

**Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus in Iran Increased to 80,327 With 171 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Minister of Energy and Chairman of the Iran-Russia Joint Cooperation Commission Reza Ardakanian Is to Travel to St. Petersburg Today to Attend the St. Petersburg Int'l Economic Forum**

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## Vienna Talks May Continue

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran's top negotiator to Vienna talks on the revival of the landmark nuclear deal between the Islamic Republic and world powers says despite intense efforts made by all involved parties to reach a conclusion in the ongoing fifth round of talks, he is not sure that this will be the final round of negotiations.

Abbas Araqchi made the remarks while addressing reporters in the Austrian capital on Monday, saying that delegations attending the Vienna talks may have to go back to their capitals once more for further consultations with their respective governments.

Under former President Donald Trump, the United States in May 2018 unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Trump also initiated a "maximum pressure" policy against Iran, prompting Tehran to take remedial measures by gradually reducing its nuclear commitments under the deal.

Trump's successor, Joe Biden, says his administration wants to rejoin the deal, but Tehran says it must first lift all the sanctions Washington imposed on Iran in the aftermath of leaving the JCPOA practically and verifiably before it can come back. **See Page 7**

## IAEA Unable to Access Iran Data Since February



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The United Nations' atomic watchdog hasn't been able to access data important to monitoring Iran's nuclear program since late February when the Islamic Republic started restricting international inspections of its facilities, the agency has said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported on Monday in a confidential document distributed to member countries and seen by the Associated Press that it has "not had access to the data from its online enrichment monitors and electronic seals, or had access to the measurement recordings registered by its installed measurement devices" since 23 February.

Meanwhile Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations says a recent report by the UN nuclear agency serves to verify the Islamic Republic's implementation of a strategic parliamentary law that has widened the scope of the country's nuclear countermeasures.

Kazem Gharibabadi made the remarks in the Austrian city on Monday, addressing reporters about the quarterly report that the International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA) released earlier in the day.

The report outlined how Iran had reduced its nuclear commitments in several key areas, including the extent of its enriched uranium stockpile. According to the report, the Islamic Republic has increased its stockpile of the material to around 16 times the limit that has been specified in the country's 2015 nuclear agreement with world countries.

The measure fits within the December 2020 law passed by Majlis (Iranian parliament) that tasked the administration with suspending more commitments under the nuclear deal.

The law that is officially known as the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, was adopted in order to further Iran's counter-steps in the face of the United States' and its European allies -- the UK, France, and Germany's -- non-commitment to the nuclear deal.

The IAEA report also outlined the other areas, where Iran had reduced its cooperation with the body in line with Majlis' legislation, including suspending the country's implementation of the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The protocol allows the IAEA inspectors to carry out closer inspections of Iran's nuclear energy program.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's latest report, published in the international media on Monday night, states that the Agency has not had access to data collected by its surveillance equipment in Iran since 23 February 2021.

## Qalibaf Stresses Safeguarding Multilateralism

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker called opposition to unilateralism and protection of multilateralism as important priorities of Iran's parliament, saying that Tehran pays attention to neighbors.

Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, stating that opposition to unilateralism and protection of multilateralism are important priorities of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, said: "Iran, while maintaining proportion and balance in its foreign relations with different parts of the world, places a special emphasis on its neighbors and the historical, civilizational and religious continent of Asia, where we all live."

Speaking on Tuesday at the opening of the second conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) held in Pakistan via video-conferencing, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the ECO Parliamentary Assembly has provided this opportunity for the member states which can assist the governments in achieving the ECO's lofty goals through effective legal and regulatory support. **See Page 7**

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## No Retreat Is Accepted

The Islamic Republic of Iran should continue its peaceful nuclear program and it should not be deceived by recent Vienna talks which seems time wasting and in favor of the West, and no retreat from the country's rights is accepted by the negotiating team.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Monday said Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium is around 16 times the limit laid down in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear agreement signed between Tehran and major world powers in 2015.

In its quarterly report on Monday, the IAEA said Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium was estimated to be 3,241 kilograms as of May 22 (vs 2,967.8 kilograms in February). The limit laid down in the deal was 300 kilograms of uranium in a particular compound form, the equivalent of 202.8 kilograms of uranium.

According to the report, the quarterly increase in Iran's enriched uranium stock was estimated to be 273.2 kilograms, (vs 524.9 kg in February).

This report comes at the time the Vienna talks on the return of the U.S. to the JCPOA are underway and everybody claims something about the outcome of the talks. On Monday while it was said this would be the last round of the talks, Iran's top negotiator to Vienna talks said despite intense efforts made by all involved parties to reach a conclusion in the ongoing fifth round of talks, he was not sure that this would be the final round of negotiations.

Araqchi further said, "We are now at a point [in talks] where major bones of contention are being discussed... Texts have been made ready. A lot of texts have been made ready, but sticking points are still being discussed."

The Iranian deputy foreign minister added, "I am personally not sure that we will reach a conclusion in this round [of talks]. However, we will continue our efforts. Delegations may need to go back to their countries once more for more consultations. No final decision has been reached yet."

As it was expected, the West and especially the U.S. seeks buying time and it wants Iran unilaterally to return to its JCPOA commitments while it doges it under the pressure of the Zionists.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said last week that an agreement is within reach on the removal of sanctions on Tehran, but it remains for the US to make a "political decision" and change course on the "failed legacy" of the former Trump regime. **See Page 7**

## Asia Refiners Face a Double Blow to Profits From Iran, Covid-19

LONDON (BLOOMBERG) - Asian refineries are grappling with what is expected to be a brief period of weak profits as a demand-sapping Covid-19 comeback across the region coincides with a likely surge in oil product exports from Iran.

The virus resurgence in India and other nations apart from China is reducing consumption of products such as petrol and jet fuel, squeezing the profit margins of refiners. The market is also bracing itself for the possibility of a boost to Iranian fuel oil supplies into Asia should a nuclear deal be revived.

That has led to complex refining margins in Singapore, a proxy for Asia, falling from \$1.65 a barrel at the end of April to as low as 3 U.S. cents in mid-May. While it is a setback for processors recovering from the pandemic, margins have rebounded slightly and are expected to resume an upward trajectory as soon as the third quarter with accelerating vaccination rates aiding demand. The average profit from converting crude into gasoline in Asia - the so-called crack spread - fell last month from April, snapping a three-month gain. Across the region, restrictions in place from Malaysia, Vietnam to Japan sapped demand for transportation fuel, with oil consultancy FGE seeing India's gasoline consumption as the "biggest stumbling block to Asia's demand recovery" with an estimated 20 per cent fall in April through this month versus the previous quarter.

"Export is not a very attractive option," said Mr N. Vijayagopal, the finance director at Bharat Petroleum, India's second biggest fuel retailer. Refiners across the country are facing a double whammy caused by weaker regional markets and lower domestic consumption that is prompting them to set aside earlier plans to maintain run rates and reduce operations instead. Complex refining margins in Singapore were at 80 U.S. cents a barrel on Friday and averaged 71 US cents last month. That compares with \$2.41 in the same period in 2019, prior to the pandemic. The profit from converting crude to gasoline in Asia was at \$7.89 on Monday and averaged \$8.47 last month.

Most are expecting a flood of crude should the nuclear accord be renewed with Iran, but it is the prospect of rising fuel oil flows - used to power ships and for electricity generation in some countries - that has raised concerns for Asian refiners, especially as China boosts output of heavy fuel.

Margins for very low-sulfur fuel oil dropped below \$10 a barrel in mid-May for the first time since December, easing from a high of almost \$16 at the end of February. Cracks in May were also at the lowest average in five months. Margins for high-sulfur fuel oil fell as low as minus US\$8.80 last month, from minus \$3.71 in April. **See Page 7**

## Iran's 11-Billion-Dollar Exports to Iraq

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran exported 11 billion dollars' worth of agricultural and food industries products to Iraq in five years (March 2016 to March 2021), a senior Iranian trade official said on Tuesday.

Farzad Piltan, the director general of the Arab and African Bureau of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, said 30 percent of Iran's exports to Iraq included agricultural products and food industries including dairy products, dried fruit, etc.

Iranian products have active presence in Iraqi market, Piltan said referring to report of Trade Promotion Organization.

To review ways to widen exports of Iran's agricultural products to Iraq, a meeting is slated for June 8 in Tehran, the official added.

According to latest report of Iran Customs Administration, the value of trade exchange between Iran and other states has been 12.8 billion dollars in Ordibehesht - the second Iranian month which falls between April 21 and May 21 - and the figure shows a 38-percent increase compared with that in the preceding year.

Iraq has been the second in Iran's first five exports destinations.

Sokhan Gostar Institute

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## Preliminary Details of Martyrdom of 2 Pilots in Dezful

TEHRAN (MNA) – Preliminary details of the martyrdom of two pilots of the 4th IRIAF Air Force base in Dezful were explained by the Governor of Dezful.

In an incident that happened on the ground on Monday morning at the base, two pilots lost their lives, Ali Farahmandpour said.

He said that the area where the accident took place has been quarantined and assessment teams are investigating the main cause of the incident.

## Raeisi Unveils Housing Plan

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Presidential candidate Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi says his potential administration could build four million housing units during its four-year term as part of his agenda to address high housing prices in the country and encourage marriage among the youth.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Raeisi said soaring housing prices had been "a major obstacle" in the way of the youth getting married and starting families, pledging efforts to construct affordable housing units to soothe the concern.

"I have advised the youth to get married and we will start pursuing the construction of housing units for them from the very first day of the administration in office. I think four million housing units could be built within four years," he said.

The Iranians, especially the residents of Tehran and other large cities, have seen the prices of houses and apartments rising sharply over the past years.

The inflation in residential property market has largely been blamed on a confluence of the country's economic problems caused by draconian US sanctions and homegrown mismanagement and failed policies to tackle the issues.

Meanwhile, Tasnim cited Afshin Parvinpour, an ex-member of the country's



Supreme Housing Commission, as saying that a team of experts and researchers had been examining Raeisi's project for seven months.

The project will be financed with bank resources, with zero spending from the national budget, Parvinpour said. "In this project, it has been taken for granted that the country would remain under US sanctions for 100 more years."

Elsewhere, Raeisi said the second top measure on his economic agenda would be a campaign against corruption and bribery.

"All those who want to cooperate with the Administration of the People must know that this administration is against corruption," said Raeisi, adding that his administration, if he is elected president, would first work to create the infrastructure required for the anti-graft campaign. "Our [Islamic] Revolution was meant to [facilitate] the implementation of justice, but we were left behind."

## Tehran, Kiev to Hold 3rd Round of Talks on Flight 752 Case

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs arrived in Kyiv to hold the third round of talks on the case of Flight 752.

Head of Iranian delegation Mohsen Baharvand arrived in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv on Tuesday to hold the third round of talks on the case of the Ukrainian plane.

During this round of talks, the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ukraine are scheduled to discuss the technical and legal aspects of the crash of PS 752.

According to the plans, the talks will last for two days.

The first round of the Iranian delegation's talks about the flight 752 incident in Ukraine ended in early August and the second round of the related talks over the flight 752 tragedy was held at the place of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran in October 2020.

## Tehran, Beijing Launch Joint Industrial Cooperation Center

TEHRAN (IRNA) - China's Shanghai International Association of Small and Medium-Sized Industries and Iran's Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization launched Joint Cooperation Center for Small and Medium-Sized Industries on Monday.

Iran's Consul-General in Shanghai Ramezan Parvaz pointed to the historical ties between Iran and China and the role of the Silk Road in connecting the two regions and said that they enjoy good ties today as two independent states in the international arena.

Parvaz highlighted the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties between Iran



and China this year, saying that Beijing and Tehran has upgraded their ties from a mere bilateral trade relationship to a 25-year strategic cooperation.

The newly launched cooperation center should facilitate exchanging and sharing information and help solve problems ahead of bilateral relations.

In the launching ceremony, China-based Iranian businessman Hossein Khalifi who is a senior advisor in Iran Chamber in Shanghai International Association of Small and Medium-Sized Industries was appointed as the head of Iran-China Joint Cooperation Center for Small and Medium-Sized Industries.

## All Sanctions Imposed on Iran Must Fully Be Lifted

TEHRAN (MNA) – Stating that protracted nuclear talks is not in favor of Iran, a member of Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission said that all sanctions imposed against Iran must fully be lifted.

Fada-Hossein Maleki reiterated that lingering the talks is not in favor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, calling for completely lifting of sanctions imposed against the country.

Regarding the evaluation of performance of government over the past eight years, the lawmaker stated that one of the main problems of the government in the last eight years was that it tied all issues to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and relations with Western countries, so that price of basic commodities in the country were severely affected by the result of JCPOA.

In the last few years, most of country's industrial and production units were shut down and gone bankrupt because people were promised that if JCPOA was signed, production would flourish in the country but it was witnessed that JCPOA did not bring anything to the country, he said, adding,

"The government should not have linked the improvement of the production situation to JCPOA while this issue was related to the domestic capability and potential."

## Tehran, Baku to Open New Customs Point

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The opening of the new customs point between Iran and Azerbaijan will further expand economic and trade relations between the two neighboring and friendly countries, Azertag reported with reference to Iranian East Azerbaijan Province Governor Mohammad Reza Pourmohammadi.

The governor noted that the new customs post will be opened near the Khudafarin bridge in Azerbaijan's liberated territories. Stating that the necessary measures have already been taken, he added that officials of both countries emphasize the creation of a new customs point.

"The new checkpoint reflects the interests of peoples and states. The development of relations between the regions of the two countries will serve to further improve the social situation of the population living in the border area.

The restoration of control over the 132 km section of the Azerbaijan-Iran border created new opportunities and prospects for broader cooperation between the two countries. Earlier, the Iranian companies voiced interest in participating in restoration and reconstruction works in the liberated territories.

So far, the two countries have worked on projects for the construction of Ordubad and Marazad hydroelectric power plants and Khudafarin and Giz Qalasi hydro junctions and hydropower plants on the Araz River.

Additionally, earlier this year Azerbaijan and Iran signed an agreement on expanding cooperation in the railway sector. It should be noted that the trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Iran amounted to \$339.1 million during 2020. Of the total turnover, the export of Azerbaijani products to Iran amounted to \$38.4 million, while import from Iran to \$300.6 million. In addition, trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$134.1 million during the first four months of 2021.

## Iran, Iraq Discuss Academic Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP) - In a meeting held with the officials of the Amirkabir University of Technology and the University of Basra, the academic cooperation was examined.

The Director of the Scientific and International Cooperation Department of the Amirkabir University of Technology said the university could cooperate with Iraq's Basra University in the field of exchanging professors and students, equipping laboratories, as well as scientific and educational activities.

Amir Golroo said the areas of cooperation between the two countries' universities would be addressed through virtual meetings. With the areas determined, representatives would be appointed from both sides to pursue the programs.

Golroo added that Basra University was currently cooperating with Mashhad's Ferdowsi University and Iran Medical Sciences University.

## Iran Warns Armenia to Halt Araz River Pollution

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has made the necessary warnings to Armenia at various meetings regarding the pollution of the Araz River, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian told reporters.

He made the remark after the event dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the joint use of the Araz and Mil-Mughan hydro junctions between Iran and Azerbaijan.

The minister emphasized that the Ministry of Energy of Iran has shown serious will in recent years to prevent the discharge of industrial waste from Armenia into the Araz River.

"Armenia's steps regarding the discharge of waste into the Araz River are still insufficient. In any case, the Ministry of Energy of Iran continues to take steps to prevent pollution of the Araz River.

## No Deadlocks In Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) – Stating that the Vienna talks had not reached a stalemate, Iranian Government Spokesman Ali Rabiee said that these negotiations are ongoing and need to be further investigated in three important areas.



"There is no major obstacle to the negotiations on the revival of the JCPOA, and as mentioned earlier, there is a basic understanding of what the parties should do to return to the JCPOA agreement," said Rabiee on Tuesday in response to the question of when the Vienna talks will end.

"It is natural that due to the complexities of numerous sanctions [imposed on Iran] in the Trump era and [Iran's] nuclear technological advances in response to them [those sanctions], many details need to be considered. But none of these obstacles is insurmountable, and with political will, these minor differences will end."

The spokesman also noted, "Therefore, we hope that we will be able to announce the full revival of the JCPOA before the end of the current administration in Iran."

"The Vienna talks are in no way affected by the election and its results and will continue to achieve the desired result, in accordance with its independent and legal procedure and within the framework of the general policies of the Establishment and under the guidance of the Leader," Rabiee highlighted.

He went on to say, "There are no deadlocks in the negotiations. We should not let negotiations become protracted and we are not in a hurry as well. Negotiations have reached a point where a few key issues need to be decided, and these issues require the attention, obsession, and time."

"Our criterion is the rights of the nation and the highest interests of the people and the Establishment. Our negotiation team has moved in the same direction," he noted. "If the talks require decisions in Tehran, they will definitely be made in the capital."

In the name of God

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



Brief Notice of International Tender No. 36378

Esfahan Steel Co. intends to purchase Head Stamping through international Enquiry.

Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.'s Website at [www.esfahansteel.ir](http://www.esfahansteel.ir) Tenders & Bids – Suppliers Comprehensive System to get the tender documents and participate in the tender no later than 17 June 2021.

Public Relation of Esfahan Steel Co.

## Ahmadinejad Accused of Making "Unrealistic" Remarks

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

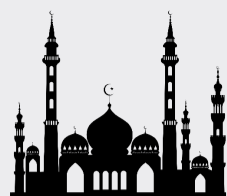
TEHRAN - Intelligence Ministry issued a statement Monday, June 30, accusing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of "disturbing public opinion" and making "unrealistic" remarks about the security agency.

The ministry said that Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments about the Intelligence Ministry's actions were "unrealistic and in line with disturbing public opinion" and that at this time it would not respond only on the basis of the Supreme Leader's emphasis on "strengthening national security and unity and maximum participation in elections and not creating grounds for abuse by enemies."

The Intelligence Ministry ultimately warned Mr. Ahmadinejad that he would "respond appropriately to allegations contrary to security facts" at the right time. The Ministry of Intelligence's statement did not elaborate on which of Mr. Ahmadinejad's statements were intended by the organization.

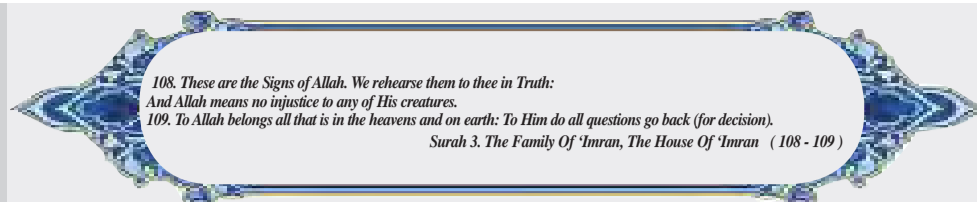
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad recently criticized the approach of Iran's intelligence and security agencies, accusing these entities of malpractice and deviations in their supervisory duties.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:02
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:36
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:04
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:49



## Barter Trade, National Currencies Can Boost Iran-Malaysia Relations

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN –Using national currencies and mechanism of barter trade are two solutions for developing the level of economic relations between Iran and Malaysia.**

Charge d'Affaires of Embassy of Malaysia to Tehran Mr. Mohammad Nizam Halimi met the manager of bilateral and multilateral relations of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Ms. Niloofar Assadi and during the meeting both sides explored ways for developing current level of cooperation between the two states.

Ms. Assadi emphasized cooperation between Tehran and Kuala Lumpur in the field of industry, tourism, hoteliering and production of halal food, and added that in the production of halal food, Malaysia is the most successful Islamic country and therefore both countries can increase the level of cooperation in this field.

She expressed her dissatisfaction over the decline in the volume of trade exchange between the two states and called for improving the cooperation in different fields.

Then she raised two suggestions for improving the ties, stating that one solution is to replace foreign currencies with the national currencies in the bilateral trade through the cooperation of the banks of the two countries, and the other one is to launch a



mechanism for barter trade of the required goods by the two countries, and agro and food products will be the priority.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nizam Halimi, for his part blamed the unilateral sanctions against Iran for the drastic decline in the trade between Iran and Malaysia, and emphasized that most of Malaysian companies are keen to cooperate with Iran and to enter Iran's market, and therefore a mechanism is needed to pave the way for them.

He then pointed to the 17th International Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) 2021 which will be hosted by Malaysia and urged Iranian enthusiasts to take part in this big trade event and called for colorful presence and participation of Iranian traders, and companies in the fields of halal food, Islamic investment and halal cosmetics and hygiene industries.

## First National Full Electric Bus "Shetab" Unveiled

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The first full electric bus of the country, produced with using the domestic knowledge and forces and with collaboration of MAPNA Group and Oghab Company, has been unveiled.



The bus, named "Shetab" (Acceleration), has used integrated body and chassis in its design and has been produced based on the engineering the management of the product life expectancy which is unique in the country.

The electrified bus has important features like smartness, methods of fast recharge, connection to the data center, advanced cooling system and monitoring system have been used in its design based on Iran's climate. The bus can be employed in different bus lines with different battery package. The infrastructures of this product are in a way that it can compete with the best products of the like in the world and it can be exported to the developing and even to the developed countries.

The Shetab electric bus is a fully indigenized product wherein the modern engineering tools in accordance with the designing principles in international levels have been employed. The body of the bus has been designed by Oghab Company and its electric engine has been designed by MAPNA Group and it is produced in Shetab Company as a joint production.

Indigenization of electric bus production by MAPNA Group is a considerable surge in the domestic production of electrified industries and it is considered a great progress in the national industry.

MAPNA Group in its bright outlook has planned exports of this product and it tasked itself to develop the infrastructures of electrification in the region.

### Iran Eyes Exporting Agro Products to Switzerland

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Chairman of Iran-Switzerland Joint Chamber of Commerce said that Iran is eyeing export of agricultural products and medical equipment to Switzerland, the issue of which has been put atop agenda of country's export list.

Sharif Nezam-Mafi broke the news and stated that presently, Iranian products have been highly welcomed in Switzerland.

Turning to the trade volume exchange between the two countries, he said that bilateral trade between Iran and Switzerland is in an upward trajectory since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2021).

Nezam-Mafi reiterated that agricultural products and medical supplies have been put at the top of Iran's exports list to Switzerland.

Despite sanctions imposed against the country, Switzerland did not sever ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran under any circumstances in the recent decades and has maintained its economic and political ties throughout this period with Iran, he said,

adding, "In spite of sanctions imposed against Iran in past years, Switzerland has continued its trade and business activity with Iran under the title of humanitarian activities."

The historical background of the two countries' relations shows bilateral cooperation and interaction in various political and economic conditions in such a way that, despite the intensification of US sanctions against Iran, Switzerland provided the country's commodity and pharmaceutical needs and launched a joint financial channel between the two countries, he emphasized.

## It was Mentioned in an Interview with the CEO of the Iranian Tire Industry's Value Chain Association:

# International Competitiveness; Tire Industry Weakness in the Aftermath



**T**he increase in the exchange rate has had a direct influence on tire production in the nation, raising the cost of tire manufacture. Producers are required to raise the selling price of their items under such conditions. Tire costs have grown so high as a result of this multi-stage increase in tire rates that consumers are finding it tough to purchase tires. This has resulted in a decrease in tire factory sales. In this regard, the head of the Iranian Tire Industry Value Chain Association considered the sale of the system as the main obstacle for tire manufacturers. He added: "The jump in the dollar exchange rate caused us to increase the price of tires in several stages." However, the market did not have the traction of this price increase and people cannot afford to buy tires at this price. Mohammad Reza Taghi Ganji called for the elimination of the comprehensive trade system as the main demand of tire industry activists. He described the continuation of the system as a means of confiscating the producers' capital. He emphasized: if the agreement is revived, the Iranian tire industry will have many difficulties in competing with foreign tires. He called for a review of the institutions in charge of supporting the tire industry.

**Please indicate the volume of tire production and sales in the country. Do manufacturing companies use their maximum production capacity? Does this amount of production meet the needs of the country?**

Tire manufacturing companies use their maximum capacity for production and are operating around the clock. In 2020, we saw a 20% increase in tire production in the country compared to 2019. This year we plan to increase our production by 10% compared to 2020. This indicates the high production capacity of tires in the country. We hope we can meet the needs of the people. We provide 80% of the people's need for tires in the whole country. We do not produce only some sizes of tires related to special and luxury cars that have less consumption in the country. We also face shortages in OTR tires and mineral and industrial tires. We have to import these tires from abroad to meet this domestic need. This amount of imports generally covers 20% of the country's needs.

**At what level do you evaluate the quality of domestically produced tires?**

The quality of domestically produced tires is not lacking compared to foreign tires. Domestic tires are produced according to the national standard of Iran. We also observe SWR in tire production. The SWR includes three international standards for tire manufacturing, including sound, grip and braking. We have complied with this standard as the latest international standards. Almost all companies are ready to access and implement this standard in the next few months. Some Iranian tire companies also have European E brand. In fact, our products in the tire sector have no shortage compared to foreign products. If we are going to give a score from one to 10 to the country's tires, we should definitely consider a score of 10. I recommend that people buy Iranian tires. Iranian tires are both high quality and cheaper than foreign tires. Domestically produced tires have after-sales service. Compensation will be provided if the consumer encounters any problems related to the manufacturer's shortcomings. Therefore, if there is financial damage, the defective tire will be replaced by the manufacturer and the new tire will be delivered to the customer. If there is a loss of life that leads to injury or death, the tires have insurance and a ransom will be paid.

**At what level do you evaluate Iran's rubber exports? Which countries are exported to? What obstacles does the development of tire exports need to**

**overcome?**

Unfortunately, tire exports are currently banned; It is said that there are not enough tires in Iran to supply to customers and domestic products must reach domestic consumption. This year, in the field of passenger tires, 2 million tires have been produced in surplus throughout the country. This volume of products must be exported to other countries. In this regard, many negotiations have been held with the authorities. We have requested that tire production units be allowed to export 10% of their production volume to other countries. We have very good markets in the countries of the region and the Persian Gulf countries, including Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. If the barriers to tire exports are removed, we can have good activity in the field of tire exports to these countries.

**What are the most important challenges for tire manufacturers in the country right now?**

The problems in the field of tire production in Iran are not separate from the problems of other production units in the country. We, like other sectors of production, face many problems. Our most important challenge right now is working capital. The price of the dollar rose from 4,200 toman to 24,000 toman and increased 6 times. Accordingly, today we actually need 6 times more working capital to be able to continue operating as before. Imagine a tire factory with a capacity of 5,000 tons importing the equivalent of \$ 100 million worth of raw materials. If it were to import the materials it needed at \$ 6, it would be a huge number. No factory has such working capital. Meanwhile, the number of bank facilities provided by banks is not significant. At the same time, the process of providing these facilities is very long and time consuming. On the other hand, their interest rates are very high.

**What impact has the rise in the exchange rate in recent years had on the domestic rubber market?**

The increase in the exchange rate has had a very direct impact on tire production in the country and has caused the cost of tire production to increase significantly. In such circumstances, we have also had to increase the selling price of our products. As a result of this multi-stage increase in tire prices, our prices have risen so much that consumers are finding it difficult to buy domestic tires. This has led to a decline in sales of tire factories.

**How do you assess the role of the agreement revival on the rubber industry and what is your prediction for the future of this industry in the country?**

If the agreement is implemented properly, our country will move towards a free economy market. In a market economy, imports and exports must be free enough. If this happens, the Iranian tire industry will not be able to compete with foreign tires; Because we are not given any concessions in Iran. In the past, concessions were considered for tire manufacturers, such as the supply of petrochemical raw materials, soot and yarn. These products were produced in Iran and were provided to us at cheap prices. But now these products are counted on us at world prices. In fact, we buy the raw materials we need at a free exchange rate. If the agreement is to be revived, the industries of more developed countries will come to our country. At lower prices, they surround the domestic industry and sell their goods. Foreign investors may even come to our country and buy all the factories inside Iran. However, there is no other way but to support the tire industry in the country. For this purpose, the best solution is to increase customs tariffs in order to support the domestic industry.

**How do you evaluate the performance of the comprehensive trading system? How satisfactory was the system tire sales?**

The comprehensive trade system and the system created under it for the tire sector were used in the early days and months of commissioning. Because at that time the dollar rate was 4200 Tomans and the tire was offered at two rates, namely the free market rate and also at the government rate. Because there was a big price difference between the free rate and the government rate, the people were wronged. This system has been created in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development. This system helped to solve the problem of distribution of goods and made the goods reach the end consumers. But for now, the tire system is a problem for the industry as a whole. This must be removed so that the market can adapt to the new conditions. At present, the selling price of goods offered by factories in the market is in some cases higher than the selling price of them in the open market. In the open market, customers can buy this product at a lower price. Therefore, there is no need for this system and remittances. Continuation of its activity means unreasonable confinement of the capital of tire manufacturers and the capital of shopkeepers who buy goods because they have to wait for remittances and such issues. Therefore, the main request of tire industry activists is to remove this system.



## Fethullah Gulen's Nephew Arrested in Kenya

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish spies have snatched in Kenya a nephew of a longtime foe of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and have brought him back to Turkey, media and family said on Monday.

Ankara accuses U.S.-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen of masterminding a failed coup in 2016 that left hundreds dead and thousands more injured. Since 2016, Turkey has arrested tens of thousands of people suspected to have links to Gulen.

Turkish state news agency Anadolu reported that Selahaddin Gulen was brought back to Turkey by agents from Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT), quoting unnamed security sources, but did not say which country he was arrested in.



## Belarusian Opposition Leader Believes Blogger Tortured

MINSK (Dispatches) - A lawyer who visited Protasevich and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega said he was fine, "but it's doubtful, because for sure he was tortured, for sure he was beaten", she told reporters at a news conference in Tallinn.

Protasevich and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega were detained on May 23 after their plane was forced to land in Minsk. Tsikhanouskaya offered no evidence for her assertion, though Protasevich's family has also said a video of him from detention showed signs of torture.

Belarus denies abusing detainees.



## Europe Demands Answers After U.S.-Danish Spying Claims



COPENHAGEN (AFP) - France warned Monday that alleged U.S. spying on European allies using Danish underwater cables would be "extremely serious" if confirmed, as questions mounted over whether Denmark knew what the U.S. was doing.

In an investigative report on Sunday, Danish public broadcaster Danmarks Radio (DR) revealed together with several other European media outlets that the US National Security Agency (NSA) had eavesdropped on Danish underwater internet cables from 2012 to 2014 to spy on top politicians in Germany, Sweden, Norway and France.

The NSA was able to access text messages, telephone calls and internet traffic including searches, chats and messaging services -- including those of Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, then-foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and then-opposition leader Peer Steinbrück, DR said.

"It is extremely serious," France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune told France Info radio.

"We need to see if our partners in the EU, the Danes, have committed errors or faults in their cooperation with American services." He added it would also be very disturbing if Washington had been spying on EU leaders.

"Between allies, there must be trust, a minimal cooperation, so these potential facts are serious," said the minister.

He said the facts must first "be verified" and then "conclusions drawn in terms of cooperation". Denmark's neighbors Sweden and Norway have also demanded explanations from Copenhagen, though the tone has been more cautious.

And a German government spokesman said Monday that Berlin was "in contact with all relevant national and international interlocutors to get clarification".

DR said the NSA had taken advantage of a surveillance collaboration with Denmark's military intelligence unit FE to eavesdrop on the cables.

But it was unclear whether Denmark knew at the time that the US was using the cables to spy on Denmark's neighbors.

Contacted by AFP, FE refused to comment on the revelations.

Defence Minister Trine Bramsen, who took over the defence portfolio in June 2019, has neither confirmed nor denied DR's report, telling AFP only that "systematic eavesdropping of close allies is unacceptable".

U.S. eavesdropping on European leaders is, however, not new. In 2013, former NSA contractor Edward Snowden revealed thousands of classified documents exposing the vast US surveillance put in place after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Among other things, the documents showed the U.S. government was spying on its own citizens and carrying out widespread tapping worldwide, including of Merkel's mobile phone.

However, if the Danish-U.S. spying is confirmed, it went on during and after the 2013 Snowden affair. In 2014, following the Snowden scandal, a secret internal working group at FE began looking into whether the NSA had used a Danish-US spying collaboration -- called XKeyscore -- to spy on Denmark's allies, DR said.

## Australia, New Zealand Present United Front on China

WELLINGTON (Dispatches) - The leaders of New Zealand and Australia have presented a united front on China, expressing deep concern over Beijing's actions in Hong Kong and Xinjiang while pushing for a continued investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who hosted her Australian counterpart, Scott Morrison, for talks on Monday, strongly refuted suggestions of differences in the two countries' approach towards China.

"You'll see Australia and New Zealand have broadly been positioned in exactly the same place on these issues consistently," she said at a joint press conference in Queenstown. "So, I really push back on any suggestion that we are not taking a strong stance on these incredibly important issues."

The show of unity came amid escalating tensions between Australia and China, with Beijing blocking some Australian exports after Canberra excluded China's telecom giant Huawei from its 5G phone network and called for an independent inquiry into the origins of the novel coronavirus.

Australia has since referred China to the World Trade Organization over its decision to restrict Australian barley.

New Zealand, on the other hand, has opted for a more diplomatic approach by strengthening economic ties with Beijing, including upgrading a free trade agreement this year. This has led to suggestions in the Australian media that Wellington was being too soft on Beijing.

But Morrison defended New Zealand, saying he and Ardern shared similar philosophies.

"Australia and New Zealand are trading nations," the Australian leader said. "But neither of us would ever trade our sovereignty or trade our values. We have stood side-by-side to defend and protect and promote these values."

He warned "there will be those far from here who would seek to divide us," but said, "they will not succeed."

Ahead of Morrison's visit, New Zealand said it would back Australia in the WTO spat.

The two leaders, in a joint declaration after their talks, expressed "deep concern over developments that limit the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong", where Beijing has clamped down on dissent by introducing a new security law that criminalises what it considers subversion, secessionism, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.



## Greece, Turkey Aim to Smooth Differences, Leaders to Meet

ATHENS (Dispatches) - Greece and Turkey pledged on Monday to smooth differences which erupted into a public spat between their foreign ministers, announcing a meeting between President Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at next month's NATO summit.

The two historic rivals are at odds over many issues from competing territorial claims in the eastern Mediterranean to migrant boats and the status of Cyprus. They came close to armed conflict last year but have been trying to lower tensions. "We are fully aware of the different, and in some very serious issues, diametrically opposed positions that we have," Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said following a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu in Athens.

"The purpose of today's meeting was to attempt an initial negotiation process and if possible, a gradual normalization of the situation over time."

As recently as Sunday, the two countries traded barbs over the status of the Muslim minority in Greece.

But the ministers were at pains to avoid a repeat of their open argument over sovereignty at a press conference in Ankara last month.

Cavusoglu said Turkey wanted to improve economic ties with Greece and said there had been concrete steps on 25 articles in areas ranging from transport to energy, the environment, tourism and trade.

He also said they had decided to recognize each other's COVID-19 vaccination certificates to permit travel between the countries.

"I would like to say that, as Turkey, we have the will for these actions and I am happy to see the same will from Greece," he said.

He said Erdogan and Mitsotakis were planning to meet at the NATO summit in Brussels on June 14.

## Egypt's Intelligence Chief Holds Talks With Hamas in Gaza Strip

CAIRO (Dispatches) - A senior Hamas official has said Israel must halt its "aggression" in both the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem as Egypt's intelligence chief met the Palestinian group's leaders in the besieged coastal enclave to try to bolster a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel.

Khalil al-Haya spoke after meeting Abbas Kamel, who visited Gaza after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on a trip aimed at shoring up an informal ceasefire brokered by Cairo.

His visit -- the first by an Egyptian intelligence chief to the enclave since the early 2000s -- was also aimed at discussing reconstruction plans following the recent Israeli bombardment of Gaza, according to Egyptian and Palestinian officials.

Kamel, who has not given public statements, is the highest-ranking Arab official to visit Gaza since 2018. He met with Yahya Sinwar, the top Hamas leader in Gaza.

"We discussed several files, most importantly the necessity to oblige the occupation to stop its aggression on Gaza, Jerusalem, Sheikh Jarrah and all over Palestine," al-Haya told reporters. He said Israel must also fully lift the blockade it imposed on Gaza when Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007 after winning 2006 elections.

"If this happens, then calm and stability could return," he said.

Egypt played a pivotal role in brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which governs the Strip, bringing an end to 11 days of fighting.

The flare-up in violence followed weeks of tensions in occupied East Jerusalem ahead of a now-delayed court ruling on the forced expulsion of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. Israeli forces cracked down on protesters in the neighbourhood and at the nearby Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which is revered by Muslims and Jews, who call it the Temple Mount.

After issuing an ultimatum demanding Israeli forces stand down from sites in occupied East Jerusalem, Hamas fired a barrage of rockets into Israel, with Israel launching air raids on Gaza shortly afterwards.

Israel bombarded the territory from air, land and sea for 11 days, killing at least 253 people, including 66 children. Rockets fired by armed groups in Gaza killed at least 12 people in Israel.

Al-Haya ruled out linking Gaza's reconstruction to Hamas's release of two Israeli civilians and the remains of two Israeli soldiers killed in a previous military campaign.



## Childhood Malnutrition in Haiti Spikes Amid Pandemic

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Severe acute childhood malnutrition is expected to more than double this year in Haiti as the country struggles with the coronavirus pandemic, a spike in violence, and dwindling resources, according to a report from the United Nations' children's fund (UNICEF).

More than 86,000 children under the age of 5 could be affected, compared with 41,000 reported last year, according to Jean Gough, UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean. Severe acute malnutrition is considered a life-threatening condition. In a slightly less dangerous category, acute malnutrition in kids younger than 5 in Haiti has risen 61 percent, with some 217,000 children expected to suffer from it this year, compared with 134,000 last year.

"I was saddened to see so many children suffering from malnutrition," Gough said after a week-long visit to Haiti. "Some will not recover unless they receive treatment on time." Overall, UNICEF said, about 4.4 million of Haiti's more than 11 million inhabitants lack sufficient food, including 1.9 million children.

Gough told The Associated Press during a recent visit to a hospital in the southern town of Les Cayes that UNICEF has only a one-month supply left of a special food paste given to children in need and is seeking \$3m by the end of June.

Officials said the pandemic has also disrupted health services, with childhood immunisation rates dropping from 28 to 44 percent, depending on the vaccine. The decrease has led to a rise in diphtheria cases as health workers brace for an expected measles outbreak this year. UNICEF noted that unvaccinated children also are more likely to die from malnutrition.

Lamir Samedi, a nurse who works at a community health centre in the southern town of Saint-Jean-du-Sud, said the target was to vaccinate 80 percent of children in the area, but they had yet to reach 50 percent. Among the children hospitalized is 11-month-old Denise Joseph, who lay quietly in a crib in Les Cayes after being diagnosed with tuberculosis two weeks ago.

"She never eats," said her grandmother, Marie-Rose Emile, who is caring for the infant since her mother also is ill. Emile is struggling to provide for the baby, saying she has barely harvested any beans, corn or potatoes this year.





**Shanon**  
(adviser)

**Parsian**

**Dibaji Apt (\$2400)**  
210sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, Sauna  
Jacuzzi, pkg  
L.balcony  
Fully Furn

**Zaferanieh Villa (\$5000)**  
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600sq.m b/up  
S/p, Sauna  
Jacuzzi, yard  
enough pkgs

**Apt (\$4000)**  
**Zaferanieh**  
400sq.m, 4bdrs  
S/pool, S, J, pkg  
L.balcony, & F.F

**Sa`adat abad Apt (\$1700)**  
170sq.m, 3bdrs, balcony, & F.F

Jordan (\$1400) 2bdrs, & F.F  
Jordan (\$1900) 3bdrs, & F.F

**bldg (\$10000)**  
**Andarzgoo**  
5storey, 20bdrs  
S/p, S, J, pkg lots  
brand new, & F.F

**Sa`adat abad (\$1600)**  
3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

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## World Stocks Set for 4th Month of Gains

LONDON (Dispatches) - World equities were firmly on track to post a fourth straight month of gains on Monday, while the dollar struggled broadly ahead of a slew of European and U.S. data this week that will provide a clearer picture on the global economy's recovery path. MSCI's broadest index of world stocks drifted 0.1% higher, putting the gauge on track for a

1.4% gain for May. It is the longest monthly rising streak for the index since August 2020, when it marked a five-month run of gains, according to Refinitiv data. But U.S. stock futures and European cash equities trading was quiet on Monday due to holidays in the United States and Britain, with benchmark indexes sticking to well-worn ranges.



## OECD Sees Higher World GDP Growth But Fears Headwinds

LONDON (Dispatches) - The OECD raised its 2021 global GDP growth forecast Monday, but warned that "too many headwinds persist" as not enough Covid vaccines are reaching emerging economies and markets worry about inflation.

The world economy will expand by 5.8 percent this year, the highest since 1973 and up from a previous estimate of 5.6 percent, the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development said in a report.

Most economies should return to their 2019, pre-pandemic levels next year, the OECD said.

This follows a massive global recession last year that was caused by lockdowns and travel curbs imposed by governments to slow the spread of Covid-19. "It is with some relief that we can see the economic outlook brightening, but with some discomfort that it is doing so in a very uneven way," OECD chief Laurence Boone said in the report.

The recovery is uneven so far, with the United States and China returning to pre-pandemic levels and forecast to have much stronger growth than other major economies such as Japan and Germany.

While the U.S. and South Korea are back to their pre-pandemic income levels, it could take an additional year for much of Europe and three to five years for Mexico and South Africa to catch up.

The 38-nation organization, whose members account for 60 percent of global gross domestic product, applauded the rapid reaction of governments to prop up the economy.

"Never in a crisis has policy support -- be it health, with the record speed of vaccine development, monetary, fiscal or financial -- been so swift and effective," Boone said.

"Yet, too many headwinds persist," she warned.

Boone said it was "very disturbing" that not enough vaccines were reaching emerging and low-income economies.

"This is exposing these economies to a fundamental threat because they have less policy capacity to support activity than advanced economies," she said.

The warning comes as the emergence of more contagious coronavirus variants has raised concerns around the world, with India battling a strain that has caused a surge in cases and deaths.

"As long as the vast majority of the global population is not vaccinated, all of us remain vulnerable to the emergence of new variants," Boone said.

New lockdowns would hurt confidence while companies, which are saddled with more debt than before the pandemic, could go bankrupt, Boone said.

The OECD's outgoing secretary general, Angel Gurría, called for a multilateral approach to put an end to the pandemic. "Effective vaccination programs in many countries has meant today's Economic Outlook is more promising than at any time since the start of this devastating pandemic," he said.

"But for millions around the world getting a job still remains a distant prospect. We urgently need to step up the production and equitable distribution of vaccines," said Gurría, who will be succeeded by Australian finance minister Mathias Cormann on Tuesday after 15 years on the job.

Gurría expressed confidence, meanwhile, that negotiations to establish a global minimum corporate tax -- championed by the United States -- could be wrapped up by a G20 meeting in October.

## Indian Economy Contracts by Record 7.3% in 2020-21

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's economy contracted 7.3 percent in 2020-21, official data showed Monday, its worst recession since independence as coronavirus lockdowns put millions out of work.

Asia's third-largest economy grew by 1.6 percent between January and March -- the fourth fiscal quarter -- after exiting its first "technical recession" since 1947 following two successive quarters of contraction.

About 230 million Indians fell into poverty due to the pandemic last year, according to a study by Bangalore's Azim Premji University, which defined the poor as those living on less than 375 rupees (\$5) a day. An easing of restrictions towards the end of 2020 helped propel a tentative recovery in activity, but this may prove short-lived following an explosion in Covid-19 cases in April and May.

India's vicious second wave, which has killed 160,000 people in eight weeks, prompted further lockdowns and saw 7.3 million people lose their jobs in April alone, according to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy.

That means more pain in a country where 90 percent of the workforce is in the informal sector with no social safety net, and where millions do not qualify for emergency government rations.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has so far refrained from announcing any fresh major stimulus measures in response.

The government has faced growing criticism -- including from Nobel prize-winning economists Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee -- for focusing on loans to hard-hit businesses rather than direct cash handouts to vulnerable households.

In a recent report, British financial services firm Barclays pegged the economic cost of India's second wave at \$74 billion, or 2.4 percent of GDP. But helped by output having slumped so much last year, the headline figures for the current fiscal year will appear strong.

India's central bank is projecting annual growth of 10.5 percent and the International Monetary Fund 12.5 percent, the fastest among major economies.

"We expect 10 percent GDP growth in FY22, with a slight downside bias," said Upasna Bhardwaj, Senior Economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank.

But she warned that analysts would "have to revisit this expectation much more often, given it depends on the pace of vaccinations and the pace of restrictions".

"While the situation this year is not as bad as the national lockdown last year, the economy is coming under a lot of stress due to localised restrictions, which we expect to continue into the rest of the year," she told AFP.



## Nestle, Under Fire Over Unhealthy Products, Working on New Strategy

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nestle said on Monday it was working on updating its nutrition and health strategy after the Financial Times reported an internal document at the food giant described a large portion of its food and drinks as unhealthy.

The newspaper said it had seen an internal presentation circulated among top executives early this year stating that more than 60% of Nestle's mainstream food and drinks portfolio could not be considered healthy under a "recognized definition of health". The paper said this assessment applied to about half of Nestle's overall portfolio because categories like medical nutrition, pet food, coffee and infant formula were excluded from the analysis.

Kepler Cheuvreux analyst Jon Cox said that including these categories would significantly reduce the proportion of products potentially considered unhealthy.

"Given the group's confectionery, ice cream, and pizza businesses, the real figure for the group based on 2021 estimates would be 28%, which is hardly a surprise," he said in a note. He said the report could point to changes in the product portfolio, notably an exit from mainstream confectionery.

Nestle said in a statement it was working on a "company-wide project" to update its nutrition and health strategy and was looking at its entire portfolio to make sure its products helped meet people's nutritional needs.

It said it had reduced sugars and sodium in its products by about 14-15% in the past seven years and would continue to make its products healthier.

Nestle shares were 0.2% higher at 0951 GMT, broadly in line with the European food sector.

## Turkish Economy Exceeds Expectations, Expands 7% in Q1

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economy expanded 7% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2021 amid economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, according to the country's statistical authority on May 31.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices increased 29.1% to 1.4 trillion Turkish liras (\$188.6 billion) in the January-March period, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) said.

A panel of 21 economists polled by Anadolu Agency on Friday had projected that the

Turkish economy would grow 6.4% on average in the January-March period, hovering between 5% and 7.2%.

Amid the pandemic, Turkey was one of the rare countries where negative growth did not occur and its economy grew by 1.8% in 2020.

Following the release of the growth data, the Turkish lira appreciated 0.73% at 8.48 versus the dollar. The lira started the new week at the level of 8.56 against the dollar.

Compared with currencies of developing countries, the Turkish lira gained the most value against the dollar on Monday, as the first-quarter growth data came out better than expected.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices increased 29.1% to 1.4 trillion Turkish liras (\$188.6 billion) in the first quarter of the year, the TÜİK said.

Alvaro Ortiz Vidal-Abarca, the chief economist for Turkey at Spanish-based BBVA bank said on Twitter: "Turkey's GDP grows at 7.0% in Q1 and stays near 23% in the second quarter."

"The data remind us that GDP will grow near or above 6% in 2021 and that controlling inflation, not growth, should be the priority this year. Only by this will guarantee sustainable growth in 2022." Value-added increased the most among financial and insurance activities constituting gross domestic product with 18.1% annually in the first quarter.

The figures rose 14.4% in other service activities, 11.7% in industry and 7.5% in agriculture during the same period.

Financial sector activity also rose by 2.9% followed by a 2.8% increase in the construction sector and 2.4% in real estate activities.

Government final consumption expenditure grew 1.3%, while gross fixed capital formation jumped 11.4% in January-March compared with the same quarter of the last year. The final consumption expenditures of resident households gained by 7.4% in the same period, TÜİK said.

Exports of goods and services increased by 3.3%, imports diminished by 1.1%, it added.

Amid the pandemic, Turkey was one of the rare countries where negative growth did not occur and its economy grew by 1.8% in 2020.

## G7 to Back Minimum Global Corporate Tax And Support Economy

LONDON (Dispatches) - Finance ministers from the group of seven rich nations (G7) will vow this week to support their economies as they emerge from the pandemic and reach an "ambitious" deal on a minimum global corporate tax in July, a draft communique showed.

G7 officials, set to meet in London on June 4-5, will also say that once the recovery is well established, they will need to "ensure long-term sustainability of public finances", which is understood to be code for a gradual withdrawal of stimulus.

The G7 comprises the United States, Japan, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Canada. "We commit to not withdrawing policy support too soon and investing to promote growth, create high-quality jobs and address climate change and inequalities," the draft communique, seen by Reuters, said. "Once the recovery is firmly established, we need to ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances to enable us to respond to future crises," the draft said, without specifying how the G7 would deem the recovery to be considered firm.

G7 governments have been pumping trillions of dollars into their economies to keep them alive since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 as repeated lockdowns pushed the world into a deep recession. To help alleviate the strain on public finances, the draft said the G7 strongly supported the efforts of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to set a global minimum corporate tax level that would ensure large multinationals paid their fair share of taxes.

Such a tax would aim to solve the problem of large companies that generate huge revenues but pay very little tax because they set up offices for tax purposes in low-tax jurisdictions.

The solution the OECD is working on would force a minimum global level of tax on all corporate revenues, no matter where a company chooses to set up its headquarters for tax purposes.

"We commit to reaching an equitable solution on the allocation of taxing rights and to a high level of ambition on the rate for a global minimum tax," the draft said, without mentioning any numbers. The United States proposed earlier in May to set the minimum tax at 15%, down from the 21% it proposed in April, and the lower level seemed to quickly receive broad backing in Europe.

"We ... look forward to reaching an agreement at the July meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors," the G7 draft said. It said there was an overwhelming moral, scientific and economic case for ensuring wide access to COVID-19 vaccines, as the global economy would not be safe until the virus is under control everywhere.

The G7 will therefore call on the International Monetary Fund to use its funds for buying vaccines and on the private sector to step up its contribution too.

## China Factory Activity Nudges Down on Slower Demand



BEIJING (Dispatches) - Factory activity in China nudged down slightly in May on slower demand and higher raw material prices, while the services industry boomed over the Labor Day break, official data showed Monday.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of China's manufacturing activity, was 51.0 -- slightly down from 51.1 in April but above the mark separating growth from contraction, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

But there are risks ahead, analysts warned, including shortages of parts -- especially semiconductors -- and rising commodity prices.

Although factory production has been "rising steadily", with overall activity exceeding the same periods in the past two years, demand growth has slowed, said NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe.

The new export order index fell, he said, "reflecting the decrease in foreign orders".

Capital Economics said in a recent note that there are "few signs" of easing, with freight rates still going up.

Meanwhile, the purchasing prices of major raw materials remains high, said the NBS.

On top of that, a fresh wave of Covid-19 in Asian countries and the resurgence in China's Guangdong province will also "hurt some small exporters in the region", said Betty Wang, senior China economist at ANZ Research.

On Monday, the southern province reported 20 new local virus cases, most of them in the provincial capital of the manufacturing hub.

Wang also said there is a need to keep an eye on the currency situation. Last week, the yuan hit a three-year high against the dollar.

And Iris Pang, chief economist for Greater China at ING, said the risks include chip shortages.

In May, China's non-manufacturing PMI rose to 55.2, with a Labour Day holiday consumer boom supported by long-distance domestic travel and accommodation.



# "Badger" Nominated at Film Festival in U.S.

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian feature 'Badger' directed by Kazem Molaie, has been nominated for the Best Film Award at the 8th Fine Arts Film Festival in the US. 'Badger' is about a woman named Soodeh Sharifzadegan who is involved with a difficult challenge in her private life, while she is close to her second marriage. Vishka Asayesh, Hassan Ma'ajouni, Mehraveh Sharifi Nia, and Gohar Kheirandish are among the film's cast members.



# U.S., EU Leaders Call for More Action at Climate Summit

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Top U.S. and EU representatives on Monday urged other countries to do more in the global initiative towards a greener planet, stressing the world "cannot afford to wait" at a virtual summit hosted by South Korea.

Climate change is a major threat to global growth, with perils ranging from disease outbreaks and declines in crop yields.

But international negotiations on how to tackle it have long been hampered by disagreements over burden-sharing between rich countries that bear far more historical responsibility for climate change and the rising giants that are now among the world's biggest polluters.

Last month, U.S. President Joe Biden announced that the world's largest economy would cut emissions blamed for climate change by 50 to 52 percent by 2030 compared with 2005 levels, doubling the country's previous commitments.

The U.S.' special climate envoy John Kerry told the P4G climate conference hosted by South Korea: "We are pressing other countries to step up their ambitions as well."

Moments earlier Vietnam called for developed countries to take the lead and provide financial assistance to others, but Kerry told Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh: "We all have to do it."

After the coronavirus pandemic, he added, "everyone wants to get back to normal but unfortunately we can't be satisfied with that because the fact is normal was already a crisis and existential one."

His comments came as virtual negotiations resumed ahead of the next UN climate change conference in Glasgow in November, with scientists issuing increasingly dire warnings on the situation. At the two-day P4G or 'Partnering for Green Growth' summit -- the second of its kind following the inaugural meeting held in Copenhagen in 2018 -- world leaders called in the concluding Seoul Declaration for more action in the global drive towards a greener planet.

The Paris agreement sought to limit temperature increase to well below two degrees Celsius, aiming for 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.



But Monday's statement came as many of the largest emitters have so far failed to keep up their commitments and countries have not even agreed on a unified rulebook governing how the Paris agreement works in practice.

"We recognise that climate change, desertification and land degradation, and biodiversity loss are three of the greatest environmental challenges of our times," the declaration added.

The UN says that emissions must fall nearly eight percent annually to keep 1.5C in play -- equivalent to the emissions saved during the pandemic every single year through 2030.

"Europe will be doing its part," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen told the meeting. "But the reason we are here today is that we all need to do our share."

"It is a matter of self-interest, of mutual interest, and of collective interest."

## No Retreat...

FROM PAGE 1

As the Supreme Leader has set the red lines for talks on the revival of the JCPOA, the negotiating team is not allowed to surpass these red lines by giving concessions to the West and returning to its JCPOA commitments, unless all sanctions are removed. When it is said "removing all sanctions" it means "all sanctions" and the U.S. cannot remove partial sanctions in order to fool Iran for its return to the JCPOA commitments because it was the U.S. who violated the deal last time and now Iran is in better position than 2015 as the current pro-West government is on the verge of transferring the power to a likely revolutionary government which will follow the revolutionary principles.



Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi said last week that the country continues to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity level as talks between the country and the remaining signatories to the JCPOA continue in the Austrian capital.

This is what exactly the country should do to defend its rights against the world arrogance. Nation will not accept any retreat and concession by the negotiating team in Vienna talks, and the team this time is not allowed to give any one-sided concessions to the other party and it should be a real win-win deal and not a paper deal wherein the West claims victory by halting the nuclear program without any tangible practical results for Iran.

As long as the talks continue, Iran should continue its peaceful nuclear programs no matter what the IAEA, as the pressure lever of the West, reports on its nuclear activities because this agency works as a tool in favor of the West for putting pressures on the countries which do not give in the world powers, especially the West.

So let the IAEA issues reports and we continue our peaceful nuclear program which is the right of this country and its brave nation until the country regains its rights.

## Vienna...

FROM PAGE 1

Representatives of Iran and the other five signatories to the nuclear agreement, namely Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China, have been engaged in the Vienna process since early April with the purpose of finding ways to bring the United States back to the deal and prepare the ground for its full implementation.

Araqchi further said, "We are now at a point [in talks] where major bones of contention are being discussed... Texts have been made ready. A lot of texts have been made ready, but sticking points are still being discussed."

The Iranian deputy foreign minister added, "I am personally not sure that we will reach a conclusion in this round [of talks]. However, we will continue our efforts. Delegations may need to go back to their countries once more for more consultations. No final decision has been reached yet." He noted that the talks have been underway in Vienna over the past week, saying, "The negotiations are very complicated. We are dealing with the main points of difference. We think that we have made good progress so far and trodden a good path."

Araqchi emphasized that Iran and the P4+1 group of countries would continue negotiations within the next two or three days, but expressed uncertainty that the Vienna talks would reach a conclusion at this phase.

Referring to his Monday talks with the Russian and Chinese delegations to the Vienna talks and a four-sided meeting with the three European signatories to the JCPOA, the Iranian diplomat said there is close coordination among positions of Tehran, Moscow and Beijing while expert meetings would continue. During the meeting with the representatives of Russia and China on Monday, the Iranian delegates outlined Tehran's stance on the draft texts and the remaining unsolved issues.

The Chinese and Russian envoys once again reiterated their countries' support for Iran's position on securing possible ways to revive the JCPOA and its full implementation by the signatories.

# Members Agree to Strengthen WHO



GENEVA (Dispatches) - World Health Organization members agreed Monday to strengthen the global body at the heart of the pandemic response and give it more secure and flexible funding to better deal with future outbreaks.

The 194 member states, in a 14-page resolution on the last day of the virtual annual World Health Assembly, also agreed to "strengthen WHO's capacity to rapidly and appropriately assess disease outbreaks" of possible global concern.

Countries and institutions had been woefully unprepared to deal with Covid-19, according to the findings of three independent panels that had reported to the assembly.

They called for a total overhaul of the global alarm system, and for a stronger, more independent WHO to help avert future pandemics.

One of the reports found that the UN agency had been too slow in declaring a so-called Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO sounded its highest level of alert on January 30, 2020.

After days of discussion, members agreed to create a new working group to study and streamline the numerous recommendations in the reports, and create concrete proposals for next year's assembly to consider.

The text called for member states to "ensure the adequate, flexible, sustainable and predictable financing of WHO's program budget."

Only about 16 percent of the WHO budget comes from voluntary membership fees, with the remainder coming from voluntary and heavily earmarked contributions.

Monday's resolution also called on all countries to strengthen their core public health capacities, increase their ability to detect new threats and communicate such threats effectively both at home and internationally.

To ensure all nations do their part, it also instructed WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to consider creating a pilot project for countries to submit to regular peer reviews of their pandemic preparedness by other members, in the same way they undergo reviews of their rights situations before the UN Human Rights Council.

The resolution meanwhile stopped short of explicitly backing the experts' recommendation to hand the WHO broader powers to launch investigations or communicate about health threats without waiting for a green light from the countries concerned. Also on Monday, countries decided to put off discussing whether or not to move towards creating an international treaty to prepare for the next global pandemic until later this year.

They ordered Tedros to convene a special session of the assembly in late November "dedicated to considering the benefits of developing a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response".

# China Allows Couples to Have Three Children as Birthrate Falls

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China will allow couples to have three children after a census showed its population is rapidly ageing, state media said Monday, further unwinding four decades of strict family planning controls in the world's most populous nation.

In 2016 China relaxed its "one-child policy" -- one of the world's strictest family planning regulations -- allowing couples to have two children as concerns mounted over an ageing workforce and economic stagnation.

But annual births have continued to plummet to a record low of 12 million in 2020, Beijing's National Bureau of Statistics said this month, as the cost of living rises and women increasingly make their own family planning choices.

China's fertility rate stands at 1.3 -- below the level needed to maintain a stable population, the figures revealed.

The slump threatens a demographic crisis which has alarmed President Xi Jinping's ruling Communist Party, risking a shortage of young workers to drive an economy experts say will have to support hundreds of millions of elderly by 2050.

A Monday meeting of the party's powerful Politburo led by Xi announced a further loosening of the state's control over the size of families.

"To actively respond to the ageing population... a couple can have three children," state media Xinhua reported.

The Politburo meeting promised "accompanying support measures" including improving maternity leave, universal childcare and lowering the costs of education, but without giving firm commitments.

The announcement was met with widespread ridicule on Chinese social media platform Weibo, tapping into a deep unease with long working hours, skyrocketing house prices and the rising burden to provide for ageing relatives that frames modern life.

"For Chinese millennials one couple must support four grandparents as well as three kids? Can the country give a hero's award to each of them?" read one comment that gained over 3,000 likes.



Others said the policy could only be taken up by those with money.

"The poor don't dare have kids, in two more generations there will only be rich people left," another user commented.

A poll on Weibo shared by Xinhua asking readers their reaction to the news later appeared to have been deleted after over 25,000 responded

that they would not consider having three children.

China's gender balance has been skewed by decades of the one-child policy, and a traditional social preference for boys which prompted a generation of sex-selective abortions and abandoned baby girls.

And for a younger generation of women with changing priorities amid the unrelenting pressures of urban life in China, there remains a widespread aversion to having children.

"I don't want to have even a single child," a 27-year-old single woman from Zhejiang province who gave her name only as Wendy told AFP. "Nobody around me wants to have kids."

Most experts agree that the policy alone will not reverse China's declining fertility, though it sends a symbolic message after decades of the one-child limit that was often brutally enforced by forced abortions and sterilisations.

"Most families have a preference for few children now -- akin to the rest of Northeast Asia," said Lauren Johnston, a China economics and demography researcher at SOAS University of London.

"By the time of the next census will there be many third children? Probably few."

A third of Chinese are forecast to be elderly by 2050, heaping huge pressure on the state to provide pensions and healthcare.

Ye Liu, lecturer in international development at King's College London, said the new policy was "unlikely to incentivize birth rates dramatically."

"The government shifts the responsibility of ageing population to individual families without concrete financial and policy commitments."

## Asia Refiners Face...

FROM PAGE 1

Diesel demand, most notably from China, is proving to be the bright spot and has provided a buffer for overall margins. Consumption in Asia during the first three months of the year was at 9.4 million barrels a day, or about 98 per cent of 2019 levels, and is expected to edge higher during the second quarter, according to Wood Mackenzie consultant Yuwei Pei.

Singapore's stockpiles of middle distillates - a category that includes diesel - fell through the week ended May 26 to the lowest since April last year. Covid-19 restrictions and the return of refineries after seasonal maintenance may lead to rising Asian inventories, but regional diesel cracks could increase \$3 to US\$4 a barrel to as much as US\$10 by December, according to Wood Mackenzie.

FGE senior oil market analyst Grayson Lim said: "As the Covid-19 situation in Asia stabilises and restrictions are eased, improvement in cracks of transportation fuels should support both simple and complex refining margins through the third quarter."

## Qalibaf...

FROM PAGE 1

The current century belongs to Asia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said, adding that while maintaining balance and proportion in its foreign relations with different parts of the world, Tehran emphasizes a special look at the neighbors and the historical, civilizational and religious continent of Asia.

Referring to the issue of Palestine, Qalibaf said: "In recent days, the world has witnessed the recurrence of widespread crimes of the fake Israeli regime against the Palestinian people, especially the killing of women and children."

Fortunately, in the last 12 days of resistance of the Palestinian people, nations, countries and even many Islamic states came to power and supported the oppressed people, especially Palestinians in every possible way, he noted.

"This resistance to the Zionist attempts to seize Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first qibla of the Muslims, and to counter the Judaization of A-Quds ended with the defeat of Tel Aviv and the Zionists' demand for a ceasefire," the official noted.



## Postlberger Double Joy At Dauphine

PARIS (Dispatches) - Lukas Postlberger of Bora-Hansgrohe won a hilly second stage of the Criterium du Dauphine on Monday to claim the overall leader's yellow jersey.

The Austrian, the sole survivor of a long-range breakaway, just clung on for the win after a 172 slog over five verdant hills from Brioude to Sauges.

Overnight leader and surprise winner of Sunday's opening stage Brent Van Moer finished three minutes down on the peloton, which sped up the final incline trying to catch Postlberger.

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## Everton Hit Back Over James Fitness Row

LONDON (Dispatches) - Everton insist Colombia midfielder James Rodriguez could have played at the Copa America after he was left out due to concerns over his fitness.

Colombia manager Reinaldo Rueda axed James for the forthcoming tournament after the Everton star's apparent slow recovery from a calf injury.

At a press conference in Colombia, Rueda said the decision had been taken after assessing his medical report which included information provided by Everton.

# Federer Makes Winning French Open Return

PARIS (Dispatches) - Roger Federer kicked off only his second French Open campaign in six years with an impressive dismissal of Denis Istomin on Monday, while reigning women's champion Iga Swiatek and men's second seed Daniil Medvedev both reached round two.

The 39-year-old Federer, level with Rafael Nadal on 20 Grand Slam singles titles, saw off Uzbek Istomin 6-2, 6-4, 6-3.

"It's a great pleasure to return. It was important to have some rehabilitation and lots of training," said Federer, seeded eighth.

Poland's Swiatek, celebrating her 20th birthday, saw off her good friend Kaja Juvan 6-0, 7-5 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Medvedev, who had lost in the first round in all of his four previous appearances in the tournament, put his poor clay-court form behind him by beating the dangerous Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion's meeting with Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania will be played behind closed doors, though, due to a 9pm Covid-19 curfew imposed by the French government.

Federer arrived to Roland Garros having played only three matches since his Australian Open semi-final loss to Novak Djokovic last year, before the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

The Swiss great lost to Pablo Andujar in his first clay-court match of the season earlier this month in Geneva, but struck 48 winners as he raced to victory over Istomin.

But he has been keen to play down any thoughts that he can add to his 2009 Roland Garros title.

He is competing in the tournament for only the second time since 2015 and the first time since reaching the 2019 semi-finals.



on the surface dating back to 2019.

But the two-time Grand Slam runner-up was too strong for Kazakh Bublik, setting up a second-round tie against US player Tommy Paul.

"It was a good match and I've been training really well," said the 25-year-old Medvedev, who lost the Australian Open final to Novak Djokovic in February.

Medvedev is bidding to take advantage of being in the opposite half of the draw to 13-time champion Nadal, Djokovic and Federer, while fourth seed Dominic Thiem was knocked out on Sunday.

The early stages of the 2021 tournament have been overshadowed by Naomi Osaka's controversial boycott of press conferences which have seen her threatened with disqualification from the event.

Her coach, Wim Fissette, told German magazine Der Spiegel on Monday that Osaka wants "to use her status to address problems".

Organisers will be relieved that no other players have followed Osaka's lead so far though.

Elsewhere on Monday, sixth seed Bianca Andreescu was dumped out after losing a marathon first-round match with Slovenia's world number 85 Tamara Zidanscek 6-7 (1/7), 7-6 (7/2), 9-7.

Italian teenager Jannik Sinner, the men's 18th seed, saved a match point against home favourite Pierre-Hugues Herbert to win 6-1, 4-6, 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4.

In-form Norwegian 15th seed Casper Ruud got the better of Benoit Paire 5-7, 6-2, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4), while former women's finalist Marketa Vondrousova came from a set down to beat Kaia Kanepi.

## Hazard Not 100% But Will Be Ready for Euros



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Eden Hazard is still having "some thigh problems" after missing much of Real Madrid's season but "will be there when the Euros start", he told a video press conference on Monday.

The midfielder said he was "not yet at 100 percent" but added that "physically I still have to prepare myself and I obviously hope to be ready for the first game on 12 June."

Belgium, one of the favorites for the title, start Euro 2020 on June 12 against Russia in a group that also includes Denmark and Finland.

Hazard arrived at the national training center at Tubize on Monday, at the same time as most of his team-mates and, as captain, was the first to speak at the press conference.

"I missed the last game with Real because of a little discomfort in my thigh. Since then I have been able to rest for a week and mentally I am fine," he said.

"I'm going to be good again when I get my confidence back, and when my thigh and ankle don't hurt," he said. "I've had an unlucky season."

"I've always been a player who liked to play one match after another and that hasn't been the case. I still have many good years ahead of me."

## Paul Helps Suns Even Series With Lakers

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Chris Paul collected 18 points and nine assists to lift the visiting Phoenix Suns to a 100-92 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers in Game 4 of their Western Conference first-round series.

Devin Booker and Jae Crowder each scored 17 points and Deandre Ayton recorded 14 points and 17 rebounds for the Suns, who evened their best-of-seven series with Los Angeles at two wins apiece. The teams reconvene in Phoenix on Tuesday for Game 5.

LeBron James had 25 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers, who saw Anthony Davis exit the contest with a strained left groin following a drive to the basket with 48.3 seconds left in the second quarter. Davis made just 2 of 9 shots for six points before departing.

Phoenix exploited Davis' absence in the third quarter, outscoring Los Angeles by a 27-15 margin to take an 81-65 lead. James sank a free throw to trim Phoenix's lead to 95-88 with 2:40 left in the fourth quarter. Crowder stopped the momentum by drilling a corner 3-pointer with 1:23 to play.

### Clippers 106, Mavericks 81

Kawhi Leonard had 29 points and 10 rebounds to help Los Angeles even its Western Conference first-round playoff series against host Dallas with a win in Game 4.

Paul George added 20 points and nine rebounds for the Clippers, who lost the first two games of the series in Los Angeles before bouncing back to win the next two on the road. Reggie Jackson scored 15 points.

Mavericks All-Star Luka Doncic, who had averaged 38 points in the first three games of the series, was limited to 19 points, six rebounds and six assists. He made just 9 of 24 shots from the field, including 1-for-7 from 3-point range.

### Nets 141, Celtics 126

Kevin Durant scored 42 points and Kyrie Irving added 39 as Brooklyn took control in the second quarter and pulled away in the third in a rout of host Boston in Game 4 of its Eastern Conference first-round series.

Swiatek, who became the first major singles champion from Poland last October, hit 22 winners in an impressive opening to her bid for a second straight Roland Garros triumph.

It is not just in Paris that Medvedev has struggled on clay. The Russian had lost eight of his previous nine matches

## Zidane Quits Real Madrid Because of Club's Lack of Faith



MADRID (Dispatches) - Zinedine Zidane resigned as Real Madrid coach because he felt the Spanish club no longer had any confidence in him, he wrote in an open letter on Monday.

"I'm leaving because I feel the club no longer has the faith in me I need, and doesn't offer me the support to build something in the medium or long term," the Frenchman wrote in the letter published in the sports daily AS.

"I am a born winner and I was here to win trophies, but beyond this there are human beings, emotions, life and I have the feeling that these things have not been valued, that it has not been understood that this is also how the dynamic of a great club is maintained," he said.

"But everything I built on a daily basis, what I brought to the relationship with the players...has been forgotten."

"I'm leaving, but I'm not jumping ship and I'm not tired of coaching," he added.

Real had a disappointing season, finishing second in La Liga behind neighbours Atletico Madrid and losing to eventual winners Chelsea in the Champions League semi-finals.

It was the first time that the 13-time European champions had failed to win a trophy in 11 seasons.

It is the second time that Zidane has resigned as Real Madrid coach.

## Copa America 2021 Moved To Brazil

ASUNCION (Dispatches) - South America's largest football tournament, the Copa America, was moved Monday to Brazil after a Covid-19 surge in Argentina and social unrest in Colombia saw the co-hosts stripped of the right to host the event.

With two weeks to kickoff, South America's CONMEBOL football federation tweeted that "The CONMEBOL Copa America 2021 will be played in Brazil!" and the June 13-July 10 dates were maintained.

CONMEBOL is expected to announce the venues and dates of matches in the coming hours.

Brazil hosted the last Copa America, in 2019.

Originally scheduled for last year, the Copa was postponed by 12 months due to the coronavirus epidemic.

New host Brazil is one of the countries in the world worst affected by the outbreak, with the second-highest death toll of over 460,000 so far and more than 16.5 million cases.

It was to have been the first time in its history that the tournament would be co-hosted by two countries, Argentina and Colombia.

But ten days ago, CONMEBOL stripped Colombia of its duties amid street protests that were met with a heavy-handed police response that drew international condemnation.

More than a month into the unrest, dozens of people have died.

On Sunday, CONMEBOL also stripped Argentina of hosting rights in the context of a record coronavirus surge, with more than 77,000 deaths in the pandemic to date and nearly 3.8 million infections.



## Barcelona Sign Aguero Until 2023

BARCELONA (AFP) - Barcelona have signed Sergio Aguero on a deal until 2023, the Catalan giants announced on Monday.

In a statement, Barca said that Aguero, who arrives after a decade at Manchester City, has a buy-out clause "set at 100 million euros (\$122 million)."

Aguero's signing for Barca comes two days after he missed out on the Champions League with City after losing this season's final to Chelsea.

The 32-year-old leaves City as their all-time record goalscorer with 260 goals, and with the most goals scored for a single club in Premier League history -- 184 goals in 275 appearances.

His departure for Barcelona had been long in the offing, with City coach Pep Guardiola saying a week ago that he was close to a deal.

Aguero returns to Spain after spending five years with Atletico Madrid between 2006 and 2011, and the club will hope his arrival in Catalonia helps to convince his compatriot Lionel Messi to stay.

Barca captain Messi, whose contract expires at the end of June, is yet to sign a new deal with Barcelona.

Aguero will participate in this year's Copa America, which on Monday was moved from Colombia and his home country Argentina to Brazil.

