

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus in Iran Exceeded 78,597 With 216 More Iranians Dying From the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Intelligence Forces Dismantled Three Terrorist Teams, the Intelligence Ministry Said on Sunday While Reporting The Arrest of the Perpetrators of A Terrorist Explosion in the Southeastern Country

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Leader's Support Heartened Palestinian Youths to Take on Zionists

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A Palestinian political party joins the chorus of gratitude towards Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for supporting the Palestinian nation in the face of the Zionist Israeli regime's recent intensified aggression.

The Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, which is affiliated to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) umbrella group, communicated strong appreciation of the Leader's supportive stance during the recent confrontation on Saturday.

Ayatollah Khamenei's "support for the Palestinian resistance provided the youths of this land with the conviction and strength to confront the Zionists," the party's Secretary-General Khaled Abdul-Majid said on Saturday, addressing the media.

The Leader and other Iranian authorities' constant supportive stance played "an important and active role" in empowering the resistance to the extent that it managed to afflict heavy damage on the Israeli forces and illegal settlers through its reprisal against the aggression, he added.

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GC Warns Presidential Hopefuls On Early Campaigning

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRA - The Guardian Council spokesman said that would-be candidates in the June 18 presidential poll should not be campaigning before the election officially begins when the council announces those approved to run.

Abbasali Kadkhodaei said that infringements could affect the council's considerations of who would be deemed eligible. Speaking to IRIB radio, Kadkhodaei said the council had extended by five days its timetable for vetting hopefuls who had registered and would announce its decision on May 26. This will leave approved candidates less than three weeks before campaigns close on June 16.

Kadkhodaei criticized those who, after registering, were already active presenting their credentials in speeches and on social media. "This, we believe, is against the law," he said.

Among presidential hopefuls recently seeking limelight have been former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has been rallying supporters around the country, and former parliament speaker Ali Larijani who Thursday answered questions from activists and journalists, both from inside Iran and abroad, in a three-hour-long session audio-chat on the Clubhouse application.

Approved candidates, usually between four to six, are given airtime on state-owned networks to campaign, including in a series of televised debates. Larijani's interest in the Clubhouse session, where access requires an iPhone, might demonstrate a desire to appeal to intellectuals and perhaps concern over the impartiality of the state-owned broadcaster (IRIB). Larijani himself IRIB from 1994 to 2004.

AUCTION SJSCO 14006



Hereby Sirjan Jahan Steel Complex announces selling and export of 10,000 tons of Rebar AJ400 (sizes 12mm 14mm 16mm 18mm 20mm 22mm 25mm 28mm) on ex-work basis. Interested bidders are invited to get documents by sending an email to sjSCO.

sales.info@gmail.com

All documents will be sent VIA email.

All bids in conformity with tender instruction should be submitted no later than, Monday May 31, 2021

Sirjan Jahan Steel Complex

IAEA No Longer to Access Images of Iran Nuclear Sites



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf says the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will no longer access images of the Iranian nuclear sites because a monitoring deal with the UN nuclear body has expired.

"From May 22 and with the end of the three-month agreement, the agency will have no access to data collected by cameras inside the nuclear facilities agreed under the agreement, and cannot transfer them," Qalibaf told the parliament Sunday.

He said the Majlis is determined to implement its Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, which has tasked the administration with suspending extra commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal.

The decision, Qalibaf said, is backed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

"Yesterday it was discussed and the decision was made. The law passed by the Parliament will be implemented. The Leader has underlined the importance of this issue as well," Qalibaf said.

Last December, Iranian lawmakers overwhelmingly voted in favor of the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions.

The law tasked the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) with producing and storing at least 120 kilograms of enriched uranium with a 20-percent purity level every year and raising enrichment beyond 20 percent according to the country's needs.

In February, Iran and the IAEA reached a technical understanding under which Iran agreed to keep the camera footage of its nuclear sites for three months in a goodwill gesture, waiting to see if the other parties to the nuclear deal can bring the US back into full compliance with the accord.

That deadline expired on Saturday, with the prospects of bringing Washington back to compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the nuclear deal is officially known, looking uncertain.

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, who is the head of the Iranian delegation to the Vienna talks, told Japan's NHK channel on Friday that the Islamic Republic may consider extending the deal with the IAEA on inspection of its nuclear sites.

Iran's chief negotiator says Tehran's resumption of the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol is "predicated" on the lifting of sanctions.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi was going to hold a news conference later on Sunday.

Macro Drivers Signal Higher Oil Prices in 2022

DUBAI (Dispatches) - While big macro drivers-including a weaker USD, inflation and monetary easing all point to higher oil prices in 2022, micro headwinds (Iran, India's 2nd wave) may fade in the second half 2021, according to a new BofA Global Research report.

A post-Covid scenario marked by a permanent reduction in mass transit use could quickly translate into a major world-wide oil demand rationing exercise. Even if electric vehicle (EV) sales reach 34% by 2030, an acceleration in miles driven of 20% could push peak oil demand levels to 109 million barrels per day (b/d) by 2027.

On the supply side, oil field decline rates have accelerated sharply in 2020 and in early 2021. Plus energy capex has come down sharply in the past year and now the IEA is calling for further investment reductions to meet climate goals. Reflecting a tighter market ahead, Brent in 2026 recently traded above \$59 per barrel (bbl) last week, up from a 2020 low of \$47/bbl.

"With spec oil positions relatively low and CO2 prices rising too, we see room for long-dated oil prices to move structurally higher by \$5 to \$10/bbl," the BofA Global Research report said.

While a Covid-19 surge in India has depressed mobility, the link between Covid-19 cases and fuel consumption is starting to break down around the world. In part, workplace mobility is picking up thanks to the global vaccination campaign. For instance, despite a resurgence in Covid-19 cases in countries like Chile, the UAE, or Bahrain (nations with some of the highest vaccination levels in the world), hospitalization and death rates have stayed low. So mobility has kept improving there.

With global transportation demand set to recover sequentially, the upcoming new Iran nuclear deal could be the next bump in the recovery path for oil prices.

"Even then, we see three mitigating factors: (1) a return of Iran is already embedded into our global oil balances, (2) Opec+ will likely act to accommodate the comeback one of its largest members, and (3) Iranian output is already nearing 2.4 million b/d anyway, up 0.36 million b/d YoY," the BofA Global Research report said.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Palestinians, The True Winners

After nearly two-week long of conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, the two sides agreed for a truce and each side claimed victory but the real winners were the Palestinians who showed the world the real nature and the crimes of Israelis against innocent civilian Palestinians.

This time in an uneven conflict with the Zionists, Palestinians took an offensive strategy by using missiles, rockets and drones to show their muscles inside the occupied lands. Palestinians fired rockets and missiles at Israel which led to some casualties in the Zionists' side. After three unsuccessful wars with Hizbollah forces, this time the Zionists fell to their knees against the Palestinians and especially the Hamas fighters.

Scores of Palestinians, including women and children, have been killed and hundreds more injured in the Israeli shelling of residential areas in Gaza.

The Gaza-based Hamas movement has retaliated by firing thousands of rockets targeting Israeli settlements, military sites, and occupied cities but this time 12 Israeli killed and Zionists' military suffered a heavy damage.

These crimes by the Zionists faced serious reactions in the world and many countries saw massive rallies in support of the Palestinians as the true brutal nature of Zionists was revealed to the world.

Iranians who have always supported Palestinians' struggle against the Zionist took to the streets in car convoys to celebrate the occasion hours after the truce. Iranian ralliers say Palestinians will respond to Israeli weapons with rockets and not stones. However, they say awareness raising campaigns like such demonstrations act as a powerful weapon by letting the world know about the Israeli atrocities and crimes against Palestinians.

As Israel was forced to accept a ceasefire Palestinians believe that resistance is still the only way to put an end to Israeli violation of Palestinian rights and its atrocities in the occupied lands.

The chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces 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.

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Iran to Continue Vienna Talks Till Clinching Agreement

TEHRAN (MNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that the Islamic Republic will continue JCPOA talks in Vienna until reaching a multilateral agreement.

Referring to the recent talks in Vienna, Rouhani said that the other sides have explicitly stated their readiness to lift anti-Iranian sanctions in accordance with the JCPOA.

Emphasizing the victory of the Iranian nation in the economic war, he noted that: "Production growth figures in various industrial sectors of the country are the best evidence of the fruitlessness of the US policy of maximum pressure." The talks in Vienna on restoring Iran's nuclear deal (JCPOA) are reportedly expected to be completed in the first days of June.

Iran is engaged in talks with the remaining parties to the nuclear deal (JCPOA) known as the P4+1 to salvage the deal in the Austrian capital of Vienna. At the end of the fourth round of Vienna talks a few days ago, the head of the Iranian delegation at the talks Abbas Araghchi said that "Very good progress was made," though, he added there are still issues remaining to be agreed upon.

Iran has vowed already that it will leave the Vienna talks if it feels they are taking time and the other parties are not serious and are just killing the time.

Strengthening Defense, Offence Power on Iranian Agenda

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Major-General Mohammad Baqeri said in a statement on Sunday on the anniversary of Liberation of Khorramshahr that the permanent component of Iran's armed forces agenda is strengthening defensive, offensive and deterrent power.

Baqeri said that Liberation of Khorramshahr was a turning point in Iran's shining improvement against enduring conspiracies of the

global arrogance, since the eight-year war until the current holy defense in proxy wars and the fight against terrorism.

The Liberation of Khorramshahr refers to the Iranian recapture of the city of Khorramshahr on May 24, 1982, during the Iran-Iraq War. The city had been captured by the Iraqis earlier in the war on October 26, 1980, shortly after the Iraqi invasion of Iran.

Iran Hosting Afghan Refugees Over Four Decades

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says Iran has focused on supporting Afghan refugees for more than 40 years.

Attending a press conference during his visit to Iran on Sunday morning, UNHCR deputy director Indrika Ratwatee has added that many refugees have returned to their homelands through Iran's efforts.

Iran has faced many challenges in hosting Afghan refugees since it has been a transit route for Afghans due to Iran's geographical condition.

"Iran has vaccinated above 70-year-old Afghan refugees like all other Iranians, although they have difficulties in the last 15 months challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic," UNHCR deputy director said.

Another speaker of the session, Director General of Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs of the Interior Ministry Mahdi Mahmoudi, said that Iran did its best so that Afghan refugees would return to their homes respectfully.

He went on to say that over two million legal Afghan refugees had been registered, though illegal ones are reported to the police.

"In 20 immigrant cities, Iran has provided all necessary equipment for Afghan refugees, including healthcare and education, and more than 523,000 Afghans are



studying in Iran," the official highlighted.

Mahmoudi concluded that the UN and related organizations expressed their readiness to give Iran over 6 million doses of Covid-19 vaccination for refugees.

He added that Iran behaved the same as Iranian citizens with Afghan refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He also said that amid the spread of coronavirus, Afghan refugees have quarantined in their immigrant cities and have been trained to observe health protocols.

Mahmoudi highlighted that all of the Afghan schools have been closed and virtual training began for them like other Iranian students.

"Iran has received some aid from international unions and has distributed them among Afghan refugees," he noted.

"Those refugees who have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic have received financial aid from Iran," Mahmoudi added.

Referring to refugees' return to their homeland, Mahmoudi said that Afghan refugees will be supported by Iran's government and United Nations so that they can learn a profession and create job opportunities in their country after returning.

"Also, through agreements with the Ministry of Science, Afghan students can continue their education in Afghanistan," he concluded.

Official Warns of Possible 5th Wave of Coronavirus in Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian Coronavirus Headquarters has sounded the alarm over a possible fifth surge in the disease.

The warning comes despite a relative drop in the number of infections and deaths.

"All provinces across the country, especially 28 ones, are seeing a downward trend in terms of the spread of the coronavirus," said Alireza Raisi, the spokesman for the headquarters. "We have passed the fourth peak of the coronavirus outbreak," he added.

"In two weeks' time, the number of [daily] deaths [from coronavirus] will drop below 200 people, but there is a possibility of a fifth surge in the disease," he said.

The spokesman underlined that a travel ban may be imposed for the holiday period in early June in order to create a safer atmosphere for the upcoming presidential election in terms of coronavirus infection.

"If there are Covid patients among voters, mobile ballots boxes should be used for them, so that they will not be deprived of the right to vote," he noted.

He said voting should take place in open spaces as much as possible to contain a possible rise in the disease as a result of being in closed spaces.

"There is no need for using stamps and fingerprinting on the election day," he said.

Resistance Victory Big Lesson for Israeli Regime

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Brigadier General Amir Hatami said on Sunday that the recent victory of the Resistance gave a big lesson to the Israeli regime and taught them to take care of themselves instead of carrying out terror operations in Iran.

Speaking on the sidelines of Parliament Speaker's visit from defense industry exhibition, Brigadier General Hatami said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is in an unprecedented position today partly due to its defense industry.

A combination of defensive capabilities and popular support has offered Iran an ensuring defensive power and the foes admit they don't have the upper hand anymore, Defense Minister added.

He went on to say that the Resistance was securing victories one after another and its recent victory over the Israeli regime gave them a big lesson that they must take of themselves instead of carried out terror operations against the Iranian nuclear scientists, including Mohsen Fakhriadeh.

Fakhriadeh was assassinated earlier this year and Iran accused the Israeli regime of being behind the assassination.

Brigadier General Hatami underlined that the axis of Iran's armed forces was to achieve strategic weapons in all areas and it has realized its objective on ground fighting and missile power.

Iran has high, medium, and low altitude defense equipment and is undoubtedly among the top countries in the world in terms of drone power, the general underscored.

Gov't Spokesman Accuses IRI of Sabotaging JCPOA Revival Talks

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said news published by Press TV about the JCPOA revival talks in Vienna was "untrue" and "has a destructive aspect to the negotiations."

In an interview published in Shargh newspaper, described Press TV as "representing a precisely thought toward opposing national policies" and said that reports the network publishes, quoting an informed source, "are at the expense of the national interest."

The challenge between The Press TV network affiliated with the Iranian government's radio and government officials has a history of several months.

In the past few months, the network has repeatedly denied statements made by Iranian government officials regarding the JCPOA revival, citing an "informed source."

Contribution of Knowledge-Based Economy in Iran GDP Increased

TEHRAN (IP) - Vice President for Science and Technology of Iran announced that the contribution of the knowledge-based economy in Iran's GDP has increased.

Sorena Sattari said on Saturday: "The contribution of the knowledge-based economy in the country's GDP is growing up to 60% annually."

Sattari, on the sidelines of the ceremony to visit the achievements of Isfahan Scientific and Research Town, added: "The sales of the country's knowledge-based products and services have reached more than 200,000 billion toman, and their export value is one billion dollars."

He also said: "We hope that this rapid growth in the field of technology will continue."

During his visit to Isfahan on Saturday, Sattari visited several companies located in the Industrial town and inaugurated the development plan of the Central Laboratory of the University of Isfahan.

Isfahan Scientific and Research Town, as the first founding organization of growth centers and science and technology parks in the country, started its executive activity in 2001 to support and guide knowledge-based companies and institutions, and now more than 580 knowledge-based companies and technology units employed more than 7,800 university-educated students.

Iran, UNICEF to Cooperate on Child Friendly Cities Initiative

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Interior Ministry and UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office renewed cooperation in the field of Child Friendly Cities Initiative in Iran.

Accordingly, UNICEF announced that Bandar Abbas, Evaz, Gorgan, Hamedan, Kerman, Mashhad, Rasht, Semnan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Tehran, and Yazd were selected to pilot the program.

The piloting process will officially start after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the municipalities of the pilot cities and the Ministry of Interior, UNICEF added.

A Child Friendly City is a city or a local community where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programs and decisions.

UNICEF CFCI logo and brand are awarded only after the city successfully completes the CFCI Cycle, UNICEF reported.

During the pilot phase, the city is not yet considered a "Child Friendly City" and does not receive the logo or the official recognition.

The new joint cooperation, which will continue the end of 2022, was signed by Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Iran Mandeep O'Brien and former head of Iran's Interior Ministry for information and international affairs Rahim Saki.

Resistance Turned the Tables On Israeli Enemy in 12 Days

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Religious teachers at the north-central Iranian city of Qom's internationally-renowned Seminary hail how the Gaza Strip's resistance movements turned the fortunes of war against the Israeli regime during Tel Aviv's recent escalation against the coastal territory.

Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom that represents the educators made the remarks in a Saturday statement, saying the movements managed to "turn the tables on the Zionist regime [of Israel]" during the warfare.

The Israeli regime launched a 12-day war against the already Tel Aviv-blockaded Gaza Strip earlier this month. Gaza's resistance groups started responding to the aggression on the same day that it started targeting the enclave.

Throughout the offensive, the groups fired more than 4,000 rockets towards the occupied territories. The projectiles swept the entire expanse of the territories, many flying as far as Tel Aviv, the holy occupied city of al-Quds, and even the northern-lying cities of Haifa and Nazareth.

The Israeli regime finally gave in to a ceasefire on Friday, incapable of stopping the resistance's rocket avalanche.

What further turned the tide against the regime was the unity that transpired within the entire borders that used to demarcate Palestine before the Israeli invasion of 1948, the statement added.

The unity bound the resistance movements, their fellow Palestinians in the Tel Aviv-occupied West Bank, and others based elsewhere in the occupied territories during the Israeli aggression, they said.

"Today, the brutal and infanticidal Zionist regime tastes the bitterness of defeat in the face of this unity," the statement read.

The era of the regime's "brazen attacks" is over, they said, adding that the ardent Palestinian youths now had the upper hand in their cause of defending the holy occupied city of al-Quds against the regime.

The senior seminarists also valued the resistance groups' calculation, planning, and "intelligence superiority" over the regime during the struggle.

Enforcing Strategic Action Law To Lift Sanctions Necessary

TEHRAN (IP) - In a verbal warning to IAEA and President Hassan Rouhani's administration, Majlis lawmaker said the negotiating team should consider the law on 'Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Interests of the Iranian Nation'.

In the open session of the parliament, Nasrollah Pejmanfar stated that according to this law, the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol and the monitoring beyond it had to be stopped from May 22.

He underlined that the monitoring must be limited to safeguards, and the storage of information from Iran's nuclear facilities must stop completely.

He noted that the issues raised in the Vienna talks were valuable if only approved by the Iranian parliament and would not be formalized if parliament did not approve the terms of the talks.

PERMIT NO : 55/00/4827

DATE : 24/05/2021

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER



AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 2x40000±5% MTS of Granular Potassium Sulphate (GSOP) through renewal of one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 24/5/2021 until Sunday dated 30/5/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Tuesday dated 29/6/2021 at 10:00 AM to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Tuesday dated 29/6/2021 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

1-The bid bond value should be at € 262671 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 20/05/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

2- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR 66109000000, which must be only submitted by the bidders.

3 - After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & intl Affairs Dept of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:10
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:52

92. By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well.
93. All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel Made unlawful for itself, before the Law (of Moses) was revealed. Say: "Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth."
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (92 - 93)

Tehran, Tashkent Can Improve Economic Ties

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Uzbekistan Ambassador to Tehran Bakhodir Abdullaev believes Iran and Uzbekistan can improve their economic cooperation due to their appropriate potentials as they can complete each other.

In meeting with Head of Iran-Uzbekistan parliamentary friendship group Gholam Reza Noori, the Uzbek diplomat referred to historical and cultural commonalities between two countries, saying senior Uzbek officials have always emphasized developing political, economic and parliamentary ties with Iran.

Cooperation on regional agreements and establishing a transport corridor for the transit of goods can improve the level of economic relations between Central Asian countries and other Asian states, he noted. He said both countries can complete each other in the economic scenes.

Meanwhile Noori, for his part, said continuation of consultations in international and regional organizations can improve economic relations between the regional countries.

He described U.S.' cruel sanctions against Iran and COVID19 as factors in reducing the level of economic relations and called on the public and private economic actors in both countries to be more active.

Both countries have always enjoyed a positive parliamentary relationship, which can help develop ties in the political, economic and cultural fields, he added.

He expressed regret for the recent terrorist attack in Afghanistan which resulted in killing an injuring Afghan student, saying security cooperation between the regional



countries, especially Iran and Uzbekistan, can help resolve tensions in the region, establish stability and security in Afghanistan, and fight extremist groups.

Last month and during his visit to Uzbekistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that Islamic Republic of Iran can ease transit route for Uzbekistan to the global markets.

Speaking to reporters after his meeting with his Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov, Zarif pointed to the common history between Islamic Republic of Iran and Uzbekistan and stated that historical commonalities between Iran and Uzbekistan will expand and enhance preliminaries of friendship between the two countries to a great extent.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed issues of mutual concerns in the fields of economic, political, and cultural relations, strengthening expansion of bilateral ties between Iran and Uzbekistan and also regional cooperation regarding peace in Afghanistan.

IME Hits a Record High

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Within the month of Ordibehesht ending on May, 21, 2021, the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) set a new record as it sold 2,925 tons of various types of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$1,828m, with a 6% and 16% of growth in volume and value of trades respectively compared to the previous month.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the IME witnessed trades of 1,464,000 tons of commodities on its mineral and industrial trading floor worth more than \$1,044m.

On this floor the exchange traded 1,189,000 tons of steel, 12,780 tons of copper, 480 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 48 tons of precious metals concentrate, 11,690 tons of aluminum, 239,000 tons of iron ore, 1,000 tons of zinc, 400 tons of coke, 10,000 tons of sponge iron and 250 tons of lead.

The other trading floor of the exchange was the oil and petrochemical on both domestic and export rings of which customers purchased more than 1,449,000 tons of commodities valued at almost \$770m

Commodities traded on this floor were 412,630 tons of bitumen, 238,686 tons of polymeric products, 155,372 tons of chemicals, 12,238 tons of oil, 490,300 tons of vacuum bottom, 4,450 tons of sulfur, 350 tons of argon, 150 tons of insulation and 132,500 tons of lube cut.

Moreover, the IME saw trade of 11,505 tons of commodities on its side market within this month.

Great Wall of Gorgan To Be Registered in UNESCO List



GORGAN (IRNA) - The Great Wall of Gorgan is a Sassanid-era defense system that has received great attention from Iranian authorities in recent years and has been proposed to the UNESCO to be registered as a World Heritage site.

Hopefully, the registration and domestic attempts to renovate the 195 kilometer-long wall will pave the ground to turn the historical monument into a proper tourist attraction.

The Great Wall is told to have protected the Sassanid Empire. The wall is also called the Red Wall or the Red Snake. It starts in Gomishan and continues along Gildagh Mountains in northeastern Kalaleh. However, a big part of the wall has been ruined and some parts of it are under soil.

The Great Wall of Gorgan is the third greatest wall in the world. Some experts believe that the wall was built when the Great Wall of China was constructed.

The Iranian government plans to introduce the wall to the people of the world and use it as a world heritage site in order to attract tourists.

Managing Director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of Golestan Province Ahmad Tajarri said that the government allocated 70 billion rials for studies on registration of the wall in the world heritage list.

Experts of tourism industry in Golestan Province have emphasized that the Great Wall of Gorgan can play a key role in enhancing tourism and economy in the northern province, noting that the registration of the historical site in the UNESCO World Heritage List will help attract more domestic and foreign tourists.

It is worth mentioning that the Hyrcanian Forest and Qabbos Tower are two historical sites, which have already been registered in the UNESCO list.

Archaeologists have named the Great Wall of Gorgan as Alexander Barrier, Firuz/Piruz Barrier, Gorgan Defense Wall and the Red Snake, which implies its importance over the passage of time.

NIDC Digs 17 Oil, Gas Wells in 2 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 17 oil and gas wells during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21– May 21), an official with the company said.

According to Babak Zanganeh, director of consolidated planning at NIDC, the drilled wells consisted of four development and appraisal wells, and 13 workover ones.

The official stated that 15 of the mentioned wells, including four development and 11 workover wells were drilled in the operational zone of the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) while two wells were drilled in the fields under the supervision of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC).

NIDC owns 70 light, heavy and super-heavy drilling rigs, including 67 onshore drilling rigs and three offshore rigs, Zanganeh said. "Currently, 25 drilling rigs of the company are being relocated in the onshore operational areas of the country", he added.

NIDC managed to carry out 10,182 meters of horizontal and directional drilling in 43 oil and gas wells across the country during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), according to the Head of NIDC's Special Operations Department Ali Daqaeyqi.

Some 654 meters of core extraction drilling was also conducted in the mentioned period which was a huge achievement for assessing the condition of the country's oil and gas reserves.

KSC Manager Meets Deputy Minister

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Khouzestan Steel Company (KSC) Mr. Amin Ebrahimi on Saturday met Deputy Road and Urban Development Minister Mr. Saeed Rasouli and discussed ways of cooperation on the shipment of the production of the company.

In the meeting, Mr. Rasouli who is also head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) said that rail transportation is one of the safest ways of connecting the country and he is proud that the background of cooperation between theRAI and Khouzestan Steel Company dates back to four decades ago.

He added that in this period, there have been close co-operations between the IRIR with experts of KSC



which has eased loading and unloading of the required materials by the company.

Ebrahimi, for his part, expressed his gratitude for sincere cooperation of the RAI and said KSC is one of the export-centered companies and shipment of raw material and exports via the railway is one of the most economized and safest ways.

He added that the cooperation between the company with the RAI is not just restricted to the transportation as they enjoy sharing expertise and exchange of information. He went on to say that rail loading, shipping and timely unloading of iron ore lead to the sustainable production, adding that the company hopes the IRIR by launching the freight train would have plans to reduce the cost of rail transportation.

No Water Rationing in Isfahan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – This year despite the shortage of 3 to 4 cubic meters per second of drinking water in the peak time, there will be no water rationing in Isfahan Province.

The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) Mr. Hashem Amini in the first meeting of the year of the council of managers of the company said that in the first half of the current year people may face drop in the water pressure due to the shortage of water resources, reiterating that but there will be no water rationing.

He said this year like the past years, the subscribers will be supplied with sustainable drinking water, noting that in the recent decade despite the continuous droughts, drinking water for the people in the province has been supplied sustainably and this year efforts will be made for supply of water for the public in the summer.

Amini then pointed to some ways for providing sustainable drinking water and said ABFA of Isfahan by employing modern technologies like telemetric systems and tele control system as well as constant monitoring of the distribution grid tries to distribute the drinking water fairly among the people.

He also said that culturalizing the efficient water consumption is one of the ways for boosting awareness and creating incentive among people for efficient water consumption, reiterating that media should make the public aware of problems of overconsumption of water.



Khorasan Steel Co. Sets Unprecedented Record Breaking for Monthly Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Khorasan Steel Complex Company (KSC) witnessed unprecedented record breaking for monthly production in last Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht in most of its production chain.

The CEO of Khorasan Steel Complex Company (KSC) announced this achievement and called it an unprecedented achievement which happened in three units of pelletizing, direct reduction and steel-making of the company as the productions of the company in all of these plants were the highest since their operations.

Kasara Ghafoori said that while just two months have passed since the beginning year, the biggest steelmaking of eastern country has so far set 11 new records in the production chain.

It seems with this stormy start in the current year and in case supports continue and hurdles are removed from the path of the production, the company can have an unprecedented year ahead of it for improving the volume of its production.

Ghafoori said that the direct reduction unit of the company which works with its maximum nominal capacity improved the production of sponge iron by 414 tons as it was previous record was 71.415 tons which had been registered five years ago.

According to the report, the total iron sponge and briquette in the direct reduction units of 1 and 2 reached 137,558 tons and it could better its previous direct reduction production in this company which had been set by 135,123 tons in the month of Farvardin (March 20- April 21).

The second record of the company was set in its pelletizing unit as the unit by increasing production by 3,000 tons set the new record of 194,575 tons.

Ghafoori said that the pelletizing unit had improved its production record in the first month of the year and the record was bettered in the second month.

He also said that breaking this record in just one month is sign of great motivation, coordination and commitment in all sections of the company.

Meanwhile the head of exploitation department of the company Mr. Fashid Fazilati announced a new record set by the company in steelmaking and said the steelmaking unit No.2 increased the steel ingot production by 1490 tons and set the new record of 54,079 tons.



Bolsonaro Fined for Breaking Covid-19 Restrictions

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) - President Jair Bolsonaro must pay a fine for failing to adhere to state health safety regulations at a public event, the governor of Maranhao state said, as Brazil struggles to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Health authorities filed the case against Bolsonaro "for the promotion in Maranhao of gatherings with no sanitary safeguards. The law applies to everyone," the governor of the northeastern state, leftist Flavio Dino, tweeted late Friday. Dino reminded the public that gatherings of more than 100 people are banned in his state, and the use of face masks is mandatory.



Hariri Not to Form Cabinet Catering to President's Wishes

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's prime minister-designate Saad al-Hariri said on Saturday he will not form a cabinet that simply caters to President Michel Aoun's wishes.

"I will not form a government as the team of his Excellency the President wants it, nor any other political faction. I will only form the kind of government needed to stop collapse and prevent the big crash that is threatening the Lebanese," Hariri told a parliament session on Saturday.



Palestinian Solidarity Protests Held Around the World



LONDON (Dispatches) - Pro-Palestine solidarity marches are being held around the world in a continuation of weeklong demonstrations, with protesters demanding their respective governments impose sanctions and a military embargo to cut the supply of weapons to Israel.

Israel's 11-day bombardment of Gaza killed nearly 250 Palestinians, including at least 65 children, leaving behind many buildings, homes and infrastructure destroyed in the besieged enclave.

The fighting came to an end after the Israeli government and Palestinian fighter groups agreed on a ceasefire that started on Friday.

The Sheikh Jarrah protests against forced expulsion of Palestinians by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem, and the Israeli attack on Muslim worshippers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, served as a catalyst for Israel's attacks in Gaza. Protests were held in London, Melbourne and Paris on Saturday, while more of them were scheduled for the weekend in other big cities, including New York.

At the march in London, Al Jazeera's Paul Brennan reported that there was a "sense of relief" with Israel's attacks halting, but that more needed to be done.

"There is a sentiment that the conflict should not be forgotten," he said.

Some were draped in Palestinian flags and set off green and red smoke flares. Others carried banners declaring "Free Palestine", "Stop bombing Gaza" and "Sanctions on Israel".

In Adelaide, hundreds of protesters gathered outside Parliament House before marching through the city centre.

"We need to remember that just because they announced a ceasefire doesn't mean it's over. It will never be over until Palestine is free," said Australian Palestinian community member Jana Fandi who attended the rally.

In Sydney, thousands of protesters gathered in Hyde Park before marching through the streets, chanting and waving banners.

"Palestinians continue to face violence from Israeli occupation forces and it's not going to end until the occupation comes to an end," Palestine Action Group activist Dalia al-Haj Qasem said.

A solidarity protest in the capital, Paris, was held with thousands attending the march.

"A ceasefire does not resolve the question. This fight concerns all those who are attached to the values of justice, dignity and law," said Bertrand Heilbronn, president of the France Palestine Solidarity Association which organised the Paris rally and other demonstrations.

The capital marchers shouted slogans such as "Palestine will live, Palestine will win", "Israel assassin, Macron accomplice", "and We are all Palestinians."

COVID-19 Deaths in Latin America Surpass 1m as Outbreak Worsens

LONDON (Reuters) - The death toll from COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean passed 1 million people on Friday, according to a Reuters tally, with the pandemic worsening in the part of the world with the highest per capita death rate.

From the dusty highlands of Bolivia to the Brazilian metropolis of São Paulo, the pandemic has swamped underfunded healthcare systems after spreading fast across nations where many people survive hand-to-mouth and have been unable to enter lockdown.

In Peru, among the hardest hit nations in the region, COVID-19 patients have died in crowded hospital corridors of the capital Lima. Deep in the Amazon jungles of Brazil, many residents of the city of Manaus have died at home with no oxygen to fill damaged lungs, after supplies ran out there this year.

With cases falling in Europe, Asia and North America, and flat in Africa, South America is the only region where new infections are rising rapidly on a per capita basis, according to Our World in Data. Although India is currently struggling through one of the world's worst outbreaks of the pandemic.

On average in May, 31% of the COVID-19 deaths in the world have been in Latin America and the Caribbean - home to just 8.4% of the global population. Doctors and epidemiologists say the coronavirus pandemic took unprepared governments by surprise last year and its impact has been worsened by leaders who downplayed its gravity and failed to secure timely vaccine supplies.

The top eight countries registering the most COVID-19 deaths per capita over the past week were all in Latin America.



Suu Kyi Will Soon Appear in Court

YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's junta leader Min Aung Hlaing said deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi was healthy at home and would appear in court in a few days, in his first interview since overthrowing her in a Feb. 1 coup.



The coup has plunged the Southeast Asian country into chaos. An ethnic armed group opposed to the ruling junta attacked a military post in a northwestern jade mining town while other violent incidents were reported from other corners of Myanmar.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate for her long struggle against previous military rulers, is among more than 4,000 people detained since the coup. She faces charges that range from illegally possessing walkie-talkie radios to violating a state secrets law.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is in good health. She is at her home and healthy. She is going to face trial at the court in a few days," Min Aung Hlaing said by video link with the Hong Kong-based Chinese language broadcaster Phoenix Television on May 20, in excerpts released on Saturday.

The interviewer asked him what he thought of the performance of Suu Kyi, 75, who is widely admired in the country of 53 million for her campaign that had brought tentative democratic reforms which were cut short by the coup.

"She tried all she could," Min Aung Hlaing responded.

He reiterated that the army had seized power because it had identified fraud in an election won by Suu Kyi's party in November - although its accusations were rejected by the then election commission.

Libya Mercenaries a Threat to Entire North Africa

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The UN special envoy for Libya warned the Security Council that progress on the key issue of withdrawing mercenaries and foreign fighters from Libya has stalled and their continued presence is a threat not only to Libya but to the North African region.

Jan Kubis said recent disturbing events in neighbouring Chad, where rebels were blamed for last month's killing of longtime president Idriss Deby, are a reminder of the link between the security situation in Libya and the security and stability in the region.

"The high mobility of armed groups and terrorists but also economic migrants and refugees, often through channels operated by organized criminal networks and other local players across uncontrolled borders only enhances risks of furthering instability and insecurity in Libya and the region," he said. Kubis said the UN mission in Libya, known as UNSMIL, reported "the continuing presence of foreign elements, mercenaries and assets, thus entrenching the division of Libya".

Libya has been racked by chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 and split the oil-rich country between a

UN-recognized government in the capital, Tripoli, and rival authorities based in the country's east, each backed by armed groups and foreign governments.

In April 2019, east-based commander Khalifa Haftar and his forces, backed by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, launched an offensive to try and capture Tripoli. His 14-month-long campaign collapsed after Turkey stepped up its support of the UN-recognised government with advanced military hardware, troops, and thousands of Syrian mercenaries.

An October ceasefire led to the formation of a joint interim government, which took power in March, and is tasked with bringing together the divided country and steering it through presidential and parliamentary elections on December 24.

As for the UN arms embargo against Libya, which UN experts reported recently has been continuously violated, Kubis said the UN mission continues to receive reports of cargoes of arms and military supplies arriving at military bases in the west, east and south.

UNSMIL also continues to receive reports of fortifications and defensive positions being set up along the Sirte-Jufra axis as well as air force training activities, he said.



Nepal President Dissolves Parliament

KATHEMANDU (Dispatches) - Nepal has plunged into fresh political turmoil as President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved parliament and fixed general elections in November amid a worsening COVID-19 outbreak.

Saturday's surprise announcement comes after a presidential statement said neither the caretaker Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, nor opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba were able to demonstrate a majority to form a new government by the Friday deadline set by Bhandari.

"The president has dissolved the House of Representatives and ordered the first phase of general elections on November 12 and the second phase on November 19," a presidential statement issued after midnight said.

It said the decision was made on the recommendation of the cabinet headed by caretaker Prime Minister Oli, whose December 2020 dissolution of parliament sparked weeks of protests and was reversed by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in February.

There was no immediate comment from political parties about the latest move.

Nepal is battling a deadly second wave of the pandemic and is reporting 8,207 new infections on average each day.





Shanon
(adviser)

Jordan Apt (\$2000)
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Shariati Villa (\$3500)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p, S
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Velenjak (\$1400)
2bdrs, S/p, S, F.F

Farmanieh (\$3000)
300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, L.balcony, pkg
Fully Furn

Jordan Villa (\$4000)
700sq.m, 4bdrs, yard

Elahieh (\$1800)
3bdrs, balcony, F.F

Vanak bldg (\$7000)
4storey, 12bdrs, pkg

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Airbus to Boost A220 Jet's Range

PARIS (Dispatches) - Airbus will go ahead with plans to increase the range of its smallest jet, the A220, its newest operator said, allowing airlines to open more niche routes internationally.

Airline entrepreneur David Neeleman said last month he was discussing adding extra endurance to the jetliner with Airbus, which took over the Canadian-designed program in 2018.

Speaking to Reuters on Friday as he launched his latest venture, U.S. startup Breeze Airways, Neeleman said a decision to offer the longer-range jet was now a given.



World Bank Official Welcomes Uzbekistan's Commitment to Continue Market Reforms

TASHKENT (Dispatches) - Anna Bjerde, World Bank Vice President for Europe and Central Asia, paid her first official visit to Uzbekistan on May 14-18. Ms. Bjerde met with the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, senior government and parliamentary officials, representatives of civil society and the private sector, and international development partners.

"The World Bank welcomes the Government's plans to continue a transparent and inclusive market transition and implement difficult but much-needed market reforms, despite the COVID-19 crisis. We will further support the reform agenda through our new Country Partnership Framework. It will define priority areas for the Bank's financing and advisory services from 2022 to 2026 and will be aligned with Uzbekistan's next development strategy," said Ms. Bjerde. The World Bank Vice President had productive talks with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Chairperson of the Senate of Oliy Majlis (Parliament) Tanzila Narbaeva, First Deputy Chairperson of the Senate of Oliy Majlis Sodiq Safoyev, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Jamshid Kuchkarov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade Sardor Umurzakov, and Minister of Finance Timur Ishmetov.

The discussions focused on the Government's efforts to enact market reforms, reduce poverty and unemployment, raise the living standards of the population in rural areas, improve access to health, education, social protection, and water supply services, create conditions conducive for private sector-led growth, and improve the business and investment climate.

The parties also considered the progress Uzbekistan has achieved in the areas of reforming public institutions, state-owned enterprises, financial, energy, transport, and other economic sectors, eliminating forced labor and reducing gender inequality, introducing a green growth model, and expanding trade and transport connectivity across Central Asia.

Ms. Bjerde participated in a signing ceremony for World Bank loans totaling \$289 million and a Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs grant of \$7.8 million. The financing will allow the Government to implement projects on improving access to water supply and sanitation services for 500,000 people in three regions of Uzbekistan, and developing a market-oriented National Innovation System.

During her visit to Tashkent, the World Bank Vice President also met with representatives of civil society, the private sector, and international development partners to discuss how the Bank can work more effectively with these stakeholders to help the Government continue important reforms.

Uzbekistan was one of four countries in Ms. Bjerde's first official visit to Central Asia. She also visited the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Ms. Bjerde, a Swedish national, became the World Bank Vice President for Europe and Central Asia on May 1, 2020. In this position, she leads the Bank's strategic, analytical, operational, and knowledge work in the region.

The World Bank supports Uzbekistan through technical assistance and the financing of 24 projects totaling around \$4.3 billion. These projects provide support in critical areas such as macroeconomic reforms, agriculture, health, education, water supply and sanitation, energy, transport, social protection, urban and rural development, as well as mitigation of health, economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Turkish Consumers' Confidence in Economy Down in May

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The consumer confidence index in Turkey slipped on a monthly basis to 77.3 in May for the second month in a row, the country's statistical institute said.

May's confidence index, jointly calculated by TurkStat and the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) through the measurement of consumer tendencies, decreased 3.6% from April.

The consumer confidence index, calculated from survey results, is evaluated within the range of 0-200, indicating optimism when the index is above 100 and pessimism when below.

All sub-indices deteriorated this month, with the financial situation expectation of households index struggling the most.

The sub-index fell 5.5%, suggesting that fewer people were expecting a better financial situation in the next 12 months.

The general economic situation expectation over the coming 12 months decreased 4.9% month-on-month in May.

The financial situation of the household index at present compared to the past 12 month period slipped 3.8% during the same period.

The index for assessment on spending money on durable goods over the next 12 months posted a slight decrease of 0.7% from last month.

The monthly survey measures consumers' assessments and expectations on financial standing and the general economic situation, as well as their expenditure and saving tendencies.



Bangladesh Outpaces India on Per Capita Income

DHAKA (Dispatches) - One of the most densely populated countries in the world, Bangladesh has been battling poverty and under-development for almost five decades

When Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971, it was arguably the poorest country in the world or close to it.

Today, the country is growing rapidly and ranks ahead of its big neighbour India.

Planning Minister of Bangladesh MA Mannan informed the country's cabinet that the per capita income of Bangladesh has now increased from \$2,064 to \$2,227.

Bangladesh's per capita income is now \$280 higher than India's per capita income which is \$1,947.

"Our per capita income stands at \$2,227 in the fiscal year 2020-21, but the previous fiscal year's per capita income was \$2,064. So, the growth rate is 9%," said Bangladesh's Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam while briefing reporters.

One of the most densely populated countries in the world, Bangladesh has been battling poverty and under-development for almost five decades.

In 2007, the per capita income of Bangladesh was half of that of India.

Bangladesh will overtake India in per capita GDP once again in 2025 if IMF's latest World Economic Outlook is to be believed.

The Bangladeshi government is understandably happy and proud of this accomplishment.

Japan's Consumer Prices in April Down for 9th Straight Month

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's core consumer prices fell for the ninth straight month in April as a record slump in cellphone fees offset rising energy prices, suggesting that weak demand and higher costs will weigh on a fragile economic recovery.

Separate data showed firms facing rising input costs and a slower expansion in factory activity in May, highlighting risks to an economy heavily reliant on the manufacturing sector.

The data underscores the challenge policymakers face in combating a resurgence in Covid-19 infections without hobbling an economy already lagging other major trading partners emerging from the pandemic-induced slump.

"Inflation fell in April but that was almost entirely due to a plunge in mobile phone tariffs," said Tom Learmouth, Japan economist at Capital Economics. "Looking past temporary distortions, we think underlying inflation will continue to rise a bit further, although unlike in some other advanced economies."

The core consumer price index (CPI), which excludes the effect of volatile fresh food costs, fell 0.1 per cent in April from a year earlier, smaller than a median market forecast for a 0.2 per cent drop, government data showed on Friday and in line with March's decline.

A record 26.5 per cent in cellphone charges knocked 0.5 per cent off core CPI, the data showed, as carriers heeded Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's calls to ease the burden on households.

By contrast, energy prices rose 0.7 per cent in April, marking the first gain since January 2020 due to recent rises in crude oil costs and the base effect of last year's slump.

Any decline in manufacturers' profits would be a huge risk to firms' capital expenditure plans and leave the economy without a driver as the country wrestles with the hit to consumption, analysts said.

Japan's economy shrank in the first quarter and analysts expect any rebound in April-June to be modest as new Covid-19 infections forced the government to re-introduce state of emergency curbs, hurting already weak consumption.

Inflation has barely picked up in Japan as companies remain wary of passing on higher costs to households, even as supply bottlenecks and labour shortages stoke inflation fears in the US and some other advanced economies.

Meanwhile, Japan's factory activity expanded at a slower pace in May as growth in output and new orders eased.

Activity in the service sector contracted at the fastest pace in nine months, pulling the private sector as a whole into contraction after the previous month's expansion.

The au Jibun Bank Flash Japan Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) weakened to a seasonally adjusted 52.5 in May from a final 53.6 in April. The PMI survey showed overall output posted the weakest monthly expansion since February, in a sign the state of emergency curbs in Tokyo and other major areas were taking a toll on manufacturers.

U.S. Manufacturing Accelerates

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. factory activity gathered speed in early May amid strong domestic demand, but backlogs of uncompleted work are piling up as manufacturers struggle to find raw materials and labor, boosting costs for both businesses and consumers.

Though other data on Friday showed sales of previously owned homes dropping to a 10-month low in April as an acute shortage of houses drove prices to a record high, they remained well above their pre-pandemic level. The housing market and manufacturing have led the economy's recovery from the COVID-19 recession, which started in February 2020.

"The economic recovery continues," said Daniel Silver, an economist at JPMorgan in New York.

Data firm IHS Markit said its flash U.S. manufacturing PMI increased to 61.5 in the first half of this month. That was the highest reading since October 2009, and followed a final reading of 60.5 in April. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index dipping to 60.2 in early May.

A reading above 50 indicates growth in manufacturing, which accounts for 11.9% of the U.S. economy. Demand shifted to goods from services as the pandemic kept Americans at home, causing supply constraints. The virus also disrupted labor at manufacturers and their suppliers, leading to raw material shortages across industries.

More than a third of the population has been vaccinated, allowing the broader economy to reopen. While that, together with nearly \$6 trillion in pandemic relief provided by the government over the past year, is unleashing pent-up demand for services, appetite for goods remains healthy.

According to IHS Markit "manufacturers highlighted that strain on capacity and raw material shortages are expected to last through 2021." It noted that the supply crunch was raising production costs for manufacturers, who "made efforts to pass higher cost burdens on to clients."

The IHS Markit survey's measure of prices paid by manufacturers rose to the highest level since July 2008.

Federal Reserve officials generally view the supply chain bottlenecks as transitory and expect them to temporarily drive inflation above the U.S. central bank's 2% target. There is also acknowledgment that the bottlenecks could take longer to ease.

Minutes of the Fed's April 27-28 policy meeting published on Wednesday showed "a number of participants remarked that supply chain bottlenecks and input shortages may not be resolved quickly," and that this "could put upward pressure on prices beyond this year. These officials also "noted that in some industries, supply chain disruptions appeared to be more persistent than originally anticipated."

Pakistan Sees Preliminary Economic Growth of 3.9% for 2020/21



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan said its economy was on course to grow 3.94 per cent in the financial year 2020/2021 that ends in June, almost double the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's projections, as it recovers from the worst of the pandemic.

The planning ministry said its provisional estimate — up from Pakistan's last forecast of 3 per cent — was based on data for the year so far on growth in the agricultural, industrial and services sectors at 2.77 per cent, 3.57 per cent, and 4.43 per cent respectively.

"This growth in a period in which Covid placed a huge challenge to the economy is extremely gratifying," minister for planning Asad Umar tweeted. Yesterday, the ministry also revised down GDP growth for the financial year that ended on June 30, 2020, to -0.47 per cent, from -0.38 per cent.

The IMF has estimated GDP for 2020/21 growing 1.5 per cent and the World Bank estimates growth of 1.3 per cent. Prime Minister Imran Khan's government is weeks away from presenting its annual budget which faces tough challenges on the fiscal deficit and an ambitious revenue collection target.

Due to a combination of GDP growth and strengthening of the Pakistani rupee against the dollar, Pakistan's per capita income jumped by 13.4 per cent this year from US\$1,361 to US\$1,543, Umar said.

Total GDP increased from US\$263 billion to US\$296 billion, the highest increase recorded in any year, he said. The South Asian nation of 220 million people got into a US\$6 billion IMF stabilisation programme in 2019 months after Khan's government delayed it.

Pakistan's Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin has said the country is in talks with the IMF to seek easing of "tough conditions" on the loan.

GDP growth was 5.8 per cent before Khan took power in 2018 with inflation below 4 per cent, which was recorded in double digit last month. Some US\$2.5 billion of borrowing in international bond markets and historically high remittances have recently given some breathing space.

Iranian Filmmaker Gets ICESCO Short Film Award

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) has presented its first prize of the short film section to Mohammed Ehsani for his film “The Sound of Wind.”

ICESCO has announced the names of the winners of its creativity awards.

The awards include the ICESCO Short Film Award, Short Stories Award, Drawing and Music Award. ICESCO is an international non-profit organization emanating from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, specializing in the fields of education, science and culture.



India Remains Greatest Rising Power Despite Covid-19 Tragedy

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India remains the “greatest rising power” on the planet and has a number of fundamental strengths that will make it one of the “most powerful” countries in the world, according to report.

Despite the damage caused by the record rise in COVID-19 cases, India remains the “greatest rising power” on the planet and has a number of fundamental strengths that will make it one of the “most powerful” countries in the world, according to report published in a Saudi daily. Rebuffing critics of India’s handling of the pandemic, American foreign policy expert Dr John C Hulsman in an op-ed for Arab News has said that India’s political power structure is stable and both Modi and the BJP are politically secure in a way that other “developing countries can only envy.”

Due to a substantial rise in virus cases, India has witnessed a strain on its health infrastructure and subsequent rebuke from some sections of the western media.

Hulsman has argued that the analytical danger is to look at India’s tragic problems of today, but not at the enduring changes lying beneath the surface that will continue to make it the “greatest rising power” in the world.

“First, India’s political power structure is remarkably stable. Surprising most of the foreign policy commentariat (but in line with my firm’s political risk predictions), the BJP actually gained seats during the May 2019 national parliamentary elections,” the American expert said.

“Coupled with these political advantages, India’s demography affords it a mighty relative advantage. It is projected to surpass China as the world’s most populous nation by 2024. Crucially, more than 50 percent of India’s population is below the age of 25 and 65 percent is under the age of 35,” he added.

Pointing to India’s sturdy figures, the foreign policy expert said that economic numbers “simply do not lie.” “By 2050, it is estimated that India will account for a startling 15 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Coming out of the COVID-19 economic abyss, the subcontinent is set for a golden era of renewed growth,” Dr Hulsman said.



He also reminded how the International Monetary Fund estimates India’s economy is on course to grow by an impressive 11.5 percent this year, which is the only major global economy predicted to experience double-digit growth.

“Long-term political stability and an economic and demographic lift off already in progress make the essentials of India strikingly clear. This is the rising power in today’s world -- one that will only grow in importance as the years progress.”

There will often be chaos on the surface but India’s enduring and essential political risk trajectory is decisively favorable, the expert concluded.

Eurozone Economy Booms as Virus Restrictions Recede



LONDON (Dispatches) - Eurozone business activity is growing at its fastest rate in three years as Europe’s economy steadily reopens after months of Covid-19 restrictions.

According to a survey published on Friday, business activity in the eurozone is growing at its fastest rate in three years, as Europe’s economy steadily reopens after months of Covid-19 restrictions.

The closely-watched study compiled by economic data group IHS Markit indicated that the jump in demand was even overwhelming the economy, with factories and businesses unable to keep up with record demands.

According to the data, “order inflows surged to an extent not seen for almost 15 years”, the report said.

The firm’s PMI index, one of the earliest indicators for where the economy is heading, said activity rose from 53.8 in April to a strong 56.9 in May, above the 50-point level that indicates growth.

Growth would have been “even stronger” had it not been for supply chain delays and difficulties restarting businesses quickly enough to meet demand.

Among the countries, IHS Markit said France, where the pandemic downturn was deep, grew “especially sharply”.

Germany also saw strong output, although “the manufacturing sector saw growth slow from the recent record pace of expansion thanks to supply chain bottlenecks,” it said.

The struggle to meet the frenetic demand will have an effect on prices, the survey showed.

How long these inflationary pressures will persist will, however, depend on how quickly supply comes back into line with demand.

Meanwhile, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has urged his EU partners to gear up for a second round of economic stimulus packages to ensure Europe doesn’t lose ground to the US and China.

France is seeking an as yet unspecified investment plan to follow the €720 billion spending boost agreed by EU leaders last year that has been hailed as a landmark of European unity.

France, the eurozone’s second biggest economy after Germany, is understood to want to set up public investment schemes to boost innovation in key sectors, especially in high tech and the fight against climate change.

Hungary to Lead EU’s Post-Covid Economic Rebound

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungary is poised to lead the European Union’s post-pandemic economic rebound, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said after meeting his EU counterparts in Lisbon.

Hungary’s vaccination drive and the government’s economic response measures to the pandemic have given the country an advantage over its EU peers, the minister told MTI by phone.

Varga said he briefed his colleagues on the Hungarian government’s economic protection measures aimed at fending off the effects of the pandemic, noting tax cuts, grants aimed at boosting investments, an extension of a moratorium on debt service payments and the job protection scheme.

The 2022 budget is devoted to relaunching Hungary’s economy, Mihály Varga, the finance minister, said during a presentation of the draft budget to lawmakers on Wednesday. The opposition, on the other hand, criticized the plan.

“As a result of these measures, Hungary’s unemployment rate has remained around 4 percent, compared with the EU average of 7.5 percent,” he said.

Varga said Friday’s meeting had vindicated the government’s economic policy. The meeting’s participants were in agreement that an expansionary fiscal policy similar to the one pursued by Hungary was needed to promote growth.

“Tax cuts and reducing the budget deficit should come next,” he said, adding, however, that there was a debate among European decision-makers as to when it was best to return to tighter policies.

Bank of Spain Hints at Faster Economic Growth in 2022

MADRID (Reuters) - Spain’s economy is expected to bounce back in the second half after a slow start to 2021 and could grow more than expected next year driven by a delayed boost from EU recovery funds, Bank of Spain Chief Economist Oscar Arce told reporters.

In its latest economic outlook from March, the central bank expected gross domestic product, which last year slumped by a record 10.8% due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to expand by 6% in its central scenario this year and by 5.3% in 2022.

On Thursday, it said in an annual report that Spain’s economic recovery also hinged on the progress of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the implementation of reforms in the labour market and pension system, as well as private consumption.

It also warned that the pace of recovery in international tourism, which in 2019 accounted for more than 12% of Spain’s GDP and now represents just around 4%-5%, was still uncertain, clouding the prospects of an economic rebound.

The European Commission raised its growth forecast for

Spain to 5.9% in 2021 and 6.8% in 2022, citing the projected impact of EU recovery funds, especially next year.

Arce said the central bank’s updated macroeconomic forecast in June would be more comparable to the Commission’s view, but would not elaborate further.

“It is possible that, as this delay (in EU aid) occurs to some extent, we will implement less European funds in 2021, and possibly more in 2022, and this may be reflected in slightly less momentum this year and more in 2022,” he said.

Such a delay may not necessarily be a bad thing if the funds were accompanied by a more thorough selection process of investment projects, Arce added.

Bank of Spain Governor Pablo Hernandez de Cos said that, while the Spanish economy would get a boost from EU funds, the consequences of the pandemic on the labour market and fiscal accounts would be felt for years.

The Spanish government has recently cut its growth forecast for 2021 to 6.5% to reflect an anaemic first quarter and delays in the arrival of EU funds, though expected the economy to expand by 7% in 2022.

UAE Creates 248,000 Jobs in Pandemic Year

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The UAE has once again proven its economic resilience by creating hundreds of thousands of jobs last year when the global economy was shrinking and international trade was on the decline.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, on Saturday disclosed that the emirate created nearly 248,000 jobs last year when millions of people were rendered jobless or unemployed due to the global economic slowdown because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“The world economy shrank 4 per cent, international trade dropped 20 per cent, and the world lost millions of jobs in 2020,” Sheikh Mohammed tweeted.

“In the same year, the UAE economy created 100,000 jobs in retail sector and e-commerce and 148,000 jobs in the financial, technology and telecommunications sector. We repeat: Crisis management creates opportunities and management crises destroy gains.”

Referring to the UAE’s successful strategy to tackle the pandemic, analysts, executives and corporate leaders said the emirate was one of the very few nations that opened their borders for travel and economy for business following a successful drive against the pandemic, resulting in the creation of a high number of jobs amidst a challenging environment.

Atik Munshi, managing partner at Enterprise House, said opportunity is hidden in every challenge and this adage has proved true for Dubai than the rest of the world.

“No wonder certain business sectors have shown growth particularly compared to their counterparts around the world. Such would obviously increase employment rates in those sectors. The real estate has shown very positive signs too and more international FDI is expected to flow,” he added.

Palestinians...

FROM PAGE 1

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei 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.

The recent resistance and fightback showed us that the Zionists are vulnerable despite claiming they have the best defensive wall against missile attacks.

Palestinians showed the world that Israel just understands the language of force and nothing more, and efforts for talks and compromise are in vain because the Zionists are fully supported by the world hegemony and especially the West and the U.S.

As the Supreme Leader has said, Muslims in the world should support Palestinians to help them overcome their enemy No.1, Israel. Palestinians taught a lesson to the Zionists that the era of the hit-and-run has come to its end and if they decide to attack, they will face appropriate response.

In reaction to these horrible Zionists’ crimes, U.S. President Joe Biden said there is “no shift” in his commitment to the security of Israel and reiterated his support for the Tel Aviv regime, following the 11-day Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip.

Therefore, Palestinians should not wait for any assistance from the West regarding their struggle to liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Zionists’ claws as the victory is approaching, and only unity among the Muslim world and their support from the Palestinians can accelerate the liberation of the holy Al-Aqsa.

As Iranian senior officials have reiterated, the collapse of the Zionists is imminent but it needs a whole-hearted resistance from the Muslim world for liberating the Palestine.

Leader’s Support...

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier this month, the Israeli regime launched a 12-day war against the already Tel Aviv-blockaded Gaza Strip. Gaza’s resistance groups started responding to the aggression on the same day that it started targeting the enclave.

Throughout the offensive, the groups fired more than 4,000 rockets towards the occupied territories. The projectiles swept the entire expanse of the territories, many flying as far as Tel Aviv, the holy occupied city of al-Quds, and even the northern-lying cities of Haifa and Nazareth.

The Israeli regime finally gave in to a ceasefire on Friday, incapable of stopping the resistance’s rocket avalanche.

The Palestinian official considered the Islamic Republic’s invariable backing of the Palestinian nation in the face of the Israeli regime’s “organized state terrorism and savage crimes” throughout the Palestinian territories, to be “a source of pride.”

Gaza’s resistance movements, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, have already voiced vociferous gratitude towards the Leader for the support.

The secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad offers his congratulations to Ayatollah Khamenei over the great victory against the Israeli regime in the 12-day war.

“The Palestinian nation, all the countries participating in the resistance axis, and all the freedom-seeking people of the world take pride in the great victory,” Abdul-Majid added.

The Islamic Republic is the “real and main supporter” of all resistance groups throughout the world, and also serves as the main guarantor of regional stability and the international Muslim Ummah (Nation)’s unity, he added.

The entire Palestinian nation, including all the resistance groups, “enter allegiance” with Ayatollah Khamenei to keep up their resistance and popular struggle against the occupiers until Palestine’s liberation.

Gauff Wins Two Parma Titles in One Day

LONDON (Dispatches) - American teenager Coco Gauff swept aside China's Wang Qiang to win her second WTA career title on clay in Parma on Saturday.

Third seed Gauff won through 6-1, 6-3 against Wang, the sixth seed, in 74 minutes to add to her hardcourt title in Linz in 2019.

After reaching the semi-finals on clay in the Italian Open in Rome last week, 17-year-old Gauff dropped only one set en route to the title in Parma, just one week before Roland Garros.

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Badosa Wins Maiden Title

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Spain's Paula Badosa claimed her maiden WTA title on Saturday in Belgrade after opponent Ana Konjuh's injury cure returned and forced her retirement from the final.

Fourth seed Badosa, ranked at 44 in the world, was leading 6-2, 2-0 when her Croatian opponent called it quits.

Badosa, whose clay court season has seen her notch up a win over world number one Ashleigh Barty in Charleston, has now won 13 of her last 15 matches on tour.

Ruud Wins Geneva Open Title, Tsitsipas Into Final

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Norwegian young gun Casper Ruud has clinched his second ATP Tour title by winning the Gonet Geneva Open held at the Tennis Club de Genève. The 21-year-old, No. 3 seed of the ATP 250 clay-court tournament, defeated second favourite Denis Shapovalov 7-6(4), 6-4 in Saturday's singles final.

After a first-round bye, Ruud beat US-American Tennys Sandgren, Dominik Koepfer of Germany and Spaniard Pablo Andujar and dropped only one set en-route to the championship match. The World No. 21 withstood eight aces from Shapovalov and won 54 per cent of the total points played to seal victory in one hour and 41 minutes.

"It was a tough first set, it was very close," Ruud said. "We were both serving great so there weren't that many rallies after the serve on both sides because of the high level. But in the tie-break there were some rallies here and there... Happily for me I won the first set, and I think that gave me a little bit of confidence to calm down a little bit - not to relax, but to play more freely."

Following his maiden triumph in Buenos Aires, Argentina in February last year, Ruud pocketed €41,145 as well as 250 ATP Ranking points in western Switzerland.

Earlier in the day, John Peers from Australia and Michael Venus of New Zealand took the doubles title. The No. 2 seeds defeated Italian Simone Bolelli and Maximo Gonzalez from Argentina 6-2, 7-5. The encounter lasted one hour and 16 minutes.

Meanwhile in Lyon, world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas came from a set down to beat Lorenzo Musetti 4-6, 6-3, 6-0 on Saturday and reach the final of the ATP event in Lyon.



In the final, the 22-year-old Greek will face Britain's Cameron Norrie who raced past Karen Khachanov 6-1, 6-1 in the other semi-final.

Norrie, 25, had already played on Saturday morning having beaten French hope Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in a quarter-final suspended overnight with the last set still to play.

Musetti, 19, came into the event as an alternate but made the most of his chance with wins over seventh seed Felix Auger-Aliassime, Sebastian Korda and Aljaz Bedene.

The Italian teenager grabbed the first set but Tsitsipas gradually took charge.

"It was important I had a match like this," said Tsitsipas on court after the match.

"It makes me stay humble and focus on some detailed things I can potentially improve and get better at on clay."

"I had to stay calm. It was difficult to be a set down and have to kind of refresh myself and come anew in the second set."

"He was still putting in a lot of work and making me work for every single point. It wasn't easy."

Tsitsipas is seeking his second title of the year after winning the Monte Carlo Masters. He also reached the final in Barcelona where he lost to Rafael Nadal having had a match point.

British number two Norrie, ranked 49 in the world, will be looking for his first ever title in his first meeting with Tsitsipas.

Flick Set To Be Named Germany Coach



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Hansi Flick admitted Friday there are only "minor details" left to finalise with the out-going Bayern Munich head coach poised to take charge of Germany after the Euro 2020 finals.

Flick, who has won seven titles over the last 18 months at Bayern, took charge of his final game at home to Augsburg on Saturday after which the hosts will lift the Bundesliga trophy for the ninth season in a row.

The 56-year-old is set to replace Joachim Loew as Germany head coach after the European Championship from June 11-July 11. "I've spoken to the DFB (German Football Association) and everyone knows how I feel about the national team, but it's also the case that things always have to be sorted out, it's about the little things," Flick said Friday.

However, once details are agreed, "things could be finalised pretty quickly," Flick added.

He was assistant coach to Loew when Germany won the 2014 World Cup.

James Escapes Sanction Over Covid-19 Rule Breach

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James broke NBA rules regarding Covid-19 but will not face sanction over the protocol breach, US media reported Saturday.

James, who will spearhead the Lakers in their opening playoff game against the Phoenix Suns on Sunday, violated health and safety regulations after attending a promotional event for a brand of tequila he has invested in, ESPN reported.

Hollywood actor Michael B. Jordan and singer Drake both attended the event with James, which took place before the Lakers win over the Golden State Warriors on Wednesday. Although invitees were required to show proof of a negative test or vaccination to get access to the event, James was deemed to be in breach of the NBA's Covid-19 protocols.

"It's a violation of the agreed upon protocols, and, as we have in other comparable instances around the league, it has been addressed with the team," an NBA spokesman told ESPN.

James will not face suspension however because the breach was not regarded as serious enough to risk spreading the virus. According to NBA regulations, players found to have breached health and safety protocols can receive warnings, fines or suspensions depending on the seriousness of the breach.

James' Lakers team-mate Dennis Schroder was recently required to miss 10 days because of Covid-19 protocols.

Ranieri to End Managerial Soap Opera at Sampdoria

ROME (Dispatches) - Claudio Ranieri announced on Friday he will not coach Serie A club Sampdoria next season.

Ranieri, who memorably guided outsiders Leicester City to the 2016 English Premier League title, took over the Genoa side in October 2019. "I would like to close the soap opera of my contract," Ranieri said on the club's website. "Today, I told the team that I will not stay another year, the conditions aren't right to stay."



Lewandowski Finally Topples Mueller's Bundesliga Goal Record

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski on Saturday broke Gerd Mueller's 49-year-old record when he bagged a 41st Bundesliga goal of the campaign seconds before the final whistle on the last weekend of the season.

Mueller, 75, is suffering from severe dementia, but 'The Bomber' remains an iconic figure in German football as the Bundesliga's all-time top scorer with 365 goals, well ahead of Lewandowski's tally of 277.

Many thought Mueller's record of 40 goals for Bayern Munich in 1971/72 would never

be matched until Lewandowski rounded the goalkeeper to score in the same club's 5-2 rout of Augsburg on Saturday after equalling the record last weekend.

"It was tense until the last second, I would have liked to have scored earlier," a relieved Lewandowski told Sky.

"Sometimes you also have to stay patient, which was difficult."

"I always believed that a chance would come. That was a special and historic moment."

While Mueller scored his 40 goals over 34 league games in 1971/72, injury and squad rotation meant Lewandowski broke the record in just 29 matches.

Bayern scored 101 goals in the league in 1971/72 and 99 this season.

Physically, the 32-year-old Lewandowski is very different to Mueller, who was 26 in the 1971/72 season.

Atletico Clinch La Liga Title Thanks To Suarez Winner

VALLADOLID (Reuters) - Atletico Madrid pipped city rivals Real Madrid to the La Liga title on Saturday after Luis Suarez fired them to a 2-1 comeback win at Real Valladolid, which secured them the Spanish championship for the first time in seven years.

Valladolid took a shock lead in the 18th minute when Oscar Plano slotted past Jan Oblak to complete a sweeping counterattack after Yannick Carrasco had lost control of the ball following an Atletico corner.

Just as they had done in last week's comeback win over Osasuna, Atletico missed a series of clear opportunities but they drew level after a moment of magic from Angel Correa, who danced his way through the defence before arrowing into the bottom corner in the 57th minute.

Suarez then pounced on a giveaway by the Valladolid defence to score in the 67th and put Atletico on their way to a victory that would secure the title no matter what happened in Real Madrid's game at home to Villarreal.

Valladolid missed a couple of glaring opportunities down the other end while Geoffrey Kondogbia wasted a chance that would have given Atletico a more relaxing finish when he blasted into the side-netting.

Real Madrid ended up fighting their way back from a goal down to beat Villarreal 2-1 which meant they would have swiped the title from Atletico's hands if Valladolid had equalized thanks to a better head-to-head record.

However, Diego Simeone's side saw out the victory and wildly celebrated on the pitch.

"Atletico have had an incredible season despite all the difficulties we've had. We've been the most consistent team and we are champions," said Suarez.

The game was played behind closed doors like all of Atletico's matches this season although several hundred supporters cheered them on from outside the stadium.

Atletico finished top of the standings on 86 points while Real came second on 84. Valladolid finished 19th and were relegated to Spain's second division.



Infantino Wants Overhaul of FIFA Calendar

ZURICH (Dispatches) - FIFA President Gianni Infantino on Friday called for an overhaul of the international football calendar beyond 2024, insisting on a requirement to start with a "blank sheet of paper".

"Let me be very clear: the starting point is not 'the calendar is full and so nothing changes'," he told the 71st FIFA Congress.

"The starting point is the exact opposite of that. We have a blank sheet, we are open to take on board all views and opinions about how we can make the international calendar better."

Infantino reiterated his intention to "find a date" for a Club World Cup which he wants to see extended to 24 teams, despite widespread opposition to the plan.

However, he argued at length Friday for FIFA to play a key role in rewriting the calendar. He said the organisation is the "only body" that "generates" and "redistributes" its revenues "around the world" unlike continental confederations and leagues.

"Let me explain," he added Friday.

"Today, big leagues generate billions in revenues from all over the world - and these revenues are distributed where? To the 18-20 clubs in their leagues, with a small percentage going in solidarity." He added: "The only body which is generating revenues from all over the world and redistributing and investing all over the world in solidarity is FIFA."

Meanwhile, there have been moves to push for a biennial World Cup, which is tempting for broadcasters but has angered national leagues and clubs who are seeing player burnout in an already packed calendar.

FIFA's football development chief Arsene Wenger suggested in March that the World Cup, the European Championship and other international tournaments be held every two years.

It was an idea dubbed "unrealistic" by European Leagues, a body which groups 37 leagues and club associations in Europe, but still featured in a report carried out by Wenger and released last week.

Infantino has stayed vague on the concept, saying at the end of March that he was open to any ideas for the post-2024 football calendar and earlier this month promising "interesting discussions" on Wenger's proposals.

