields of unmanned aerial vehicle and air defense system.

The super heavy combat drone, named Gaza, the "9th of Dey" surface-to-air missile system and the "Qods" radar system were unveiled on Friday during a ceremony attended by the IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami and the IRGC Aerospace Division Brigadier General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh.

Gaza is a wide-body drone manufactured by Iranian experts that can carry out various surveillance, combat and reconnaissance missions with flight duration of 35 hours.

It is capable of carrying 13 bombs in a range of 2,000 kilometers in combat missions. The new drone can also carry 500 kilograms of various reconnaissance and signal and intelligence equipment.

After joining the IRGC Aerospace Division's drone fleet, it will improve the force's intelligence command and capability to counter the enemies' threats.

In addition to military and defense applications, the Gaza drone can also carry out missions in monitoring forests, rescue operations and providing assistance in natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

The IRGC also unveiled the complete domestically-manufactured surface-to-air missile system, named the 9th of Dey, which has the capability to confront and destroy various threats at a close range such as cruise missiles, aircraft bombs, and different drones.

The Qods radar system has the capability to be deployed in a position and moved quickly.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great progress in indigenously developing and manufacturing a broad range of equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in this regard.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the Islamic Republic will not hesitate to build up its defense capabilities, emphasizing such abilities are entirely meant for the purpose of defense and will be never subject to negotiations.

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## Life of al-Quds Occupiers in Hands of Palestinian Fighters

TEHRAN (PressTV)- The chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces has congratulated the Palestinian people over their victory against the Israeli regime, saying the life of the occupying Israeli regime is in the hands of Palestinian fighters.

In a message on Saturday, Major General Mohammad Baqeri said the latest asymmetrical battle between the oppressive Zionist regime and Palestine was a manifestation of the regime's defeats against Palestinians and a promising event foreshadowing the final victory of Palestine.

"We are confident that the countdown to the promised collapse of the oppressive, criminal and cruel Zionist regime is nearing zero, and the heroic Palestine ... has been imposing its rightful iron will more powerfully than any other era on the despicable usurpers of al-Quds and has placed them in a position of weakness and powerlessness," Baqeri said. Palestinians on Friday took to the streets to celebrate Israel's defeat in its latest confrontation with resistance groups in the Gaza Strip, as the regime declared a ceasefire early in the morning after 12 days of heavy bombardment of Gaza, to which the resistance responded with firing thousands of rockets into the Israeli-occupied territories.

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# Iran, Russia Consult on Counter-Terrorism

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's ambassador to Russia met with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister to discuss counter-terrorism and extremism.

The Iranian ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali and the Russian deputy foreign minister Oleg Vladimirovich Syromolotov discussed important international issues in counter-terrorism and extremism. They discussed the prospects of Iran-Russia cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

In recent years, Iran and Russia have had extensive cooperation in the field of figuring international terrorism.

## Iran Not to Hesitate to Fully Support Palestinians

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

**TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to fully support the Palestinian people against Zionist regime's aggression on the occupied lands and territories.**

Following the disgraceful retreat of Zionist regime from its attack on Gaza, Iranian Parliament Speaker Qalibaf wrote in his twitter account, "The brave and courageous people of Palestine in the occupied lands and territories rubbed the noses of Zionists, who are the greatest enemies of the God Almighty and humanity in contemporary world of today, into the soil."

He reiterated that Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to fully support the oppressed Palestinian people even for a moment.

During the 11-day clashes between the Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza and the Zionist regime, more than 4,000 rockets were fired at occupied lands of Palestine by Hamas and Islamic Jihad armed wings Qassam and al-Quds Brigades, hundreds of which hit the ground in the occupied land calling into question the effectiveness of the Iron Dome air defense system in intercepting and destroying Palestinian resistance rockets.

Meanwhile Foreign Ministry offered congratulations on the victory of the Palestinian resistance in defending the cause and the sanctities of Palestinians, and imposing a new equation on the Israeli regime.

In a statement on Friday night, the Foreign Ministry hailed the perseverance and sacrifices of the Palestinian resistance and people, especially in Gaza, in the face of atrocious attacks by the Zionist Israeli regime.



The Ministry reiterated Iran's support for the Palestinian nation's struggle, and commemorated the martyrs of Gaza and the entire Palestine.

"Among the blessings of the recent developments were the solidarity of different Palestinian territories and revival of their relations, renewal of discussions on the Palestinian issue in the regional and global levels, widespread public support for the Palestinian resistance and more disgrace for the Zionist occupiers as well as promotion of Quds as a link among all Palestinians and the Islamic world," the statement read.

"The victorious resistance of the Palestinian people clearly demonstrated the failure of the shameful process of normalisation [of ties with Israel] by some Arab countries. Therefore, these countries are expected to respect the resistance of the Palestinian people and the lofty ideal of liberation of the holy Quds, reverse the wrong course they are treading, and seriously reconsider their policies."

The Foreign Ministry also condemned as a horrible crime the Zionist regime's attacks on residential areas of Palestine and the killing of defenceless people, and urged that the leaders of the regime be put on trial as war criminals and the actions of the child-killing regime be identified as genocide and crime against humanity.

## VP Opens Innovation Centre to Boost Home Appliances Production

TEHRAN (IFP) - An innovation and creativity center, part of which is dedicated to the production of innovative home appliances, has opened in the central Iranian province of Isfahan.

The center was opened by Iranian Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari.

"The path has opened for creative ideas to enter the household appliances sector," said the vice president during a ceremony where the center was inaugurated. He said now the infrastructure and ground has been prepared to establish an innovation area at the University of Isfahan.

"The existence of a scientific and research township as well as numerous knowledge-based units in this province shows the firm determination of officials and managers in the province to develop the ecosystem for technology and innovation," he said.

Sattari will also open a chamber for culturing livestock feed belonging to an Iranian company and a fabric production line, and will equip a firm at Isfahan's Scientific and Research Township.

The provincial Andisheh Technology Tower will also be put into service during the vice president's visit.

## Iran National Innovation Fund to Attend Austria's Global Innovation Summit

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Global Innovation Summit 2021 (GIS 2021) virtual event will be held in the city of Graz, Austria, from May 18 to 20, 2021, under the slogan "Exploring New Perspectives".

Iran National Innovation Fund (INIF) as the most important player in the financing of TBF's and innovation ecosystem in Iran will participate in this event to carry out its missions.

This event will be held under the supervision of the Austrian Research Development Institute (FFG), the Austrian Federal Ministry of Environment, Energy, Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs.

GIS 2021 provides an international meeting place for businesses, innovators, researchers and funding experts to network, share knowledge and develop

new business ideas.

Attendees can also learn about world-wide business collaboration and funding opportunities in Eureka and Horizon Europe.

In this event, international speakers will share their inspirational stories of the journey and growth of their ideas and innovations.

The Global Innovation Summit with its focus on Green Transition, Digital Transformation and Post-COVID Era will give all audiences the chance to extend their network in their respective field of interest.

According to Ali Chegeni, INIF's senior expert of international affairs, this 3-day event is held in cooperation with an executive partner from Iran- the Iranian Technology and Innovation Management Association- for the first time.

### Palestine's Victory Brings Israel's Downfall Closer at Hand

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has congratulated Palestinian resistance groups on their victory against the Israeli regime.

In a statement, the IRGC said the "Sword of Quds" operation indicated the upper hand of the Intifada on the ground, and showed equations had been tipped in favor of Palestinian groups in their struggles against Israeli occupiers. At a sensitive juncture, read the statement, the wrath and willpower of Palestinian resistance groups in the occupied territories shattered the goals and dreams of the criminal Israeli regime as well as mercenary rulers in some Islamic countries, which have normalized their relations with Tel Aviv.

This triumph brought the downfall of the Israeli regime closer at hand, added the statement.

The statement also urged the Tel Aviv regime to take "practical steps" to end its aggression against Quds and the al-Aqsa mosque. The statement also warned Israel against any miscalculations and daydreaming about fresh crimes and warmongering.

"The cancerous tumor of Israel is on the decline and on the path to annihilation," said part of the statement.

"The occupiers have well realized that they will be unable to perpetuate their bullying, violence and killing of defenseless Palestinian women, men and children, and to repeat their brutal and medieval adventurism, and that they should, from now on, think about their criminal scenarios in Palestine with caution and fear because Palestinian groups will no longer pay attention to their hollow threats," read the statement.

## Tehran, Baku Sign Cooperation Contract

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Azerbaijan and Iran have signed a contract in Tabriz city of East Azerbaijan Province (northwestern Iran) in order to study issues and problems on highways and cargo transportation, said the Director-General of Department of Transportation, said Javad Hedayati, reports citing Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran.

The director-general stressed that the two sides agreed to increase cargo transportation through joint international corridors and enhance bilateral trade relations.

Hedayati added that the issues facing international cargo companies were discussed at the meeting in Tabriz. As well as discussions were conducted on the reduction of transportation costs and the rules of the border terminals of the two countries.

Reportedly, a two-day meeting was held in the Iranian city of Tabriz with the participation of Azerbaijani and Iranian road and transport officials. The meeting was chaired by Javad Hedayati from Iran and Head of the State Automobile Transport Service (DANX) of Azerbaijan under the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies Habib Hasanov from Azerbaijan.

## Spokesman Announces Covid-19 Restrictions for Vote Campaigns

TEHRAN (MNA) – Any in-door elections campaign gatherings are banned, the number of polling stations will double, according to Alireza Raisi, Spokesman of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus, on Saturday.

Dr Alireza Raisi, Spokesman of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus, said on Saturday that the task force attaches great importance to observing the Covid-19 restrictions, especially on the day of the upcoming elections in June 18, adding that the body has already announced its guidelines for elections campaigns already.

Raisi added that except for special meetings held on the IRIB (radio and television) complex that will take place with the attendance of few people, the rest of the election meetings must be held outdoors. He also noted that the campaign gatherings outdoors, social distancing must be practiced and the participants must all put on masks.

The spokesman added that there must be eight square meters of space for each person in elections gatherings, stressing that stadiums and sports complexes can only operate with 30% of their capacity by candidates.

He went on to say that the number of polling stations will double on election day. Elsewhere, he said that the vaccination of people above the age of 70 against Covid-19 started on Saturday.

He said that there are enough vaccines available, expressing hope that people aged above 65 will receive the vaccines next week.

## Tehran, OIC to Establish Science Parks in Member States



ISLAMABAD (IP) - The Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan and the Chairman of the OIC Ministerial Committee on the Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech) discussed the ways to develop cooperation, including in the establishment of science parks and performing joint techno- Science projects in the member states.

Dr. Iqbal Chaudhry, Pakistan Chairman of COMSTech, met with Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Hosseini, at the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad.

The Pakistani official briefed the Iranian ambassador on plans for the development of science and technology projects in the Organization of Islamic Co-operations (OIC) member states.

Iqbal Chaudhry and Mohammad Ali Hosseini discussed the establishment of science and technology parks, the exchange program of students and professors of Iranian universities and other members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the research program of the COMSTech in Africa, and capacity building in the body.

## Iran, Georgia Discuss Ways to Solve Iranian Investors' Problems in Tbilisi

TBILISI (IP) - Iranian ambassador to Tbilisi and the Georgian minister of finance discussed the problems of Iranian investors in Georgia during a meeting.

Europe: Iranian Ambassador to Georgia Akbar Qasemi and Georgian Finance Minister Lasha Khutishvili discussed customs cooperation, the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea corridors, and the problems of Iranian investors.

Referring to the strategic role of human factors in strengthening relations between the two countries, Qasemi said: "It will be difficult to pursue the major interests of the two countries, regardless of consolidating the stabilizing processes in solving the problems of Iranian investors in Georgia and finding appropriate solutions to solve their travel and residence problems."

Lasha Khutishvili also referred to Iran's key role in the region and its important position, stressed the constructive and forward relations, and called for the development of ties between the two countries in transportation, increased economic, trade, and trade customs cooperation.

He underlined Tbilisi's readiness to take new steps to advance Iran-Georgian relations.

He also noted his readiness to seek and find an efficient solution to investors' problems, especially in connection with the residence of Iranians. He provided a comprehensive package to be provided by the embassy to the Finance Ministry to take the necessary measures to solve the problems through joint efforts of the relevant bodies.

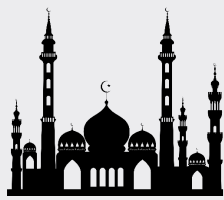
## Iran Opens Its Consulate-General In Syria's Aleppo

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran has opened its consulate-general in the Syrian city of Aleppo following an agreement between the Iranian Foreign Minister and the Syrian government.

The consulate-general was opened by Iran's ambassador to Syria in a Saturday ceremony in Aleppo, which was virtually attended by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad.

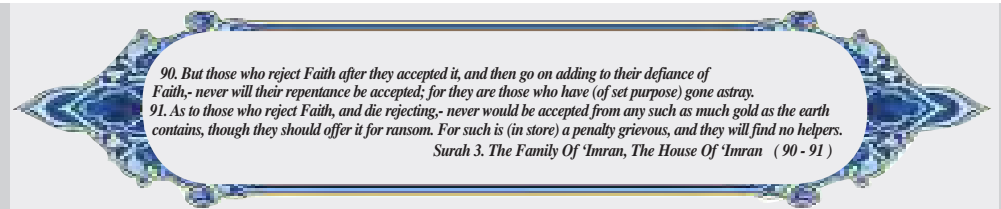
Following Zarif's recent trip to Damascus and his consultations with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Foreign Minister Mekdad, the Syrian government gave Iran the green light for the inauguration of the consulate-general in Aleppo. The Syrian Arab Republic's Foreign Ministry later gave its consent in written.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:11
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:53



90. But those who reject Faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of Faith,- never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have (of set purpose) gone astray.  
91. As to those who reject Faith, and die rejecting,- never would be accepted from any such as much gold as the earth contains, though they should offer it for ransom. For such is (in store) a penalty grievous, and they will find no helpers.  
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (90 - 91)

## Iranian Drivers Not Allowed to Travel In Turkmenistan

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

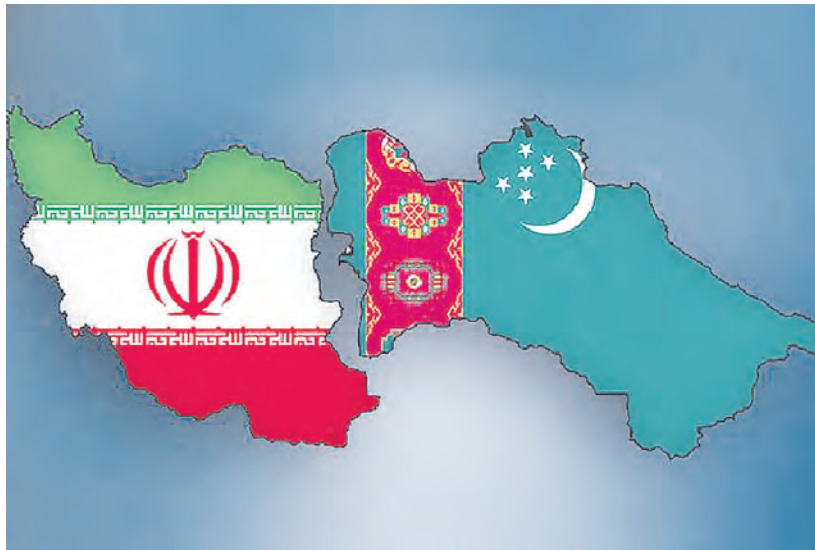
**TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid Mohammadnejad says the borders of Iran and Turkmenistan are open but the travels are done under certain conditions with observing all sanitary protocols announced by the Turkmenistan government and Iranian truck drivers are not allowed to travel inside Turkmenistan.**

Speaking to ILNA, Mohammadnejad said that rail and road exports and imports to and from Turkmenistan will be possible if there are Turkmen carts and trailers at the borders and Iranian drivers and their trailers are not allowed to enter Turkmenistan's land.

On the trend of Iran-Turkmenistan trade after the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, he said after the pandemic, all the systems in the world faced challenges and crippled with major problems and changes, and regarding Iran and Turkmenistan trade ties, he can point to the closure of their borders.

He added that Iran and Turkmenistan borders were closed for 10 months and they were reopened under certain condition and the trade resumed.

Mohammadnejad went on to say that due to the lockdown in Turkmenistan and the fourth wave of the virus in Iran, there is no exact details on the amount of the road trade like the pre-COVID-19 era but the three borders of Inchebron, Sarakhs and Lotfabad are



active and the trade with Turkmenistan and other countries continue like the past.

He reiterated that exports via railway system are active but the road trade has been stopped and the border markets due to the lack of traffic of trucks have been almost idle.

Mohammadnejad noted that Iranian drivers and their trucks and trailers are not allowed to enter Turkmenistan and exports and imports to inside Turkmenistan are carried out through Turkmen trailers and carts.

He said Iran's major imports from Uzbekistan are carried out via the Lotf Abad border while Iran's exports to Tajikistan are done via this border but due to dispute between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, Iran's exports to Tajikistan are done via Uzbekistan.

Earlier this month the Iranian Expediency Council okayed the creation of a free trade and industrial zone in Incheh-Boron in Golestan province on the border with Turkmenistan. Incheh-Boron is one of the key points along the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran rail corridor (north-south).

## Over 1,600km of Freeways, Highways To Be Inaugurated by End of 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister Kheirollah Khademi has said 440 kilometers (km) of freeways and 1,200 km of highways will be added to the country's road network by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2022).

Khademi noted that the ministry prioritized the completion of nine major freeway projects which would have the biggest impact on the country's transportation and transit operations over the past two years and these projects have had average progress of more than 70 percent so far. "Two of the mentioned projects were put into operation in the previous year and 221 kilometers of freeways were completed across the country," he told IRIB.

Khademi, who is also the managing director of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), stressed that the completion of 221 km of freeways in the previous year was achieved despite the fact that the annual freeway construction in the country has been 80 km.

As for the country's highways development, the official said the completion of 2,000 km of highways has also been put on the agenda, of which last year 170 km was completed.

"Most of the highways that are going to be inaugurated this year are part of the East-West and North-South corridors, which will be a big step towards the development of freight, transit, and passenger transportation in the country," he noted.

## Home Appliance Industry Posts Annual Growth of 78%

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki said that the country's home appliance industry experienced a 78-percent growth in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Last year, the industry was able to achieve 78 percent growth despite the restrictions on the manufacturing sector, the official said, adding, "While foreign brands left Iran, manufacturers were able to achieve this leap by relying on domestic capacities."

Back in April, the official had said that considering the Iranian home appliance industry's infrastructure and capacities, the country will be able to become an exporter of such products in the near future because most of the raw materials needed by the mentioned sector are produced domestically. Stating that the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry will definitely support domestic manufacturers and national brands, the official added: "Today we have the necessary manpower, knowledge, and infrastructure in the field, so there is no reason to look for foreign sources to meet the country's demands."

Over the past few years, the Iranian government has been following a new strategy for supporting domestic production to neutralize the impacts of the U.S. sanctions while reducing the reliance of the economy on oil revenues.

The home appliances sector has been one of the pioneers in this regard and like many other areas, the production of home appliances has witnessed a significant rise in the past two years so that this industry's production capacity increased by 24 percent in the past Iranian year, and by 10 percent in its preceding year.

## Country Facing Serious Power Shortage This Summer

**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN - Iranian energy officials anticipate serious electricity shortages this summer, partly due to reduction in hydroelectric power generation due to drought, the general manager of the electricity grid said.

Mohammad-Hassan Motevalizadeh told a meeting convened to discuss power needs during summer that the country has an electricity shortage of at least 5,000 megawatts a day. This is roughly a ten percent shortage if consumption remains as high as last summer when it reached 56,000 megawatts.

Summers pose a challenge to Iran's electricity capacity as hot weather increases the use of air conditioning, especially in the south where temperatures can easily reach 110 F and higher.

This year drought has limited hydroelectric power generation and Motevalizadeh also referred to a big surge in cryptocurrency mining which poses a substantial burden on the power network. He called for banning "illegal" mining. However, the government permits well-connected entities and Chinese operators to set up large crypto mining farms.

Iran mines roughly 5 percent of world cryptocurrencies, which requires a high amount of electricity used by tens of thousands of computers. Iran offers one of the world's cheapest electricity rates, which makes electronic mining of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies more profitable.

## Jask Terminal Ready to Receive Crude Oil From Gulf of Oman

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN- Jask oil terminal, in southern Iran, is ready to receive crude oil from the Gulf of Oman, the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) stated.

Announcing the 98-percent progress in the project of constructing the terminal, Mohammad Meshkinfam said Jask terminal is prepared for receiving, loading, and transferring crude oil via the single point mooring (SPM) export facility.

Making the remarks while visiting the stages of the project for constructing the terminal, Meshkinfam said, "Due to the experience and expertise in the implementation of offshore projects, the construction of this oil terminal was entrusted to Pars Oil and Gas Company, and fortunately, with the unremitting efforts of my colleagues, this project has achieved considerable progress."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company pointed to the sending crude oil from the origin of Goreh to Jask by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in recent days, and stated, "According to the scheduled programs, we are ready to receive, transfer and load crude oil by export tankers from Makran coastal areas".

As the country's second major oil terminal, Jask terminal is under construction by POGC on 60 hectares of land and with nearly €260 million of investment.

In line with the development of the mentioned oil terminal, a pipeline project, dubbed the Goreh-Jask oil transfer project, is also underway which is going to provide Iran with an alternative route for the country's crude oil exports that are currently carried out through the Strait of Hormuz.

Last week, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced the beginning of oil transfer operation through Goreh-Jask pipeline which is laid from Goreh oil terminal in the southwestern Bushehr Province to Jask oil terminal along the Gulf of Oman.

Goreh-Jask project, which is aimed at expanding the oil transport capacity in the south of the country to one million barrels a day, was started in late June 2020.



## IME Sees Rise In Weekly Trade

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 861,793 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$554m, showing 36% and 40% of growth in volume and value of trades respectively as compared to the previous week.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its mineral and industrial trading floor, 518,793 tons of commodities worth more than \$350m.

On this floor the IME sold 399,269 tons of steel, 1,120 tons of copper, 680 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 24 tons of precious metals concentrate, 106,000 tons of iron ore pellets and concentrate, 480 tons of zinc, 100 ton of lead, 10,000 tons of sponge iron (DRI) and 4 kg of gold bars.

The next trading floor was the oil and petrochemicals with 338,363 tons of commodities sold on its both domestic and export pits, valued at more than \$200m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 83,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 88,868 tons of bitumen, 80,255 tons of polymeric products, 38,437 tons of chemicals, 43,000 tons of lube cut, 3,691 tons of base oil, 60 tons of argon and 200 tons of sulfur.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 4,423 tons of commodities traded on it.

## Developing and Improving Quality of Industries Is IDRO's Priority

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) says the main priority of the programs of IDRO is to develop and improve the quality of industries.



While visiting Sabzevar Khodro Cable Company and inaugurating the projects of this company, Mr. Mohsen Salehinia said considering the unprofessional behavior in the international trade by Iran's foreign partners after the illegal U.S. sanctions, production of some of the auto parts, which were imported by the auto industry in the past, were indigenized with local capabilities.

He noted that production of indigenized parts of the assembled cars as well as developing and reforming the structure, renovation and improving the quality of production by utilizing the domestic capacities has been the main priorities of IDRO's programs.

Salehinia noted that this year 50,000 Tara car will be produced at Iran Khodro Company, stating that with the defined development and with the amount of production of cars through employing the specialized forces, expansion and renovation of auto industry in the country is provided.

He referred to the existing capacities at Iran Khodro Company and said the technical and engineering capacities of the personnel of Sabzevar Khodro Cable Company, one of the strongest sub-divisions of Iran Khodro, can meet the demands of this auto-making company.

## Successful Week of PGSOC at Int'l Ring of IRENEX

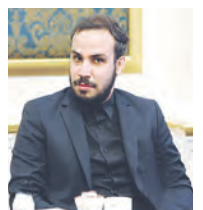
**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN - Sales and Marketing Manager Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) explained two successful offers of the company at the international ring of Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) and said the company due to its volume of production is the main actor in defining the price of naphtha in the Persian Gulf region and at the Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Reza Karamad explained successful offering of light naphtha of PGSOC at the international ring of IRENEX and said the day before offering surpassed 60,000 metric tons which was warmly welcomed by the activists in the market and still the price of naphtha sale of Persian Gulf Star Refinery is the highest export price for naphtha in Iran, reiterating the sale bespeaks the market stability of PGSOC's naphtha products in East Asia.

He went on to say that one of the other offerings of the company at the international ring was the heavy end product of the company, saying that 620,000 barrels of this product was offered at the IRENEX for discovery of the price which was a successful and unprecedented offering in the history of the IRENEX. Karamad noted that offering of the products at the energy exchange leads to more transparency regarding the sale of the products and expressed hope with logical planning and using all capacities one could see broader activities and brilliance of PGSOC at the IRENEX.

He stated the super refinery of the country, due to massive volume of production, programs and monitoring and analyzing the target markets, has been the main actor in defining the price of products specially the naphtha at the IRENEX.





## Moscow Mayor Decries Low Demand for COVID-19 Vaccines

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin on Friday lamented how few residents had chosen to get vaccinated against COVID-19 despite free and easy access to shots since January, a rare admission by a Russian politician of the extent of the problem.

Hospitals in the Russian capital continue to be packed with sick and dying people, Sobyanin said, despite vaccines against the disease being widely available for almost six months.

"It is remarkable... People are getting sick, they continue to get sick, they continue to die. And yet they still don't want to get vaccinated," Sobyanin said in comments made at a meeting with activists last week but published in a blog post on Friday.



## Argentina Announces Strict Coronavirus Lockdown

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina will go into strict lockdown starting this weekend, for the first time this year after more than 35,000 coronavirus infections were reported for the third straight day and the death toll soared.

The measures will last from Saturday until May 31, and will limit circulation and suspend social, business, educational, religious and sporting activities. Workers with essential jobs will be exempt from the measures. "We are living the worst moment since the pandemic began," President Alberto Fernandez said in a message broadcast by the national TV channel on Thursday. "We are seeing the highest numbers of cases and deaths. We must take this critical situation seriously and not naturalise so much tragedy."



## Israel, Hamas Both Claim Victory As Fragile Ceasefire Takes Hold



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israel and Hamas both claimed victory on Friday after their forces ended 11 days of fighting, but a clash between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters in Jerusalem underscored the fragility of the truce.

Egypt, which mediated the pre-dawn end to the worst hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians in years, discussed measures to avoid a resumption of the militant rocket attacks from Gaza on Israel and Israeli strikes on the enclave.

The Gaza violence was set off on May 10 in part by Israeli police raids on the al-Aqsa mosque compound and clashes with Palestinians during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Thousands gathered there again for this Friday's prayers, with many staying on to demonstrate in support of Gaza.

Israeli police fired stun grenades towards demonstrators, who threw rocks and petrol bombs at officers, and Palestinian medics said some 20 Palestinians were wounded.

The confrontations died down within about an hour, with Israeli police pulling back to the compound's gates.

In Gaza, five more bodies were pulled from the rubble in the densely populated Palestinian enclave, taking the death toll to 243, including 66 children, with more than 1,900 wounded.

The Israeli military said an Israeli soldier had been killed as well as 12 civilians; hundreds have been treated for injuries after rocket salvos that caused panic and sent people as far away as Tel Aviv rushing into shelters.

Palestinians who had huddled in fear of Israeli shelling poured into Gaza's streets, embracing one another in celebration in front of bombed-out buildings. Mosque loudspeakers feted "the victory of the resistance" and cars drove around flying Palestinian flags and honking horns.

Egypt said it would send two delegations to monitor the truce, which began at 2 a.m. (2300 GMT), as the warring parties said they were ready to retaliate for any violations.

Civilians on both sides of the front line were sceptical.

"What is truce? What does it mean?" said Samira Abdallah Naseer, a mother of 11 children sitting near the wreckage of a building near Beit Hanoun in the north of the Gaza Strip. "We returned to our houses, and we found no place to sit, no water, no electricity, no mattresses, nothing," she said.

In a cafe in the Israeli port city of Ashdod, north of Gaza, student Dan Kiri, 25, said Israel should continue attacking Hamas until it collapsed.

"It's only a matter of time until the next operation in Gaza," he said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the operation had damaged the ability of Hamas, the Islamist group which runs Gaza, to launch missiles at Israel.

Netanyahu said the Israeli military had attacked and destroyed Hamas's extensive tunnel network in Gaza, its rocket factories, weapons laboratories and storage facilities, and killed more than 200 militants, including 25 senior figures.

## Pharma Firms, G20 Leaders Pledge Vaccines for Poorer Nations

ROME (AFP) - Coronavirus vaccine producers promised billions of doses for poor countries at a G20 health summit Friday, where leaders vowed to expand access to jabs as the only way to end the pandemic.

The bosses of Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson announced they would supply around 3.5 billion vaccine doses at cost or discount to low- and middle-income countries this year and next.

Meanwhile the European Union pledged to donate 100 million doses and invest in regional manufacturing hubs in Africa to reduce the continent's reliance on imports.

The summit was billed as an attempt to learn lessons from the pandemic, which has killed more than 3.4 million people globally since it emerged in late 2019. But while many rich countries are enjoying a slowdown in infections thanks to vaccination drives, many others are still battling fresh surges.

"As we prepare for the next pandemic, our priority must be to ensure that we all overcome the current one together," Draghi told the summit.

"We must vaccinate the world -- and do it fast."

In Washington, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) report emphasized the same message, with a \$50-billion (41-billion euro) plan to end the pandemic focused heavily on expanding vaccines.



## Taliban Attacks End Short-Lived Local Ceasefire

KABUL (Dispatches) - Taliban insurgents launched attacks in a district of eastern Afghanistan where local elders had brokered a one-month ceasefire, dashing hopes of a temporary truce, residents and officials said.

The ceasefire - a rare event as fighting ramps up around the country - had begun on Tuesday to allow local people to harvest wheat and students to sit exams.

"Unfortunately the Taliban could not keep their promise, they started attacks against Afghan security forces checkpoints," said Malik Wares, a tribal elder in Laghman province's Alingar district.

"They will always be guilty before the tribes in Laghman."

The Taliban did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The head of Laghman's provincial council said the fighting had started late on Thursday and the Taliban had also captured another district in the province.

"It is very sad seeing that our efforts are wasted," said Jaber Alkozai, a resident of Alingar. "Initially people, especially farmers, were very happy when the Taliban and local government accepted people's demand for a ceasefire, but now it looks like we have to expect very bad days ahead."

Clashes have escalated in Afghanistan as the United States and NATO forces withdraw troops.

Washington, neighboring Pakistan and other countries have tried to pressure the Taliban to reduce violence, negotiate a peace settlement and announce a ceasefire, but progress has been slow and violence has risen.

Foreign forces are set to withdraw by September 11. Analysts and officials say the

Taliban is increasing pressure in the east and south of the country where they have a heavy presence, including in Laghman province as they take hold of districts and close in on provincial capitals.

## Pakistan Blast Kills Six, Wounds 13 at Pro-Palestinian Rally

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - A bomb blast killed six people on Friday at a pro-Palestinian rally in southwest Pakistan and wounded 13, including the leader of a hardline religious party that organized the event, police said, but there was no immediate claim of responsibility.

The motorcycle bomb exploded as people dispersed at the end of the rally held in the city of Chaman near the Afghan border in the province of Balochistan, the region's police chief, Jafar Khan, told Reuters by telephone.

He added that the bombing also wounded Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni, a cleric and leader of the religious party, which has a history of supporting Afghan Taliban militants.

The mineral-rich province bordering Iran and Afghanistan has long been convulsed by a nationalists' insurgency seeking a greater share in the profits from exploitation of regional resources.

Other operators included Islamist militants linked to the Afghan and local Taliban as well as the Islamic State group. The province is home to the newly expanded Gwadar deepwater port, the centrepiece of a planned \$65-billion investment in China's Belt and Road Initiative economic corridor.

In April, a car bomb exploded in the parking area of a luxury hotel in the provincial headquarters of Quetta, killing four and wounding 11.

China's envoy to Pakistan, who had been staying at the hotel, was away at the time, however.



## New Catalan Leader Vows to Keep Up Independence Fight

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Moderate separatist leader Pere Aragonés pledged to keep up Catalonia's fight for independence as he was elected Friday president of the northern Spanish region which tried to break away four years ago, plunging the country into turmoil.

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

The 38-year-old Aragonés has called on Madrid to organise an independence referendum for Catalonia, one of the country's richest regions and home to about 7.8 million people.

The regional "government aims to ensure that the independence of Catalonia is possible", he said Friday before his election by local MPs.

That followed a regional election in February in which separatist parties captured more than half of the vote. But squabbling delayed the formation of a government. However, three Catalan separatist parties put aside their policy differences and united in their desire for independence, backing Aragonés as the new president.

"Now, we must resolve this political conflict through dialogue, negotiation... we will push ahead with negotiations, which will not be easy."

The jurist, the highest ranking leader of the leftist ERC party not in jail over Catalonia's failed bid to break away, is now one of the staunchest defenders of dialogue with Madrid.

In addition to an independence referendum, he wants amnesty for exiled or jailed leaders of the separatist movement. Both options have been roundly rejected by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's leftist government.

Aragonés has been Catalonia's acting president since September 2020.

He took over from Quim Torra of the more hardline Together for Catalonia (JxC) party, who was banned from holding public office after being convicted by Spanish courts of disobedience.

Aragonés was the right-hand man of ERC leader and former Catalan vice president Oriol Junqueras, currently serving a 13-year jail term.

He implements decisions taken by Junqueras from behind bars.







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## Microsoft Announces Retirement of Internet Explorer

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Microsoft said it is retiring Internet Explorer, the browser it created more than 25 years and which is now largely abandoned as people instead use competitors like Google's Chrome or Apple's Safari. "We are announcing that the future of Internet Explorer on Windows 10 is in Microsoft Edge," the company said in a blog post Wednesday, referring to its other browser. "Not only is Microsoft Edge a faster, more secure and more modern browsing experience than Internet Explorer, but it is also able to address a key concern: compatibility for older, legacy websites and applications," Microsoft said.



## Ending COVID-19 Pandemic Possible at Cost of Some \$50b

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund on Friday unveiled a \$50 billion proposal to end the COVID-19 pandemic by vaccinating at least 40% of the population in all countries by the end of 2021 and at least 60% by the first half of 2022.

Doing so, IMF officials say, would inject the equivalent of \$9 trillion into the global economy by 2025 due to a faster resumption of economic activity, with rich countries potentially benefiting the most.

The crisis has killed more than 3.5 million people across the world, and projections point to highly unequal health prospects well into 2022, which poses "severe risks for the world," the IMF said.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told a health summit hosted by the European Commission and Group of 20 major economies that it made sense for rich economies to boost donations to ensure a faster end to the pandemic.

"Advanced economies - asked to contribute most to this effort - would likely see the highest return on public investment in modern history, capturing 40% of the GDP gains and roughly \$1 trillion in additional tax revenues," she said in her prepared remarks.

The proposal, drafted by IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath and staff economist Ruchir Agarwal, builds on efforts already under way by the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, United Nations, World Health Organization and other groups.

Implementing the plan would cost some \$50 billion, with \$35 billion to be paid for by grants from rich countries, private and multilateral donors, and the remaining \$15 billion to be funded by national governments using low- or no-interest financing available from multilateral development banks.

G20 countries had already recognized the need for some \$22 billion in grants to tackle the crisis, leaving some \$13 billion in additional grants needed to reach the \$50 billion, the IMF authors said.

The plan calls for upfront financing, vaccine donations and moves to ensure free cross-border flows of raw materials and finished vaccines, as well as some \$8 billion in investments to diversify and increase vaccine production capacity worldwide.

The IMF projected some 1 billion doses could be donated this year even if countries prioritized their own populations, and 1 billion additional doses should be produced by early 2022 to handle downside risks, such as new variants that require booster shots.

While the vaccine supply was still limited, it called for \$30 billion in spending on widespread testing, sufficient therapeutics and preparations for vaccine deployment, as well as \$2 billion to evaluate and implement dose-stretching strategies.

Without urgent actions, many emerging and developing countries might have to wait until the end of 2022 or later to bring the pandemic under control, they said.

## 40% of UK Firms Expect Fall in EU Trade

LONDON (Dispatches) - Four in 10 UK companies expect that their annual trade with the European Union (EU) will fall in the coming year in comparison to pre-pandemic levels, new research has shown.

According to figures from the Institute of Directors (IoD), which surveyed 738 directors who are actively trading with the EU or have temporarily suspended trade, more than one-third anticipated no change over the year ahead. However, one in five believed that trade would increase. The survey, which was conducted between 19 April and 10 May, also found that some 60% of British firms are still finding it challenging to adjust to new trading arrangements brought on by Brexit.

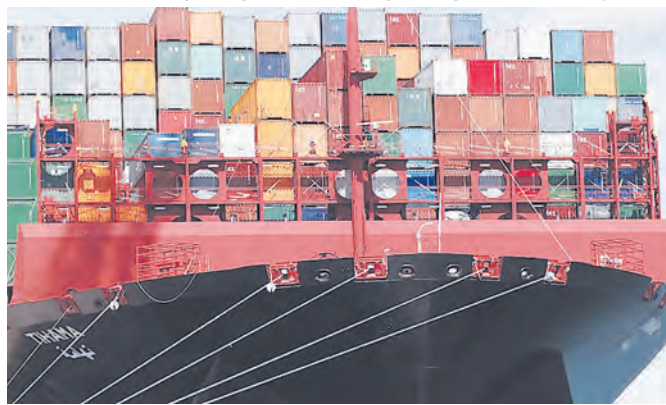
Britain's exit from the European Single Market on 1 January 2021 led to new trading rules with the EU that slowed the movement of goods and left some businesses struggling.

Customs changes, and the new non-tariff barriers across goods and services trade were cited among the biggest obstacles, the IoD said. These difficulties have also been exacerbated by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

During the first quarter of this year, a number of firms were treading water as restrictions lingered. Now that the UK economy is reopening, many are evaluating whether it remains viable for them to trade with the EU.

It comes after the Institute published a report last week to set out a roadmap for cooperation between the UK and EU on a positive long-term global trade agenda. It argued that there is an urgent need to stabilise relationships with the EU to support traders.

"It has been a tumultuous time for UK firms with EU customers and supply chains. The double whammy of the pandemic and the costs of adjusting to new trading arrangements is likely to dampen trade with the bloc over the coming year at least,"



## Total Rebrands as Total Energies in Climate Push

PARIS (Dispatches) - French group Total, one of the world's biggest energy companies, is preparing to change its name to TotalEnergies to signal its diversification towards cleaner energy sources.

The group, founded in 1924 as the Compagnie française des pétroles, is set to propose the new name on May 28 during a shareholders' general assembly. Total has begun to invest more in solar and wind power, but it is under pressure to do more as climate issues rise closer to the top of investors' agendas. "The group is expressing its intention to transform itself into a multi-energy company to respond to the twin challenges faced by energy transitions: more energy and fewer emissions," chief executive Patrick Pouyanne said in a French-language statement. This year, Total plans to devote more than 20 percent of its investment budget to renewable energy sources as well as electricity.

But environmental activists say it must do more to fight climate change, and on Tuesday the International Energy Agency said all future fossil fuel projects must be scrapped if the world is to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. That is needed if the world is to limit global warming.

Towards that end, the Total board is expected to present a climate resolution during the general assembly, a move it resisted last year.

Total would not be the first energy giant to change its name to reflect the changing times.

Denmark's Dong—a name that originated from Danish Oil and Natural Gas—changed its name to Orsted as part of a green rebrand in 2017. And Norway's Statoil renamed to Equinor in 2018, in a similar bid to reflect its diversification towards cleaner energy sources.

## Boeing Plans New 737 MAX Output Jump in Late-2022

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Planemaker Boeing (BA.N) has drawn up preliminary plans for a fresh sprint in 737 MAX output to as many as 42 jets a month in fall 2022, industry sources said.

The plans would extend the U.S. company's recovery from overlapping safety and COVID-19 crises and lift output beyond an early 2022 target of 31 a month, which the sources said Boeing aims to reach in March.

Implementation will depend on demand, the health of suppliers and Boeing's success in reducing a surplus of jets already built.

Boeing declined to comment and pointed to its latest guidance. Last month it reaffirmed plans to raise MAX output from an unspecified "low" rate to 31 a month by early 2022.

Production was halted in 2019 after Boeing's fastest-selling model was grounded in the wake of fatal crashes. It resumed last May at a fraction of its original pace while Boeing navigated regulatory approvals and a fragile supply chain.

It is still awaiting the go-ahead from China after winning Western approvals late last year. Chief Executive Dave Calhoun has warned that the timing of remaining approvals will influence the shape of Boeing's final production ramp-up.

As an interim step, Boeing hopes to speed monthly output from single digits now to about 26 a month at the end of 2021 at its Renton factory near Seattle, two of the sources said.

Higher production could inject much-needed cash into the supply chain and reduce Boeing's component costs.

The Puget Sound aerospace industry has already started to pick up steam. Sources say Boeing has been placing parts orders again, while fuselages can be seen heading by rail to the Seattle area from Spirit AeroSystems' Wichita factory.

That comes as demand for medium-haul jets such as the 737 MAX and competing Airbus (AIR.PA) A320neo begins to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, boosted by widespread vaccinations, especially in the busy U.S. domestic market.

However, several U.S. and European suppliers view the production plans of both planemakers as optimistic, saying that concerns remain over the health of the global aerospace supply chain.

## Euro Zone Business Growth Hits Three-Year High But ECB Cautious

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Euro zone business growth accelerated at its fastest pace in over three years in May, a survey showed on Friday, but European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde said an uncertain recovery still needed emergency support from the ECB.

After a slow start to vaccinations the pace is picking up, allowing some restrictions imposed to quell the spread of the coronavirus to be lifted, and a strong resurgence in the bloc's now-reopening service industry added to the impetus from a booming manufacturing sector.

As the economy rebounds, some policymakers are making the case for the ECB to start giving up its emergency measures and revert to more traditional forms of stimulus.

But others are more cautious, warning the fledgling recovery is predicated on copious ECB support and that a recent rise in borrowing costs to two-year highs is already a major drag.

"We are committed to preserving favorable financing conditions. It's far too early and it's actually unnecessary to debate longer-term issues," Lagarde said on Friday.

"I have repeatedly said that policymakers needed to provide the right bridge across the pandemic, well into the recovery, so we can actually deliver on our mandate."

Alongside that, euro zone finance ministers will continue to support their economies as they recover from the pandemic, their chairman Paschal Donohoe said on Friday.

With more businesses reopening - or at least adapting to lockdowns - IHS Markit's flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index, seen as a good guide to economic health, climbed to 56.9 in May from April's final reading of 53.8.

That was its highest level since February 2018 and comfortably above the 50 mark separating growth from contraction, as well as the more modest increase to 55.1 predicted in a Reuters poll.

"We don't think today's euro area PMI data will cause the ECB to taper the PEPP next month," said George Buckley at Nomura.

The bloc's economy will expand 1.4% this quarter, according to a Reuters poll last week that also found forecasts for the rest of the year had been downgraded from last month.

"May's increase in the euro zone Composite PMI reflects the further lifting of virus restrictions in many parts of the region and suggests that the economic recovery is now underway," said Jessica Hinds at Capital Economics.

In Germany, Europe's largest economy, services activity rose by the most in nearly a year, helped by a loosening of restrictions. But supply bottlenecks in manufacturing led to production problems at a growing number of factories.

## China Slams EU's Confrontational Approach After Investment Deal Blocked



BEIJING (AFP) - China on Friday slammed the European Union's "confrontational approach" after MEPs voted to block a landmark investment deal over Beijing's tit-for-tat sanctions against EU lawmakers.

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Beijing's sanctions were a "necessary and justified response" to previous EU measures against Chinese officials over human rights concerns in Xinjiang.

To the surprise of many, the European Union and China in late December approved a major investment pact, wrapping up seven years of painstaking negotiations thanks to a final push by Germany.

But the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly Thursday to refuse any consideration of the EU-China investment deal as long as Chinese sanctions against MEPs and scholars were in place.

Beijing says the sanctions were imposed to "safeguard (China's) interests".

"China has imposed sanctions on relevant institutions and personnel of the EU who spread Xinjiang-related lies and false information and who have seriously damaged China's sovereignty and interests," Zhao said at a regular press briefing.

He urged the EU to "immediately stop interfering in China's internal affairs, abandon its confrontational approach" and push EU-China relations "back to the right track of dialogue and cooperation".

Defenders of the pact see it as a much needed opening of China's economy to European companies, but it is set to face a difficult ratification process among the 27 member states and European Parliament.

The investment deal aims to open China's market and eliminate discriminatory laws and practices preventing European companies from competing on an equal footing, according to the European Commission.

EU foreign direct investment in China since 2000 -- excluding Britain -- amounted to \$181 billion. The corresponding sum from China is \$138 billion.

Ties between the EU and China soured suddenly in March after an angry exchange of sanctions over human rights concerns. The EU sanctioned four Chinese officials over suspected human rights violations in China's far northwestern region of Xinjiang.



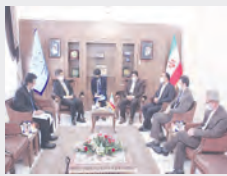
## Iran, Japan Call for Development Of Legal, Judicial Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Justice Minister for Human Rights and International Affairs Mahmoud Abbasi on Saturday emphasized the need to bolster legal and judicial relations between Iran and Japan.

Abbasi made the remarks in a meeting with the Japanese Ambassador to Iran Aikawa Kazutoshi.

Referring to the Iran-Japan agreement signed on the transfer of convicts in 2016, he described it as a significant step in the legal and judicial relations between the two states.

He expressed Iran's readiness to promote the legal and judicial relations of the two countries to a high level by concluding and inking legal and judicial agreements in civil, criminal, commercial, and extradition issues.



## EU-Turkey Relations at Historic Low Point

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Parliament adopted a report urging the EU Commission to formally suspend accession negotiations with Turkey if Ankara does not reverse its "hostile" policies.

"In recent years, the [government] of Turkey has distanced itself increasingly from EU values and standards. As a result, relations have been brought to a historic low point," Members of the European Parliament said in a statement.

MEPs slammed Turkey's human rights record and its foreign policies in the report adopted by 480 votes in favor, 64 against and 150 abstentions.

"This report is probably the toughest yet in its criticism of the situation in Turkey," said MEP Nacho Sanchez Amor.

"We urge the other EU institutions to make any positive agenda they might pursue with Turkey conditional upon democratic reform," he added.

MEPs urged Turkey to release jailed human rights activists, journalists and "others who have been detained by the government on unsubstantiated charges."

"[MEPs] also repeat their encouragement to Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide," their statement read.

Still, the European Parliament asserted its view of Ankara as a key partner for stability in the region, noting Turkey's role in hosting millions of refugees.

However, they insisted that "the use of migrants and refugees as a tool for political leverage, and blackmail cannot be accepted."

How has Turkey responded?

The Turkish Foreign Ministry released a statement rejecting the European Parliament's report, saying it was "by no means objective."

"It is well known... that the standstill in Turkey's accession negotiations is not due to Turkey's lack of will for reforms," the Turkish statement read.



"As a candidate country, Turkey expects the [European Parliament] to carry out constructive efforts about how the relations can be improved with Turkey and how it can contribute to Turkey's EU integration process, rather than being a platform for baseless allegations and blind accusations against Turkey."

Negotiations to join the EU started in 2005. However, the EU Commission said last year that accession talks had "effectively come to a standstill," due to Ankara's strained relations with Cyprus and human rights concerns.

## China's Industrial Commodities Slide



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's main industrial commodities tumbled on Thursday after the government announced stepped-up measures to keep a lid on soaring raw material prices which threaten to undermine the country's economic recovery.

Prices of key steelmaking ingredients iron ore and coking coal, as well as steel products such as rebar and hot-rolled coil, all swooned more than 5% as traders offloaded supplies and speculators placed short-sided bets that Beijing's measures will trigger a further pullback in metals markets.

China's cabinet announced on Wednesday that it will strengthen management of commodity supply and demand to curb "unreasonable" prices and investigate behavior that bids up commodity costs, spooking China's hoards of metal traders. read more

Analysts at ANZ said Steel and iron ore prices remain supported by strong seasonal demand, record high steel production, attractive steel margins and subdued supply.

"China's measures to curb steel production and exports were not much help in containing the price rise. Falling iron ore inventories reflect strong underlying fundamentals," ANZ said.

Beijing's warning about overheated markets follows a 30%-40% climb in several critical steel and metal prices so far in 2021, fuelled by a synchronised recovery in China's mammoth construction and manufacturing sectors from last year's pandemic.

The world's largest exporter of finished and semi-finished goods gobbled up record amounts of metal since late 2020 to churn out appliances, exercise equipment, shipping containers and other goods that have seen strong demand globally in recent months.

However, the broad-based rally in industrial activity - which also propelled thermal coal prices to record highs this month as power use surged - is now threatening to strangle demand from consumers and ignite inflation.

China's factory gate prices rose at their fastest pace in three and a half years last month, raising concerns that consumer prices will follow suit if commodity costs continue to climb.

Richard Lu, senior analyst at commodity consultant CRU Group's Beijing office, said high steel prices "will frighten some consumers at some point."

But he said steel margins "remain good on average", which will encourage Chinese mills to continue operating intensively unless further restrictions are rolled out.

## Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka Nearly out of Covid Vaccines

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are close to running out of coronavirus vaccines, authorities said Friday, and are hoping China and Russia will bolster South Asia's efforts to tackle a devastating pandemic wave.

Covid-19 cases and deaths have hit record levels across India and its neighbours in recent weeks and all are counting on vaccine campaigns to head off the next surge.

But India's move last month to ban vaccine exports because of growing domestic shortages has badly hit other countries, and the three South Asian nations have slowed their vaccination campaigns as they scour international markets for new stocks.

Bangladesh has about one million doses of AstraZeneca's Covishield and Chinese Sinopharm jabs, and was expecting 100,000 Pfizer shots, but all will be gone in "days", government health chief A.B.M. Khorshed Alam said.

The country of 168 million people has reported some 800,000 infections and 12,200 deaths. As in other South Asian nations, experts say the true toll is much higher.

Bangladesh had a deal to buy 30 million Covishield doses from the Serum Institute of India, the world's biggest vaccine maker. Only seven million had been delivered when India halted exports last month.

It has since contacted China and Russia to get their vaccines and Western countries who may have surplus AstraZeneca shots.

One deal with China for an unspecified number of Sinopharm shots was approved on Wednesday, officials said. But China's Ambassador Li Jiming said Bangladesh should not expect commercial supplies before December. He told the bdnews24.com portal that "the queue is too long".

Nepal has an estimated 1.5 million people waiting for a second shot of Covishield, with supplies also held up by the Indian export ban. It is now getting through dwindling numbers of Sinopharm jabs given by China.

Sri Lanka, with a population of 21 million, has about 115,000 vaccine doses left and has slowed its inoculations to 15,000 a day as it also negotiates with other countries, officials said.

The new pandemic wave saw the daily death toll hit a record 38 on Thursday.

India's export ban froze Sri Lanka's deal to buy 13.5 million Covishield doses from Serum International, authorities said.

Sri Lanka is now going through 600,000 gifted Sinopharm doses and is hoping to receive 26 million shots from Russia and China.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said governments and pharmaceutical companies had to help struggling Asian nations where hospitals are overflowing with sufferers.

"Tens of thousands of lives are being lost each week and vaccines must be available so that we can prevent further terrible tolls in the weeks and months ahead," said Alexander Matheou, Asia Pacific head of the IFRC.

Even India, one of the world's major pharmaceutical and vaccine producers, is looking for foreign supplies.

India has already started importing Sputnik V from Russia as its ambitious target of inoculating 300 million people by the end of July is slowed by shortages.

About 150 million people have had a first dose and 40 million the second jab. But daily injections have fallen from 3.6 million a day in April to 1.4 million on Thursday.

Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar is to visit the United States next week and media reports said he would meet executives from US vaccine makers.

## Taiwan's Once Blistering Economy at Risk From Covid, Drought

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan is facing major threats from a surge in coronavirus cases and drought-triggered power outages, potentially derailing one of Asia's economic success stories this year.

The island has gone from zero local cases earlier this month to recording 1,512 domestic infections in the past six days alone, and stocks fell Thursday after a soft lockdown was extended to the entire island. Schools were already closed, but the new rules mean masks are mandatory outdoors, with limits on social gatherings and the closure of many public facilities.

If cases stay high, Taiwan may be forced into a full lockdown, which would spread the pain from the retail sector to exports in an economy heavily reliant on trade. On top of that, a drought has left hydroelectric plants operating at limited capacity, contributing to power outages in major cities across the island, including locations where the world's biggest computer chip businesses operate.

"The economy will be hit now and in the near future, there will be scars from Covid on economic growth," said Iris Pang, chief economist for Greater China at ING Bank NV. The power shortages mean "even a short blackout slows down the production



line. So the chip shortage will be under even more pressure."

Pang sees a downgrade in economic growth this year depending on how long a lockdown lasts. Gross domestic product rose at a blistering pace of 8.16% in the first quarter, underpinned by factory output and surging export growth, with the government predicting a full-year expansion of 4.64%.

Taiwan's export orders rose a better-than-expected 42.6% in April from a year earlier, the economy ministry said Thursday, faster than the 33.3% gain in March. Orders have now risen for 14 months in a row, underscoring the world's growing reliance on the island.

Taiwan is the world's main supplier of advanced computer chips, with the island hosting the highest-end facilities of industry linchpins Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. and ASE Technology Holding Co. -- a key supplier to an auto industry already struggling with shortages.

The hit to GDP growth from the latest virus curbs could be as low as 0.16 percentage points if the outbreak ends by June 30 or as high as 0.53 points if it extends into the third quarter, National Development Council Minister Kung Ming-hsin said at a briefing in Taipei Tuesday.

### Serial Military...

FROM PAGE 1

While Western countries and especially enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are wary of Iran's progress in producing different types of missiles, the country has advanced in producing other types of its weapons in order to cut fully its independence to the aliens.

The Iranian Army Ground Force also unveiled a number of new military products, including a radar warning system and a micro turbojet engine to show the world that Iran will not stop in improving its weapons and any other required equipment.

Late last month, the Iranian Army Ground Force unveiled seven domestically-developed high-tech military achievements, including air defense systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and electronic warfare devices.

The IRGC in November unveiled a smart automated system which can launch multiple long-range ballistic missiles consecutively.

While Iran is strengthening its military and even its attacking powers, the West is trying to confine its power amid different pretexts. The U.S. and Europeans are trying to confine Iran's missile power and program by pushing it to sign more JCPOAs but they have forgotten this fact that The Islamic Republic of Iran has found the way of progress and self-sufficiency in the military equipment products and it will definitely find ways for solving other problems without reliance on the foreigners.

Strong determination and unity in the country is solution for any woe and the country should avoid division on the eve of the presidential election and people should have learned from the previous elections that any rift between the voters will harm the country and will weaken the executive branch no matter it be a reformist or principalist and the rift can put the country in weaker position in confronting the enemies and problems.

### Fourth Wave of...

FROM PAGE 1

In another part of his remarks, Rouhani referred to the Zionist atrocities against the Gaza Strip, saying that the victory of the great Palestinian nation, achieved through the unity of the Palestinian people, was a valuable one.

He stated that people in Europe and the United States took to the streets to support the oppressed people of Palestine, but some western countries took the wrong position. In addition, more was expected from the Arab world, and some were silent until the last days.

He congratulated the resistant and patient nation of Palestine on the Resistance Front's victory against the "armed to the teeth" Israeli regime.

Rouhani also highlighted unity and solidarity among Palestinians during Twelve-Day War against the Zionist regime of Israel and described the Gaza Strip's strong response as a big victory.

People in Europe and America poured into streets [to support Palestinians] but some Western states did take incorrect stance on the issue, President Rouhani said in the National Coronavirus Taskforce session in Tehran.

President Rouhani went on to say that most of Islamic countries adopted a good stance; however, much more was expected from the Arab World.

Some kept silent even at final days of the war, the president added.

However, "all nations did well," the President underlined. As the President stressed, resistance will bring victory.

Further, he congratulated the Resistant and patient nation of Palestine on their victory.

### Life of al-Quds...

FROM PAGE 1

As a result of the confrontation, at least 248 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, including 66 children, while Palestinian rockets killed 12 in the Israeli-occupied territories. Over 1,900 Palestinians were also wounded.

"We send our regards to the zealous Palestinian warriors and fighters who sacrificed their lives in the epic and asymmetrical 12-day battle and pierced ... the so-called Iron Dome shield to tighten the noose on the Zionists," Baqeri said.

The top Iranian general also warned the Israeli regime's supporters as well as the "despicable and corrupt rulers of certain Arab countries," who betrayed the Palestinian cause by normalizing their relations with Israel, telling them to take a deeper look into the recent developments and stop supporting the regime "lest someday you be the target of the flames of revenge and the holy rage of the Palestinian people and the faithful fighters of the world."





## Connors Makes Early Start at Windy Kiawah

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - PGA Championship leader Corey Connors was set for an early start as the second round began at wind-swept Kiawah Island with the Canadian chasing his first major title.

Connors fired a five-under par 67 on Thursday to grab a two-stroke edge and was due out in the fourth group off the 10th tee alongside England's Matthew Fitzpatrick and American Tony Finau.

"There's nothing I want to do differently," Connors said. "I didn't really make any mistakes out there. A lot of good putts. Drove it well, ironed it well and got up-and-down a couple times really nicely."

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

### Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

### Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

### Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

### Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

### Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

### E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

### ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

### Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Pandev to Lead Underdog North Macedonia at Euros

LONDON (Dispatches) - Debutants North Macedonia will be led at Euro 2020 by veteran attacker Goran Pandev, coach Igor Angelovski said in naming his 26-men squad.

Angelovski said the minnows would not be satisfied with a bit part in the competition, which was delayed from last year.

"We are aware of our quality and we know the quality of the European championship. The goal that I have set is to fight for qualifying for the next round," Angelovski said.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY MAY 23, 2021

# Tsitsipas Eases Into Semis in Lyon

LYON (Dispatches) - World number five Stefanos Tsitsipas will meet teenager Lorenzo Musetti in this weekend's Lyon ATP semi-finals after they won their last eight ties.

Greece's Tsitsipas eased past Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 6-4 in 66 minutes for a career best 31st win of the season.

The two-time Grand Slam semi-finalist is favourite for the Lyon title on clay just nine days from the start of the French Open.

"It was a good match from my side, he was serving well," 22-year-old Tsitsipas said.

"His game is a little unpredictable and he is one of the best left-handers out there. I knew he was going to fight and not give up.

"Tomorrow is going to be serious business and I know he (Musetti) can play well on this surface and elevate his game," he added.

Italian 19-year-old Musetti overcame world number 55 Aljaz Bedene 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) to claim his last four spot.

"He (Tsitsipas) is one of the best guys on Tour," Musetti said on Friday.

"I will try to lead the match and try not have him dominate me," he added.

Elsewhere, Russian Karen Khachanov 6-1 7-6 (7/3) beat 34-year-old Richard Gasquet to celebrate his 25th birthday by reaching his first semi-final on clay.

Khachanov, ranked 26th in the world, will play either French qualifier Arthur Rinderknech or Briton Cameron Norrie.

Meanwhile Casper Ruud reached the Geneva ATP final and revealed he will prepare for the French Open by hitting with 13-time Roland Garros champion Rafael Nadal at the Spaniard's Mallorca base next week.



World number 24 Ruud has already made the semi-finals on clay at Monte Carlo, Munich and Madrid this year.

"I will go to Mallorca to relax a day or two and then practise a couple of days before going to Paris. Rafa is there preparing for Roland Garros, so it will be very good preparation," Ruud told reporters.

"He's eager to play a little bit next week, so I have to enjoy maybe a day or two off and then be ready for tough practises with him."

Ruud has played in three previous tour finals, all on clay, winning the Buenos Aires title in February last year.

"It means a lot and it gives me also good confidence going into Roland Garros knowing I have been playing good matches in a row," he said.

"It's the last day of the tournament that we're all fighting to get to.

"It's the ultimate goal to try to win the whole tournament and the finals are the biggest matches we have."

Shapovalov is also in form, having had two match points against eventual champion Nadal earlier this month in Rome.

"Even though I didn't get the win against Rafa, I was playing his level and playing some really good tennis. So I just tried to take the positives from that match," he said.

Ruud and Shapovalov, both 22, know each other well from the juniors, but have never disputed a senior match.

## Buffon Linked With Monza Move

MILAN (Dispatches) - Gianluigi Buffon has been linked with a move to Silvio Berlusconi's ambitious Monza when the Italian goalkeeping great leaves Juventus at the end of the season, according to reports in Italy on Friday.

Monza missed out on reaching the Serie A promotion play-off final on Thursday night after losing 3-2 on aggregate to Cittadella, despite a 2-0 second-leg win in which Mario Balotelli scored.

The Serie B side are one of several clubs interested in signing the 43-year-old, who has not ruled out continuing playing, Gazzetta dello Sport and Corriere della Sera reported.

Monza CEO Adriano Galliani sent Buffon a text message just after he announced his Juventus exit, Corriere claimed.

Turin daily Tuttosport also reported Buffon's former club Parma, where he started his career in 1995, were also interested after being relegated this season.

Buffon played his final game for Juventus in the Coppa Italia final midweek where he lifted the trophy for the sixth time.

It was his 685th game for Juventus and his 27th career trophy, including the 2006 World Cup.



## Maguire Likely to Miss Europa League Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United captain Harry Maguire is unlikely to be fit for next week's Europa League final against Villarreal, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

The 28-year-old central defender is making progress in recovering from an ankle injury he suffered against Aston Villa earlier this month and was pictured walking without crutches on Thursday.

However, Solskjaer was downbeat about his chances of being fit for the match against the Spanish side in the Polish city of Gdansk on Wednesday.

"He's walking but it's a long way from walking to running so, to be honest, I don't think we'll see him in Gdansk, no," the Norwegian said.

"But, as I've said so many times, I'm going to give him until Tuesday night, the last training session, and see if he can try to be out there.

"Steadily but surely he's improving but ligaments, they take time to heal."

United's defence has looked shaky in Maguire's absence -- they have lost two and drawn one of their past three Premier League games.

Solskjaer expects the England international to play an important role off the field even if, as expected, he does not make it for the final.

"He's a very important person in the dressing room and a leader," the United manager said. "Before the fans came in, I think you all heard him from the stands.

"He does still want the team to do well, of course. He's organising even from the stands, which has been easy because it's been so quiet.

## Halep Out of French Open With Calf Injury

PARIS (AFP) - Simona Halep, the 2018 French Open champion, announced Friday she has withdrawn from this year's tournament because she has failed to recover from a calf injury.

"Unfortunately the tear in my left calf muscle needs more time to recover and the timeline is just too short," said Halep, the reigning Wimbledon champion.

Norway's Ruud made it to the title match by beating world number 75 Pablo Andujar 6-3, 6-2 in the semis. The third seed faces Denis Shapovalov for the title. The Canadian second seed overcame Uruguayan veteran Pablo Cuevas 6-4, 7-5 in the last four.



Kane has now raised the prospect of a move to Pep Guardiola's title winners, naming City's De Bruyne as a perfect team-mate.

City are reported to be interested in signing the 27-year-old, but Spurs will not let their talisman go without a fight, especially as he is under contract for the next three years.

Kane is determined to stay in the Premier League and when asked by former Manchester

# Kane Hints at Man City Move

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham forward Harry Kane has hinted at a move to Manchester City as speculation mounts over his future, calling the champions' star midfielder Kevin De Bruyne a "striker's dream".

Kane has reportedly told Spurs he wants to leave at the end of the season and the England captain has been linked with City, Manchester United and Chelsea.

Kane has now raised the prospect of a move to Pep Guardiola's title winners, naming City's De Bruyne as a perfect team-mate.

City are reported to be interested in signing the 27-year-old, but Spurs will not let their talisman go without a fight, especially as he is under contract for the next three years.

Kane is determined to stay in the Premier League and when asked by former Manchester

United defender Gary Neville which player would help him score more goals he said: "De Bruyne for sure.

"When I watch De Bruyne play he's a special, special player and some of the balls I see him put in for City are just a striker's dream if I'm honest."

Kane this week told Neville that he doesn't "want to come to the end of my career and have any regrets".

Tottenham caretaker boss Ryan Mason, who replaced the sacked Jose Mourinho in April, is a close friend of Kane after playing with him in the club's youth academy.

Asked if he could understand Kane's desire to win silverware while in the prime of his career, Mason said: "Of course no player wants to end their career with regrets.

"It's normal. If you speak to any player in the world we say the same.

"I can't speak on transfer value and people's stock and all that. In football things change so quickly.

"At the moment Harry is a Tottenham player and he's going to be involved at the weekend and hopefully he can win the Golden Boot."

## European Clubs Set To Lose 8.7b Euros As a Result of Virus

LONDON (Dispatches) - European football clubs are forecast to miss out on 8.7 billion euros (\$10.6 billion) in revenue as they struggle to cope with the devastating financial fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, a UEFA report said.

The annual European Club Footballing Landscape study says the current projection of lost revenues in the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 financial years is 7.2 billion euros for top-tier clubs and 1.5 billion for lower-tier outfits.

In the foreword, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said: "In last year's report, I said that European football was strong, united, resilient and ready for new challenges.

"But no one could have predicted that we would have to face the biggest challenge to football, sport and society in modern times."

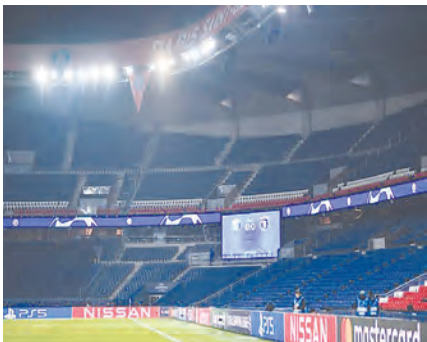
National leagues and UEFA's club competitions, the Champions League and Europa League, have largely been played out behind closed doors since the pandemic hit Europe in early 2020.

"Every level and every corner of professional football has been hit hard," says the report from European football's governing body. "Clubs with heavy reliance on supporter attendance have been particularly impacted by the pandemic."

As a result of slashed budgets, transfer spending by European clubs in last year's summer window plummeted by 39 percent.

Reduced revenue streams have forced UEFA to temporarily ease Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules, which are aimed at ensuring clubs do not spend more than they earn.

However, Ceferin admitted more permanent changes may be required to FFP.



## Tokyo Games to Go Ahead Even Under State of Emergency

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Tokyo Olympics will go ahead even if the city is under a state of emergency due to COVID-19, a top Olympic official said on Friday, underscoring the challenges facing organizers of the pandemic-hit Games.

With just nine weeks until the Games get underway, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) sought to calm fears in Japan that the event would present a burden to a medical system already under strain from the pandemic at the end of a three-day virtual meeting to discuss preparations.

In a boost for the Olympics, which was postponed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was announced that French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country will host the 2024 Games, plans to attend the opening ceremony in Tokyo.

The global sporting event faces mounting opposition from the public, and in a Reuters company survey released on Friday nearly 70% of respondents said they wanted a cancellation or further postponement.

Asked whether the Olympics would go ahead even if Tokyo is under a state of emergency, the IOC Vice President John Coates, who oversees the preparations, said: "Absolutely yes."

He added that "all of the plans we have in place to protect the safety and security of the athletes and the people of Japan are based on the worst possible circumstances."

Coates, who spoke at a news conference at the end of the meeting, said that more than 80% of residents of the Olympic Village would be vaccinated ahead of July 23, when the Olympics start.

