

Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus in Iran Increased to 81,362 With 179 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Lawmakers Called for Filing an Official Complaint Against Outgoing President Hassan Rouhani for Approving the UNESCO 2030 Document on Gender Equality in Education Years Ago

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Tehran Warns IAEA Over Its Unconstructive Positions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to the international organizations in Vienna warns that the UN nuclear watchdog's recent unconstructive positions towards the Islamic Republic could jeopardize the future of the country's interaction with the body.

"The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Secretary-General [Rafael Grossi]'s recent positions reflect the IAEA Secretariat's unilateral attitude towards the [status of] cooperation with Iran, and ignorance of the level of the bilateral cooperation," Kazem Gharibabadi told the media in early Tuesday.

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Next President Not to Change Course on JCPOA



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Government Spokesman Ali Rabiei says he believes the removal of all sanctions, including those related to the 2015 nuclear deal, is near at hand.

Rabiei said in a presser on Tuesday that Tehran hopes the final round of the nuclear talks in Vienna is held soon and the negotiations bear fruit before the current administration leaves office.

"Just as we are in no haste in the talks, we are strongly opposed to the negotiations lingering on. Our focus is on ending the negotiations in the remaining time," Rabiei said.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



No More Concessions

It seems the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is still daydreaming and expecting more retreats and concessions from Iran in its nuclear program while the Western countries have not given a damn to their JCPOA obligations and they just want Iran to retreat from its rights and give then concessions regarding its nuclear program.

The head of the IAEA on Monday said it is getting increasingly harder to further extend a deal that the agency originally clinched with Iran in February to monitor the country's peaceful nuclear activities, which expires on June 24 after its first extension.

Rafael Grossi made the remarks in a press conference at the agency's headquarters in Vienna on Monday.

On May 24, Iran and the IAEA agreed to extend by one month the agreement they had clinched for the UN nuclear agency to continue inspection of the country's nuclear sites while the ongoing talks in Vienna on the revival of the landmark nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers continue.

This came after Iran halted its voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that allowed the IAEA to carry short-notice inspections at its nuclear sites.

In addition to the deal's extension, Iran also agreed not to erase information collected so far by agency equipment in the country.

"I think it's becoming increasingly difficult," Grossi said in his Monday interview when asked how likely it is that the two sides will again extend the agreement later this month.

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The CEO of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company announced

The Copper Company will Reach \$ 4.5 Billion in Revenue Over the Next Four Years

Necessary planning has been done. Copper is expected to increase revenue from \$ 2.5 billion to \$ 4.5 billion over the next four years. This issue makes Iran one of the top 10 countries in the world in copper production. Dr. Ardashir Saad Mohammadi, CEO of "Famli", said: "From 2024 to 2031, the level of copper mines in the world will decrease significantly." The world's 4 largest mines are coming to an end. This, together with the increase in demand, has led to an increase in the price of copper in the current situation.

The CEO of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company emphasized: China set economic growth of 9% for 2022, considering the annual turnover of more than 14.7 trillion dollars. This reflects the economic growth of world demand. On the other hand, European countries have made plans to achieve the economic growth planned for 2022. This will be followed by an increase in demand. Due to the reduction of mine grade and tonnage, copper prices will increase significantly.

Saad Mohammadi added: 199 copper projects in the world are being formed and launched. By 2031, the shortage of demand for the end of the life of 4 mines must be compensated. In this regard, 10.6 million tons of copper are to be supplied and replaced by these projects. These projects are divided into different countries. Iran is also present in these divisions and evaluations. We were able to participate in these projects.

He continued: "For example, Chile is going to add 1.3 million tons to its production by investing 27 billion dollars. Peru wants to add 650,000 tons to its production by 2031 with an investment of \$ 14 million. The United States is also set to invest about \$ 10 billion in this area.

Saad Mohammadi pointed out: The National Iranian Copper Industries Company is also involved in these projects. Fortunately, Iran is also included in this capacity building. According to the mentioned projects, we intend to increase our production capacity to 600,000 tons of cathode copper. This means that we have created a new capacity of 300,000 tons.

He emphasized: When we look at the statistics; It is important to note that our country's production is an acceptable figure compared to Peru, which wants to add 600,000 tons to its production capacity. More interestingly, the amount of investment in Chile is \$ 22,000 per tonne of copper due to its poor infrastructure. The investment in Peru is approximately \$ 14,000.

"Therefore, the amount of investment we want to make in the field of copper industry in Iran, taking into account the figures we have specified, is approximately \$ 8,000 per ton," concluded the CEO of "Famli". In fact, the number we want to invest per ton of production compared to the world; The number is much lower. It



is an honor and it is very valuable. Sales record of 6938 billion tomans during the first two months of this year

Dr. Ardashir Saad Mohammadi, CEO of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company, continued: In the first two months of this year, the Copper Company managed to sell a total of 6,938 billion Tomans. This amount has more than doubled compared to the same period last year.

Saad Mohammadi also mentioned the sale of 5,538 billion Tomans of the copper company in May of this year. This amount of sales has doubled compared to the same period last year (2,775 billion tomans).

The CEO of the Copper Company said: The sales plans of the Copper Company and the supply of internal needs are being carried out in accordance with the plan. During the first two months of this year, the company managed to record sales of 29,393 tons of cathodes. From the beginning of this year to the end of May, the copper company has realized its production plans ahead of schedule. During the first two months of this year, it has produced 216 thousand tons of copper concentrate and 52 thousand and 389 tons of copper with mineral content. This represents a 5% increase over the program. It has also produced 50,000 tons of cathodes with a growth of 7% compared to the plan.

By the end of this year, 400,000 tons will be added to the country's copper production capacity

In 2021, we have focused on development," he said. 3 very important projects will be inaugurated this year. The CEO of National Iranian Copper Company added: "Darreh Aloo concentrate mine and factory, Darrehzar mine and concentrate factory and flotation factory from Sarcheshmeh slag are 3 important

projects that will be put into operation this year." Saad Mohammadi stated: with the opening of these projects, more than 400,000 tons will be added to the production of concentrate of the National Copper Company. The launch of the three plants means adding at least \$ 800 million to the company's revenue. This will have a significant impact on revenue, profit and capital for other developments.

He continued: In the form of 29 projects, we have defined a project of 2.4 billion Euros along with 30,000 billion Tomans. The current capacity of copper concentrate plants is one million and 150 thousand tons. With the implementation of development plans, this figure will reach 2.3 million tons in the next 4 years.

Saad Mohammadi added: with the new refining smelting capacity in Sungun, whose envelopes will be opened on May 26 and the prices will be determined. With the capacities created in Sarcheshmeh and Khatunabad, we hope that the cathode production capacity in the country will increase to 600,000 tons. 550 thousand tons of smelting. He expressed hope that with such plans, we will increase our position from the current situation, which is about \$ 2 billion in the company's revenue, to \$ 4.5 billion in the next four years. He added: "This event makes us one of the top 10 companies in the world in copper production." At the end of 2019, the National Copper Company was the third listed company in the country. This figure came in second at the end of last year. We hope to reach the first rank of listed companies by the end of this year and the launch of new factories.

Full implementation of social responsibility programs in Kerman and East Azerbaijan provinces

Saad Mohammadi also referred to social responsibilities. He said: At the time of the corona outbreak, we have spent over 70 billion tomans. Two hospitals with 50 beds and 40 beds were built in Kerman province with all medical facilities. There was also a lot of help for the development and renovation of the hospital in East Azerbaijan province. The CEO of Copper mentioned the preparation and installation of an oxygen generator for patients. He continued: "Good assistance was provided to Kerman and East Azerbaijan universities of medical sciences." Nationwide, costs were also incurred for the required equipment. In fact, as much as possible, we tried to be with people and be able to provide better conditions for treatment. He said: Jihad camps were also held. We deprived more than 12,000 people in jihadist camps in the areas. There were 25 specialist doctors in each group to treat people for free.

Saad Mohammadi added: More than 66 artificial grasses have been constructed in the villages. 19 gyms were put into operation. We have tried to do our social responsibility together with the people. He referred to the issue of resistance economics. He stated: In this section, important events took place and we had the discussion of animal husbandry, entrepreneurship and construction of flower farm on the agenda and we will continue. We also established an innovation center in Kerman province. We cover all people who have new ideas for investing. Before the new year, the top 8 projects were offered the opportunity to invest and turn ideas into wealth creation.

France Urged to Lift Bans On Paris-Tehran Flights

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Embassy in France referred to the easing COVID-19 restrictions in Paris and asked the Iranian National Anti-Corona Headquarters to lift the ban on flights from Paris to Tehran.

The Public Relations of the Iranian Embassy in Paris ensured the Iranian citizens that during the past weeks a major part of the Corona restrictions have been lifted and a major part of the French people have

got their Corona vaccines, and therefore the Corona pandemic has after a long time lost its severances and the Paris-Tehran frights can therefore be resumed and back to their normal status.

The embassy has emphasized that it knows about the difficulties with which a large number of Iranians, especially university students, are entangled with and has reflected their requests to Tehran, and pursued the matter, but no positive response has been received yet.

40% of Iran's Production Capacity Remains Inactive

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Presidential candidate Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi says 40 percent of Iran's productive capacity remains inoperative, pledging efforts to activate the dormant capacities as a solution to the country's high unemployment rate.

At a question-and-answer TV show with the elite, Raeisi, who serves as the Judiciary chief, described production as a factor that helps the country build up power.

Raeisi said 40 percent of the country's production capacity remains unused today.

"In the Judiciary, we activated 2,000 production units, but hundreds of others remain to get functional. We can resolve the unemployment issue through the activation of these capacities," he said.

Raeisi said measures should be taken to protect manufactures should be protected against the banking system, which charges them with an interest rate of 35 percent for providing them with facilities, although the maximum interest rate should not exceed the 18 percent set by the Central Bank and its Commission on Money and Credit.

"We asked the administration to prevent that, but it said it could not work this out with the banks," said Raeisi, stressing that the Central Bank should take control and impose its management on banks instead of making mere recommendations to them.



Elsewhere, Raeisi emphasized the need to seriously tackle unemployment and high housing prices, which the youth mainly blame for their failure to start families.

"I have already started the construction of housing units in [the city of] Mashhad, where 600 housing units have been built in 10 blocks for couples who are studying at university," he said.

Raeisi had earlier pledged to build four million housing units during its four-year term as part of his agenda to address high housing prices.

Raeisi said the economy should be fortified to the extent that it would be able to stand unshaken in the face of hostilities, sanctions, natural disasters, and pandemics.

"A good manager is one who gets different minds, experts, and capacities involved in the job. We need to bring together a harmonious economic team that has convergence. Things should be done on the back of consultations with experts," Raeisi said.

The country, he said cannot be run with "factionalism and by standing on ceremony," and "a serious management was needed."

Zarif Urges U.S. to Change Course on Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says it still remains to be seen if US President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken are prepared to depart from their predecessors' attitude towards Iran.

"It remains unclear whether POTUS (President of the United States) and Sec Blinken are ready to bury the failed 'maximum pressure' policy of Trump and Mike Pompeo, and cease using Economic Terrorism as bargaining 'leverage,'" Zarif tweeted on Monday. The U.S. left a historic 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and others under former president Donald Trump. Ex-American top diplomat Mike Pompeo was among those playing a notable role in escalating the situation that led to Washington's departure.

Washington then returned the inhumane economic sanctions that the deal -- officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) -- had lifted. Using the sanctions as instruments of economic terrorism has been forming the central plank of the U.S.'s policy towards Iran since Trump. The former American chief executive triumphantly named the overall approach as "maximum pressure."

Zarif's tweet came after remarks by Blinken to U.S. lawmakers, in which he had expressed alleged doubt on the part of Washington about Tehran's "willingness" to "come back into compliance" with the JCPOA. By resuming "compliance," Blinken was referring to the likelihood of Iran's reversing the remedial nuclear measures that it has been taking since 2019 in return for the US and others' non-compliance with the deal.

Zarif reminded Blinken that "Iran is in compliance with the JCPOA" because its remedial measures fit well with the JCPOA's Paragraph 36 that entitles any party to such reprisal in case of others' non-commitment. "Just read Paragraph 36," Zarif wrote.

Speaker Commemorates Anniversary of Parliament Attack Martyrs

TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian Parliament Speaker marked the martyrdom anniversary of the ISIS terrorist attack on Majlis, saying that a ceremony will be held today (Wednesday) in the parliament on this occasion.

At the beginning of Tuesday's open session of Iran's Parliament, while commemorating the martyrs of the parliament, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf commemorated the 17th of Khordad, the anniversary of the ISIS terrorist attack on the Islamic Consultative Assembly, saying: "We congratulate the families of the martyrs on the anniversary of their martyrdom."

"Tomorrow, on the occasion of the martyrdom anniversary of the martyrs of the parliament, a ceremony will be held," he added.

Qalibaf had earlier said the intelligence services of the United States and Israel were behind simultaneous attacks by the Daesh Takfiri terrorists in the Iranian capital in 2017.

On June 7, 2017, ISIS terrorists mounted almost simultaneous assaults on the Parliament building and the mausoleum of the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in Tehran, killing 17 people and injuring more than 50 others.

The terrorist outfit claimed responsibility for the assaults. Some of the attackers were killed or arrested and dozens more were captured in the following months -- many in operations along the borders with Iraq and Turkey.

Tehran, Kabul Discuss Bilateral Ties, Latest Developments

TEHRAN (MNA) -- Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Afghanistan explored avenues for enhancing bilateral ties and discussed latest developments in Peace Process in Afghanistan and issues of mutual interests.

Iranian Foreign Ministry's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Affairs Mohammad-Ebrahim Taherianfard held a phone talk with Head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah to discuss bilateral ties and the latest peace process developments. During the telephone conversation, Taherianfard and Abdullah Abdullah exchanged their views on the latest developments on the peace process in Afghanistan and also visit of UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for Afghanistan's Affairs to Tehran.

For his part, Head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah called for the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the peace process in Afghanistan. While reiterating the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for efforts in the Afghan peace process, Taherianfard reminded the importance of conducting interaction between the various factions of the country to accelerate the peace process.

President Urges Regulations on Cryptocurrencies in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN -- President Hassan Rouhani called for new rules regulating the use of cryptocurrencies in the country in order to protect people's assets in the capital market.

In comments at a Tuesday meeting of the Administration's Economic Cooperation Headquarters, Rouhani said it is necessary to regulate the legal use of cryptocurrencies and devise and introduce new rules in order to protect the financial assets of people.

Warning of the risks associated with the cryptocurrency trade, the president urged people to avoid entering that market without enough expertise and knowledge.

Developing a smart economy is a necessity today, but legal and technical regulations need to be made carefully and a dynamic policy must be formulated in this regard, he added.

The president also noted that the energy-intensive mining of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin will be banned until the end of summer, saying the ministries of intelligence, ICT and energy are in charge of taking action against cryptocurrency miners.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are created through a process known as mining, where powerful computers compete with each other to solve complex mathematical problems. The process is highly energy intensive, often relying on electricity generated by fossil fuels.

The value of a single Bitcoin reached over 63,000 dollars for the first time in April. The new phenomenon's bull market in the past year encouraged many around the world and also in Iran to invest in the field.

Meanwhile emphasising the government's decision to control prices, President Rouhani said, "The government has explicitly announced that any increase in price of goods, and especially people's essential needs is not acceptable at all, and the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade is obliged to take serious control of prices and prevent any increase".

Regarding the activities in the field of digital currency and cryptocurrencies, the President stressed the need to preserve and protect national interests in this field, saying, "Today, the economic intelligence program is a requirement and we must pay attention to the legal and technical requirements".

95% of Iranian People Enjoy Natural Gas

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Minister of Oil said 95 percent of the Iranian people were connected to the country's gas distribution network.

Attending the parliament's open session on Tuesday to answer the lawmakers' questions, Bijan Zangeneh explained during the last 8 years, the number of villages enjoying natural gas increased 2.5 times, that was from 14,000 to more than 35,000 villages.

According to Zangeneh, Iran's oil refineries produce 7,000 tons of gas, of which 5,000 tons are distributed in the country.

Noting that Iran's gas export has doubled, he said the ministry did not oppose distributing gas. Still, it preferred the distribution of Compact Natural Gas (CNG) as a priority and export of liquid gas for bringing higher currency income.

The minister of oil noted that about \$50 billion is needed to maintain the production of the Southern Pars gas field along with other gas fields.

Housing Price in Tehran City Falls 2% in a Month

TEHRAN (MNA) - Housing price in Tehran city dropped two percent in the second month of the current Iranian calendar year (April 21-May 21), from its previous month, according to the deputy transport and urban development minister.

Mahmoud Mahmoudi although said, "Following the analysis of prices in different areas of the capital, we see that in some areas of Tehran, we had a 16-percent reduction in prices last month."

Mentioning the three-percent fall in the housing price in Tehran city in the first month of the present year, the official stated, "The price analysis in the first month of this year also indicates the increase of prices in five districts of Tehran and the decrease of prices in 17 districts of the capital, which was repeated in the second month."

He predicted that if the dealers could be pushed out of the housing

market while balancing supply and demand in the current executive plans, housing prices would fall and stabilize.

The housing market reacts to the negative and positive movement of rival markets and is not an independent market that can be definitively commented on, the official noted.

He further explained that the implementation of housing policies in recent years, such as mass production of housing through the National Housing Plan and Mehr Housing Plan, as well as registration in the real estate system, besides the identification of vacant homes and the government's determination to collect taxes from vacant homes have helped reduce keeping of capital in the housing sector, and if the parallel markets do not face a price shock, the direction of the market is towards price reduction and price stability.

Iran Protests Against Not Receiving Its Water Share From Hirmand River

TEHRANM (IRNA) - Deputy Ministry of Energy for Water and Wastewater Affairs Ghasem Taghizadeh Khamesi at the joint meeting of the water commission on Tuesday said that Iran protests about not receiving its water share from the Hirmand River.

The 23rd joint meeting of the Hirmand Water Commission was held in the presence of the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan.

Khamesi made the remarks during the joint meeting on Tuesday, calling for Iran's right to water under the 1973 treaty.

Referring to Iran's concerns over the construction and filling of the Kamal Khan Dam on Hirmand, he said that according to Article 5 of the 1973 Hirmand Treaty, Afghanistan should have obtained Iran's approval to build this dam.

He added that Iran believes the dam will have social consequences including migration, agricultural closures, and the development of dust centers.

Iran has been suffering a severe water shortage in its southeastern provinces bordering Afghanistan.

Iranian, Russian Museums Sign MoU

MOSCOW (IRNA)- Iran's Niyavaran Museum and Russia's The Pushkin State Museum have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand bilateral cooperation.

The memorandum inked by Alireza Sharifi, Director of Niyavaran Palace Complex in Tehran, Iran and Marina Loshak, Director of The Pushkin State Museum in Russia, paves the way for the museums to exchange experience and knowledge.

Holding joint exhibitions, educational courses and exchanging experts are among other areas of cooperation agreed in the MoU.

The Pushkin State Museum owns one of Russia's greatest arts collections which include paintings, sculpture and other artworks from ancient times, medieval and renaissance period.

Items from ancient Egypt and painting collections from 4th and 5th century AD European artists are among works exhibited in Pushkin Museum.

The Museum has begun to showcase modern artworks from Russia and Europe.

Iran Expresses Grief on Pakistan Train Accident

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan has expressed grief over the tragic train accident in Pakistan's southern Sindh Province that claimed 60 lives.

Mohammad Ali Hosseini in a tweet on Tuesday presented deep sense of sorrow over loss of precious lives in the tragic accident of the collision of two trains in Dharki.

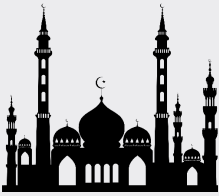
Offering condolences over the tragedy, he prayed to God for forgiveness of the dead, good health for the wounded and patience for the survivors.

At least 60 passengers died and over 100 others injured in a collision between two trains near Ghotki on Monday.

According to Railways officials, Sir Syed Express collided with the Millat Express between Raiti and Obaro Railway stations and fourteen bogies derailed.

Police sources say four bogies of Millat Express were completely destroyed in the accident.

Relief and rescue efforts are in progress by Pakistan Army at the train incident site near Ghotki.



PRAYER TIME

Noon (Zohr)

Evening (Maghreb)

Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:03

20:40

04:02

05:48

116. Those who reject Faith,- neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah. They will be companions of the Fire,- dwelling therein (for ever).
117. What they spend in the life of this (material) world May be likened to a wind which brings a nipping frost: It strikes and destroys the harvest of men who have wronged their own souls: it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong themselves.
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (116 - 117)

Iran Exports to Russia Up by 20%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The chairman of Iran-Russia Chamber of Commerce says Iran’s exports to Russia have increased by 20 percent but with the existing condition, one cannot expect more increase of the exports to Russia.

Speaking to ILNA, Hadi Tizhoush Taban said Russia’s imports only in the agro and food products are estimated at \$67b per year but Iran accounts only for 0.22 percent of the figure which is around \$500m.

Touching upon on the current condition of trade between Iran and Russia, he said the trade condition of Iran and Russia has not changed considerably because when the borders of other countries were closed due to the pandemic, Russia’s border was open for imports and exports of goods, adding that major problems for Iran’s trade with Russia are domestic because required infrastructures for transportation are not ready and as long as these infrastructures do not get ready, the trade volume with Russia will not increase noticeably.

Tizhoush Taban went on to say but comparing to the past years, Iran’s exports to Russia have increased but the figure has not been so considerable and it has been around 20 percent. He noted that Russia imports agro and food products worth of \$67b annually but Iran’s share of the figure is only 0.22 percent and around \$500m. He stated other countries have entered Russia’s big market but unfortunately Iran has not acted successfully, and sanctions as well as domestic issues like banking issues should be blamed for this failure.

He went on to say that problems of banking system cost dear for Iranian tradesmen and repatriation of the earned forex from the exports has also its problems. He reiterated that as long as these problems are not solved, one cannot expect



considerable rise in the exports unless the domestic laws and regulations are revised.

Tizhoush Taban also said one of the problems of the trade is the issue of regulating the domestic market, adding that when the country faces the shortage of one commodity, its exports are halted and this happens nowhere in the world in this way. He said if a country faces shortage of some commodity, it begins its imports until it meets the demand of the domestic market and then its imports are halted. He reiterated that regulation of the domestic market is done with imports but in Iran the market regulation is done by stopping exports. So an economic activist cannot have a long term planning for his activities and he just looks at his short term interests, and for this reason one cannot expect considerable rise in exports, he added.

On Iran’s imports from Russia, he said that Iran’s imports from Russia are mostly wood, oil seeds, livestock and poultry and there is no certain import from Russia and to expand it, Iran needs resolving issues like banking issue.

Responding to a question on the North-South Corridor, he said with completion of this corridor, the costs will be decreased by one-third and it will have good revenues for Iran.

He also reiterated that Eurasia can create good facilities for Iran regarding tariffs and the final cost of the prices in the region, and this point should be taken seriously and Iran’s ties with Eurasia should be expanded.

Energy Minister Calls To Boost Iran, Tajikistan’s Relations



TEHRAN (IP) – Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, called to shore up relations between Iran and Tajikistan.

During the 14th session of the Joint Economic, Cultural and Social Cooperation Commission meeting on Monday, Ardakanian said: “One of the important areas for expanding trade relations between the two countries is banking relations, where both sides need to take the necessary steps in this regard.”

Referring to the implementation of the agreements reached in the 13th session of the joint meeting, he added that the implementation of an agreement required a more serious will.

Ardekanian and Tajikistan’s Minister of the Energy and Water Recourses Daler Juma chaired the 14th me

The Iranian energy minister will also hold meetings with other senior Tajik officials during his stray in Dushanbe to weigh plans for closer economic ties between the two Persian-speaking nations.

The Iranian Minister of Energy has traveled to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, to attend the 14th session of the Joint Economic, Cultural and Social Cooperation Commission meeting between Iran and Tajikistan.

Hewas scheduled to meet with other Tajik officials on promoting economic relations.

Prior to Tajikistan, Ardakanian visited Moscow and participated in the 24th Saint Petersburg International Economic Conference.

Iran Power Export to Afghanistan Disconnected

TEHRAN (MNA) – Afghan officials say electricity imported to the country from Iran has been cut due to an explosion in an electricity tower.

Afghanistan Electricity Company announced the explosion of an electricity tower in Herat province.

Zeinab Mohseni, public relations manager of Breshna Company in Herat, said that this morning, the electricity tower exploded in Kohsan city of the province.

According to her, with the destruction of this tower, Iran’s imported electricity to Herat has been cut off.

This morning, Breshna also announced that an imported electricity tower had exploded in Parwan province, leading to power outages in Kabul and several other provinces.

According to Breshna, local sources in Salang County, Parwan Province, reported that an imported power tower had been blown up and destroyed by unknown individuals in the Ahangaran area of South Salang.

Breshna officials have confirmed that electricity has been cut off in the capital and many other provinces.

So far, no individuals claimed the responsibility for this incident.

Baku Says No Red Line for Developing Ties With Tehran

TABRIZ (IRNA) - Azerbaijan Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mostafayev said on Tuesday that there is no red line for promoting relations with Iran.

Mostafayev described Iran as a friend for Azerbaijan, saying Iranian and Azeri leaders are determined to increase interactions in religious and cultural fields.

He referred to the 50th anniversary of Aras dam exploitation, saying Azerbaijan maintains friendly ties with Iran with regard to water.

He appreciated Iran’s supports for Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with regard to energy, gas and roads.

Iran and Azerbaijan are united and friends, he said, adding that this friendship will be permanent.

Referring to his meeting with Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami, Mostafayev said both sides are following up joint

objectives aiming to lift obstacles.

He pointed to launching bus and car lines between Iran and Nakhchivan as topics on the agenda of two countries.

Meanwhile, Eslami said that Iran respects developing relations with neighbors especially Azerbaijan.

He noted that thanks to recent developments in the region and the trilateral MoU between Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, Tabriz-Nakhchivan railway will be activated to develop trade capacities between two countries and regional states as well.

Iran and Azerbaijan enjoy various opportunities, which can play an effective role in the Black Sea and Persian Gulf corridors, he added.

Eslami arrived in Jolfa on Tuesday morning to confer with Azeri official. He is then scheduled to visit Baku.

Iran to Hold 1st Int’l Blockchain Conference

TEHRAN (MNA) – The 1st International Blockchain Conference on CRYPTOCURRENCY and the World Economy’ is scheduled to be held in August 2021.

Iranian Innovation and Technology Club and the National Commission for UNESCO are to run the event.

The conference is to be held on August 5-6, 2021.

The Head of Iranian Innovation and Technology Club Peyman Sarhaddi said this conference will create a suitable platform for cooperation and knowledge transfer among professors, elites, and researchers in the field of blockchain innovation and technology.

It will also create a common space for providing comprehensive and effective solutions based on knowledge and analysis of economic opportunities on a national and global basis for better management of organizations.

The conference will focus on three major aspects of ‘blockchain, science and development’, ‘applications of blockchain in technology and industry’ and ‘blockchain and economics of financial and international markets.’

Tehran, Copenhagen Stress Cooperation On Geological Sciences

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Officials from geological agencies of Iran, and Denmark, in a virtual meeting on Monday, underlined the need for bilateral cooperation on geological sciences, high-tech as well as satellite technologies.

Alireza Shahidi, the head of the Iranian agency and the deputy minister of industry, mine and trade, said that the global climate change has caused Iran problems providing the water needed for drinking and agriculture.

He also referred to drought, flash floods, landslides and dust storms as other problems caused by climate change. The official expressed hope that the two countries can also cooperate on holding training courses on high-tech and satellite technologies.



Iran’s Economic Growth Should Reach Above 5%

TEHRAN (IP) – Former Central Bank governor and one of the presidential election candidates says the country’s economic growth should reach above 5% to get out of the current economic crisis.

As a part of his election campaign, Abdolnasser Hemmati said in a special news talk show on national TV that the country’s average economic growth was less than 2% for 16 years, which was not acceptable for a rich country.

The candidate said the government had engaged in productive investments but should only invest in infrastructure and not enter the private sector.

He noted that fiscal policy should provide economic stability so that production becomes profitable both short-term and long-term.

Hemmati said that if the sanctions were not lifted, the country’s economic growth would be limited, adding that financial development required foreign markets and technology, but sanctions were the obstacle.

Iran Envoy, OPEC Secretary-General Discuss Oil Market

LONDON (IRNA) - Iran’s permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations Kazem Gharibabadi held talks with Secretary General of OPEC Mohammed Barkindo on Monday evening in Austria and discussed oil market and bilateral ties.

In his tweeter account, Gharibabadi wrote, “I had a fruitful consultations today with #OPEC SG #HEBarkindo. We reviewed the latest developments on international oil market and OPEC.”

OPEC and its non-OPEC partners recently decided to gradually increase production. The group predicted in April that demand for oil will increase in the world; therefore, OPEC decided to increase production by 2.1 million barrels per day between May and July.

Senior diplomats have gathered together in Vienna to revive the deal from which the US withdrew in 2018.

The fifth round of the Joint Commission meetings of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was held in Vienna, Austria, where top diplomats of delegations decided to travel back to their capitals in order to hold consultations with their governments.

Iran Crude Revenues Nearly Doubled in Quarter to December

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Latest economic performance data released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) show the country nearly doubled its crude revenues in the quarter to late December.

The figures published on the CBI website on Monday showed that Iran’s crude revenues had reached \$14.614 billion in the third quarter of the calendar year beginning March 2020, up from \$8.558 billion recorded at the end of the previous quarter.

Non-crude export revenues also surged by 69.3% to a total of \$19.597 billion in the quarter to December 20, showed the tables compiled by CBI’s Economic Research and Policies Department.

Iran’s crude revenues began to drop in the second half of 2019 after the United States toughened its sanctions on the country after pulling out of the 2015 international agreement on Tehran’s nuclear activities, known as the JCPOA.

Iran had earned just over \$29 billion from oil exports in the calendar year to March 2020, down from over \$60 billion in the previous year, according to the figures published on Monday.

First Home-Made COVID-19 Medicine Unveiled

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The first Iran-made coronavirus medicine “Saliravira” has been unveiled at the Science and Technology Office of the vice presidency in Tehran.

The Iran-made coronavirus medicine “Saliravira” has been unveiled at the Science and Technology Office of the vice presidency in Tehran in attendance of President of Pardis Technology Park Mahdi Safarinia, the Saliravira producer Reza Ramezani on Monday.

“Saliravira” is a new drug produced in four medicinal forms including tablets, nasal spray, oral spray, and inhaler drops.

This four-dimensional drug consists of nasal and oral sprays to eliminate viruses located in these areas, antiseptic pills and antivirals to eliminate blood viruses, and incense drops to reduce pulmonary complications.

Saliravira nasal spray and oral tablets are two common and reciprocal forms of medicine that are absorbed through the gastrointestinal tract.

Biden, Erdogan to Discuss Their Differences Next Week

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan will meet to discuss Syria, Afghanistan and other regional issues next week and will also look at the “significant differences” between Washington and Ankara, the U.S. national security advisor said on Monday.

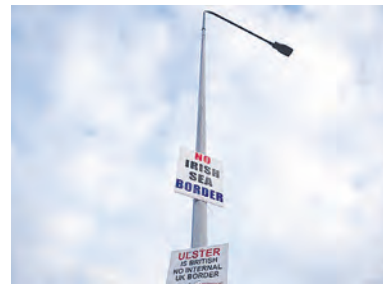
Speaking at a White House briefing, Jake Sullivan said the eastern Mediterranean, Syria, Iran, as well as the role that Turkey will play in Afghanistan as the United States withdraws from the country will be part of the “expansive agenda”.



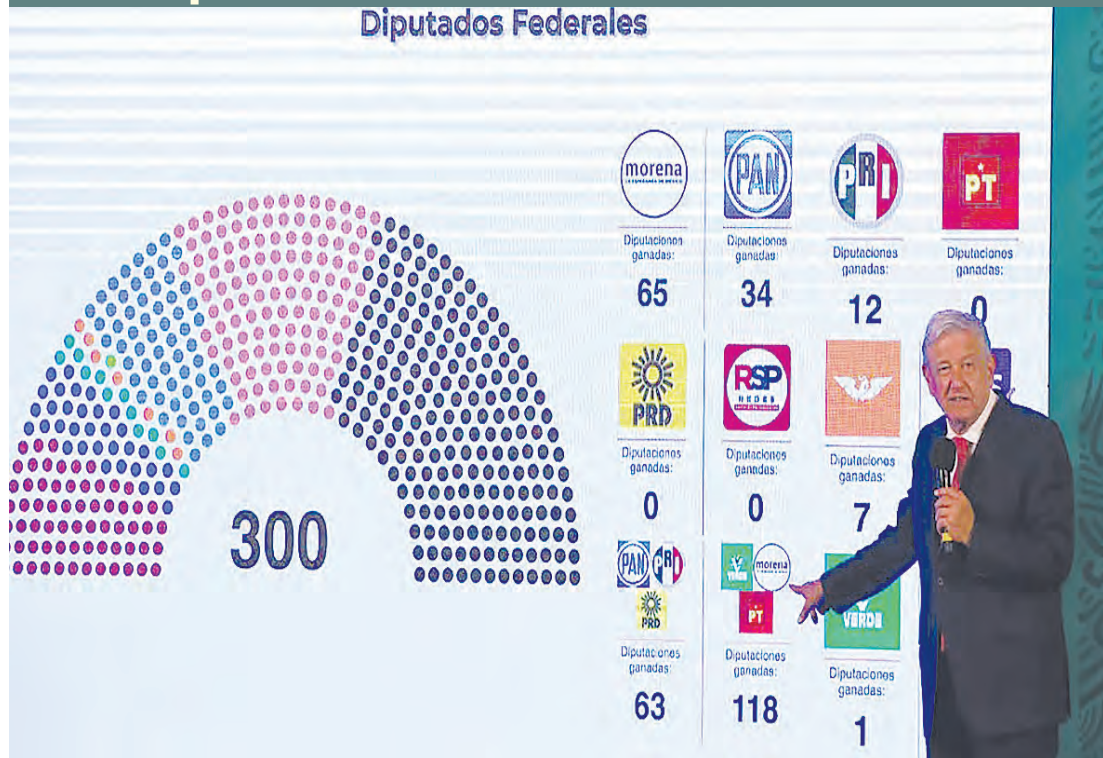
Biden to Warn Johnson Over Northern Ireland

LONDON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden will warn British Prime Minister Boris Johnson not to renege on the Northern Ireland Brexit deal when they meet for the first time at the G7 summit this week, The Times reported on Monday, citing unidentified sources.

Preserving the delicate peace in Northern Ireland without allowing the United Kingdom a back door into the European Union’s markets through the 310-mile (500 km) Irish land border was one of the most difficult issues of the Brexit divorce.



Mexico President Upbeat Despite Election Setback



MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Monday his ruling coalition was on course to retain its control of the lower house, despite a setback in legislative elections he called “free and fair.”

Initial results indicated that Lopez Obrador’s Morena party lost the absolute majority it held in the lower house of Congress, complicating his promised “transformation” of the country.

But he struck an upbeat tone, noting that together with its political partners, Morena was still projected to hold more than half the seats.

“I’m very grateful because as a result of this election, the parties that are sympathetic to the transformation project that is under way will have a majority in the Chamber of Deputies,” he told reporters.

“People voted not only for a party, for a candidate, but for a project, in one sense or another,” he added.

The vote was seen as a referendum on Lopez Obrador’s more than two years in office overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic and cartel-related violence. Dozens of politicians were murdered in the months leading up to the polls for the lower house of Congress, 15 of 32 state governors and thousands of local politicians.

On the eve of the elections, gunmen killed five people helping to organize voting in southern Mexico, while two human heads were left at polling stations in the border city of Tijuana on election day.

A quick initial vote count suggested Lopez Obrador’s Morena party alone was set to take between 190 and 203 of the 500 seats in the lower house, the National Electoral Institute said.

Lopez Obrador was elected in 2018 for a term of six years, vowing to overhaul Mexico’s “neoliberal” economic model, root out corruption and end profligacy by a privileged elite.

But his presidency has been largely dominated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has left more than a quarter of a million people dead in Mexico and devastated the economy.

Up to now the ruling coalition has had a two-thirds supermajority that enabled Lopez Obrador to amend the constitution without negotiating with his opponents.

Without it, he faces a tougher time pushing through his planned reforms, including seeking greater energy independence for Mexico.

“It’s a defeat for Lopez Obrador -- not overwhelming -- but it does weaken him and his project because it requires constitutional reforms,” said political analyst Jose Antonio Crespo.

“It’s an important victory for the opposition because it was able to capitalize on the discontent, although the reality is that people voted against Lopez Obrador, not for his opponents,” he told AFP.

A coalition of three opposition parties was set to increase its number of lower house seats to between 181 and 213, the National Electoral Institute said.

Afghan Troops Suffer Shockingly High Casualties as Violence Mounts

KABUL (Dispatches) - At least 150 Afghan troops have been killed or injured in the last 24 hours in a surge of attacks by Taliban militants as foreign forces withdraw, senior government officials said on Monday.

Fighting is now raging in 26 of the country’s 34 provinces, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Casualties were “shockingly high”, one added.

The government says clashes over territory have increased as the United States pushes on with an operation to withdraw all its remaining troops by Sept. 11.

The Taliban seized Shahrak district of western Ghor province on Monday and forced Afghan troops to retreat to nearby villages after a heavy firefight, local officials said. A powerful car bomb targeting a police headquarters in the Khas Balkh district of Balkh province killed at least four people and wounded 50 more including civilians on Sunday, officials said.



Putin Signs Law Taking Russia out of Open Skies Arms Control Treaty

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law on Monday that formalizes Russia’s exit from the Open Skies arms control treaty, a pact that allows unarmed surveillance flights over member countries.

Russia had hoped that Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden could discuss the treaty when they meet later this month at a summit in Geneva.

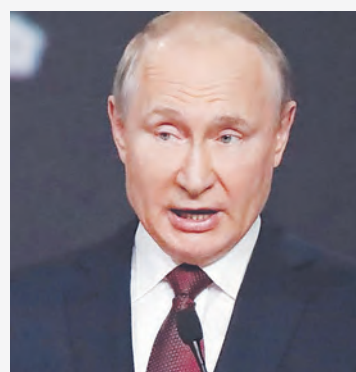
But the Biden administration informed Moscow in May that it would not re-enter the pact after the Trump administration quit it last year.

The Kremlin said on Monday that the U.S. decision to withdraw from the treaty had “significantly upset the balance of interests” among the pact’s members and had compelled Russia to exit.

“This caused serious damage to the treaty’s observance and its significance in building confidence and transparency, (causing) a threat to Russia’s national security,” the Kremlin said in a statement on its website.

Moscow had hoped that Biden would reverse his predecessor’s decision. But the Biden administration did not change tack, accusing Russia of violating the pact, something Moscow denied. In January, Russia announced its own plans to leave the treaty, and the government submitted legislation to parliament last month to formalize its departure.

Russian officials said they regretted the U.S. decision not to rejoin, calling it a “political mistake” and warned the move would not create an atmosphere conducive to arms control discussions at a the Geneva summit later this month.



36 Killed in Pakistani Train Accident

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - A train in Pakistan smashed into derailed carriages of another train on Monday, killing at least 36 people, authorities said, the latest accident to highlight the decrepit state of a railway system that dates to the 19th century.

Several passengers were still trapped in mangled coaches strewn across the tracks in the southern province of Sindh, according to railway officials.

Police officer Umar Tufail said at least 36 people were killed and his men could see four more bodies in the wreckage.

“We have not been able to take them out so far, but an operation is underway for that,” he told reporters at the site. “We have saved three more people; they are injured.”

More than 70 passengers were admitted to various hospitals, another police officer Kamran Fazal told Reuters.

An injured passenger, who had been travelling on the train that derailed, recounted how one calamity led to another.

“We felt as if we had been thrown away,” the man, who had a bandaged head, told a television reporter from hospital, speaking of the initial derailling of his train.

“The second train then hit our train (and) that caused

more damage,” he said, adding most of the passengers were sleeping at the time in the pre-dawn hours.

A Pakistan Railways spokesman said several carriages of the first train spilled across the adjacent track after the derailment in the Ghotki district. Within minutes, the second train, coming from the other direction, smashed into them.

“The driver tried to apply emergency brakes but the locomotive hit the infringing coaches,” Pakistan Railways said in an initial report.

“The track has got issues on several points, the coaches are old, some as old as 40 years,” railway official Tariq Latif told Geo News TV. “I’ve told high-ups several times: ‘Please do something about it,’” he said.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Twitter he was shocked by the “horrific” accident and was ordering a comprehensive investigation into railway safety.

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry blamed the crash on what he said was corruption by previous government, saying the exact cause of the accident was yet to be known, and an inquiry had been opened.

The two trains were carrying a total of 1,388 passengers, he told parliament in a speech telecast live.



Peruvian Leftist Castillo Inches Ahead in Tight Presidential Vote

LIMA (Dispatches) - Peruvian socialist Pedro Castillo overtook right-wing rival Keiko Fujimori in the country’s presidential election vote count on Monday, taking the lead in the official tally on the back of a late surge of rural votes.

The official count from Sunday’s election showed outsider candidate Castillo with 50.1% and Fujimori on 49.9%, with over 94% of the vote counted. The leftist candidate had trailed in early counting, but taken as much as 75% of some newly counted vote updates to steadily haul himself clear.

Castillo, the son of peasant farmers, has pledged to shake up the Andean nation’s constitution and mining laws, spooking copper producers and local markets, which fell sharply in trading on Monday as he gained in the race.

The tightness of the result could also lead to days of uncertainty and tension. The vote underscored a sharp divide between the capital city Lima and the nation’s rural hinterland that has propelled Castillo’s unexpected rise.

Lucia Dammert, a Peruvian academic based in Chile, predicted that the coming days would be volatile, with potential challenges to the votes, requests for recounts and street protests by supporters of the losing side.

“All we want right now is democracy, that everything be democratic. That whoever wins, the other accepts it and doesn’t start any trouble,” said Lili Rocha, a voter in Lima after some scuffles had broken out overnight.

As results trickled in on Sunday evening, 51-year-old Castillo had rallied supporters to “defend the vote” when an exit poll had shown him behind, though he later called for calm.

Fujimori, 46, the daughter of ex-president Alberto Fujimori, who is in prison for human rights abuses and corruption, also appealed for “prudence, calm and peace from both groups.”

Castillo’s Free Peru party said on Twitter that the candidate, who had been in his northern rural home district to vote, would arrive in the capital Lima on Monday morning, to “ensure the will of the people is respected”.





Elahieh Apt (\$1800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Farmanieh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & F.F

Parsian

(\$3000)
Mahmoodieh
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
L.balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh (\$2300)
240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, pkg
marble floor
F.F

(\$10000)
Velenjak bldg
5storey, 20bdrs
S/p, S, J, balcony
brand new, & pkgs

Sa'adat abad Apts
(\$1200) 2bdrs, 140sq.m, S/p
(\$1800) 3bdrs, 200sq.m, S/p

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Google Fined €220m by French Antitrust Regulator

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Google has been slapped with a €220m (£189m, \$268m) fine by France's antitrust regulator after being accused of abusing its power, opening the door for similar disciplinary action for other tech giants.

France's competition authority accused Google on Monday of unfairly sending business to its own

services, and discriminating against its rivals, who suffered as a result.

Google has promised to change its business practices in online advertising in response to the move. The landmark fine was the first of its kind, and is the first time a US tech company has agreed to alter its advertising business, which brings in the bulk of its revenue.



Climate Crisis Could See G7 Economies Lose 8.5% Per Year by 2050

LONDON (Dispatches) - The economies of the G7 nations could lose an average of 8.5% per year by 2050, equivalent to \$4.8tn (£3.4tn), if leaders do not take more ambitious action to tackle climate change, a research group has warned.

According to Oxfam's analysis of research by the Swiss Re Institute, human and economic impact on low-income nations will be much worse. Oxfam warned on Monday that the loss in GDP is double that of the COVID-19 pandemic, which already caused G7 economies to shrink by an average of 4.2%.

The worst affected country in the G7 would be Italy, which stands to lose 11.4%. The US would be hit with a 7.2% loss by 2050, with Japan set to lose 9.1%, Germany 8.3%, France 10%, and Canada 6.9%. The UK economy would lose 6.5% a year by 2050 on current policies and projections, compared with 2.4% if the goals of the Paris climate agreement are met.

Although economies are expected to recover from the short-term effects of the current health crisis, the effects of climate change will be seen every year, the research said.

Oxfam is calling on G7 leaders, who are meeting in the UK later this week, to reduce carbon emissions more quickly and steeply.

Danny Sriskandarajah, Oxfam GB chief executive, called on the UK to "strain every diplomatic sinew" to drive more climate ambition from fellow G7 nations at the upcoming G7 summit.

"The UK government has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to lead the world towards a safer, more liveable planet for all of us," he said.

Swiss Re modelled how climate change is likely to affect economies through gradual, chronic climate risks such as heat stress, impacts on health, sea level rise and agricultural productivity. All of the 48 nations in the study are expected to see an economic contraction, with many countries predicted to be hit far worse than the G7.

The data showed that by 2050, India, which was invited to the G7 summit, is projected to lose 27% from its economy, while Australia, South Africa and South Korea are projected to lose 12.5%, 17.8%, and 9.7% respectively.

The Philippines is projected to lose 35% and Colombia is projected to lose 16.7%.

It follows a recent study by the World Bank that suggested between 32 million and 132 million additional people will be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 as a result of climate change. Oxfam added that G7 governments are also collectively failing to deliver on a pledge to provide \$100bn per year to help poor countries respond to climate change.

Only two G7 countries have said they will increase climate finance from current levels. France decided to maintain its current level of climate finance while Canada, Germany, Japan and Italy have yet to state their intentions, the charity said.

Oxfam estimates their current commitments amount to \$36bn in public climate finance by 2025, with only a quarter (\$8-10 billion) of that for adaptation.

"The economic case for climate action is clear —now we need G7 governments to take dramatic action in the next nine years to cut emissions and increase climate finance," Max Lawson, head of inequality policy at Oxfam, said.

"The economic turmoil projected in wealthy G7 countries is only the tip of the iceberg: many poorer parts of the world will see increasing deaths, hunger and poverty as a result of extreme weather. This year could be a turning point if governments grasp the challenge to create a safer more liveable planet for all."

Oman Is Planning a Second Debt Sale in 2021 With Dollar Sukuk

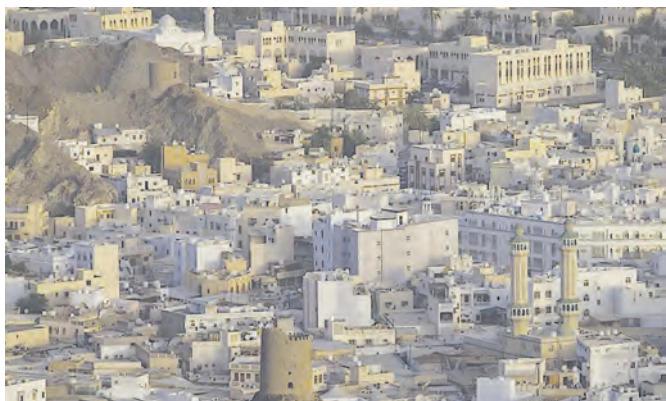
MUSCAT (Dispatches) - Oman picked banks including Citigroup Inc and HSBC Holdings Plc for its second Islamic bond offering this year, taking advantage of demand among investors hungry for higher yields and impressed by the Persian Gulf Arab state's economic overhaul.

Citigroup, Gulf International Bank, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Bank ABC and Bank Muscat will arrange an investor call on Monday, according to a person familiar with the matter.

A year after the sultanate's bonds approached distressed territory and its government discussed the possibility of financial aid from other members of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council, higher oil prices coupled with a slew of cost-cutting measures have helped put it back on track.

Oman successfully tapped the international debt market in January, raising \$3.25 billion. Rated junk by all three major credit assessors, it's making the most of appetite for high-yielding bonds, which are less sensitive to U.S. interest rates. Oman's dollar bonds have gained 4.4% this year to outperform all of its Persian Gulf Arab peers, according to Bloomberg Barclays indexes.

The finance ministry has said that as of end-March it was more than halfway to meeting its total funding needs of 4.2 billion



rials (\$10.9 billion) for this year, thanks to borrowing and drawdowns from the sovereign wealth fund.

The country's public finances, long among the weakest in the Persian Gulf region, remain vulnerable to oil-price swings and disruptions from the global pandemic, however.

Its debt as a percentage of economic output will climb to 82.7% in 2021 from 79.2% last year, according to a bond prospectus seen by Bloomberg. That contradicts estimates by the International Monetary Fund, which projected debt-to-GDP would fall this year to 71.3% from 81.1% last year. The government's total outstanding debt stood at 19.7 billion rials by the end of 2020, up from 17.6 billion rials the previous year, according to document.

Turkish Arms Exports to U.S. Jump 56% as Gun Control Looms

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish defense and aviation exports to the United States have surged by 56% during the January-April period of this year, data by an industry trade body showed Monday.

The domestic demand for weapons and ammunition in the U.S. has increased on the expectations that the new administration led by Joe Biden would limit armaments.

The COVID-19 pandemic, also contributed to the demand as it increases people's security anxieties in a world where unemployment and social and economic problems have been on the rise.

All these developments, however, reflected positively on the sector's foreign sales.

According to the data by the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM), the Turkish defense and aviation industry exported products worth \$949.7 million (TL 8.19 billion) abroad in the first four months of the year, up 47.7% from the year before. The U.S. took the lion's share with imports worth \$386.1 million.

Samsun Yurt Savunma Industry and Trade Inc. (SYS) who alone shoulders some 75% of Turkey's pistol exports with its award-winning Canik pistols, has doubled its U.S. exports in the same period. The company ranks fourth worldwide among the top brands that selling pistols to the U.S.

Utku Aral, SYS general manager, who said that the momentum in the U.S. market begun at the beginning of the pandemic, underlined that the country is the largest export market of their company which makes \$120 million worth of foreign sales to 68 countries around the world.

Japan to Pledge Fiscal Reform in Economic Blueprint

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan will highlight the need for fiscal reform even as it keeps up stimulus to combat the blow to its economy from the coronavirus pandemic, a draft of its economic and fiscal blueprint reviewed by Reuters showed.

The government will also unveil plans to promote green and digital investment by drawing in private demand, as part of efforts to revitalize the world's third largest economy, according to the draft of this year's blueprint.

"The government will seek to promptly return Japan's economy to pre-pandemic levels with a determination to never again push the country back to deflation," the draft showed.

"Japan will strive to improve its fiscal health," along with efforts to revive the economy by taking flexible action "without hesitation," the draft added.

Japan's government faces the tricky balance of trying to prop up growth while reining in a huge public debt that has ballooned to twice the size of its economy even before massive pandemic-relief packages were deployed last year.

"We won't drop our commitment to fiscal reform," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga told parliament on Monday.

"Our immediate priority is to put an end to the pandemic as soon as possible and to speed up vaccine inoculation," Suga said, offering no assurances to growing calls from lawmakers to deploy another huge stimulus package.

The draft blueprint, which serves as a backbone for this year's economic policymaking, will be submitted to its top economic council on Wednesday for deliberation by ministers, academics and business executives.

A final version of the blueprint is likely to be approved by the cabinet on June 18, taking into account the views of ruling coalition lawmakers.

The government has been under political pressure to water down an already stretched fiscal target this year as the cost to combat the pandemic accumulates, casting further doubt on Tokyo's resolve to fix Japan's tattered finances.

With slow vaccine rollouts and a resurgence in infections cooling consumption, some ruling party lawmakers have urged the government to compile another stimulus package or cut tax.

The government and finance ministry officials have pushed back against such calls, arguing that Japan needs to keep its fiscal house in order to maintain market trust in its finances.

In the draft blueprint, the government pledges to "lay the groundwork" for fiscal reform partly through targeted spending, suggesting that any additional expenditure will focus on firms and households hit hardest by the pandemic.

Japan has for years set a timeframe for bringing the primary budget, excluding new bond sales and debt servicing costs, back to a surplus in its annual fiscal blueprint.

Chinese Exports Up 28%, Imports Hit Decade-High

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's exports rose 27.9 percent in May while imports grew at the fastest pace in more than a decade as the global economy powers back from the pandemic crisis, official data showed Monday.

Demand for China's goods has bounced after economically painful lockdowns last year due to the Covid-19 crisis, and as vaccines are rolled out across much of the world.

The figures are also boosted by last year's low base of comparison when the coronavirus was spreading rapidly. Exports from the world's second largest economy posted strong growth but came in lower than expectations of 32.0 percent.

"To be honest, that is a cracking number by anybody's standard and show that global demand remains robust," said OANDA's Jeffrey Halley.

In May, import growth hit its highest rate since January 2011, coming in at 51.1 percent on-year, also slightly below expectations of a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

But still, imports and exports to China's major trade partners including Southeast Asia's ASEAN bloc, the European Union and the United States have risen in the first five months this year, said customs authorities. "It's still a fairly healthy set of numbers," Jonathan Cavenagh, senior market strategist at Informa Global Markets, told Bloomberg TV.

"We know that global demand is still recovering and that trend is likely to continue towards the end of the second quarter and into the third quarter as the major developed economies open up."

The lower-than-expected export figure was likely due to port disruptions due to tighter Covid-19 control measures in late May after the coronavirus was detected among staff.

"I think there was some disruption in May from ports," ING chief economist for Greater China Iris Pang said, referring to recent congestion at southern China's Yantian port.

Pang added that the Suez Canal incident -- when a stranded mega-ship blocked the critical maritime artery for six days in March -- had also affected China's export and import trade.

Electronics shipments have bolstered Chinese exports, rising 31.9 percent on-year in the January to May period, although growth in demand for textiles -- including masks to guard against the virus spread -- have eased, dropping 10.3 percent.

Nomura chief China economist Lu Ting noted that factors behind import growth include rising commodity prices and strong yuan appreciation.

Authorities said Monday that the volume and prices of iron ore, crude oil and soybeans imports have risen.

China's overall trade surplus came in at \$45.53 billion in May, an on-year decrease of 26.5 percent.

World Bank Approves \$500-Million Program to Support the MSMEs in India



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The World Bank said it has approved a \$500 million program to support MSMEs in India to increase liquidity access for viable small businesses impacted by COVID-19.

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a \$500 million program to support the Government of India's nationwide initiative to revitalize the MSME sector, which has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The program targets improvements in the performance of 555,000 MSMEs and is expected to mobilize financing of \$15.5 billion, as part of the government's \$3.4 billion MSME Competitiveness - A Post-COVID Resilience and Recovery Programme (MCRPP).

The MSME sector is the backbone of the India's economy, contributing 30% of India's GDP and 4% of exports. Out of some 58 million MSMEs in India, more than 40 percent lack access to formal sources of finance.

The \$500 million Raising and Accelerating Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Performance (RAMP) Program is the World Bank's second intervention in this sector, the first being the \$750 million MSME Emergency Response Program, approved in July 2020 to address the immediate liquidity and credit needs of millions of viable MSMEs severely impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. To date, 5 million firms have accessed finance from the government program. With the program approved today, the World Bank's financing towards improving the productivity and financial viability of the MSME sector amounts to \$1.25 billion over the past year.

Junaid Ahmad, World Bank Country Director in India said, "The MSME sector, a critical backbone of India's economy, has been hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. The RAMP program will intensify efforts to support firms to return to pre-crisis production and employment levels, while laying the foundations for longer-term productivity-driven growth and generation of much-needed jobs in the MSME sector."

Zarif Meets With UN Envoy on Yemen

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met and held talks with the United Nations Special Envoy on Yemen Martin Griffiths on Tuesday.

Earlier in Tehran, the UN envoy held talks with Iran's Senior Assistant to Foreign Minister for Special Political Affairs Ali-Asghar Khaji on various dimensions of the Yemen crisis and ways to achieve peace there to halt the desperate humanitarian crisis.

Referring to the regrettable and difficult situation imposed on Yemenis through war and economic blockade, Khaji called on the UN and the global community to intervene more in the issue to stop the bloodshed in Yemen and lift the siege.

Further, he expressed Iran's readiness to dispatch humanitarian and medical aids to Yemen to help the country fight against the coronavirus.



Pakistan Successful in Reviving Economy Despite Covid Pandemic

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Leading American business magazine Forbes has lauded the government's efforts to tackle pandemic and to stabilize and grow Pakistan's economy, saying that the government has been successful in reviving its economy through prudent policies which is expected to grow at 4%.

Successful management to tackle the pandemic and the success of IMF program, as evidenced by the 4% GDP growth, is a testament to Pakistan's growth potential and good investment opportunities, the magazine said.

It said when countries like United States and India have had difficulties in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. Pakistan has succeeded in reviving its economy, which is expected to grow at a rate of about 4%, exceeding initial estimates in 2021.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) initially forecast a 3% increase in the GDP, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank forecast an increase of 1.5% and 1.3%, respectively.

According to the report, the services sector, which is projected to grow at a rate of 4.43% in 2020-2021, contributes significantly to the overall growth. This is certainly noteworthy for a country like Pakistan which is succeeding in expanding its services sector. The growth rate of the agricultural sector is estimated at 2.77% while that of the industrial sector is 3.57%.

The situation in India is dire, with an incredible number of 28,441,986 cases of corona and 338,013 deaths.

Due to the increase in awareness on social media in Pakistan, citizens started wearing masks to protect against the novel coronavirus.

Last year, the country witnessed a spike in cases during the Eid festival, but this time the government partially imposed a lockdown, taking steps such as shutting down unnecessary businesses and banning domestic tourism, which helped to contain the spread of infection.

However, the sanctions caused difficulties for the working class. The government hopes that by the end of 2021, last week, on May 26 and 27, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) had witnessed the highest ever buying and selling of 1.56 billion shares and 2.21 billion shares, respectively.

Pakistani investors and traders are optimistic and enthusiastic about the public budget and proposals for further growth.

According to SBP Governor Reza Baqir, flexible monetary and monetary policy has led to unprecedented growth in Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP). The SBP hastily reduced the policy rate by 625 basis points to 7%. An aid package equal to 5% of GDP was provided.

The SBP governor said the government also controlled the coronavirus situation as the rate of new coronavirus cases is 12 out of 1 million people in Pakistan while the



rate is 62 cases per 1 million people in the rest of the world.

In the IMF's global economic outlook, the ratio of government debt to GDP in 2020 did not change significantly compared to the previous year. Bloomberg also reported the same, while the rate of debt of emerging economies has also increased in terms of GDP by 10%.

Raza Baqir said that due to the prudent fiscal and monetary policies of the government, the debt rate in terms of GDP has not increased.

According to the report, inflation is expected to remain between 7% and 9% in Pakistan.

According to SBP Governor Raza Baqir, the recent rise in inflation was mainly due to energy and food items and one-time supply is a major factor, but authorities concerned are ready to respond to the pressure of possible demand in a timely manner.

The report said that the IMF provided Pakistan with an expanded fund of \$6 billion. According to Baqir, Pakistan is moving towards stability and growth. The government has managed to turn a \$19 billion current account deficit into a \$900 million surplus. Foreign exchange reserves increased from \$2.7 billion to \$16 billion. The report said that the successful management of the pandemic and the success of the IMF program, as evidenced by the 4% GDP growth, have helped Pakistan to grow and offer good investment opportunities.

U.S. Has Left OPEC in Control of Global Crude Prices



LONDON (Bloomberg) --OPEC+ appears in control of crude prices as U.S. production is lagging pre-pandemic levels, according to a senior executive at the world's biggest independent oil trader, Vitol Group.

The decline in U.S. drilling and output leaves little competition to efforts by the producers' group to manage markets, Mike Muller, Vitol's head of Asia, said during an online conference on Sunday. Brent crude closed above \$70 a barrel last week for the first time in two years, as buyers demand more oil than producers are pumping.

U.S. oil producers are still employing only half the rigs they used before the coronavirus struck. Meanwhile OPEC+, as the group led by Saudi Arabia and Russia is known, is easing barrels back on to the market as demand recovers.

"There's a perception in the market that control is with OPEC+," Muller said at the event hosted by the consultancy Gulf Intelligence. "It will take a long time for U.S. oil to come back" to production levels seen before the coronavirus outbreak, he said.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and partners agreed last week to continue easing production restraints in July but left markets guessing about what it will do for the rest of the year. After cutting production by some 10 million barrels a day, or a tenth of daily global demand, the group still has about 6 million barrels a day of idle capacity.

China's economy will continue to grow, helping bolster oil demand and bringing down crude stockpiles, Muller said. Economic expansion and regulatory changes there will likely cause domestic refineries to process more crude, he said. "It doesn't pay to hold inventory at all," Muller said. "De-stocking must continue from a purely commercial perspective."

More Iranian crude oil is likely to hit markets this year after an expected deal to limit the country's nuclear program in return for the U.S. easing sanctions. Iran is limited in how quickly it can bring oil back to the market since a lot of its stored barrels are condensate, a light and sulfurous liquid which may be harder to sell, he said.

Given delays in negotiations last week, Muller said it's less likely more Iranian barrels will hit the market before the fourth quarter.

Science Must Produce Vision in Society; Not Merely Solution to Adversities

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - During the 5th Science Promotion Meeting held on Monday, prominent figures in the sphere of science communication delivered speech on the Reflection of Science News in Mass Media.

The meeting was held by the Mustafa (PBUH) Science and Technology Foundation gathered the experts in science communication from India and Iran.

The moderator initiated the discussion by pointing to the existing gap between science and media and how this gap has been formed. Mohammad Khodadadi, the press deputy of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, as the first speaker said "media is the factory of data production."

"The media and science are rapidly progressing and affecting each other," he continued. Nowadays we are confronted with an unlimited amount of data, he added.

Referring to this phenomenon as "an eruption of data" around the world, Khodadadi stated that this has made some forms of crisis like the flow the fake news in the society.

"Science belongs to all spheres of a society," he asserted. Zahra Ojagh, head of the Media Studies Department at Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, talking about the gap between science and media pointed out that "this gap is prevalent all around the world, not just in developing countries."

She talked about the approach of media towards science, stating that science is often regarded and appreciated as "a solution to problems," not as a means towards a new worldview. The social role of science must come to the fore more than before, Ojagh continued.

There are different reasons behind the existing gap between science and media, she said, adding that when the audience of science become producers of scientific content, pseudoscience happens and exacerbates the situation.



"Science cannot be treated merely as a fantasy; it should be implemented in the minds of every one of us," she highlighted.

She also hinted at the different approaches in different countries towards science, stating that "the perception of policymakers from science" is the chief cause of such different approaches.

Gauhar Raza, member of the National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources of India, commenced his speech by saying that the gap between science and the society was extremely wide in the 16th and 17th centuries.

From the 17th century onward, people started to think about the world and science more seriously, he continued, adding, We need more people having an expertise in translating the language of scientists for common people."

Emphasizing that there is a problem with media when it comes to communicating science to people, he said science must compete with other realms like politics, sports, culture, and movies. "Science is often defeated in this competition," he noted. Statistics and facts do not appeal to common people, he continued, adding that "it is only amid facing natural disasters that the society gets inclined to read science news."

Without having "a comprehensive perspective towards the whole system," we cannot effectively transfer science to the society, he maintained.

Science communication in most countries is not done effectively, he said, noting that many newspapers still do not have a scientific section. Pointing to scientific and nonscientific data, he said "the less tendency people show towards receiving and reading science news, the harder it is to transfer science to the society." When it comes to science news, we should figure out the needs of people; that to what extent they need to receive science news, so that we can mainly target those needs, not more.

Next President...

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He also dismissed stated concerns on whether a change of administration in Iran affects the commitments Iran makes in the talks. He said everyone can rest assured that the Islamic Republic will not go back on its commitments as long as all signatories to the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, stick to their obligations under the accord.

"Adherence to commitments and respect for international law is an established principle of Iran's foreign policy, which will not change with a change in government," Rabiei said.

Rabiei said the decision to engage with the deal's other participants, including the U.S., was made by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and had backing from the highest levels of Iran's ruling establishment. That won't be affected by Rouhani's departure, Rabiei said. "Other parties to the nuclear deal can rest assured that Iran will not break its obligations as long as they abide by their commitments," he told reporters. "We're focused on finalizing talks in the remaining time. Right now, we're not interested in speculating about different possibilities in advance."

The spokesman also talked about the remaining FATF bills, which Iran should ratify before it is removed from the regulatory body's blacklist. He said these bills are an independent issue and are not related to the nuclear talks in Vienna. Rabiei stressed that the Expediency Council has the final say on the issue. But he expressed hopes that revival of the nuclear deal would increase the ratification chances of the Palermo and CFT bills.

No More...

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Grossi confirmed that there have been meetings, and that the Iranian side "has reiterated its will to engage and to cooperate and to provide answers."

"But so far they haven't done that," Grossi claimed, hoping that this might change, adding, "But as we speak, we haven't had any concrete progress on any of the issues."

This Argentinian gentleman seems playing in on the Western court against Iran or any other country that it resists against the world arrogance's demands. The IAEA expects Iran to fully observe its JCPOA commitments but it remains indifferent against the Western countries' commitments regarding the deal.

The IAEA and the West should realize this fact that this time Iran does not intend to retreat from its rightful nuclear programs as enough is enough for the country for observing its JCPOA commitments unilaterally.

Although the nuclear talks continue and different remarks are made about the outcome of the Vienna talks, so far no deal has been stricken and the West likely intends to prolong the talks in order to keep Iran's economy in limbo.

On Monday, the United States, which has for two months been holding indirect talks with Iran on the future of the tattered nuclear deal, said it was not even sure if Tehran really wanted to come back into compliance.

"We've been engaged in indirect conversations, as you know, for the last couple of months, and it remains unclear whether Iran is willing and prepared to do what it needs to do to come back into compliance," Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "We're still testing that proposition," Blinken said.

Blinken remarks came while Iran has repeatedly said that it is ready to return to its JCPOA obligations if all sanctions are removed. When it is said all sanctions it means all sanctions and not partial ones.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has said there is no problem with the talks but they should not be prolonged as he has set the red lines and the negotiation team is obliged to follow it this time and they should not retreat even an inch from Iran's rightful demands.

Blinken's remarks show that the U.S. despite the remarks of its officials is not so serious in removing all sanctions and it wants to make Iran tired for giving concessions by dragging the talks.

But they should consider this point that there will be no concessions even if the talks prolong for months and Iranian negotiation team should be fully on alert in order not to be deceived by the U.S. And the IAEA is better to stop such anti-Iran claims because Iran has done more than its obligations to the IAEA and the JCPOA.

Tehran Warns IAEA...

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"This can develop into an obstacle in the way of future interaction between the two sides," the envoy noted.

Grossi had on Monday claimed that the watchdog's ability to continue to verify the "peaceful nature" of Iran's nuclear energy program could be affected seriously as a result of, what he called, "lack of progress" in clarification of the agency's "questions" about the country's nuclear work.

He also alleged that Iran had not lived up to its pledges of cooperating with the watchdog.

The agency has faced the Islamic Republic with questions concerning alleged presence of nuclear material in four "undeclared locations."

This is not the first time that the agency comes up with such questions under Grossi.

The last time, the IAEA questioned Iran's nuclear activities based on alleged data provided to it by the Israeli spy agency Mossad, demanding access to two sites in the country. Iran provided the access, while protesting strongly that reliance on a foreign spy service for information was strictly forbidden in the IAEA's Charter.

As a show of goodwill, Iran has even allowed the IAEA's cameras to continue recording developments at some nuclear sites. It has, however, conditioned provision of the devices' data to the agency on removal of the United States' sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The devices keep registering Iran's nuclear work, while neither the U.S. has lifted the bans, nor has the Islamic Republic's cooperative attitude has received any credit in a recent report by Grossi.

Gharibabadi regretted that the IAEA report did not reconcile with the history of Iran and IAEA's cooperation. "The report is neither reliable because it is based on unreliable sources, nor is it convincing since it does not reflect the full aspect of the cooperation and the achievements that have been made," he said. "Constructive cooperation requires a positive environment as well as avoidance of prejudgment and expression of bogus concerns," the envoy said.

The agency has to avoid all sorts of political agendas, he also urged, and demanded that the body instead take the Israeli regime to task for its harboring the Middle East's only military nuclear program and evading subscription to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

S. Korea Ex-Football Star Dies From Cancer

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Former South Korean footballer Yoo Sang-chul, who starred in the country's run to the World Cup semi-finals in 2002, has died after a battle with pancreatic cancer, the Korea Football Association said Monday. He was 49. The midfielder was a mainstay of the South Korean team when they took the world by surprise under Guus Hiddink at the 2002 World Cup, which the country co-hosted with Japan. Yoo scored against Poland to kick off the group stage with a victory, the team going on to defeat Italy and Spain.

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World Athletics Approves 35 More Russians to Compete as Neutrals

LONDON (Dispatches) - World Athletics on Monday declared 35 Russian track and field athletes eligible to compete under a neutral flag ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, taking the total count to 62.

Russia's athletics federation (RusAF) has been suspended since 2015 after a report commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) found evidence of mass doping among track and field athletes.

Nadal Into 15th French Open Quarters

PARIS (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal reached the French Open quarter-finals for the 15th time with a straight sets win over Italy's Jannik Sinner to stay on course for a 14th Roland Garros title and record-setting 21st Grand Slam.

Third seed Nadal downed 19-year-old Sinner 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 and goes on to face 10th-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina who he defeated in the semi-finals last year.

Nadal has now won 104 matches at Roland Garros against just two defeats since his 2005 debut while Monday's victory extended his run of consecutive sets won in Paris to 35.

The 35-year-old Spanish world number three is seeded to face Novak Djokovic in the semi-finals.

World number one Djokovic defeated Sinner's compatriot Lorenzo Musetti who had to retire in the fifth set having stunned the Serb by taking the first two.

"I started well but was a little too defensive. I gave him the chance to come inside the court and play his best shots. That was a mistake," said Nadal.

"I broke back at 5-4 in the first set and the match changed after that. I played at a great level."

Nadal had beaten Sinner in the quarter-finals in Paris in 2020 as well as at this year's Italian Open.

Sinner, the 18th seed, led 5-3 in the first set but that was as good as it got as Nadal raced away with 16 of the last 19 games.

He hit 31 winners with the Italian claiming just 10 points in the third set.

Meanwhile Novak Djokovic survived a major scare from teenager Lorenzo Musetti to reach a 15th French Open quarter-final and stay on course to become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Grand Slams twice.

The world number one dropped the first two sets, then comfortably levelled before the 19-year-old Italian retired in the final set.

Djokovic's 6-7 (7/9), 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 6-0, 4-0 win set up a last-eight clash with Matteo Berrettini, another Italian, who progressed after Roger Federer's withdrawal.

Djokovic, the 2016 champion and chasing a 19th major, was facing his earliest exit in Paris since 2009 when 19-year-old Musetti stormed through the first two sets, hitting blistering winners and finding the acutest of angles.

But the 76th-ranked Italian, making his Grand Slam debut, then went dramatically off the boil.

Can, Hummels Rate Germany Only as Euro 2020 Outsiders

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Emre Can and Mats Hummels only both rate Germany as outsiders for the Euro 2020 title, but have urged the 'Mannschaft' to prove their 2018 World Cup debacle is behind them.

Germany won the last of their three European Championship titles back in 1996 and are struggling for form heading into the Euro 2020 finals, which starts Thursday.

The Germans have a tough draw in Group F, hosting world champions France in their opening game on June 15, then playing holders Portugal four days later, also in Munich.

"We have to be honest with ourselves: We are not top favourites for the title," Dortmund midfielder Emre Can told Sport1.

Germany were held to a 1-1 draw in a friendly by Denmark last Wednesday and face minnows Latvia in their final warm-up Monday.

The Germans have dropped to 12th in the world rankings as they have struggled to pick themselves up after crashing out of the 2018 World Cup in the group stages.

The reputation of head coach Joachim Loew, who led Germany to the 2014 World Cup title, was further tarnished by a crushing 6-0 defeat to Spain last November and a shock home loss to minnows North Macedonia in March.

"We definitely have to improve," Can's Borussia Dortmund team-mate Mats Hummels, back in the Germany squad after a two-year exile, told Monday's edition of Kicker.

"We, as a team and me personally, have to get better to be successful at the European Championship."

However, ex-Liverpool star Can sees the Euro as a chance for Germany to prove themselves after their disastrous 2018 World Cup campaign.

"We want to show the whole world that our early exit from the World Cup was just a slip-up," Can stressed.



Where the first two sets had taken 75 and 66 minutes, Djokovic swept the third in 24 minutes and the fourth in just 17.

Musetti won only 14 points in the third and fourth sets before leaving the court for a medical time-out.

Djokovic broke for 1-0 in the decider, injuring a finger as he smashed a winner while losing his balance and falling into the clay.

Meanwhile in women's event, Greece's Maria Sakkari demolished last year's French Open runner-up Sofia Kenin 6-1, 6-3 to reach the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

The world number 18 needed just 68 minutes to defeat the fourth-seeded American and set up a clash with reigning champion Iga Swiatek or Ukrainian teenager Marta Kostyuk for a place in the last four.

Sakkari broke Kenin six times as the 2020 Australian Open winner committed 32 unforced errors and served nine double faults.

"I'm speechless. I love Paris. I'm having a great time and I don't want to leave anytime soon," said Sakkari, who reached the last 16 in Melbourne and New York last year.

"I'm actually enjoying myself, that's the most important thing. I'm not actually torturing myself when I'm on court."

The win over Kenin was Sakkari's third win over a top-five player this season. It also left eighth seed Swiatek as the highest-ranked player left in the women's draw.

"The match before yesterday gave me a lot of confidence," said Sakkari, who beat 14th seed Elise Mertens in three sets in the previous round.

"I played really good tennis and so today I was really ready for a battle."



Osaka Pulls out of Berlin Event

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Naomi Osaka has pulled out of next week's Berlin WTA grasscourt tournament in the wake of her controversial exit from the French Open, organizers confirmed Monday.

"We have received notification that Naomi Osaka cannot start in Berlin. After consulting her management, she will take a break," said a spokesman for the Berlin tournament, which starts June 14.

Osaka has not said when she plans to play next, casting doubt on her participation at Wimbledon, which starts on June 28, and the Tokyo Olympics.

The 23-year-old four-time Grand Slam winner has been in the spotlight since withdrawing from Roland Garros after a dispute over her refusal to attend press conferences.

As a result, French tennis officials fined Osaka \$15,000 and threatened to axe her from the tournament for not honoring mandatory media commitments, prompting the Japanese star to withdraw. On Saturday, Osaka, who revealed her ongoing battle with depression and anxiety which she said having to face the media exacerbated, thanked her supporters in a brief message on Instagram.

Murray Backs Federer's Sensible Decision to Pull Out of French Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former world number one Andy Murray said 20-time Grand Slam champion Roger Federer made a "sensible decision" to withdraw from the French Open to protect his body after two knee operations and opt to focus his efforts on Wimbledon.

Federer, 39, decided to end his Roland Garros campaign on Sunday, a day after winning a gruelling third-round match against Dominik Koepfer.

Eight-time Wimbledon winner Federer, who has hardly played in the last 17 months because of a knee injury, had been due to face Italian ninth seed Matteo Berrettini in the French Open on Monday.

Replying to a tweet from a user who said Federer was "disrespectful" to other players for "using" the French Open to gain fitness, Murray said: "In basketball, football etc when returning from injury players are given reduced minutes to build up their fitness."

"In tennis you don't have that luxury of just playing a set in first match then 2 sets the next etc and building up that way."

"I'd argue that it's quite risky to play multiple 4hr matches in a row in your 2nd tournaments back in 18 months so to me it makes sense to be reactive based on how your body feels, length of matches etc (sic)."

Federer's decision sparked mixed reactions, with seven-time French Open winner Chris Evert saying the Swiss had earned the right to do so, while former U.S. Davis Cup captain Patrick McEnroe said he understood Federer's reasoning, but it was not a good look.



De Bruyne Crowned PFA Player of the Year

LONDON Kevin De Bruyne became just the third player to win the English Professional Footballers' Association's (PFA) player of the year for a second consecutive season.

The Belgium midfielder follows in the footsteps of Thierry Henry and Cristiano Ronaldo as the only other players to win the award in back-to-back years.

De Bruyne was vital to City's third Premier League title in four years and a fourth consecutive League Cup triumph.

The 29-year-old also guided City to the club's first ever Champions League final, where his presence was badly missed during the latter stages of a 1-0 defeat to Chelsea last weekend as he was forced off early in the second-half with two fractures to his face.

"You want to win all the trophies with the team and then obviously if you win a trophy like this, this is probably the most important one as an individual trophy in the league," said De Bruyne.

"To be voted by your competitors who you compete with every game, that says a lot. They are the people, in my view, who know the most about the game and they are trying to get to the best level. "When you have these things, you can show your kids and say, 'Look, this is what daddy did when he was younger'."

De Bruyne scored 10 goals and provided 18 assists in 40 appearances across all competitions for City this season. He pipped club teammates Phil Foden, Ilkay Gundogan and Ruben Dias, who were named on a six-man shortlist alongside Tottenham's Harry Kane and Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes.

Dias was crowned the Football Writers' Association player of the year last month.

Foden capped a superb campaign by being named PFA men's young player of the year.

