

Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus in Iran Increased to 79,056 With 208 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Sumi Junichi, Head of the Information and Cultural Center of Embassy of Japan Says That Japan Makes Its Stance Clear to Support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

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2 DOMESTIC

Tehran, Beijing Should Counter U.S. Cold War



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

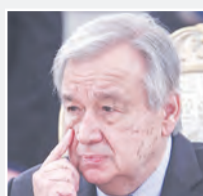
Tehran, Kiev Urged To Ease Bartering Agro Products



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

UN Chief Declares War on Covid



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Grizzlies Stun Top-Seeded Jazz To Open Series



> SEE PAGE 8

Iranian Army Launches Large-Scale Electronic Warfare Drill

TEHRAN (PressTV)- The Iranian Army has launched a large-scale aerial drill involving electronic warfare units and featuring the country's domestically-built air defense systems and equipment.

Rapid response and electronic warfare units of the Army's Ground Force, Air Force, Navy and Air Defense are participating in the joint aerial maneuvers, codenamed Sky Shield 1400, whose headquarters will be located in Iran's central province of Isfahan.

According to Deputy Chief of Iran's Army for Coordination Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the drill is the most practical exercise in the field of military electronic warfare in recent years.

He said the Iranian Army is going to use its latest achievements and combat capabilities during the drill, with offensive as well as defensive electronic warfare tactics to be put into practice.

Sayyari also pointed to the high significance of electronic warfare in both operational and intelligence aspects of present-day military encounters, stressing that the Iranian Army has developed the necessary infrastructure for defense and electronic warfare.

See Page 7

Tehran, Yerevan Targeting for \$1b Worth of Mutual Investment

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Armenia are targeting for \$1 billion worth of bilateral trade annually.

Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development revealed the signing and sealing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and Armenia for the removal of goods transit barriers.

By expanding cooperation and promoting level of investment to \$1 billion, Islamic Republic of Iran can immediately be turned into a trading partner of Armenia.

Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami made the remarks in his meeting with Armenian Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan in Yerevan on Monday.

During the meeting, agreements were made between the two countries of Iran and Armenia in the field of transport.

See Page 7

GC Approves Seven Candidates To Run in Presidential Elections



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The Guardian Council approved seven hopefuls to run in next month's presidential poll, with judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi among the mainly ultraconservative candidates, while heavyweights Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ali Larijani were barred.

The much-awaited list, which was released on Tuesday, includes Saeed Jalili, Seyyed Ebrahim Raesi, Mohsen Rezaei, Alireza Zakani, Seyyed Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi, Albdolnasser Hemmati, Mohsen Mehralizadeh.

Raesi has been the chief of Iran's Judiciary since 2019. He is mainly associated with the Principlist camp, but he said he would be contesting the June 18 vote "independently."

Rezaei, a Principlist, currently serves as the secretary of Iran's Expediency Council.

Mehr-Alizadeh, a Reformist politician, formerly served as vice president and head of the National Sports Organization of Iran under ex-President Seyed Mohammad Khatami.

Jalili, a Principlist figure and former diplomat, served as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council from 2007 to 2013. In that capacity, he served as Iran's top nuclear negotiator in talks with major world states on the country's nuclear program.

Zakani is a Principlist politician and a lawmaker representing the city of Qom in the Iranian Parliament (Majlis).

Hemmati, affiliated with the Reformist camp, is an Iranian politician and economist who currently serves as the governor of the Central Bank of Iran.

Ghazizadeh-Hashemi is a Principlist politician and lawmaker.

A number of heavyweights, including Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, as well as former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, were disqualified by the Constitutional Council from joining the presidential race.

According to official figures, 592 hopefuls had registered to join the forthcoming presidential race, pending approval by the Constitutional Council — which supervises Iran's elections and is in charge of vetting hopefuls.

The Council, however, said only 40 out of the 592 hopefuls had submitted all the required documents to the panel through the Interior Ministry's election HQ.

It took 10 days for the Council's jurists to examine the qualifications of the hopefuls. Each hopeful had to secure at least seven out of the 12 votes to get the vetting body's approval for running in the election.

Iran-IAEA Deal Gives Bilateral Talks Chance to Succeed

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A new report says a recent agreement between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to extend by one month an understanding to keep inspections alive is only meant to give the technical negotiations between the two sides a chance to reach a breakthrough.

Back in February, Iran stopped the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards Treaty, which stipulates enhanced international access to nuclear sites and snap inspections by the IAEA. The halt came under the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed in December 2020 by the Iranian Parliament, and adds to Iran's previous steps away from the 2015 nuclear deal in response to the U.S.'s unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and the other parties' failure to fulfill their commitments.

At that time, the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) reached a temporary bilateral technical understanding, under which the latter would continue to use cameras to record information at its nuclear sites for three months, but it would retain the information exclusively. If the US sanctions are lifted completely within that period in a verifiable manner, Tehran will provide the footage information to the UN nuclear watchdog, otherwise it will be deleted forever. The understanding expired this week amid diplomatic efforts in Vienna, Austria, to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran and the IAEA agreed to extend the understanding for a further month allowing the agency to continue necessary verification and monitoring work in the country.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said that at a time when, the Vienna talks are underway in parallel with the technical negotiations between Iran and the IAEA to resolve the issues related to the Safeguards Agreement, Iran had decided to continue retaining recordings from monitoring equipment for one month in order to provide an opportunity for progress in the discussions.

"Both when the agreement between Iran and the IAEA was in effect and now that it has expired has expired, the Iranian parliamentary resolution, including the issue of "the suspension of the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol," will continue without any compromise while any access to the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites and activities has been halted," Nour News reported on Tuesday.

See Page 7

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Zionists' Crimes Rewarded With U.S. Arms Sale

While the world was and is still condemning Israel's crimes against Palestinians and massive protests are held in any part of the world and even in the Occupied Lands (Israel), amid the Zionists' crimes, the U.S. rewarded this killer regime with bonus for its crimes against the Palestinians.

The American newspaper The Washington Post reported that the U.S. government approved the sale of \$735 million in precision-guided weapons to the Israeli regime, citing sources in the U.S. Congress. The Congress was officially informed of the proposed sale on May 5, the daily said, days before the Israeli regime launched an all-out aggression on Palestine. This happens while the world expected the Biden Administration to reverse the decision for selling the arms to Israel which had been agreed during the Donald Trump Administration.

The proposed weapons sale is related to Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMS) that transforms so-called "dumb" bombs into precision-guided missiles, which the Israel regime has reportedly used on several occasions in the past.

Washington Post said some U.S. Democrats want to know the details of the proposed arms sale, as they believe its timing may be used as leverage.

According to the report, once the Congress receives formal notification from the Biden administration about the sale, lawmakers would have 20 days to object with a nonbinding resolution of disapproval.

It comes at a time when Palestine has been reeling under an unprecedented military aggression from the occupying regime, with the resistance front retaliating forcefully, exposing cracks in the Israeli regime's defense infrastructure.

The latest escalation was triggered earlier this month by the Israeli regime forces who forced Palestinian families to vacate their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem, followed by violent onslaught on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

After the Palestinian resistance movement retaliated, the occupying regime fired a barrage of missiles targeting civilian areas in the besieged territory, including high-rise buildings housing residential apartments and media houses.

The death toll from the Israeli regime attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip has jumped to 200, the Palestinian Health Ministry said Monday.

Biden and some of his Democratic colleagues have insisted that Israel has the right to defend itself, even though an overwhelming evidence points to Israeli regime's disproportionate attacks on Palestine.

See Page 7

Strengthening, Upgrading Missile Power Mod's Priority

TEHRAN (MNA) – Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said that strengthening and upgrading missile power is the first goal of the Ministry of Defense.

Hatami made the remarks when he paid a visit to the exhibition of achievements of the Ministry of Defense in the field of ground combat on Tuesday.

"Strengthening and upgrading the missile power of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the first goal of the Ministry of Defense," he said.

He also noted, "Strengthening the areas of air defense, air combat, naval and ground combat are other priorities of the defense industry."

Referring to the strategic importance of ground combat in wars and battles, Hatami said, "The field of ground combat is important because it establishes and determines the defense power of each country on the battlefield."

"In recent years, we have been able to achieve significant achievements in the field of ground combat, especially in the field of anti-tank missiles and surface-to-surface guided bombs, tactical vehicles and smart weapons," the Iranian minister added.

See Page 7

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President Congratulates Lebanon Liberation Day

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani in a message to Lebanese people and government congratulated Lebanon Liberation Day from the grip of the Zionist regime.

The nature of the Zionist regime which is rooted in aggression indicated that resistance is the only solution for fighting aggressors, President Rouhani said in his message to his Lebanese counterpart Michel Aoun.

He hoped for full liberation of Lebanese territories under Aoun's leadership.

In line with determination of the Lebanese government, nation and Resistance for maintaining unity and defending territories, Iran is standing by Lebanese government and nation, he added.

He also wished health and success for Lebanese president and dignity for people of Lebanon.

Tehran, Beijing Should Counter U.S. Cold War

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani says the Islamic Republic and China must join hands to counter the new cold war launched against independent countries by the United States and its Western allies.

President Rouhani made the remarks in a Monday phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping during which he expressed Iran's readiness to boost all-out cooperation with China as a major world power.

Rouhani appreciated China's principled positions and support for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal with world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), including the ongoing Vienna talks.

Stressing the need for the removal of unilateral sanctions against the Iranian people, Iran's President stated that it is imperative for both countries to forge close cooperation with regard to international issues in order to counter the new cold war and coalition building efforts by the United States and its Western allies against independent nations, including Iran and China.

Referring to the presentation of the Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) by the Islamic Republic at the United Nations, which focuses on promoting cooperation among regional countries, Rouhani said Iran is ready to help promote China's ties with West Asia on various matters, including resolving the Palestinian issue, and that the peace initiative, in this respect, can form the basis of interaction between the two sides.

Tehran introduced the HOPE initiative to the world leaders in the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2019, which was aimed at enhancing



solidarity, mutual understanding as well as peaceful and friendly relations among countries in the region in order to guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of regional states.

During the phone call on Monday, Rouhani also voiced Iran's willingness to promote economic cooperation with China in West Asia, saying that the development of such cooperation would further strengthen relations between the two countries, especially in the economic and trade fields.

Iran and China signed a 25-year strategic partnership agreement in April, which was described as a major blow to the United States' hostile foreign policy against Tehran and countering its sanctions regime.

The Chinese president, for his part, referred on Monday to the regional cooperation between the two countries, stressing that Iran and China can play an effective role in resolving regional and international issues by sharing their positions.

Pointing to talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal in Vienna, Xi stressed that Beijing has always supported the deal as a multilateral international agreement and backs its full implementation. "The United States cannot withdraw from the [nuclear] deal [with Iran] or return to it on its own terms. The removal of all sanctions against Iran is necessary for the US to return to the JCPOA," the Chinese president said.

Agreement for Cooperation on Fighting Organized Crimes in Caspian Sea Approved

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's parliament has approved the generalities of a quadrilateral agreement on fighting organized crimes in the Caspian Sea.

The MPs voted by 184 against 5 votes to approve the report by the judicial and legal commission on the bill on protocol for cooperation on fighting organized crimes in the Caspian Sea.

That's an attachment to the Agreement on Security Cooperation in the Caspian Sea, earlier approved by Iran.

Russia, the Azerbaijan Republic, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are other signatories to the agreement and its attachment.

Iran Among Top 5 Submarine Producers

ABADAN (IRNA) - Iran's Navy Marine Rangers Commander Rear Admiral Morteza Darkhoran said on Tuesday that the country is among the top five nations in building submarines thanks to the knowledge and expertise of domestic forces.

Darkhoran told reporters in sidelines of commemoration ceremony of Liberation of Khorramshahr that Iran's Navy is among top powers in the world in manufacturing cruisers, destroyers, battlecruisers and hovercraft.

He pointed to the order by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei to take over the Persian Gulf by submarines, saying that the order has been executed and all the countries were aware of Iran's presence level in the waterway.

The commander also said that the Military's Strategic Force helps many countries to ensure the security of their vessels.

Rangers of Iran's Navy are in the best condition regarding equipment, preparedness, and human forces, Darkhoran asserted, adding that they were ready to defend Iranian interests anywhere in international waters.

He commemorated the dedication the rangers practiced in defending Khorramshahr during the Eight-Year Imposed War between Iran and Iraq.

Majlis Delegation Meets Syrian Parliament Speaker

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -An Iranian parliamentary delegation that has arrived in Damascus a short while before the Syrian presidential elections met and conferred with Parliament Speaker Hamuda Sabbag.

The Iranian parliamentary delegation is comprised of Zohreh Elahian, a member of the Parliament's National Security Commission, and Fatemeh Maqsoodi, a member of the Parliament's Internal and Councils Affairs Commission.

Speaking about the meeting, Elahian said that in the meeting we appreciated the Syrian government's initiative of inviting delegations from various countries to supervise the authenticity of their country's presidential elections.

She said that the presence of parliamentary delegations from various countries is sufficient proof for the sound process of the elections and observation of the democratic process in it.

Elahian expressed hope that the presidential elections will be a turning point marking the establishment of peace and stability in Syria and the harbinger of a bright future for the Syrian people.

The Syrians are enthusiastically participating in this election and this is a strong support for the establishment of peace and security in this country, she added.

Referring to the close relations between the two countries, Elahian also invited the Syrian Parliament speaker and parliament members to visit Tehran at their earlier possible opportunity. The Syrian presidential elections are scheduled to be held on June 26, but the Syrians living abroad casted their votes last Thursday.

PUIC Urged to End Israel's Apartheid, Genocide Against Palestinians



TEHRAN (PressTV) – Majlis Speaker has urged Muslim countries to adopt policies to put an end to Israel's apartheid policy and genocide of Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf made the remarks while addressing the 4th extraordinary meeting of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation member states (PUIC)'s Standing Committee on Palestine in Tehran on Monday.

"I hope this important meeting will achieve all its lofty goals to support and defend the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian nation ... and come up with basic solutions to end oppression, crime, genocide, apartheid, racial cleansing [of Israel against Palestinians]," he said.

He emphasized that all those who believe in God and justice are duty-bound to support the resistance of the Palestinian people in their strong battle against the occupying aggressors and offer them any support in order to help them restore their absolute rights.

"Beyond belonging to a specific religion, sect and ethnicity, the Palestinian issue is an international issue and support for the oppressed Palestinians in the face of aggression and crimes by the Zionist occupiers is a global responsibility," the top Iranian parliamentarian said.

He added that resistance of the Palestinian people once again proved that the Zionist regime only understands the language of force and noted that the "indescribable" struggle of the Palestinian fighters has shattered Tel Aviv's alleged invincibility.

The Israeli regime's weakness and expected annihilation have been more obvious than ever before, he pointed out.

Israel sustained a heavy defeat in its latest confrontation with resistance groups in the Gaza Strip, as the regime declared a ceasefire early on Friday after 12 days of heavy bombardment of Gaza, to which the resistance responded with firing thousands of rockets into the Israeli-occupied territories.

Canadian Court Ruling, Political Statement

TEHRAN (IP) - Judiciary spokesman called the Canadian court ruling a kind of politicization, stressing that the Islamic Republic of Iran's courts were the only legal entities capable of exercising jurisdiction over the Ukrainian airliner case.

In response to question on the jurisdiction of the Canadian court about Ukrainian plane, Gholamhossein Esmaeili said: "According to the Islamic Republic and international laws and regulations and the general principles of international rules and criminal investigation in terms of the incident in Iran, the only competent authority would be the courts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, so other countries' courts including Canada,



have no jurisdiction over the (Ukrainian Plane Crash) issue at all."

"The verdict of the court is emotional, unscientific, and based on speculation, so it does not have legal and judicial value and necessary documents," he emphasized.

Esmaeili also stressed that the technical report of the accident was sent to various countries by the Judiciary Organization of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran and some of these countries sent their comments to Iran and their contents confirm this technical report."

The 44th press conference of the Judiciary Spokesman with reporters from various media outlets was held on May 25th, 2021.

Zarif Meets With President of Azerbaijan

BAKU (IP) – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met on Tuesday with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

arrived in Baku on Monday evening for a one-day visit and meeting with high-ranking officials of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Consultation and exchange of views on the latest developments in bilateral relations and the most important regional and international issues are the main purposes of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At the end of the visit, Zarif will leave the Republic of Azerbaijan for Armenia and meeting with the officials of this country.

The visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia can be considered as part of Tehran's diplomatic efforts to strengthen the peace and stability of the region following the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

During the 44-day military conflict that began on September 27, 2020, the Republic of Azerbaijan was able to liberate its territories occupied by Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh after nearly 30 years.

The military conflict ended on November 10 last year with the signing of a tripartite statement by the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia, and the Prime Minister of Armenia.



Iran's Behavior With Afghan Refugees Outstanding, Exemplary

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific of the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, says what the Islamic Republic of Iran has done for Afghan refugees over the past four decades has been outstanding.

"I think – objectively speaking – what the Islamic Republic has done for Afghan refugees over the last four decades have been tremendous," Indrika Ratwate said in an interview with Iran Press on Monday.

Asked about reports by Iran's enemies claiming that the country is oppressing and cracking down on Afghan refugees, the UN official said all such reports are false as the Islamic Republic has included Afghan refugees in education and health, which has been 'exemplary'.

"Iran has included Afghan refugees in education, in health and that has resulted in an entire generation of young Afghan people having opportunities, so I would say that it has been exemplary what Iran has done for Afghan refugees."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ratwate said that after the COVID-19 outbreak, necessary equipment was sent to Iran

for refugees through cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), adding that the UNHCR plans to send six million doses for the refugees in the country.

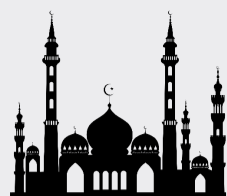
He also praised Iran for including refugees aged over 75 in the national vaccination campaign.

In February 2020, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi praised Iran and Pakistan for hosting millions of Afghan refugees despite receiving minimal support from the international community.

Royan Institute to Open Branch in Algeria

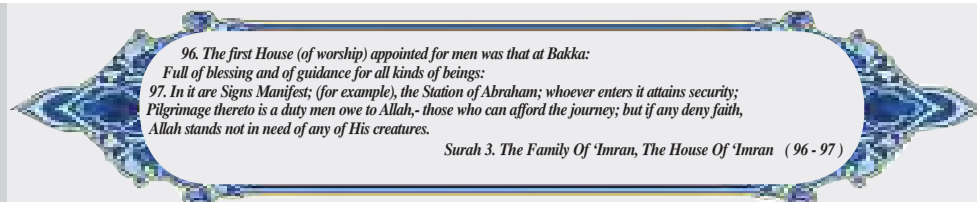
TEHRAN (MNA) – Dr. Abdolhossein Shahverdi, head of Royan Institute, informed on Tues. that the institute plans to establish a branch in Algeria.

"We have been negotiating with Algeria for almost a year to set up another branch of the institute in that country," he said. As he explained, in addition to training the workforce, an embryo infertility treatment center will be set up in Algeria, accordingly. Royan Institute is a renowned center committed to multidisciplinary, campus-wide, integration and collaboration of academic and medical personnel for understanding male/ female infertility, embryo development, stem cell biology, and biotechnology.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:31
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:09
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:51



Tehran, Kiev Urged to Ease Bartering Agro Products

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Ukraine have called for easing the ground for bartering agricultural products which is effective in boosting bilateral trade cooperation.

On Monday, the first specialized meeting between the private sectors of Iran and Ukraine was held and the meeting was focused on the agriculture because statistics show that the major trade exchange between the two countries last year was in agro products sector.

In the meeting, head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei, Head of Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UCCI) Gennadiy Chyzykhov, and ambassadors of both countries were present.

In the meeting, Chyzykhov expressed his satisfaction on the current level of cooperation between the chambers of commerce of the two countries and the MoU which signed between them in 2017, and said according to the MoU, these co-operations have been formed and fortunately it is active.

He said the trade between Iran and Ukraine was over \$400m last year that agro products account for 95 percent of the total trade and it indicates the position of agro sector in the relations between Iran and Ukraine. Chyzykhov went on to say that currently the trade exchanges between the two countries are done via the third party country, adding that if the grounds are eased in a way that both countries trade directly, the level of trade will definitely increase by three-fold and to exceed \$1b.

He then referred to the views of the exports about the hurdles in way of cooperation between Iran and Ukraine and said the financial relation is complicated and it should be eased through adopting proper methods. He stated that currently Ukrainian economic activists and entrepreneurs are waiting for a condition where the financial exchange is restored and therefore the two countries should take advantage of views of exports to resolve the problem.



Then Ukrainian Ambassador to Tehran Mr. Sergey Bordiliak said that such seminars and meetings are to be continued by the yearend in cooperation between the provincial chambers of commerce of the two countries in line with developing cooperation.

He added holding specialize seminars and meetings like today's which has been allocated to the field of agriculture is a good idea and it stops controversies and it ushers both sides to make certain decisions and these co-operations should not be limited to the agriculture and it should be expanded to other sectors in the similar meetings.

Bordiliak went on to say that the trade volume between Iran and Ukraine was \$1.1b in 2017, adding that unfortunately the bilateral trade is done via the third party country and therefore there is no exact statistics on the current trade volume between the two countries. He stated irrespective of the restrictions and sanctions, the trade between the two countries rose by 14 percent in 2020, and, of course, the trade balance was significantly in favor of Ukraine and this year the figure should increase.

He reiterated that the embassy has plans to ease issuing licenses for Iranians to boost their trade with Ukraine by signing agreements.

Meanwhile, Head of ICCIMA Mr. Shafei, for his part, said that the meeting is a new beginning for talks between the private sectors of the two countries, adding that this is the first specialized meeting between the traders of the two countries which has been allocated to the agriculture. He then referred to the sincere relations between the chambers of two countries and exchanges of trade delegations in the past and assed positively the chamber-centered activities of the two countries in their future trade exchanges.

Iran Likely to Offer COVID-19 Vaccine Tourism Services in Future

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran is to add "COVID-19 vaccine tourism" to its basket of health tourism services.

Minister of Tourism Ali-Asghar Mounesan said the country has the potential to offer vaccination services as part of its health tourism program in order to further promote tourism in the country.

However, he underlined, the plan will get underway only after all Iranians are vaccinated and an Iranian vaccine hits the market. He made the comment while visiting a luxurious Tehran shopping mall which has allocated part of its space for the vaccination of citizens.

The minister said the inoculation of senior citizens is going smoothly and in an orderly manner.

Share of Energies In the World Significantly Growing

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The 29th Annual Conference of Iran Society of Mechanical Engineering and the 8th Conference on Thermal Power Plants was wrapped up at Khaje Nasir Toosi University of Tehran on Monday.

The three-day conferences were held with senior officials of the mechanical engineering and thermal power plants officials in presence.

The CEO of MAPNA Group was one of the participants in the conference who delivered a speech with the title of "Developments in the Field of Energy Through Passing Electrification".

In his speech, Mr. Abbas Aliabadi briefed the participants of the energy consumption basket in the world and the forecast for the share of renewable resources for providing different types of energy required by human being.

He added, "The fact is that the share of renewable energies in the world is on the rise significantly, and in 2020, we saw the decline in the growth rate of the renewable production. Of course, the production of carbon dioxide is decreasing whose reasons are not international pacts like the Paris Agreement or the commitments of the governments but it is because of sharp slump of the price of electricity production via renewable energies in a way that the price of solar electricity has decreased by 82 percent in the past 10 years."

Dr. Aliabadi then explained a chart showing the trend of using renewable energies and said share of electricity consumption in the energy basket has always been high in recent year, however, it is predicted that this growth in 2021 will be lower due to the coronavirus pandemic but it will bounce back to its normal condition.

He noted that all predictions bespeak that in the future, electrical energy will be mostly the dominating energy by human while in the future, the major trend of electrification will take place in the transportation sector.

Aliabadi termed hydrogen as the main rival of electrification and emphasized electrification requires smart network and due to the restrictions in the field of electrification, in the future, human being by using hydrogen can approach its goals in the field of electricity energy.

Tehran, Yerevan Exploring Avenues for Increasing Customs Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Armenia are mulling over increasing bilateral cooperation in the customs and transit fields.

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi and Edvard Hovhannisyian Chairman of the State Revenue Committee of Armenia met and held talks in Tehran on Monday.

During the talks, the two sides discussed ways to boost and increase bilateral cooperation in issues of mutual interests.

Implementation of customs agreements inked between Iran and Armenia and also previously signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between the two countries have been announced as the main aim behind visit of Chairman of the State Revenue Committee of Armenia to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Obstacles ahead of customs cooperation and data exchange, as well as facilitation of trade between Iran and Armenia, were put forward in this meeting, IRICA chief said.

Accordingly, it was decided to reach a conclusion by forming working committees to implement the previous agreements, Mir-Ashrafi added.

Implementation of Iran-Armenia agreements can be very effective in increasing volume of exchanges between the two countries in the field of transit of goods, fight against smuggling goods, he emphasized.

Discussions with regards to bilateral customs cooperation, a joint trade gateway between customs of the two countries of Iran and Armenia and also some problems facing businesspersons of the two countries were raised in the meeting, he said, adding, "It is hoped that, in addition to implementing the previous agreements, the two countries would enhance and promote mutual customs and trade cooperation significantly."

If Iran's membership is finalized in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), it is expected that Armenia, as the gateway for entry of Iran to Eurasian market, would play a key role in increasing bilateral exchanges between Iran and EAEU as well as reduction of time clearing and discharging goods and commodities to a great extent.

Edvard Hovhannisyian Chairman of the State Revenue Committee of Armenia, for his part, pointed to the trade volume exchange between Iran and Armenia and stated, "Expansion of joint cooperation and creation of facilities for boosting transit of goods between the two countries is one of the main aims behind my trip to the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Water Projects Worth Over \$185m Inaugurated

TEHRAN (MNA)- Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian on Tuesday inaugurated seven major water industry projects valued at 7.81 trillion rials (about \$185.9 million) through video conference in three provinces, IRIB reported.

Put into operation in the eighth week of the ministry's A-B-Iran program in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), the said projects were inaugurated in Hormozgan, Fars, and Kurdistan provinces.

Water supply to several rural areas in the mentioned provinces, some wastewater and water treatment plants, some surface water collection facilities, as well as a tunnel for water transfer were among the inaugurated projects. Under the framework of the A-B-Iran program, the Energy Ministry has inaugurated many projects to supply drinking water to the country's rural areas.

The first phase of the A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), during which 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion) were put into operation across the country.

In the second phase of the program that was carried out in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) 250 water and energy projects worth 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) were inaugurated in several provinces.

The third phase of the program was officially started on April 6 and like the previous phases, this year, too, the Energy Ministry is planning to inaugurate numerous water and electricity projects in various provinces every week.

29 Mining Projects Ready to Go Operational Across Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) Vajihollah Jafari has announced that 29 projects in mines and mining industries are ready for inauguration across the country.

Jafari noted that 13 of the mentioned projects are related to the steel chain, six are related to the copper chain, and 10 are implemented by Iran Minerals Production and Supply Company (IMPASCO) in other fields like producing minerals and machinery.

According to the official, more than \$1.9 billion worth of projects in the steel, copper, lead, and zinc, gold,

ferrochrome, nepheline syenite, phosphate, and mining infrastructure sectors will be operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (ends in March 2022).

He further said that six development projects will be inaugurated this year in the country's copper industry which includes the development of Sarcheshmeh Copper Mine, and several projects in copper concentrate units.

Back in February, Jafari had announced that his organization will inaugurate 23 development projects in mines and mining industries soon. Jafari said these projects worth over \$355 million would create direct jobs for 1,053 persons, and indirect jobs for 2,655 persons.

Exports From Iran to Sulaymaniyah Reach \$5b Annually

SANANDAJ (IRNA) - The Governor of Iraq's Sulaymaniyah Haval Abubakir said on Monday that annually five billion dollars of goods are exported from Iran's six borders to the Sulaymaniyah Province of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

During a meeting on the implementation of the memorandums of understanding between Kurdistan Province and Iraq's Sulaymaniyah, Abubakir said that the export of goods from Iran to Iraq's Sulaymaniyah Province has reached over five billion dollars.

He added that despite the coronavirus outbreak, the borders of Iraq's Sulaymaniyah Province with Iran were not closed, and trade and economic exchanges between the two countries increased, indicating friendly cooperation and communication between the two states.

At the meeting, the process of implementing the memorandums of understanding signed in 2019 was reviewed, and the two Iranian and Iraqi sides emphasized efforts to conclude the memorandums of understanding.

Promoting Cultural Diplomacy Yields Great Achievement

TEHRAN (IP) - "By investing in cultural diplomacy, great achievements will be made, and we will see a strong Iran," stated European Affairs Expert and Managing Director of Abrar Institute for International Studies and Research.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ceremony held on Tuesday to commemorate Matsuo Bashō, Japanese poet Abed Akbari stressed: "Iran has a strong power to develop relations with the countries of the world, which unites nations."



Akbari added that Iran-Japan cultural relations dated back to more than 1,300 years, saying: "This long-historical relationship has always been with respect and friendship."

"Iranians have always been interested in Japanese culture and civilization; to the same degree, the Japanese are interested in Iranian culture and civilization," noted Akbari.

"The implementation of cultural programs by the cultural attaché offices of Iran and Japan has led to the development of relations between the two countries," he underlined.

Foreign Technical Savvy Could Eliminate Main Petchem Bottlenecks

TEHRAN (Shana) – The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said the arrival of foreign technical knowhow could sort out major bottlenecks in the



development of the country's petrochemical industry.

The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company said technical knowhow is the most important bottleneck in implementation of petrochemical development plans, and added the nuclear negotiations indicate that the space for cooperation is opening up and the communication process is expanding."

He noted that the petrochemical industry needs the participation and entry of large foreign companies in the two areas of financing and technical knowhow, adding: "We still need to use the world's technical savvy in some processes."

Mohammadi said: "Our most important issue is the provision of technical knowledge for petrochemical projects which will render the country 70% needless of imports and the most important bottleneck of these projects is technical savvy, which we hope will happen in the near future."

BBC to Launch Internal Probe Into Diana Interview Row

LONDON (AFP) - The BBC said Monday it will review its editorial policies and governance after an independent report found one of its journalists used deception to secure a landmark interview with Princess Diana.

The British broadcaster's board said the internal probe would be conducted by a group of non-executive directors led by Nick Serota, its senior independent director, and report back by September.

"We must not just assume that mistakes of the past cannot be repeated today -- we must make sure that this is the case," the board of governors said in a lengthy statement.



Biden, Putin to Have Summit in Geneva Soon

ZURICH (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin will meet in Switzerland for their first summit, newspaper Tages-Anzeiger reported on Monday, citing "reliable sources".

An advance U.S. mission has already arrived in Geneva for that purpose, the newspaper added. Plane spotters reported on Twitter seeing an unusual U.S. cargo aircraft landing at the city's airport on Sunday.

The Tages-Anzeiger said the time and venue of a Biden-Putin meeting remains unclear though it would likely take place in Geneva in the next few weeks.



UN Chief Declares War on Covid



GENEVA (Dispatches) - The UN chief on Monday declared the world "at war" against Covid-19, as India's death toll crossed 300,000 and Japan opened its first mass vaccination centers -- just two months before the start of the Olympics. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged governments to apply wartime logic to stark inequalities in the response to the pandemic, warning the crisis was far from over despite rapidly advancing vaccination rollouts in wealthy parts of the world.

"Unless we act now, we face a situation in which rich countries vaccinate the majority of their people and open their economies, while the virus continues to cause deep suffering by circling and mutating in the poorest countries," he said. Deadly outbreaks in India, Brazil and elsewhere have pushed the global death toll past 3.4 million, even as rich countries such as the United States, Britain and Israel have eased restrictions.

India has witnessed horrific scenes in recent weeks with severe shortages of oxygen at hospitals and crematoriums overwhelmed, although the number of new daily infections has fallen in big cities. However, experts say the real numbers of deaths and infections in India -- fuelled by a new coronavirus variant and "superspreader" events such as mass religious festivals -- are probably much higher than the official figures.

"We are seeing the bodies along the river Ganges which don't seem to be recorded as Covid deaths but are very likely to be Covid deaths," Ashoka University biology professor Gautam Menon told AFP. India has administered close to 200 million vaccine shots, but experts say the programme needs to be ramped up significantly to bring the virus under control.

Another Asian country that has faced criticism over a slow inoculation rate is Japan, where the first mass vaccination centres opened on Monday.

"It's wonderful. I can rest easy now. For a long time, a year and a half, I was feeling rather anxious and tense," Hideo Ishikawa, 73, told reporters after he got the shot. Japanese authorities are trying to speed up their vaccination drive with just two months until the postponed Tokyo Olympics begin.

Just two percent of Japan's 125 million population has been fully vaccinated, compared with around 40 percent in the United States and 15 percent in France.

Speaking alongside Guterres at the World Health Organization's main annual assembly in Geneva, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he wanted 10 percent of every country's population vaccinated by September.

He also paid tribute to the estimated 115,000 health and care workers who have died from Covid-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. "They have saved countless lives and fought for others who, despite their best efforts, slipped away," he said, describing the medical workers lost to the pandemic as having paid "the ultimate price in the service of others".

Afghan Forces, Taliban Clash Near Capital

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghan forces clashed with Taliban fighters in a provincial capital about 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Kabul, officials and witnesses said, prompting the defense minister to take charge of a counteroffensive.

Violence has soared in Afghanistan since US forces began their final pull-out on May 1, as the insurgents press on with a campaign to seize new territory.

Fierce fighting erupted late Sunday on the edge of Mihtarlam, a city of around 140,000 people and the capital of Laghman province.

At one point Defense Minister Yasin Zia took personal charge in the field, officials said.

"With the arrival of reinforcements, the enemy has sustained heavy blows," Zia, a former army chief of staff, said in a video message.

The ministry said at least 50 Taliban fighters were killed in overnight fighting.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP the insurgents captured 37 security checkpoints on the outskirts of the city. Casualty figures and battlefield gains can rarely be independently verified in Afghanistan and both sides frequently exaggerate their successes and minimise losses.



Russia Warns Turkey Over Ties With Ukraine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's foreign minister on Monday warned Turkey against what he said were attempts to fuel "militaristic sentiment" in Ukraine after Ankara moved to boost cooperation with Kyiv.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan last month pledged support to Kyiv amid a buildup of Russian forces along its border with Ukraine.

Erdogan said at the time that Turkey, a NATO member, and Ukraine had launched a platform with their foreign and defense ministers to discuss defense industry cooperation, but added that this was "not in any way a move against third countries".

"We strongly recommend that our Turkish colleagues carefully analyze the situation and stop fuelling Kyiv's militaristic sentiment," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with Argumenty i Fakty newspaper. He said that encouraging "aggressive" Ukrainian actions towards Russian-annexed Crimea amounted to an encroachment on Russia's territorial integrity.

"We hope Ankara will adjust its line based on our legitimate concerns."

Turkey, along with the rest of NATO, criticized Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and voiced support for Ukraine's territorial integrity as Kyiv's forces battle pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Turkey, which faces Ukraine and Russia across the Black Sea to the north, also sold drones to Kyiv in 2019.

But Ankara has also forged close cooperation with Moscow over conflicts in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh as well as in the areas of defense and energy.

Moscow's ties with the West have languished at post-Cold War lows since the annexation of Crimea, which resulted in a flurry of sanctions being imposed against Russia.

An AFP correspondent reported fighting continuing in some parts of Mihtarlam on Monday, adding that hundreds of people had been displaced.

A student from Mihtarlam, who gave just his first name Zabihullah, said he went to school after government forces assured him they had control, but had to flee when fighting resumed.

"I'm not sure which part of the city is safe now," he told AFP.

The attack on Mihtarlam comes as the Taliban push on in efforts to capture new territory.

In recent days the insurgents have seized the districts of Nerkh and Jalraiz in the province of Wardak, just 40 km from Kabul.

Wardak has long been used by militants as a gateway to reach the capital and launch deadly attacks.

The Taliban also captured Burka in northern Baghlan province earlier this month after government troops withdrew from the area.

Rare Protests in Oman Over Jobs Draw Massive Police Response

MUSCAT (Dispatches) - Scattered protests in Oman over layoffs and poor economic conditions have drawn a massive police presence in at least one city in the sultanate, with protesters throwing stones at one point and police firing tear gas.

Videos posted to social media showed several dozen Omanis in the city of Sohar trailed by a long line of riot police vehicles on Monday. Other images appear to show a line of police in riot gear near a government labor office in the city, 200km (125 miles) northwest of the capital, Muscat.

Other images appear to show Omanis fleeing and others being arrested. The images correspond to known landmarks around Sohar, the first major city people enter in the sultanate after coming over the border from the neighboring United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Similar scattered protests on Sunday brought another mass police presence, activists said online. That demonstration was acknowledged by Oman's labor ministry in a tweet, which said it was aware of people

gathering there to try to "find new job vacancies and to solve the problems of those who were fired".

It was not immediately clear if there had been a major layoff in Sohar, which is home to a key port, as well as plants producing aluminium and steel.

Oman's tightly controlled private media, as well as its state news agency and television broadcaster, did not immediately report on the protest. The Royal Oman Police did not acknowledge making any arrests.

Oman's information ministry and the Omani embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Monday.

The demonstrations mark the first major unrest for Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who took over in January 2020 after the death of the long-ruling Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

Oman faces billions of dollars in looming loan repayments, including to China, and needs even more money as its youthful population seeks jobs and its government is unable to afford the cradle-to-grave benefits given in other Persian Gulf Arab nations.



Europeans Threaten to Restrict Air Traffic Over Belarus

LONDON (Dispatches) - Several airlines said on Monday they would avoid Belarusian air space after Belarus scrambled a warplane to intercept a Ryanair jetliner and arrest a dissident journalist in an act denounced by Western powers as "state piracy".

The European Union was considering responding to Sunday's incident by limiting international air traffic over Belarus and restricting its ground transport, and could tighten sanctions already in place on the former Soviet republic.

"This was effectively aviation piracy, state sponsored," said Ireland's Foreign Minister Simon Coveney, using language that was echoed by a number of other countries as EU leaders prepared to discuss a response at a summit in Brussels. Some airlines and countries did not wait for guidance on how to respond to the flight from Greece to Lithuania being diverted as it flew through Belarusian air space.

Britain said it was issuing a notice to instruct British airlines to cease flights over Belarus and that it would suspend the air permit for Belarus's national carrier Belavia with immediate effect. Latvian airline airBaltic and Scandinavian airline SAS said they would stop using Belarusian air space, and Cyprus-registered Avia Solutions said its Lithuania-based airlines would follow suit.

Lithuania's transport minister, Marius Skuodis, said Poland's LOT and Hungarian airline Wizzair would also not use Belarusian air space and said all flights to and from Lithuanian airports must from midnight GMT avoid Belarusian air space. Countries also called for the release of 26-year-old Roman Protasevich, who was detained when the plane was forced to land in Minsk, the Belarusian capital.

His social media feed from exile has been one of the last remaining independent outlets for news about Belarus since a mass crackdown on dissent last year. Sophia Sapega, a 23-year-old student travelling with him, was also detained. EU countries could ban Belavia from European airports and was considering other unspecified measure regarding ground transport links, an EU official said.

Still, the options for Western retaliation appear limited. The Montreal-based International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has no regulatory power, and the EU has no authority over flights taking off and landing in Belarus or flying over its air space, apart from direct flights that originate or land in Europe. Belarus has shrugged off previous rounds of EU and U.S. financial sanctions.



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Sauna, J, S/q
green yard
pkg, & F.F

Parsian

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Zaferanieh (\$4000) 400sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F

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Cryptocurrencies Punch Back After Sunday Sell-Off

LONDON (Dispatches) - Cryptocurrencies fought back on Monday, retaking ground lost during a bout of weekend selling that was fuelled by further signs of a Chinese crackdown on the emerging sector. Bitcoin jumped more than 10% to \$38,538, erasing losses of 7.5% from a day earlier but still down by more than 40% from last month's record high. Second-largest cryptocurrency ether jumped more than 17% to as high as \$2,464 after slumping more than 8% on Sunday to near a two-month low. Yet it too has fallen by almost half from peak hit earlier this month.



World Economic Recovery From Covid-19 Looks Likely to Be Uneven

LONDON (Guardian) - After the most severe global recession in decades, private and official forecasters are increasingly optimistic that world output will recover strongly this year and thereafter. But the coming expansion will be unevenly distributed, both across and within economies. Whether the recovery is V-shaped (a strong return to above-potential growth), U-shaped (a more anemic version of the V) or W-shaped (a double-dip recession) will depend on several factors across different economies and regions.

With the coronavirus still running rampant in many countries, one key question is whether the emergence of virulent new strains will trigger repeated stop-and-go cycles, as we've seen in some cases where economies reopened too soon. One particularly ominous possibility is that more vaccine-resistant variants appear, heightening the urgency of vaccination efforts that have so far been too slow in many regions.

Beyond the virus, there are a number of related economic risks to consider. A recovery that is slow or insufficiently robust could result in permanent scarring if too many firms go bust and labour markets start exhibiting hysteresis (when long-term unemployment renders workers unemployable owing to an erosion of skills). Another question is how much deleveraging there will be among highly indebted firms (small and large) and households, and whether this effect will be fully offset by the release of pent-up demand as consumers spend down pandemic-era savings.

Another area of concern is socio-political: will rising inequality become an even more salient source of instability and depressed aggregate demand? Much will depend on the scale, scope and inclusiveness of policies to support the income and spending of those left behind. Likewise, it remains to be seen if the macro-policy stimulus (monetary, credit and fiscal) implemented so far will be sufficient, insufficient or actually excessive, leading to sharply rising inflation and inflation expectations in some cases.

Keeping all of these uncertainties in mind, the recovery currently looks like it will be stronger in the US, China, and the Asian emerging markets that are part of the Chinese global supply chains. In the US, a decline in new infections, high vaccination rates, increased consumer and business confidence, and the far-reaching effects of fiscal and monetary expansion will drive a robust recovery this year.

Here, the main risk is overheating. The recent increase in inflation could turn out to be more persistent than the U.S. Federal Reserve expected, and today's frothy financial markets could undergo a correction, thereby weakening confidence.

In China and the economies closely linked to it, the recovery owes much of its strength to the authorities' success in containing the virus early, and to the effects of macro stimulus, all of which allowed for a rapid reopening and restoration of business confidence. But high levels of debt and leverage in some parts of the Chinese private and public sectors will pose risks as China tries to maintain stronger growth while reining in excessive credit. More broadly, the prospect of an escalating rivalry – a colder war – between the US and China will threaten Chinese and global growth, particularly if it leads to a fuller economic decoupling and renewed protectionism.

Europe is worse off, having suffered a double-dip recession in the last quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, owing to a new wave of infections and lockdowns. Its recovery will remain weak through the second quarter, but growth could accelerate in the second half of the year if vaccination rates continue to rise and macro policy remains accommodative. But phasing out furlough schemes and various credit guarantees too early could cause more permanent scarring and hysteresis.

Moreover, without long-needed structural reforms, parts of the eurozone will continue to register low potential growth and high public debt ratios. As long as the European Central Bank keeps buying assets, sovereign spreads (namely, the difference between German and Italian bond yields) may remain low. But monetary support eventually will need to be phased out, and deficits will need to be reduced. And the spectre of populist Eurosceptic parties looking to exploit the crisis will constantly loom.

Airline Industry Will Be Smaller After Crisis

LONDON (Dispatches) - The head of global airline body IATA expects the industry to emerge from the coronavirus crisis smaller and more cautious, doubting airlines will try to expand through acquisitions.

The airline industry has been crippled by the pandemic, which continues to leave many aircraft around the world grounded or flying near-empty as demand limps towards a recovery.

"It will be a smaller industry. We are not going to recover all the capacity," International Air Transport Association (IATA) Director General Willie Walsh said in a pre-recorded online interview broadcast on Monday. He cited the swathes of aircraft retired and employees laid off or placed on furlough.

"It will be a more cautious industry. I don't expect to see M&A (merger and acquisition) activity, principally because people will be guarded about the cash they have."

Walsh, the former chief executive of British Airways owner IAG (ICAG.L), said that spending "valuable cash resources" would be "too risky" but he believes there will be consolidation through airlines shrinking their operations and some failing.

"It's going to take airlines time to repair their balance sheets," he said.

IATA has forecast global travel demand to return to 2019, pre-pandemic levels in 2024.

While those airlines that survive would fill the gaps left by those that fail, they would have to be careful how quickly they rebuild, Walsh said, urging caution.

"Airlines are not going to be able to take the risk of operating unprofitable routes in the short term," he told aviation consultant John Strickland.

However, Walsh does not believe the crisis has undermined airline business models such as those for regional or low-cost carriers among others.

"Nothing has changed the competitive nature of this industry," he said.



Biz Sentiment in South Korea Falls for June Amid Pandemic

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's business sentiment slightly fell for June due to deteriorating profitability in the manufacturing industry amid the coronavirus pandemic, a local think tank said Monday.

The business survey index (BSI) of the country's top 600 companies by sales reached 102.6 for next month, down 5.1 points from May, the Korea Economic Research Institute (KERI) said in a statement.

The index stayed above 100 for the fourth straight month after its March

reading exceeded 100 for the first time in 34 months, it said.

A reading above 100 means optimists outnumber pessimists, while a figure below the benchmark means the opposite.

"Global chip shortage and delayed delivery of parts are weighing on the bottom line of manufacturers which suffers from lack of inventories," KERI said.

KERI said 390 out of the 600 companies responded to the survey, which was taken from May 12-18.



Turkey's Tourists A Quarter of Pre-Pandemic Levels in April

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey welcomed 790,687 foreign visitors in April, down from a month earlier and only a quarter of the arrivals in 2019 before the pandemic hit, according to official data on Monday that suggested the tourism season may get off to a tough start.

A coronavirus spike last month and a flurry of foreign travel warnings have wiped out many early bookings and raised prospects of another lost season for Turkey, which relies on the cash inflow to fund its heavy foreign debt.

April's arrivals were still up sharply from a year ago when only 24,238 foreigners trickled in. Turkey began closing borders and restricting activity in March 2020 when it logged its first COVID-19 case.

Compared to March of this year, when coronavirus curbs were briefly lifted, tourist numbers dipped 12% last month. In April 2019 nearly 3.3 million foreigners arrived.

While the government has predicted a rebound this year, slumping tourism has dimmed economic growth and exacerbated the current account deficit.

Russia - Turkey's top source of tourists, accounting for 20% in April - last month suspended most flights until June and could extend the pandemic measure, prompting its airlines to halt most flights into the summer. read more

Some 2.1 million Russians came last year and 6 million in 2019 before the pandemic. In another blow, Britain, the third-biggest source of holiday-makers, has put Turkey on its travel 'red list'.

Bora Kok, sales manager at Bora Bora Boutique Hotel in the southern Mediterranean coastal city of Antalya, said postponed flights "cause serious damage".

"Possibly the hotels that mostly host Russians that were planning to open in June will start laying off personnel," he said last week. "Hotels would need to have discounted prices."

Turkey's tourism minister told Reuters earlier this month that 30 million foreigners could arrive this year, twice as many as last, if daily COVID-19 cases drop below 5,000 from more than 60,000 last month. The government logged 7,837 cases on Sunday.

Foreign arrivals were down 54% year-on-year in the first quarter.

Philippines Expected to Miss 2021 Economic Growth Target



MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippines is likely to miss its already lowered economic growth target for 2021 as return to pre-pandemic levels will only be realized until late next year, according to Moody's Analytics.

In an analysis, Moody's Analytics said it expects the Philippine GDP growth at 5.3% this year, falling short of the government target of 6.0% to 7.0%.

"The Philippines isn't forecast to return to pre-pandemic levels of output until the end of 2022," the analysis read.

"In contrast, China, Taiwan, South Korea and Vietnam have returned to previous output levels, while Indonesia and Thailand are on track to return this year. This makes the Philippines the clear laggard in Asia," it added.

The Philippine economy shrank by 4.2% in the first three months of the year, marking the fifth consecutive month of contraction.

For the full-year 2020, the country reported a contraction of 9.6%, the worst slump in record.

The analysis noted the spike in coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases in April, when daily cases increased by as much as 15,310 on April 2. The daily infections have since eased.

"A contributor to the Philippines' inability to control local infections in the earlier months came from the healthcare system being centralized. City and town leaders are responsible for the health system, rather than the central government," it said.

"As a result, there were not consistent policies and rigor around contract tracing, funding, and quarantine measures for those infected and their close contact," the analysis added.

Moving forward, economic managers expect the economy to return to positive economy in the second quarter of the year.

The NCR Plus bubble—Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, and Bulacan—is under general community quarantine with heightened restrictions until May 31.

GM Improves Rating in Annual Supplier Relations Study

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - General Motors Co strengthened relations with its suppliers last year despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global semiconductor chip shortage, according to an annual North American survey released on Monday.

The No. 1 U.S. automaker improved its score in consulting firm Plante Moran's annual Working Relations Index by 20 points to 289, moving it closer to annual leaders Toyota Motor Corp (347 points) and Honda Motor Co (316 points), both of which saw their scores go up slightly. The annual survey measures trust and communication suppliers have with customers, something that translates to better pricing, and supplier willingness to invest in and share new technologies with automakers.

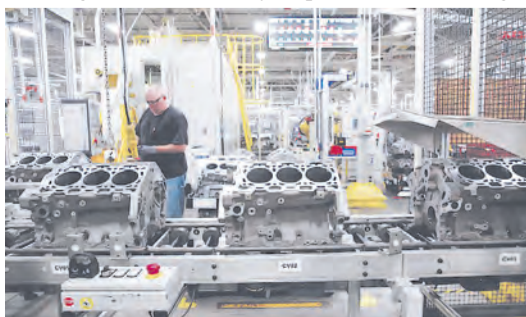
"The industry went through a trial by fire this past year, but seeing the positive results for four of the six automakers was a surprise in many ways," Dave Andrea, principal in Plante Moran's automotive practice, said in a statement. "Typically, a crisis is not the time to improve established relations."

GM Vice President of global purchasing Shilpan Amin said in a separate statement the survey results show the company's efforts to strengthen supplier ties. "This provides many important benefits, including stronger business results for both GM and the supply base, along with supplier willingness to invest in new technology," he said.

Ford Motor Co saw its rating drop 15 points to 249, while Fiat Chrysler (FCA), prior to its merger with France's PSA to create Stellantis earlier this year, saw a 28-point decline to 170. FCA finished last behind Nissan Motor Co, which saw a 21-point improvement to 211.

Tesla Inc does not participate in the Plante Moran study.

The annual survey was conducted from mid-February to mid-April, drawing responses from 728 salespeople at 479 suppliers that represent about half of the six automakers' annual purchases, Plante Moran said.



Low Turnout in Election Not in Anyone's Interest

TEHRAN (IP) – Government Spokesman says minimal participation in the upcoming presidential election is in the interest of no one, and the first losers are the people. Ali Rabiee said the government profoundly believes that it was a duty of rulers to foster the conditions for people's political participation as a civil right. He noted that the government wanted all institutions involved in the election process to consider national unity and ensure the country's continuation of stability, security, and progress of boosting the spirit of participation in the election.



Turkey to Ban UK Plastic Waste Imports

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has announced that it will ban imports of plastic waste from the UK following an investigation that uncovered "mountains" of trash being dumped or burned in the country.

Greenpeace visited ten sites in Adana province and found piles of plastic waste – mainly from the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland and other EU countries – dumped on the roadside, in fields and even spilled into waterways.

UK legislation only allows the shipment of waste outside Europe if it is intended for recycling.

However, the environmental group's study revealed that the UK is treating Turkey as its 'garbage pit' by exporting 40% of its plastic waste annually to the country.

Additionally, Turkey has a recycling rate of only 12% – which means most of the waste is not even recycled.

"As this new evidence shows, plastic waste coming from Europe to Turkey is an environmental threat, not an economic opportunity," Nihan Temiz Atas, biodiversity projects lead for Greenpeace Mediterranean said.

"Uncontrolled imports of plastic waste do nothing but increase the problems existing in Turkey's own recycling system. Around 241 truckloads of plastic waste come to Turkey every day from across Europe and it overwhelms us. As far as we can see from the data and the field, we continue to be Europe's largest plastic waste dump."

The investigation has prompted Turkey's trade chiefs to remove ethylene polymer plastics – including shampoos and detergent bottles and plastic film and bags – from the list of waste materials allowed into the country. The ban is likely to be implemented in the first week of July.

Campaign group A Plastic Planet's co-founder, Sian Sutherland, said: "Turkey are the latest to join a growing list of countries that will no longer accept our waste."

"It's vital the government learns we cannot continue to offshore our responsibility in dealing with our plastic problem."



Sam Chetan-Welsh is the political campaigner at Greenpeace UK. Commenting on Turkey's ban, he said: "People have been appalled to see images of UK household waste dumped and burned in Turkey, and to learn that the plastic they carefully sort for recycling is being shipped off for other countries to deal with."

While Chetan-Welsh welcomed Turkey's ban, he warned that this move could increase shipments to other countries such as Malaysia, Poland and the Netherlands. He added that UK exports of plastic waste should be completely banned and companies should be ordered to reduce the amount they create in the first place.

Acknowledging the need to handle more of its waste at home, a spokesman for Defra, Britain's environmental department, said in a statement: "We are committed to banning the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries and clamping down on illegal waste exports – including to countries such as Turkey – through tougher controls."

Indonesian Gov't Positive Economic Recovery This Year



JAKARTA (Dispatches) - The Indonesian government is optimistic the economy will grow positively this year with indications of an improvement emerging amid the pandemic and containment measures, which have plunged the global economy into a deep contraction.

After Indonesia recorded its first coronavirus cases in March, 2020, economic growth spiraled to minus 5.32 percent in the second quarter to reach minus 3.49 percent in the third quarter and minus 2.19 percent in the fourth quarter of last year.

Overall, the Indonesian economy shrunk 2.07 percent year-on-year (yoy) in 2020, a figure that is considered better than several other countries.

In the first quarter of this year, the country saw a significant improvement, with the economy recording a smaller contraction of 0.74 percent as the Retail Sales Index, Consumer Confidence Index, and manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index strengthened. A rise in car sales, electricity consumption, and cement production also provided a positive impetus to Indonesia's economic recovery.

The government is optimistic that the national economy would continue to improve and grow at a high rate of 4.5 percent-5.3 percent by the end of 2021.

However, to achieve this figure, the economy needs to grow positively in the range of 6.9 percent-7.8 percent in the second quarter of 2021.

The government believes that positive economic growth can be attained through state budget stimulus programs, acceleration of the vaccination program, and consistent implementation of the health protocols.

Furthermore, the government plans to encourage the strengthening of local industries in various key strategic fields, such as palm oil, chemicals, aluminum, electronics, and footwear, to help boost the economy.

"Our economic growth rate indicates a positive trend. It is expected to reach seven percent (in the 2021 second quarter)," Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Airlangga Hartarto, observed on May 15, 2021.

As of March, 2021, the realization of foreign direct investment reached 54.6 percent, while the consumer confidence index among people with expenses below Rp5 million was recorded at 90.1, inching towards the normal zone of 100, the minister stated.

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

Poland to Become First NATO Country to Buy Turkish Drones

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Poland will buy 24 armed drones from Turkey, the Polish defence minister said on Saturday, becoming the first NATO member to buy Turkish-made unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The Bayraktar TB2 drones, the first of which are due to be delivered next year, will be armed with anti-tank projectiles. Poland will also buy a logistics and training package, said Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak.

Blaszczak told state radio the Bayraktar TB2 drones "have proven themselves in wars" and added that the UAVs would be serviced by a military company, without giving further details.

The contract, which will be concluded without a procurement process, will be signed next week during a visit by Polish President Andrzej Duda to Turkey.

Authorities in fellow NATO member Turkey say the country has become the world's fourth-largest drone producer since President Tayyip Erdogan increased domestic production to reduce reliance on Western arms.

Turkish defence technology company Baykar has sold its Bayraktar TB2 armed drone to Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Qatar and Libya. Erdogan said in March that Saudi Arabia was also interested in buying Turkish drones.

Canada scrapped export permits for drone technology to Turkey in April, after concluding that the equipment was used by Azeri forces fighting Armenia in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. The parts under embargo included camera systems for Baykar armed drones.

China Signs World's Largest Trade Agreement With 14 Countries

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Fifteen economies in the Asia-Pacific region formed the world's largest free trade agreement, one backed by China and excluding the United States.

The signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) at a regional summit in Hanoi is another blow to the agreement promoted by former US President Barack Obama, from which Trump left in 2017. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) could strengthen China's position as a partner country. Economic with Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea, which puts the second largest economy in the world in a better position to dictate the rules of trade in the region.

The United States is absent from both the RCEP and the successor to the Obama-led Trans-Pacific

Partnership (TPP), leaving the world's largest economy out of two trade deals covering the fastest-growing region on Earth.

RCEP could help Beijing reduce its dependence on external markets and technology, a change accelerated by a deeper rift with Washington. RCEP brings together the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Over the next few years, it aims to gradually reduce tariffs in many sectors. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the ASEAN Online Summit held as Asian leaders addressed tensions in the South China Sea and plans for economic recovery after the pandemic. India has not signed concerns about increasing its trade deficit with China, but it may join at a later time.

Strengthening...

FROM PAGE 1

Hatami said that one of the highlights of the defense industry is meeting the diverse and advanced needs of the armed forces during the period of maximum and oppressive sanctions.

"Under the guidance of the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, very good interaction has been established with the Armed Forces, especially with the private sector and knowledge-based companies and universities across the country, and we have tried to use all national capacities to provide maximum power," he highlighted.

Defense Minister also pointed to the cooperation and interaction of the defense industry with other industries in the country, saying, "With the escalation of the oppressive sanctions, we were able to provide significant assistance to civilian fields such as automobiles, oil and petrochemical industries, railways, telecommunications, mines, and etc."

Earlier, referring to the achievements of the Ministry of Defense in the field of ground combat, Hatami said, "Today, we have gained various achievements in various fields, which are not limited to ground combat, and in the field of missiles, we are undoubtedly one of the world powers, and in the field of UAVs, we are even better than the world's top powers."

Iran-IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

"The new decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran does not mean the extension of the three-month agreement that expired. However, it is a unilateral decision that the country has taken aimed at giving bilateral negotiations with the agency the necessary opportunity to make progress and reach conclusion."

The report also noted that the wrong approaches towards the Iran-IAEA interactions, formed under pressure from the West, as well as the illegal sanctions must be removed in any possible agreement on the revival of the JCPOA.

"The previous agreement with the IAEA chief could be extended if a deal is reached within this month regarding the correction of aforesaid wrong approaches and if the talks on the JCPOA and sanctions continue and make progress," it added.

Zionists' Crimes Rewarded...

FROM PAGE 1

The controversial sale has caught some U.S. lawmakers off guard. One of them, quoted in the Washington Post story, says there is "zero transparency" on the House Foreign Affairs Committee with "sensitive deals" being "regularly approved without scrutiny".



The deal is likely to lead to further divisions in the Democratic Party ranks as some lawmakers are mounting pressure on the Biden administration to take action in the face of Israeli regime's relentless aggression on Palestinians.

"This is happening with the support of the United States," Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said on Saturday in reference to Israeli airstrikes. "The US vetoed the UN call for ceasefire. If the Biden admin can't stand up to an ally, who can it stand up to? How can they credibly claim to stand for human rights?"

Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib said Israel is bombing the international media so the world can't see its war crimes against the people of Palestine, in reaction to an airstrike on a building housing media offices in Gaza.

"Israel targeting media sources is so the world can't see Israel's war crimes led by the apartheid-in-chief Netanyahu. It's so the world can't see the killing of babies, children and their parents. It's so the world can't see Palestinians being massacred," she tweeted on Saturday.

Now with this pro-Israeli gesture from Israel how the world, the Palestinians and Muslims can trust this killer regime and the current ceasefire. The U.S. verbally and practically has shown its ardent support to the Zionists and the Palestinians have no choice but struggle and continuing their intifada till the moment occupier regime is thrown out of their lands.

Now as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has called for all-out support of Muslim states for the Palestinians in their fight against the Zionists, all Muslims should come to the help of Palestinians through financial and military equipment aids in order that the Palestinians can boost their defensive and attacking power against the Zionists. As the Supreme Leader in separate messages to Palestinian Resistance leaders called the struggle against the occupiers of Palestine a resistance against oppression and arrogance. And he reiterated, "Palestinians will be victorious and purify the holy land from the filth of usurpers."

So countdown for the victory of the Palestinians has begun and unity among Muslims and their material and spiritual supports.

Iranian Army...

FROM PAGE 1

During the drill, drones and smart micro aerial vehicles (MAVs) will also strike predetermined targets using electronic warfare cover, he said.

Sayari said aerial interception and cyber defense operations will also be conducted in the drill.

Furthermore, accuracy and speed in detection of aircraft will be analyzed, and electronic eavesdropping and jamming systems monitored.

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

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

Tehran, Yerevan...

FROM PAGE 1

The motive of Iranian government is to develop cooperation and promote level of trade exchanges between the two countries, he said, adding, "An agreement has been reached with Armenian government to immediately remove transit barriers and increase quality of bilateral trade ties."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian minister pointed to the expansion of cooperation in the field of investment between the two countries and stated, "Capacity building was agreed between the two countries of Iran and Armenia to expand cooperation in the field of investment in Mogri Free Zone."

With the expansion of cooperation and promotion of level of investment to \$1 billion, Islamic Republic of Iran can be turned into a trade partner of Armenia, Roads Minister Eslami reiterated.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

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info@irannewsdaily.com
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Bad Weather Hits Giro Queen Stage

ROME (Dispatches) - Rain and freezing weather has forced the shortening of Monday's 16th stage of the Giro d'Italia to the ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo in the Dolomites, organisers announced.

Two of the days' climbs have been scrapped with the stage cut back to 153km from the original 212km.

The final climb of the day, the Giau Pass, which is the highest point in this year's race at 2,233 metres altitude, has been maintained, along with the opening one at La Crosetta.

Ronaldo top Serie A scorer After England, Spain

ROME (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo made more history on Sunday becoming the first player to finish the season as top scorer in three major leagues -- England, Spain, and Italy.

The 36-year-old scored 29 goals this campaign, five more than second-placed Belgian Romelu Lukaku for champions Inter Milan. The Portuguese striker was top scorer in England with Manchester United in 2008, and three times in Spain with Real Madrid, 2011, 2014 and 2015. But it is the first time in three seasons the former five-time Ballon d'Or winner has scored the most goals.

Grizzlies Stun Top-Seeded Jazz To Open Series

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Dillon Brooks scored 31 points and Ja Morant added 26 to lead the No. 8 seed Memphis Grizzlies to a huge 112-109 road upset win over the No. 1 Utah Jazz in Salt Lake City on Sunday night in the first round of the Western Conference playoffs.

The young Grizzlies fell behind by 14 points in the first half, rallied to jump ahead by 17 points early in the fourth quarter and then held on to win on the top-seeded team's home court just two days after earning a spot in the playoffs. While Utah rested, the Grizzlies had to beat San Antonio and Golden State in the NBA's new play-in tournament to qualify.

The Jazz were short-handed after All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell (ankle sprain) was ruled out of the game in the afternoon. Former Grizzlies guard Mike Conley played well for the Jazz with 22 points and 11 assists, and Bojan Bogdanovic lit up to score 29 points -- all in the second half -- to lead Utah.

Jonas Valanciunas had 15 points and 12 rebounds, while Kyle Anderson added 14 points and six steals for a Grizzlies squad that is playing in the playoffs for the first time in four years.

Suns 99, Lakers 90

Devin Booker recorded 34 points, eight assists and seven rebounds to lead Phoenix to a home victory over Los Angeles in the opening game of their Western Conference first-round series.

Deandre Ayton added 21 points on 10-of-11 shooting and collected 16 rebounds for the second-seeded Suns, who were playing in their first postseason game since 2010. Suns star Chris Paul played 36 minutes despite injuring his right shoulder in the second quarter when teammate Cameron Johnson clipped his arm.

LeBron James had 18 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds while Anthony Davis had 13 on just 5-of-16 shooting for the seventh-seeded Lakers. Game 2 of the best-of-seven series is Tuesday in Phoenix.

Mickelson Defies Age to Win PGA Championship

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Phil Mickelson blocked out the distractions and kept his mind quiet in front of a raucous gallery to win the PGA Championship by two strokes on Sunday and become golf's oldest major winner at the age of 50.

Mickelson battled through strong winds, shrugged off a few poor shots and kept calm amid suffocating pressure to record a one-over-par 73 at the Ocean Course, holding his nerve with Brooks Koepka and Louis Oosthuizen breathing down his neck.

In collecting the sixth major of his career, and first since the 2013 British Open, Mickelson surpassed Julius Boros as the oldest major winner. Boros was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship.

"This is just an incredible feeling because I just believed that it was possible but yet everything was saying it wasn't," said Mickelson, who is now the only player to have claimed PGA Tour victories 30 years apart.

"And I hope that others find that inspiration. It might take a little extra work, a little bit harder effort to maintain physically or maintain the skills but, gosh, is it worth it."

When Mickelson's approach shot safely found the green at the final hole a wild scene ensued as fans raced to follow one of the game's all-time greats up the fairway and completely enveloped him in a frenzied swarm.

Injured Shapovalov Out of Roland Garros

LONDON (Dispatches) - Canada's world number 15 Denis Shapovalov withdrew from Roland Garros due to a shoulder injury on Sunday.

"I am saddened to share that after consulting with my medical team I have made the difficult decision to withdraw from Roland Garros," the 22-year-old wrote on Instagram.

"Unfortunately, my shoulder has been bothering me over the last few weeks and, while all medical tests look good, it is for the best to play it safe and rest."

Shapovalov was runner-up to Casper Ruud in the Geneva clay court final on Saturday.



76ers 125, Wizards 118

Tobias Harris set a playoff career high with 37 points to help host and top-seeded Philadelphia hold off eighth-seeded Washington in Game 1 of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Harris scored the most points by a 76er in the first half of a playoff game (28) since Allen Iverson's 30-point, first-half performance in Game 1 of the 2001 NBA Finals against the Los Angeles Lakers. Joel Embiid finished with 30 points and six rebounds in just 30 minutes after battling early foul trouble.

Bradley Beal paced the Wizards with 33 points and 10 rebounds. Russell Westbrook had 16 points, 14 assists and five rebounds, Davis Bertans added 14 points and Rui Hachimura, Alex Len and Daniel Gafford each scored 12. Game 2 is Wednesday night in Philadelphia.

Hawks 107, Knicks 105

Trae Young drove the lane for the game-winning floater with 0.9 seconds left as Atlanta mounted a late rally and edged host New York in Game 1 of an Eastern Conference quarterfinal series at Madison Square Garden.

Young scored 13 of his game-high 32 points in the fourth quarter for the Hawks, who led by as many as 11 in the first quarter. He also had 10 assists. Bogdan Bogdanovic had 18 points, while Lou Williams scored 13 points off the bench and John Collins finished with 12 points.

Reserve Alec Burks scored 18 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter for the Knicks, whose biggest lead was seven points in the third. Derrick Rose had 17 points off the bench, while Julius Randle (15 points, 12 rebounds) had a double-double.

Ramos Left Out of Spain's Euro Squad

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain coach Luis Enrique on Monday left veteran defender Sergio Ramos out of his Euro 2020 squad but called up centre-back Aymeric Laporte, who recently switched his football nationality.

Ramos, the 35-year-old Real Madrid captain has struggled with injuries this season and has played just five times since the start of the year. "It was a very difficult decision but he has not been able to play this season and has hardly trained since January," Luis Enrique told the press conference as he announced a 24-man squad.

"I called him yesterday (Sunday), it was hard, difficult. I feel bad, because he is very professional and he helps the national team a lot. And he can still help it in the future. But I have to look for the best for the squad," the coach said. This season Ramos has missed games after catching Covid-19 and also because of injuries to his right thigh, his left calf and, most recently, his left hamstring.

He was in Madrid's squad for Saturday's final game of the season against Villarreal but did not start.

The absence of Ramos means there is not a single Madrid player in the Spain squad.

"It pains me not to have been able to help my team more and not to play for Spain but, in this case, the best thing to do is rest, fully recover and come back next year like we've always done. It hurts not to represent your country, but I have to be honest and sincere," he wrote on Twitter.

"I hope we have a great Euros. I'll be another fan cheering on from home."



Napoli Sack Gattuso After Champions League Flop

ROME (Dispatches) - Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis on Sunday confirmed that coach Gennaro Gattuso will leave the club after failing to qualify for the Champions League.

The southerners finished fifth, one point behind fourth-placed Juventus, after a 1-1 draw at home against Hellas Verona.

A win would have guaranteed a top four finish, but Napoli miss out on a second season of Champions League football.

"Dear Rino, I am happy to have spent almost two seasons with you," De Laurentiis wrote on Twitter.

"Thanking you for your work, I wish you success wherever you go. A hug to your wife and children too. Aurelio De Laurentiis."

The relationship between the pair had been tense with the club having imposed a media boycott for months. Former AC Milan coach Gattuso took over after Carlo Ancelotti was sacked in December 2019.

The 43-year-old also missed out on a Champions League return with AC Milan in the 2018-2019 season by just one point.

The Italian 2006 World Cup winner as a player has been linked with clubs including Fiorentina and Tottenham.

Italian Super Cup Will Return to Saudi Arabia Next Season

ROME (Dispatches) - The Italian Super Cup will return to Saudi Arabia next season when champions Inter Milan face cup winners Juventus, the Italian League announced on Monday.

"The next Super Cup will be held in Saudi Arabia, with fans, as stipulated in our contract," league president Paolo Dal Pino told Italian radio.

The 2017-18 Super Cup was played in Jeddah in January 2019 and the following season was held in Riyadh in December 2019, before being staged in Reggio Emilia this season.

The decision to hold those two matches in Saudi Arabia provoked protests in Italy over human rights and women's rights.

"It's a contract signed two or three years ago, when I was not in office," Dal Pino said.

"There is a relationship of intense collaboration between our federation and that of Saudi Arabia, with discussions on women's football, there have been several meetings with them, precisely to move in a direction of openness to human rights," he said adding that he did not wish to "go into this subject further".

No date has yet been set, but the Super Cup could take place in January 2022, according to Italian media reports.



Aguero Close to Barcelona Deal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Sergio Aguerro is close to agreeing a move to Barcelona that would unite him with fellow Argentine superstar Lionel Messi, according to Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola.

City's record goalscorer, who has spent a decade at the Etihad, scored a quickfire double in the champions' 5-0 win over Everton in his final Premier League appearance for the club on Sunday.

The goals took his Premier League tally to 184 -- the most by any player for a single club.

The 32-year-old forward is set to leave the Etihad as a free agent after Saturday's Champions League final against Chelsea. "Maybe I reveal a secret," Guardiola told the BBC. "Maybe he is close to agreeing a deal for the club of my heart -- for Barcelona."

"He is going to be playing alongside the best player of all time, Messi."

If the move goes ahead it would be Aguerro's second spell in Spain -- he made his name at Atletico Madrid before the move to Manchester in 2011.

Aguero's final season at City was dogged by injury and a coronavirus infection but Guardiola believes the striker has a lot to offer the Catalan giants. Barcelona had a disappointing season, finishing third in La Liga and falling in the last 16 of the Champions League.

"I'm pretty sure he is going to enjoy," said Guardiola. "And maybe Barcelona are stronger and stronger with him on the pitch."

