

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 81,911 With 115 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

As Announced by a Provincial Official, the Issuance of Industrial Unit Establishment Permits Has Risen 47 Percent in Semnan Province During the Current Iranian Calendar Year (Started on March 21)

VOL. XXVII, No. 7244 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY JUNE 13, 2021 - KHORDAD 23, 1400

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Iran Restores UN Voting Rights After Paying Dues

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has regained its voting rights in the 193-member United Nations General Assembly after paying off some \$16.2 million in arrears it owed to the UN operating body.

"After more than 6 months of working on it, the UN today announced it has received the funds," Iranian Ambassador to the UN Majid Takht Ravanchi said in a post on his Twitter account on Friday.

He emphasized that "illegal U.S. sanctions" have led to the delay in settling the debts, saying they had "not just deprived our people of medicine; they have also prevented Iran from paying our dues in arrears to the UN."

Illegal U.S. sanctions have not just deprived our people of medicine; they have also prevented Iran from paying our dues in arrears to the UN.

"ALL inhumane sanctions must be lifted NOW," the Iranian diplomat added.

Takht Ravanchi's tweet came after President of the UN General Assembly Volkan Bozkir said in a meeting on Friday that Iran has made a partial payment toward the United Nations budget that allowed the country to restore its voting rights.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter," Bozkir said.

Iran is now able to vote in the General Assembly on Friday to elect five new non-permanent members of the UN Security Council for 2022-2023.

Tehran, Doha Discuss Cooperation in Communications and IT Fields

DOHA (Dispatches) - President of the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) H E Mohammed Ali Al Mannai met yesterday with a delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran, headed by Minister of Information and Communications Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran H E Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi.

The meeting included discussions of several topics of common interest in the fields of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and post, in addition to ways of framing the future cooperation.

CRA delivered a presentation about the ICT and postal sectors in the State of Qatar, and from their side, the Iranian delegation presented the experience of the ICT sector in the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the sector's role in mitigating the damage of the pandemic, especially in the education and health sectors.

H.E. the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the State of Qatar Hamid Reza Dehghani and officials from CRA attended the meeting

U.S. Policy Change Towards JCPOA "Only in Words"



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's UN ambassador has rejected a U.S. claim of policy change towards the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal, saying Washington is still pushing ahead with the so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, Majid Takht-Ravanchi complained that the U.S. economic terrorism against the Iranian nation has hampered the import of medicines to the country.

"The current U.S. administration's claim of policy change towards the JCPOA is just in words. In practice, the U.S. policy of maximum pressure still continues, preventing Iran from using its own financial resources abroad to import medicines," he said, referring to the nuclear deal by the acronym of its official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"Although the ongoing talks in Vienna are the first step in assessing the accuracy of the true political will of the US to return to the JCPOA, the main and real test will be after verification, when it is proven that America has changed course, abandoned its failed policy of maximum pressure, and stopped its economic terrorism against Iran."

The Islamic Republic refused to bow down to the pressure and adopted instead a "maximum resistance" policy, which includes economic measures to weather the bans as well as reducing Tehran's compliance with the JCPOA.

The new U.S. administration, under President Joe Biden, says it wants to undo Trump's wrongs and rejoin the deal, but it is showing an overriding propensity for maintaining some of the sanctions as a tool of pressure.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Takht-Ravanchi said, "The UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted a deadly silence in the early days of 2020, when the United States martyred regional counter-terrorism heroes, including General Soleimani, in a terrorist act at the direct order of its president. A few days later, the US president threatened to hit 52 sites, including Iran's important cultural sites."

"Of course, in the same year, when the United States presented a draft resolution to impose an arms embargo on Iran, 13 UNSC members categorically rejected it. Subsequently, when that country tried to trigger the snapback mechanism against Iran, the same 13 UNSC members dismissed the US move. They said that the US had lost any right to use the snapback mechanism by its withdrawal from the JCPOA and that the US illegitimate claim had no legal, political or practical effect," he added.

S. Korea Could Shun Some Mexican, Russian Crudes If Iran Returns to Market

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea will likely alter its crude oil procurement and trading strategy when Iranian barrels return to the international market, with Mexican and Russian suppliers poised to lose a big portion of their market share in the world's fifth largest crude importer.

Major South Korean refiners are keen and ready to buy Iranian crude oil if the sanctions on Tehran are lifted, as medium and heavy sour grades from the Persian Gulf producer are relatively economical. S Korea's overall refinery systems also are better designed to process Iranian feedstocks, refinery officials based in Seoul told S&P Global Platts.

South Korea completely halted imports of Iranian crude and condensate since May 2019, and refiners including SK Energy and Hyundai Oilbank were since then raising purchases of Mexico's Maya crude and Russia's Urals Blend as alternative feedstocks to Iranian Heavy and Forozan crudes, feedstock management sources at the refiners with direct knowledge of the matter told Platts.

Accordingly, Mexico and Russia are prone to surrendering the big gains in the South Korean market share the producers had enjoyed during Iran's absence, a senior Seoul-based market analyst at Korea Petroleum Association said.

Crude imports from Mexico and Russia in the first four months of this year made up 6.4% and 6.7% of South Korea's overall refinery feedstock import basket, respectively, according to Platts calculation based on data from state-run Korea National Oil Corp., or KNOOC.

In comparison, the South Korean market share for Mexico and Russia was only 2.8% and 3.5%, respectively, in 2017, when Iranian cargoes were freely traded on the international market. S Korea imported more than 13% of its crude oil requirements from Iran for that year.

"Maya and Urals would probably be the primary scapegoat once Iranian crude becomes available. It's like football ... when a star player returns after recovering from an injury, a substitute player must come off," said a feedstock manager at a major South Korean refiner, who declined to be identified due to the sensitive nature of producer-end user business relationship.

The country's refineries were all primarily designed and configured to process Middle Eastern sour crude, hence it is a lot more effective in technical terms to feed the systems with Iranian oil rather than crude from the Americas and Europe, industry officials and the refinery sources said.

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Tehran Denounces U.S. Crocodile Tears For Iranians

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says the U.S. is shedding "crocodile tears" over the death of a prisoner in Iran while maintaining its murderous sanctions on the 82-million nation.

Araqchi made the remarks in a tweet on Saturday, one day after U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley claimed he was "saddened" by the death of prisoner Sasan Niknafs.

"Trump is gone, but his unlawful & murderous sanctions are still there. No need for crocodile tears when US efforts to immiserate 82 million Iranians are ongoing," Araqchi wrote, referring to former US president Donald Trump who abandoned the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and reimposed the sanctions that the landmark deal had lifted against the Islamic Republic.

Trump also placed additional sanctions on Iran under other pretexts not related to the nuclear case as part of the "maximum pressure" campaign.

The unilateral restrictive measures have hampered Iran's fight against the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

"Economic terrorism amid a PANDEMIC, is a crime against humanity," the Iranian deputy foreign minister added.

In a statement, the Tehran Province General Directorate of Prisons said Niknafs had been sentenced to five years imprisonment by Tehran Public Prosecutor's Office.

U.S. Needs First to Lift Iran Sanctions to Return to JCPOA

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi says the United States should first lift all the sanctions it has imposed on Iran in order to return to the 2015 nuclear deal as negotiations continue in the Austrian capital to revive the agreement, which was abandoned by the U.S. three years after its conclusion.

"To return to the deal, lifting sanctions on Iran first is the natural thing to do," Wang said in an address to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on Friday, referring to the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed between Iran and major world powers.

He stressed the need to resolve non-proliferation issues through negotiations and lambasted the US unilateral bullying acts which are the "root cause" of issues pertaining to the Iranian nuclear issue.

"As the negotiations for the United States and Iran to resume compliance with the agreement are now in the final sprint, parties concerned need to make a political decision as quickly as possible and redouble diplomatic efforts to bring the JCPOA back on track," the top Chinese diplomat, whose country is a party to the deal, stated.

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Putin Denies Giving Advanced Satellite System to Iran

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin on Friday denied a U.S. media report that Russia is set to deliver an advanced satellite system to Iran that will vastly improve its spying capabilities.

The Washington Post reported Thursday that Moscow is preparing to give Iran a Kanopus-V satellite with a high-resolution camera, allowing Islamic republic to monitor facilities of its adversaries across the Middle East.

Putin, who is expected to hear a range of complaints from U.S. President Joe Biden when they meet Wednesday in Geneva, dismissed the report as "garbage."

"We have cooperation plans with Iran, including the military and technical cooperation," he told NBC News in an interview ahead of the summit.

"It's just fake news. At the very least, I don't know anything about this kind of thing, those who are speaking about it probably will maybe know more about it. It's just nonsense, garbage."

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Iran Eyes New Chapter in Ties With the Philippines

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – President Hassan Rouhani congratulated the Philippines on its Independence Day, hoping for a new chapter in the bilateral relations between Tehran and Manila with the promotion of regional and international cooperation.

In a letter to his Filipino counterpart Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday, President Rouhani congratulated the Philippines on the anniversary of gaining independence from Spain.

Highlighting the historical background of relations between Iran and the Philippines and their potential capacities, Rouhani expressed hope that two Asian nations would enhance the bilateral, regional and international cooperation and mark a new chapter in the bilateral ties.

Coronavirus Fourth Wave Ending

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani has said during the 16 months of facing with coronavirus, Iran went through three long waves, and the fourth wave is passing.

At the meeting of the National Task Force for Combatting Coronavirus, Hassan Rouhani congratulated the auspicious birth anniversary of Hazrat Masoumeh (SA) and National Girl's Day.

He stated that Iran did not have the necessary equipment and facilities at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but today it is self-sufficient and may be able to export diagnostic kits and perform 150,000 diagnostic procedures per day.

"The institutions worked hard and did a great job, and we have no shortage today," he added.

He pointed out that enough masks had been produced in a short time, and the price was balanced, noting that there was no problem in the country with detergents and the like, and everything was in abundance.

Compared to countries where stores had problems in the first weeks of the pandemic and took perhaps a month and a half to normalize the situation, Iran did not have unusual conditions even for a day, Rouhani said.

He said the situation was the same in medical equipment. For example, when there



was a need for N95 masks, ventilators, and the likes, all were produced in the country; all urgent COVID needs were quickly met in the hospitals.

"Today, the deputy health minister reported that 50% of Iranian hospitals that were not equipped with ventilators, now all were provided, and today all hospitals have it; also, about 250 CT scans were provided to the hospitals," he underlined.

President, referring to some measures taken to curb COVID-19, claimed that conditions in 50 countries, including the United States, Switzerland and Germany, were "tougher" than Iran's.

He also called his administration's actions "unparalleled" throughout Iran's entire history since the Achaemenids.

Rouhani also added that Iran has been one of the "most regular countries" since the beginning of the pandemic crisis in the world in announcing the number of people infected with coronavirus. He described "transparent" information about the arrival of COVID-19 in the country and the daily statistics of the virus as one of the "greatest" honors of the government and the Ministry of Health.

Iran to Enter World Energy Markets With New Look by Exploiting Jask Project



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Governor General of Hormuzgan Province believes the outlook of implementing oil industry projects on the Makran coasts has led to \$16b of investment in the province and said exploitation of the Jask oil terminal will affect the national economy and lead to creating job opportunities and Iran will enter the world energy markets with new look and will play key role.

On the sidelines of visiting the Jask oil terminal project, Ferydoon Hemmati hailed the jihadi efforts of the executive factors of this project in the toughest climate condition and said that the country faces a mega project from raising the idea of its launch till the design of the project in order that Jask oil terminal on the Makran coasts meet its certain targets.

He said that at first it was supposed that most of equipment and required parts of the projects would be provided by foreigners but due to the blessing capabilities of Iranian experts, the project was carried out by the domestic forces and through indigenizing the required equipment, it is expected in the shortest time, we would witness the exploitation of the first phase of the Jask oil terminal and oil exports from Kouh-e Mobarak region.

According to Hemmati, with implementation of this strategic project, the country would be both self-sufficient in providing the required equipment and acquiring the required knowledge and technology which is priceless.

The governor general termed Jask-Goureh project and construction of the oil exports on the Makran coasts as one of the vivid examples of the resistance economy. He noted that the outlook of the implementation of oil industry projects has led to \$16b investment in the province and urged the media to reflect such major achievements of the country.

Iranian Knowledge-Based Companies Operate on Int'l Scale



TEHRAN (IP) – Four technological water projects have been unveiled with the attendance of the Vice President for Science and Technology, in Tehran on Saturday. Sorena Sattari says Vice Presidency Office aim is to develop knowledge-based companies to operate on an international scale in various fields.

The projects include "Development of technical knowledge and indigenization of silicon carbide ceramic membrane", "Indigenization of cameras with specific temperature ranges in 8-14 and 200,000 °", "Development of technical knowledge and indigenization of brackets and cages for fish farming in the sea" and "Potable water supply to Aliabad, Arabi and Haj Noshad districts in Bushehr province using reverse electro dialysis (EDR) desalination device" which has been developed with the support of the Vice President Office for Science and Technology.

To produce standard drinking water from saline water (surface and groundwater), reverse electro dialysis water desalination systems are used in the world.

In this method, electricity is used to direct the ions in the water to remove them from the main water flow.

The recovery rate of at least 90 to 95%, no use of complementary chemicals during the desalination process, and also very low energy consumption are the advantages of reverse electro dialysis.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Vice President for Science and Technology stated that one of the important areas of activity for Science and Technology is water.

Due to the special ecosystem and geographical conditions of the country in the world, Iran has a high capacity for water, which unfortunately has not been neglected, Sattari said.

Sattari noted that to desalinate water various approaches are implemented according to the local conditions of the country one of which is the Nano system, which is unparalleled and unique in the world and its costs are very low, although it has limitations.

Highlighting ceramic membranes being indigenized in the country which greatly reduces the costs, Sattari added that the required filters in the traditional technology for desalination of water, are no longer needed to be imported to the country, and they are right now have been produced in the country.

In response to a question, Sattari stated: "We have serious problems in the field of water; the number of knowledge-based companies in this field is limited, so the Vice President Office for Science and Technology is seriously following-up to activate the private sectors."

Removing Sanctions, U.S. Can Rejoin JCPOA

TEHRAN (MNA) – Presidential candidate Alireza Zakani says the United States can return to the 2015 nuclear deal only if it removes, verifiably, all its anti-Iranian sanctions.

Zakani offered a brief outline of the foreign policy he would pursue if he won the presidential election, slated for June 18. He said Iran had fully fulfilled its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the nuclear deal is formally called, and "we are now seeking to find out why Europe is not upholding its end of the bargain. That is why the negotiations are taking place."

"We will continue negotiations to make our demands, and it is now Europe that should fulfill its commitments," he said.

In the case of the U.S., Zakani added, there is a condition that Washington must fulfill before it can rejoin the JCPOA, over three years after it withdrew from the deal under ex-President Donald Trump and went on a campaign of draconian sanctions against the Iranian nation.

"The condition for the US to return to the JCPOA is removing all the sanctions, giving [all the necessary] legal guarantees, followed by our verification. If that happens, the U.S. can rejoin the JCPOA," he said.

Zakani referred to certain calls by the U.S. and its allies for the inclusion of other issues unrelated to Iran's nuclear program in the JCPOA, including the Islamic Republic's conventional missile work and its influential role in the region.

Tehran, Greece Can Cooperate in Sports

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's National Olympics Committee Head Reza Salehi Amiri said in a meeting with Greek public sport official that Tehran and Athens could have good cooperation and interaction in some sport fields.

Salehi Amiri who has traveled to Greece, met Greek Deputy Minister of Culture and Sport and public sport official Eleftherios Avgenakis on Friday to discuss cooperation in sport-related issues. Both sides emphasized signing a memorandum of understanding in this regard.



He said that Iran and Greece can cooperate in areas like education, holding joint camps and exchanging trainers and experts.

The Greek official welcomed Salehi Amiri's proposal of signing a MoU and cooperating in the areas he suggested. He also suggested preparing a list of sport fields as a basis of cooperation between the two countries.

Avgenakis expressed great desire to visit Iran, as it was his childhood wish as he said. Salehi Amiri, in turn, invited the Greek official to pay a visit to Iran in September.

Larijani Demands Explanation for Vote Disqualification

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The former Majlis speaker Ali Larijani demanded on Saturday an explanation from an election watchdog on why he was barred from running in next week's presidential vote.

Last month, the hardline Guardian Council approved just seven hopefuls to stand in Friday's poll and disqualified several prominent candidates, including Larijani and former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"I urge the esteemed Guardian Council...to formally, publicly and transparently provide all the reasons behind my disqualification," Larijani said in a tweet hours before the final presidential debate.

At the time of his disqualification, Larijani, a moderate conservative, accepted the Council's ruling, saying he had "done my duty before God and my dear nation."

Tire Output Climbs 3% in 2 Months on Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production of tires in Iran has risen three percent during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21), compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Some 40,619 tons of tires have been produced during the two-month period of this year.

In terms of number, a four-percent growth has been also achieved through the production of 3.788 million tires.

As reported, passenger car tires account for the lion's share of the number of produced tires in the mentioned time span, showing a four-percent rise year on year. Some 4,198 tons of van tires were produced, indicating a 16-percent growth.

Also, 8,494 tons of truck and bus tires were produced, showing a four-percent rise.

Production of the tires of light agricultural vehicles experienced a decline of 34 percent to stand at 2,874 tons, and that of the heavy ones fell three percent to stand at 669 tons.

Meanwhile, 669 tons of road building and industrial vehicle tires were produced, with a 35-percent drop compared to the first two months of the past year.

The bicycle and motorcycle tire output stood at 2,474 tons, indicating 62 percent growth. In a bid to nullify the U.S. sanctions, Iran is determined to strengthen its domestic production to achieve self-reliance.

Biden Should Stop Repeating Trump's Maximum Defeat

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Saeed Khatibzadeh said the U.S. President Joe Biden should stop repeating the maximum defeat suffered by his predecessor Donald Trump by effectively and verifiably lifting sanctions.

Khatibzadeh tweeted on Friday that "the selective removal of names from the list of those sanctioned is neither relevant to the JCPOA talks nor seen as a message of goodwill, especially when it is accompanied by the renewal of economic terrorism."

He expressed that instead of following Trump, Biden must stop his maximum defeat by effectively and verifiably lifting sanctions.

Canada Once Again Bars Iranian Expatriates From Voting in Iran Elections

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Ottawa government has once again stripped the Iranian expatriates living in Canada of their right to vote in Iran's presidential elections, an Iranian election official said.

According to the spokesman for Iran's election headquarters, the Canadian government has violated the international norms by not allowing the Iranian government to open polling stations in the country for Iranian expatriates living in Canada.

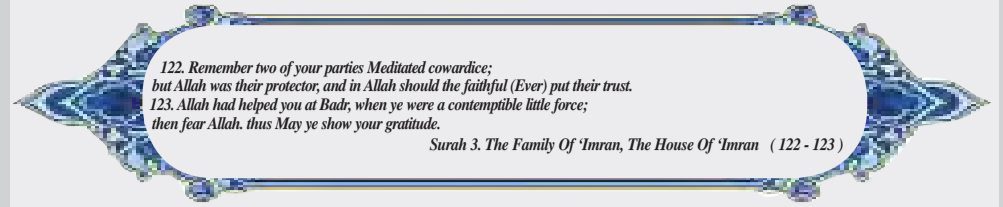
Therefore the official added, a U.S. border town has been chosen for the Iranians living in Canada who would like to vote in the June 18 elections.

Earlier in 2017, the Canadian government had refused to facilitate a way for the tens of thousands of Iranian nationals residing in Canada to participate in the votes.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:04
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:41
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:01
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48



Border Fencing Has No Effect on Iran-Pakistan Official Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A member of board of directors of Pakistan-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce says Iran's schedule for exports to Pakistan has not been materialized and Pakistan's action for fencing the border with Iran has no impact on the both countries' official trade.

Speaking to ILNA, Mahmoud Tohidast said that Iran can even export \$30b of goods to Pakistan but currently Iran's export volume to Pakistan is between \$900m to \$1.3 but currently the country has been unable to materialize its export target to Pakistan.

On Pakistan's decision to fence its border with Iran, he said that fencing is mostly because of the security issue and stopping the bandits who create security problems for both countries and for this reason Pakistan has decided to fence its border. He noted that the fencing may affect smuggling but it will have no effect on lawful trade through the official avenues.

Tohidast admitted that there is no bank in Pakistan for banking transactions with Pakistan and for this reason most of the trades are done on the bartering basis, admitting that those who import the goods legally will see no problem because of the fencing but the fencing will affect the illegal imports.

On determining a bank for trade transactions between the two countries, he said that for years there have been talks on fixing a bank for this matter but it has not been materialized yet and it seems high-ranking officials are not serious.



Tohidast reiterated that if the special economic zone of Mirjaveh which is in its last stages or any other free zone is launched in Sistan, one bank from Iran and one from Pakistan can open branches in this special zone to resolve the problem of money transfer.

He noted that all measures for the launch of the special economic zone of Mirjaveh have been taken and it is in its last stages and by its launch, many problems of Iranian and Pakistan traders will be resolved.

On the problems in way of exports to Pakistan, he said Iran can even boost its exports to Pakistan to \$30b but unfortunately the volume of exports to this country is between \$900 to \$1.3b and the target has not been materialized.

He blamed banking transactions as the major hurdle in way of trade between Iran and Pakistan and in case it is resolved, the exports to Pakistan will increase considerably.

Tohidast also pointed to the significance of railway between Zahedan and Mirjaveh and expressed hope the government would invest on this railway because it will resolve transportation problems in the region and will help the economy of the region to pick-up.

He added that Iran can import its basic goods via this important railway and the government should have investment on this project on its agenda.

Iran Imports Electricity From Azerbaijan Republic

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran began importing electricity from Azerbaijan Republic on Thursday to alleviate electricity supply limitations, the spokesman for Iran's Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (Tavanir) said.



Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said on Saturday that the electricity grid of Mughan in northwest Iran has been synchronized with that of Azerbaijan Republic so that 73 megawatts of electricity is injected to Iran's power grid.

The imported electricity has the capacity to increase to 130 megawatts in the peak, he added.

Iran has leveraged the whole domestic power supply capacity, as the consumption is pushing the electricity generation capacity to its limits due to increasing demand in the summer.

He asked household consumers to manage their consumption, especially during the peak hours, in order to reduce the pressure on the power grid. Over 50 percent of consumption is allocated to household consumption in Iran.

624,000 Tons of Commodities Traded on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 634,540 tons of various types of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$327m.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold on its mineral and industrial trading floor 253,528 tons of commodities worth nearly \$174m.

On this floor the IME sold 159,438 tons of steel, 4,620 tons of copper, 8,500 tons of aluminum, 160 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate, 640 tons of zinc ingots, 9,500 tons of zinc dust, 45,930 tons of cement, 1kg of fold bars and 25,000 tons of sponge iron.

Furthermore, within the same week the IME saw trade of 371,224 tons of commodities valued at more than \$156m.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 212,900 ton of vacuum bottom, 35,048 tons of bitumen, 50,339 tons of polymeric products, 31,517 tons of chemicals, 29,500 tons of lube cut, 5,200 tons of base oil, 60 tons of argon, 4,370 tons of sulfur, 290 tons of insulation and 2,366 tons of PDA TAR.

It's worth noting that the exchange played host to trade of 432 tons of commodities on its side market.

MAHAK Supports 17,358 Blood-Cancer Children Over Past 30 Years



TEHRAN (MNA) - MAHAK Charity Center has supported 17,358 children with the blood cancer during the past 30 years since its establishment.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (ALL) which is also known as blood cancer is one of the most common cancers in children and if diagnosed early, its cure rate will increase significantly. As more people in the society become aware of the symptoms of this disease, its detection will be on right time and accordingly, the treatment will be more effective, less costly and less painful. On the occasion of International Week for Children with Leukemia, we had an interview with the Medical Deputy of MAHAK regarding the symptoms and information related to this disease.

Dr. Alireza Daneshgar addressed the child-related groups that they should pay attention to the signs and symptoms of this disease as the most important step in its diagnosis. He said: "Paleness, weakness, lethargy, frequent infections, fever, easy bruising, bleeding that is hard to stop, and pain in the bones and joints are the symptoms which are seen in children with leukemia. It should be noted that these symptoms do not necessarily mean that a child has cancer; however, the parents should refer to a physician as soon as they notice any of them."

Regarding the importance of periodic check-ups and tests for children, he added: "according to the child's age, the time intervals between check-ups are different. New born and infants should be checked once a month during their first year of life; and it will be reduced to every two months in the second year and every three months in the third year. After that, check-ups should be done once or twice in year. It should be noted that diagnostic tests have no specific time and it will be done based on physician's prescription."

He mentioned the other common cancers in children which are Wilm's tumors, Retinoblastoma, Low-grade Glioma, Hodgkin Lymphoma, Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and added: "The importance of these check-ups and tests becomes even greater when we know that sometimes cancer affects the body asymptotically so, it is only diagnosable through routine check-ups and medical examinations or with the disease progression."

No Bike Imports From India

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Bicycle, Motorcycle and Spare Parts Sellers Union Mohammad Khadem Mansouri says there are currently no imports of bikes from India and as long as sanctions are not lifted, Indians will not sell bikes to Iran.



Speaking to ILNA, Mansouri said that Iran's problem with India regarding the imports of motorcycles has not been resolved and as long as the sanctions are on the cards, Indians do not tend to cooperate with Iran. He noted that major shareholders of the Indian motorcycle manufacturers are Americans and therefore they do not cooperate with Iran, and since the reimposition of the U.S. sanctions, Iran has not had any imports of

motorcycle from India.

He stated that most of Iran's motorcycle imports are currently from China, and of course, they are high quality ones and Iran will not let any low quality motorcycles be imported any longer.

He admitted that unfortunately the domestic demands for the motorcycle is insignificant and today people do not tend to change their bikes with new ones and try to repair their bikes because of the high price of the imported bikes.

Mansouri reiterated that when there is no demand in the market, there is no justification for plants to increase the prices. He then called for supporting the domestic producers and manufacturers which help them not to dismiss their workers.

45% Growth in Green Space at MSC

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN - Head of Energy and Fluid Department of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) explained the environmental performance of the company and said the company has developed by 45 percent its green space.



Seyed Amir Tabatabaian said the company as one of the high energy consuming industries has launched a supreme committee on energy since 1998 has set the target for providing sustainable energy of the company.

He added that the approach of the committee is to make policy in line with improving the energy consumption indexes of the company in accordance with the modern standards of the world. He then pointed to the optimizing the energy consumption indexes and the environmental indexes as well as establishing the energy management monitoring systems have been of the other environmental actions of the company.

Tabatabaian then elaborated environmental actions of the company in recent years and said that the company in 2015 received the energy management certificate and one should consider this point that monitoring the energy by the international companies is not an easy job and it depends on control and full monitoring of energy consumption in all processes of the steel production.

He then pointed to the expansion of green space as one of the environmental parameters at the company and said some 16 square kilometers of the total 35 square kilometers of the area of the company has been allocated to the green space and it means 44 to 45 percent of the total area of Mobarakeh Steel Company has been allocated to the green space. He stated expansion of green space is on the agenda of the company and every year some 40b tomans is spent on green space.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Children

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Health described the coronavirus consequences for Iranian children as "increasing the number of working children," "getting married at an early age" and "dropping out of school."

Alireza Raisi, speaking at a university conference on Saturday, June 12, said about other consequences of corona for students, especially first grade students, without mentioning the statistics on the harm done to children, that some second grade students have now learned to read, but have not learned to write, ISNA reported. Behrouz Mohebbi, a representative of Sabzevar, had announced that 30 to 40 percent of students in some cities of the country had left school this April because of lack of access to educational facilities.

Hybrid Cooling Towers of ESCO Installed

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Head of Planning and Maintenance Department of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) announced the installation of hybrid cooling towers of the plant.

Mohammad Reza Yazdanpanah referred to the implementation of several projects regarding the reform and optimizing the water consumption pattern at ESCO which have long experience, and said that in the previous system, the cooling towers of the Casting Station No.5 had considerable waste of water and failure in providing the required temperature, the company decided to the modern technology of the world and replacing the old system with the brand new ones.

He added that in the new installed towers, which are of the new generation of the existing towers in the country, have the capabilities of the distillation mechanism or condensation and eliminator, and they can reduce the waste of water and minimize the energy waste. He noted

that the total operation of installation took 21 days including the disassembling the whole previous towers, pre-assembling the parts and ultimately installation of the new ones as well as their tests and successful launches.

Yazdanpanah went on to say that by this achievement, ESCO joined the club of the few plants in the country which have hybrid cooling towers. He noted that due to the coronavirus pandemic and absence of the South Korean supervisors due to restrictions, all processes of installation of the towers were done by the domestic experts and without involvement of foreigners with the highest quality.

Meanwhile head of engineering water supply department Mr. Mehrdad Esmaili said that the previous towers due to their huge waste were not repairable and therefore the company decided to use hybrid towers to minimize the waste of water and energy.

Romanians Queue for COVID-19 Vaccine



BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - After getting her COVID vaccine shot, Mioara Neacsu went straight to a busy barbecue stand in Bucharest's Obor market to claim her free portion of mici - a traditional Romanian street snack.

The market is famous for its mici - small, sausage-shaped patties of spiced ground meat eaten piping hot from the grill with bread and mustard.

For three days starting on Friday, the grill's owner is offering free mici to anyone who gets their COVID shot at a mobile vaccination unit installed in the market.

Cuba Suspending Cash Bank Deposits in Dollars



HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba said it would temporarily stop accepting cash bank deposits in dollars, blaming tighter U.S. sanctions that are restricting its ability to use greenbacks abroad, although it will still accept transfers.

The move came shortly before the government was due to present its annual resolution to end the crippling, decades-old U.S. trade embargo on the Communist-run country at the United Nations General Assembly. Some Cubans and analysts speculated it was an attempt to control the black market price of the dollar. That has risen to more than twice the official exchange rate since the import-dependent country started opening stores selling in hard currency and stopped selling greenbacks due to a cash crunch.

China Brands COVID-19 Lab-Leak Theory as Absurd



LONDON (Dispatches) - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken stressed the need for cooperation and transparency over the origins of COVID-19 in a call with Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi on Friday and raised other contentious topics, including China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Yang, China's top diplomat, expressed Beijing's serious concern to Blinken that some people in the United States were spreading the "absurd story" about the coronavirus escaping from a Wuhan laboratory, Chinese state media said.

Yang, the head of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission of China's ruling Communist Party, also told Blinken that Washington should handle Taiwan-related issues "carefully and appropriately," state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The call came ahead of a G7 summit in Britain attended by U.S. President Joe Biden that is expected to be dominated by Washington-led efforts to counter China's growing influence.

The world's two largest economies are deeply at odds over issues ranging from trade and technology to human rights and the coronavirus. Washington should work with Beijing to put ties "back on track," Yang said. Yang, who had a fiery exchange with Blinken in Alaska in March during the Biden administration's first high-level meeting with its counterparts in China, said Beijing firmly opposed what he called "abominable actions" over the pandemic, which he said were being used to slander China. CCTV said.

The State Department said the diplomats also discussed North Korea policy and that Blinken expressed U.S. concerns over the deterioration of democratic norms in Hong Kong and what Washington describes as the genocide of Muslim Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang region. Blinken also called on China to stop its pressure campaign against Taiwan and to release "wrongfully detained" U.S. and Canadian citizens, it said in a statement.

The State Department said the discussion on North Korea - an issue on which the United States is keen for more Chinese action to press its ally and neighbor to give up its nuclear weapons - focused on the need for Beijing and Washington "to work together for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

It said the two diplomats also continued discussions on shared global challenges, including Iran and Myanmar, and the climate crisis.

"Addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretary stressed the importance of cooperation and transparency regarding the origin of the virus, including the need for WHO Phase 2 expert-led studies in China," it said, referring to the World Health Organization.

Bonnie Glaser, an Asia expert at the German Marshall Fund of the United States think tank, said that although the agenda included potential areas of cooperation, the conversation appeared dominated by contentious issues.

Omar Hits Back at "Islamophobic Tropes" By Fellow Democrats



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. congresswoman Ilhan Omar has hit back after a rare rebuke from her Democratic Party colleagues over her remarks that seemed to place the United States and Israel in the same category as the Palestinian resistance group Hamas and the Afghan armed group Taliban.

The Muslim American congresswoman on Monday tweeted: "We have seen unthinkable atrocities committed by the U.S., Hamas, Israel, Afghanistan, and the Taliban", drawing bipartisan condemnation and even seeing her accused of "anti-Semitism". "We must have the same level of accountability and justice for all victims of crimes against humanity," she tweeted, along with a video of her questioning Secretary of State Antony Blinken regarding the US opposition to International Criminal Court (ICC) inquiries into alleged war crimes in Israel and Afghanistan.

A dozen Jewish lawmakers called on Omar on Wednesday to "clarify her words", arguing that "equating the United States and Israel to Hamas and the Taliban is as offensive as it is misguided".

The House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, jumped in. "Drawing false equivalencies between democracies like the U.S. and Israel and groups that engage in terrorism like Hamas and the Taliban foments prejudice and undermines progress toward a future of peace and security for all," Pelosi said in a statement.

But Omar pushed back, slamming the Jewish lawmakers' comments as "shameful" and "Islamophobic tropes".

"The Islamophobic tropes in their statement are offensive. The constant harassment and silencing from the signers of this letter is unbearable", the Minnesota representative tweeted.

"It's shameful for colleagues who call me when they need my support to now put out a statement asking for 'clarification' and not just call.

Omar's spokesperson Jeremy Slevin, said in a statement on Thursday that the group of lawmakers were "ginning up the same Islamophobic hate against her" as far-right foes who initially attacked Omar over her tweet. Slevin had said earlier that Omar reached out to the group ahead of their statement's release to offer clarification, but her calls were not returned.

Turkey Turns to U.S. Firms as Plans Black Sea Gas Extraction

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has shared data on its Black Sea discovery with U.S. energy majors Chevron and Exxon Mobil ahead of possible cooperation in extracting the gas, a Turkish official with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

Ankara has so far insisted it would develop the estimated 540 billion cubic meters field, its biggest-ever discovery and among the world's largest last year, on its own.

Any formal work with U.S. companies would, therefore, mark a shift in the Black Sea, where Russia also has claims. Turkish exploration in the Mediterranean has raised tension with the European Union and the United States over offshore rights. If the gas can be commercially extracted, the discovery could transform Turkey's dependence on Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan for energy. President Tayyip Erdogan has said his country was determined ultimately to become a net exporter.

Erdogan is set for his first meeting on Monday with U.S. President Joe Biden since last year's election. Energy cooperation could help ease rifts between the NATO allies, including over Turkey's purchase of Russian missiles.

The Turkish official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that until now the government had been cool to foreign corporate interest in the gas discovery unveiled in August.

"But now ... Exxon Mobil and Chevron have met with Turkish Petroleum and received data regarding the discovery," the official said, with reference to Turkey's state oil company.

The energy ministry declined to comment on Friday.

A spokesperson said Chevron's policy was not to comment on commercial matters. An Exxon Mobil spokesperson declined to comment.

"The two companies reviewed the technical data and decided to give more time to work in this field together," the official said. Turkey plans to begin pumping gas from the southwest Black Sea field in 2023, but must first build the offshore pipeline network and processing facilities. The field is expected to reach sustained peak production from 2027.

Algeria Opposition Arrests, Police Clampdown on Eve of Polls

ALGIERS (Dispatches) - Algerian police deployed heavily in the capital Friday ahead of parliamentary elections to block protesters disrupting the polls, as activists criticized a "climate of repression" amid arrests of opposition figures.

Large numbers of police officers patrolled the streets of Algiers, blocking roads to preempt any attempt by supporters of the long-running Hirak pro-democracy movement to gather, AFP correspondents reported.

Saturday's poll came as authorities seek to bolster their legitimacy and take the wind out of the sails of the Hirak, which returned to the streets in February following an almost year-long break due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights said seven leading protest movement figures had been arrested on Thursday evening, five in Algiers and two in other parts of the country.

"This repressive atmosphere and the restrictions placed on human rights and freedoms mean these elections have no democratic value," its vice president Said Salhi told AFP, adding they did not know "the grounds for these arrests".

Back in 2019, the Hirak mobilized hundreds of thousands to force longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resignation, after he launched a bid for a fifth term.

It has urged boycotts of all national votes since then.

A presidential election 18 months ago, won by Abdelmadjid Tebboune, attracted a turnout of less than 40 percent, even according to official figures.

Among those detained in Algiers were leading opposition figure Karim Tabbou and independent journalist Khaled Drareni, as well the director of a pro-reform radio station, Ihsane El Kadi.

Drareni was being held in a barracks on the outskirts of the capital. His only contact with his family was a 1:30 am phone call, his lawyer Zoubida Assoul said.

The journalist was only released on bail in February after being detained while covering a mass demonstration in the capital in March last year.

Tabbou and Ihsane El Kadi were being held in the same barracks, their lawyers said.

"These arrests mark a chilling escalation in the Algerian authorities' clampdown on the rights to freedom of expression and association ahead of the elections," Amnesty International said in a statement, reporting over 200 people were in detention in connection with the Hirak movement.

"Instead of rounding up journalists and political opponents in a bid to crush dissent and intimidate members of the Hirak protest movement, Algeria's authorities should focus on respecting their human rights obligations."



UN Rights Commissioner Warns of Escalating Violence in Myanmar



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said on Friday that violence in Myanmar is intensifying and condemned the army's "outrageous" use of heavy weapons, while urging a wider diplomatic effort to pressure the ruling generals.

Michelle Bachelet said the junta had shown no willingness to implement a five-point consensus it agreed with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in April to halt violence and start dialogue with its opponents.

Bachelet said there were credible reports that in Kayah State, civilians were being used as human shields and the army was shelling homes and churches, which had forced more than 108,000 people to flee, with little food, water or sanitation, and humanitarian access was blocked.

"There appear to be no efforts towards de-escalation but rather a build-up of troops in key areas, contrary to the commitments the military made to ASEAN to cease the violence," Bachelet said in a statement.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a Feb. 1 coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, unleashing daily protests and strikes that have paralysed the economy, and fighting in borderlands between the armed forces and ethnic minority guerrilla forces and militias.

A junta spokesman did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment. The Southeast Asian mediation effort has made little progress. ASEAN's foreign ministers, China and Japan were among several countries this week stressing the importance of the peace plan being implemented.

The United Nations, Western countries and China all back the ASEAN effort, but the Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw, has paid little heed to that and instead touted the progress of its own five-step plan towards a new election.

Bachelet encouraged the intensification of diplomacy, including from influential states, and said dialogue was urgently needed with all political stakeholders, including a shadow government made up of opponents of military rule.

Two ASEAN envoys visited Myanmar last week and met top junta officials, including military chief Min Aung Hlaing, a trip that was criticised by pro-democracy groups, who say they are being shut out.

"The international community needs to unify in its demand that the Tatmadaw cease the outrageous use of heavy artillery against civilians and civilian objects," Bachelet said. "The military leadership is singularly responsible for this crisis, and must be held to account."

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marble fl
fireplace
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Shariati Villa (\$5000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
marble fl
Fully Furn

Parsian

Velenjak Apts
(\$1800) 2bdrs, S/p
(\$2300) 3bdrs, S/p
(\$2800) 4bdrs, S/p

Jordan Apts
(\$1300) 2bdrs, F.F
(\$1700) 3bdrs, F.F
(\$2200) 4bdrs, F.F

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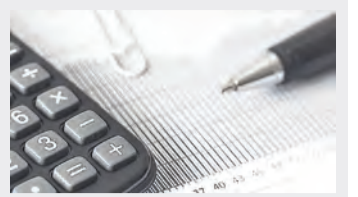
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Turkey's Inflation to Fall to 12% Next Year

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Inflation in Turkey is estimated to decline to 15.5% this year and 12% next year, the global rating agency Fitch Ratings said. Interest rate is expected to be 17% at the end of 2021 and 13.5% at the end of 2022, according to a webinar titled "Fitch on Turkey: A Sovereign and Financial Institutions Overview". Fitch said it forecasts Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP) to increase 6.7% in 2021 and 4.7% in 2022. "[Turkish] lira interest rates have risen quite significantly since the start of last year," said Lindsey Liddell, senior director, head of Turkish Banks at Fitch Ratings.



Oil Demand Will Exceed Pre-COVID Levels by End of 2022

LONDON (Dispatches) - Oil demand is set to rise above pre-COVID levels by the end of 2022, but oil producers will need to boost production, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Friday.

The Paris-based body expects consumption to rebound by 5.4 million barrels per day (bd) this year as vaccines are rolled out and economies reopen. Consumption declined by a record 8.6 million bd in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic took a hold.

It expects a further 3.1 million bd increase in 2022, to average 99.5 million bd with an increase at the end of the year that will surpass the level of demand before the COVID pandemic. IEA warned "the recovery will be uneven not only amongst regions but across sectors and products", and slow vaccine distribution could "jeopardize" any rebound. Demand is expected to recover faster in wealthy countries that had earlier access to vaccines, while some industries like aviation lag as some travel restrictions remain and more people continue to work from home.

"A widespread return of the global aviation industry to normal capacity appears off the cards until most countries have reached herd immunity, which may not happen until late 2022," the report said.

Countries outside the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+) group are expected to boost output by 1.6 million bd next year, to exceed 2019 levels.

While, OPEC+ countries will have 6.9 million bd of spare capacity even after lifting production by 2 million bd over the May-July period. "Even if OPEC+ producers were to fill the gap created by demand growth, the bloc's output would still be more than 2 mbd below the 2019 average," IEA said.

OPEC+ is slowly increasing output as the global economy recovers. Members of the OPEC cartel and allies like Russia cut production in 2020 to bump up and stabilize oil prices which briefly dropped into negative territory at the onset of the pandemic. IEA said oil industry stocks in the OECD advanced economies fell below their pre-pandemic 2015-19 average for the first time in over a year.

Crude oil and Brent were up 0.3% to \$70.46 (£50) and \$72.65 respectively on Friday morning as both benchmarks continue to rally. Oil futures rebounded to record highs last week, with crude hitting \$70 a barrel for the first time since October 2018 and Brent rising above \$72.

On Wednesday, the U.S. dashed hopes of Iranian crude exports returning. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that even if America reached a nuclear deal with Iran, hundreds of sanctions on Tehran would remain in place.

It comes after the IEA published a historic proposal to reach net zero emissions by 2050, a prerequisite to meet the Paris climate accord goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The plans published earlier in May called for energy groups to stop all new oil and gas explorations from this year to keep global warming in check, the group said. Apart from slashing fossil fuels the IEA also said an unprecedented jump in spending on low carbon technologies would be required — around \$5tn in energy investments per year by 2030, up from around \$2tn.

Bank of Russia Raises Key Rate

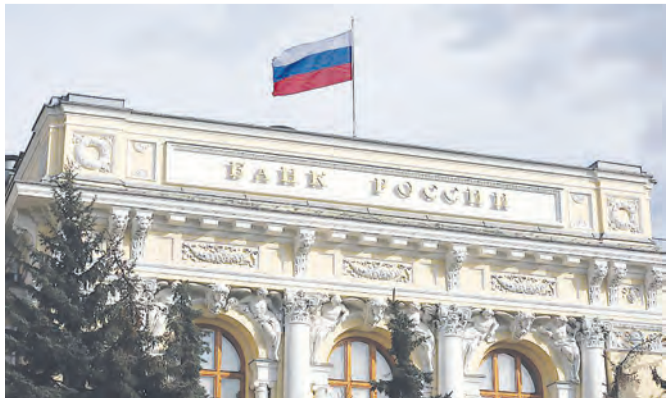
MOSCOW (Dispatches) - For the second time in a row, the Bank of Russia raised the key rate by 0.5 percentage points to 5.5% per annum, according to the regulator's statement.

"On 11 June 2021, the Bank of Russia Board of Directors decided to increase the key rate by 50 b.p., to 5.5% per annum. Both the Russian and global economies are recovering faster than expected. Inflation is developing above the Bank of Russia's forecast. The contribution of persistent factors to inflation is increasing due to faster growth of demand compared to output expansion capacity. Over a short-term horizon, this influence is strengthened by price growth in global commodity markets. Taking into account high inflation expectations, the balance of risks has significantly shifted towards proinflationary ones," the regulator said.

Annual inflation in Russia as of June 7 increased to 6.15%, which is higher than forecast, the Bank of Russia noted. "Inflation is developing above the Bank of Russia's forecast. In May, seasonally adjusted consumer price growth accelerated significantly, with annual inflation growing to 6.0% (vs 5.5% in April). According to estimates as of June 7, annual inflation went up to 6.15%. Based on the Bank of Russia's estimates, indicators reflecting the most sustainable price movements also rose in May and substantially exceed 4% (annualized)," the regulator said.

According to the regulator's estimates, increased inflationary pressure may lead to a more significant and prolonged deviation of the indicator from the target in the context of the final economic recovery. This creates the need for a further increase in the key rate at the next meetings. At the same time, the Bank of Russia sees a trend towards an increase in deposit rates in the banking market, which "will make it possible to raise the attractiveness of bank deposits for households, protect the purchasing power of savings, and ensure balanced lending expansion".

The Bank of Russia also noted that economic activity in Russia is recovering faster than expected. "According to the Bank of Russia's estimates, consumer activity has generally reached its pre-pandemic levels. The household services sector continues to recover actively. The Bank of Russia estimates that output has exceeded its pre-pandemic levels in most sectors of the economy. Demand for labor force is growing in a wide range of industries, with certain sectors experiencing a deficit," the regulator said.



Kazakh President Focuses on Economic Diversification, Greener Economy

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev spoke about the need for greater economic diversification and greener solutions in the economy at the 33rd session of the Foreign Investors' Council hosted June 10 by the Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan, reported the Akorda press service.

The session was attended by senior Kazakh officials, heads of large multinational companies, heads of government agencies and representatives of international organizations.

The council that consists of heads of 37 large transnational companies and international organizations as well as heads of key ministries has served as an important platform for connecting major foreign investors in Kazakhstan and the government and helping the nation to improve the investment climate.

This year's meeting focused on boosting non-commodity exports as well as post-crisis tax incentives, human capital development, subsoil use and digitization.

"Kazakhstan, as an economic system, cannot rely only on domestic investment, domestic demand and export of raw materials. Our country will continue the policy to ensure the most favorable environment to attract quality foreign investments. We are determined to maintain our leadership in the region and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)," said Tokayev in his opening remarks.

He stressed the need to develop exports of processed products, which, as he described, is a guarantee against volatile prices for raw materials, an indicator of the economy's capacity to produce quality demanded goods and services.

Over the past year, global trade suffered from dramatic losses. Kazakhstan's foreign trade turnover was down 13 percent last year amounting to \$85 billion.

Despite this downward trend, Kazakhstan's non-commodity exports showed a lesser decrease of 2.8 percent to \$15 billion and foreign direct investments made \$18 billion. Last year saw the implementation of 41 investment projects worth \$1.6 billion and involving foreign investors.

"As the global economy recovers, Kazakhstan is also on its path to economic recovery. Our government forecasts the growth to be at least 3.5 percent and we expect the possibility of higher growth," said Tokayev.

Exports remain a priority for the Kazakh economy, said Tokayev, noting that the utmost potential is yet to be unlocked for Kazakhstan. The target for Central Asia's largest economy is \$41 billion of noncommodity exports by 2025. To support this target, Kazakhstan allocated nearly \$1.2 billion.

Tokayev agreed with the Asian Development Bank proposal to digitize the export support system.

"We have to agree that digital transformation reduces trade costs, especially for small and medium-sized businesses. The Ministry of Trade (and Integration) and Digital Development (Innovations and Aerospace Industry) should formulate proposals together with the Asian Development Bank," said Tokayev.

UK Economic Recovery Continues Apace With 2.3% Growth in April



LONDON (Dispatches) - The UK economy surged 2.3% in April — the fastest monthly growth since July 2020, and a sure sign that a "rapid recovery is well underway".

GDP is now 1.2% above its initial recovery peak in October 2020, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, published on Friday.

April's growth left GDP up a massive 27.6% up from its low point in April 2020, but still down 3.7% on its pre-pandemic level in February 2020.

The surge was driven largely by the service sector, which enjoyed a 3.4% bump as consumer-facing services re-opened in line with the easing of coronavirus restrictions.

Commentators say caution should be exercised regarding the final stage of reopening on 21 June. However, any delay is unlikely to detrimentally affect the economy in the longer term. Kingswood chief investment officer Rupert Thompson said: "Today's data confirm a rapid recovery in the UK is well underway and will fuel hopes that the economy will in a few months' time have recovered all of its pandemic-related losses."

Jesús Cabra Guisasaola, associate at Validus Risk Management, said: "There are no doubts that the UK has been one of the countries coming out in a better position from the pandemic after the success of its vaccination program." He warned there are "reasons to be cautious" as coronavirus cases continue rising, with the delta variant spreading rapidly.

But added that there is "optimism surrounding sterling in the coming months".

"Any delay on the reopening would have a minimal impact on the recovery," he said. Quilter warns of potential BoE shift as economy reopens | Money Marketing

Quilter Investors portfolio manager Hinesh Patel said that, given the "depths of where we were last year", the economy is clearly returning to health. "The removal of social distancing when the time comes will give an additional turbo charge to the economy," he added.

India's April IIP Surges 134.4% Due to Low-Base Effect

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's factory output surged a massive 134.4% in April, primarily helped by the low base effect of the year-ago period when the Centre had imposed a nationwide lockdown, to limit the spread of the pandemic, bringing to a halt all economic activities as factories and offices shut down.

This surge may lead to a false sense of normalcy, given that the second wave of the covid-19 pandemic and slow vaccine rollout are widely expected to delay any meaningful economic revival in Asia's third-largest economy.

In April last year, the index of industrial production (IIP) had contracted 55.5%. The favourable base may keep IIP numbers buoyed till August this year. The national Statistical Office did not formally compute the April IIP numbers though it provided the indices for the month. According to government data, the industrial output index rose to 126.6 in April from 54.0 in April last year, when the lockdown hit the production.

"It may be noted that the nationwide lockdown and other measures implemented to restrict the spread of Covid 19 pandemic from the end of March 2020, had led to a majority of the establishments not operating in April 2020 and consequently, there were many units which reported 'Nil' production, affecting comparison of the indices for the months of April 2020 and April 2021," the National Statistical Office said.

Most economic forecasters have slashed their FY22 GDP projection for India to single digits as the second wave of the pandemic is expected to have significant impact on consumer sentiment and also is likely to have hit rural demand. The World Bank earlier this week pared down its FY22 growth projection for India to 8.3% for FY22 from 10.1% estimated in April.

Japan's Exports Set for Biggest Monthly Gain Since 1980

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's exports likely posted their largest monthly rise in four decades in May, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, but the flattering milestone was largely reflective of a rebound in shipments from last year's pandemic-driven plunge.

Globally, policymakers are keeping a close watch on the extent of underlying demand recovery as COVID-19 vaccinations have improved economic conditions in some key economies.

A marked recovery in Japan's exports and output due to surging global demand has helped its economy offset lackluster conditions at home, after the government recently extended coronavirus emergency curbs in Tokyo and other major areas.

Next week's key data include machinery orders and consumer prices, as well as a Bank of Japan policy meeting.

Exports likely soared 51.3% in May compared to the same month a year earlier, the poll of 17 economists showed.

That would mark the sharpest monthly rise since April 1980, when shipments jumped 51.4%, a finance ministry official said. The annual uptick in exports largely reflected the recoil effect of the 28.3% plunge in May of 2020.

Imports were forecast to have jumped 26.6% year-on-year in May, which would result in a trade deficit of 91.2 billion yen (\$833.7 million).

"Exports in May... likely posted a larger gain than they did in the previous month," said Kenta Maruyama, an economist at Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting.

"On a (month-on-month) seasonally adjusted basis, they probably decreased slightly, though global demand from capital investment remains high."

Core machinery orders data, which exclude those for ships and electrical utilities, are also scheduled to be released on Wednesday. The poll showed core machinery orders in April were likely to have increased 8.0% year-on-year, and to have gained 2.7% from the previous month.

The core consumer price index (CPI), which includes oil products but excludes volatile fresh food prices, is expected to have risen 0.1% in May compared to the same month a year earlier, according to the Reuters poll.

That would mark the first month of year-on-year price growth since March last year.

The poll also showed the Bank of Japan is expected to keep its policy interest rate at minus 0.1% and the 10-year Japanese government bond yield target at around 0% at its policy meeting on June 17-18.

Iran's Sky Safest in Region

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Joint Air Defense Command said on Saturday that Iran's sky is the safest in the region due to joint endeavor of Iran's military and Islamic Revolution Guards Corps air defense forces.

Brigadier General Qader Rahimzadeh attended a gathering of commanders and the staff of the IRGC Air Defense Force

on Saturday and expressed satisfaction of the preparedness. He also hailed deploying the Dey-9 Air Defense System and Quds Radar System by IRGC's Aerospace Force.

The commander said in the gathering that Iran's airspace is the safest in the region and that's achieved by the collaboration of air defense forces in the military and IRGC.



Tackle Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss Together

PARIS (Dispatches) - The world must tackle the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss together, two UN expert groups meeting together said Thursday, warning against measures to combat global warming that harm nature.

In the first ever collaboration between the United Nations' intergovernmental panels on climate and nature loss, the scientists said that while the twin threats were mutually reinforcing, they had historically been treated as if they were independent of each other.

A peer-reviewed workshop report, based on virtual discussions between experts from the IPBES biodiversity and IPCC climate panels, warned that a number of planned interventions against global heating would adversely impact nature.

These include planting bioenergy crops over large land areas, which are detrimental to ecosystems.

They also cautioned against planting trees to suck up carbon pollution in ecosystems that have not historically been forested, which often damages biodiversity and food production.

The panel called for an end to the loss and degradation of carbon- and species-rich ecosystems on land and oceans.

Subsidies supporting activities harmful to nature -- such as deforestation, over-fertilisation and over-fishing -- must halt, the experts concluded.

At the same time, they underlined the need for changes in individual consumption habits.

Restoring ecosystems was among the cheapest and quickest climate interventions available, and could also offer much-needed additional habitat for plants and animals, the researchers said.

Improved management of cropland and grazing systems alone could save three-six billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions a year.

"Climate change and biodiversity loss combine to threaten society -- often magnifying and accelerating each other," said Hoesung Lee, chair of the IPCC.

Lee said that Thursday's report was an "important step" in the collaboration



between scientific fields focusing on climate and those focused on biodiversity.

Alexandre Antonelli, director of science at Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens, said the IPCC and IPBES collaboration was "long overdue".

"Although climate change and biodiversity loss pose unseen threats to our future, the good news is that we can tackle both through the right measures -- those that are based on solid science," said Antonelli, who was not involved in the report.

IPBES chair Ana Maria Hernandez Salgar stressed that solutions such as nature preservation or restoration would only work in countering climate change and biodiversity loss if they were accompanied by sweeping cuts in manmade emissions.

"Transformative change in all parts of society and our economy is needed to stabilize our climate, stop biodiversity loss and chart a path to the sustainable future we want," she said.

"This will require us to address both crises together, in complementary ways."

U.S. Needs First to...

FROM PAGE 1

He once again emphasized that the JCPOA has been endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and is "an important outcome of multilateral diplomacy and a key pillar of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and peace and stability in the Middle East."

Since April, representatives from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries have been holding talks in Vienna. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told a UN Security Council meeting on Thursday that non-stop efforts to revive the JCPOA continue unabated in all its aspects, including nuclear activities and the lifting of sanctions.

He added that he is in an active engagement with all the main players in the nuclear issue as the EU delegation leading the negotiations in Vienna is making all-out efforts. "We are making progress but the negotiations are intense on a number of issues including on the precise sequencing of steps," Borrell said.

Russian ambassador to international organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Friday that the next meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission would start this weekend. "It will mark the beginning of the sixth round of the #ViennaTalks on restoration of the nuclear deal. Will it be the final round? Nobody knows but all negotiators hope so," Ulyanov said in a post on his Twitter account.

Ulyanov, who is the head of the Russian delegation to the Vienna talks, told RIA Novosti that there are several more issues that are of fundamental importance for both Washington and Tehran, adding that it is still difficult to predict the development of the situation.

Putin...

FROM PAGE 1

Biden, who is on his first foreign tour since entering the White House, is expected to raise a slew of complaints with Putin including over election interference and hacking purportedly linked to Russia.

The Washington Post, quoting current and former U.S. and Middle Eastern officials, said the launch of the satellite could happen within months, and is the result of multiple trips to Russia by leaders of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards. The satellite, while not of U.S. capabilities, could allow the monitoring of Israeli bases and the U.S. troop presence in Iraq, the report said.

The satellite could be launched in Russia, although Russian trainers have assisted ground crews who would operate the satellite near a new site near the northern Iranian city of Karaj, The Post reported.

S. Korea Could Shun Some...

FROM PAGE 1

Maya is a heavy sour crude that typically has a gravity of 22 API and 3.3% sulfur content, while Urals is a medium sour grade with a gravity of around 31.5 API and sulfur content of 1.44%.

Key Korean refiners are expected to cut imports of several Middle Eastern sour grades, including Saudi Arabia's Arab Medium and Arab Heavy, Abu Dhabi's Upper Zakum, and Qatar's Deodorized Field Condensate, to make room for Iranian crude and condensate procurement.

"Iranian Light, Iranian Heavy, Forozan, South Pars ... these will obviously directly compete with all medium and heavy sour grades, as well as ultra-light crudes in the Persian Gulf market," the South Korean refinery source said.

Many Asian refiners found Iranian crude oil, from ultra-light to heavy grades, relatively attractive and competitive within the Persian Gulf market, with South Korea paying less for shipments from Iran than other key producers in the region prior to the sanctions.

S Korean refiners paid an average outright price of \$52.90/b for Iranian crude imported in 2017, lower than \$53.83/b paid for shipments from Saudi Arabia, \$54.80/b from the UAE, and \$55.76/b from Qatar that year, the KNOC data showed. KNOC's import cost figures include freight, insurance, tax and other administrative and port charges.

The sharp uptrend in the Brent-Dubai price spread could also prompt refiners to cut Urals crude purchases as the Russian medium sour grade is priced against the European benchmark, refinery trading sources said.

The Brent/Dubai Exchange of Futures for Swaps, or EFS, spread -- a key indicator of Brent's premium to the Middle Eastern benchmark -- averaged \$3.17/b to date in the second quarter, on course to set the highest quarterly average since \$3.81/b in Q2 2018, Platts data showed.

Iran remains in deep negotiations with the U.S. and European diplomats in a bid to revive the nuclear deal and cast off sanctions.

S&P Global Platts Analytics still expects the sides to reach a deal in the coming months, with the Biden administration removing sanctions on Iran's oil, petrochemicals, shipping and other sectors by September. This sanctions relief would allow the country to boost crude and condensate exports to 1.5 million b/d by December from 600,000 b/d in May, Platts Analytics said.

Foreign Businesses Shocked By Rollout of China's Anti-Sanctions Law



BEIJING (AFP) - China's quick rollout of a law against foreign sanctions has left European and American companies shocked and facing "irreconcilable" compliance issues, two top business groups said Friday, despite Beijing saying the move would unlikely impact investment.

The law came into effect on Thursday, adding to China's toolbox as it builds its defences against US and EU pressure over trade and human rights.

The move also came just a week after US President Joe Biden expanded a blacklist of Chinese companies in which Americans are not allowed to invest -- allowing Beijing to now hit back at those who formulate or comply with foreign sanctions.

"European companies in China are shocked by the lack of transparency and speed of this process," European Chamber president Joerg Wuttke told AFP, referring to the passing of the new law.

With the fresh rules prohibiting organisations from implementing what Beijing deems discriminatory and restrictive measures, "foreign firms remain very much stuck between a rock and a hard place," he said.

American Chamber of Commerce chairman Greg Gilligan cautioned that the new law "presents potentially irreconcilable compliance problems for foreign companies".

Rushing through a new law without an opportunity for public comment severely jeopardises foreign investor confidence in China's legal system as well, he added.

But Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular press briefing on Friday he did not see a definite link between the new law and foreign investment.

"If anything, the enactment of the anti-foreign sanctions law provides a predictable legal environment... for foreign companies operating in China," he said.

Wuttke, however, warned that the action was not conducive to attracting investment, or in reassuring companies that "already feel they may be used as sacrificial pawns in a game of political chess".

"There is a real concern that this will further destabilise EU-China relations," he said.

In the European Chamber's latest business confidence survey released this week, 41 per cent of respondents said China's business environment had become more politicised last year.

Most reported they expect the situation to remain the same or deteriorate over the coming year.

German Economy Set for Post-Pandemic Bounce in Growth and Prices

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - German output is rebounding from its pandemic-induced slump and inflation could rise faster than currently expected, potentially affecting behavior in the economy, the German central bank said on Friday.

The Bundesbank raised its growth and inflation forecasts for this year and the next, assuming that the coronavirus outbreak would be contained quickly and durably by the vaccination campaign and that restrictions will soon be relaxed.

It now expects the German economy to reach pre-pandemic levels as soon as next quarter, growing by 3.7% this year, 5.2% next year and 1.7% in 2023.

"The German economy is overcoming the pandemic-related crisis," said Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann.

The German central bank also raised its forecasts for inflation for this year and the next, warning there were still "upside risks".

It now saw inflation at 2.6% this year, which would be the highest since 2008 and well above the European Central Bank's target of price growth "below but close to 2%".

But the Bundesbank played down the significance of the surge, blaming it mainly on energy prices and tax effects.

Without those, inflation would stand at just 1%, in line



with last year and well below 2019's level, the BuBa said.

But it still warned that the sudden surge in prices, which will see inflation touch 4% in late 2021, might affect perceptions after a long period of low inflation.

"The exceptionally high inflation rates, by German standards, projected for the second half of 2021 could ultimately shift economic agents' inflation perceptions and expectations," it said.

"As a result, wage and price-setting behaviour could change and exert further inflationary pressure. This would especially be the case if headline price inflation in the near future were to be even higher than estimated here."

German's consumer price index hit a 10-year high of 2.4% in May.

But inflation, normally a hot topic in a savings-oriented country, has not so far become an issue in the election campaign, with all major parties agreeing with the generally hawkish Weidmann's view that the jump is likely to be temporary.

The ECB promised to keep ample stimulus flowing on Thursday despite the brighter outlook, although three policymakers dissented with that decision at the meeting.

Moderna Seeks U.S. Authorization for Covid Vaccine in Teens

WASHINGTON (AFP) - American biotech company Moderna said it was asking the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for an emergency use authorization for its Covid-19 vaccine to be given to adolescents.

The move was widely expected after the company announced in May early results from a trial of 3,700 12-to-17-year-olds that found the two-dose regimen was safe and highly effective.

On Monday, Moderna made similar requests to the European and Canadian regulators.

"We are encouraged that the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was highly effective at preventing COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2 infection in adolescents," said the company's CEO Stephane Bancel.

Vaccine efficacy was shown to be 100 percent after two doses when using the same definition of symptomatic disease that was applied to the adult trial.

It fell to 93 percent after one dose when using a more stringent definition used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that requires just one symptom in addition to a positive test.

No significant safety concerns were noted. The most common side effects outside the injection site after the second dose were headache, fatigue, body aches and chills.

The FDA authorized the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for children aged 12 to 15 years old in May.

Although adolescents are much less susceptible to severe Covid than adults, experts believe they are important to reach in order to help achieve population immunity against the disease.

Indonesia's Digital Economy to Grow Eight-Fold by 2030

JAKARTA (ANTARA) - Indonesian Trade Minister Muhammad Lutfi has predicted Indonesia's digital economy will grow eight-fold from Rp632 trillion in 2020 to Rp4,531 trillion in 2030.

"E-commerce will play a crucial role (by contributing) 34 percent, or Rp1,900 trillion (to the digital economy)," he said following a limited meeting at the Presidential Palace here on Thursday. Meanwhile, the business-to-business digital economy is projected to contribute 13 percent, or Rp763 trillion, and technology-based health services (health-tech) are expected to contribute 8 percent, or Rp471 trillion, to the digital economy, he added.

"These are parts of what we have discussed that our e-commerce has a very high level playing field," he said.

In other sectors, economic activities that adapt to digital technology will also support the growth of the national gross domestic product (GDP) in 10 years' time, such as online travel, online media, and digital transport services, he predicted.

"We realize that the Indonesian digital economy has good prospects. In 2020, the digital economy contributed 4 percent of the GDP. In 10 years' time, or by 2030, the GDP will grow from Rp15,400 trillion to Rp24,000 trillion," he said.

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E-Mail Address:
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ISSN 1024-6053
P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Printed by:Honar Sarzmin Sabz
Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and
Artistic Institute
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Goretzka Out of Germany's Opening Euro 2020 Clash

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Leon Goretzka has been ruled out of Germany's opening Euro 2020 match against world champions France, it was confirmed.
The 26-year-old Bayern Munich midfielder is back in training after a leg injury, but will sit out Germany's Group F match against the French on Tuesday.
"It is out of the question that he could play in the first game," Germany's team director Oliver Bierhoff said at their European Championship base in Bavaria.

Bale Not Worried About Wales Goal Drought

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wales captain Gareth Bale said on Friday he was unconcerned about his international goal drought on the eve of his side's Euro 2020 opener against Switzerland.
Bale, 31, last scored for Wales against Croatia in October 2019 but has created four goals in his previous seven appearances.
"It doesn't matter. I've made assists. I'm still contributing. I'm not worried," he said.
"If the chances arise to score, hopefully I can take them," he added.

Djokovic Defeats Nadal In Greatest French Open Display

PARIS (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic handed 13-time champion Rafael Nadal only his third defeat in 16 years and 108 matches at the French Open on Friday to reach his sixth Roland Garros final in an epic showdown which even beat the country's Covid-19 curfew.
In their 58th career clash, Djokovic triumphed 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and stays on course to capture a 19th major and become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice.
Djokovic, the 2016 champion in Paris who had also beaten Nadal at the 2015 tournament, will face Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final in what will be his 29th championship match at the Slams.
Tsitsipas had earlier become the first Greek to reach a Grand Slam final with a 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Germany's Alexander Zverev.
Nadal, 35, who would have been the oldest finalist at the French Open in the modern era, remains tied on 20 majors with Roger Federer.
"It was a privilege to face Rafa in such an incredible match," said Djokovic after four hours and 11 minutes of intense action.
"Tonight it was my greatest ever match in Paris."



It was his second win in eight meetings in Paris with Nadal, a sequence which also included three losses in finals.
It was Nadal's first defeat in 14 semi-finals in the French capital.
"Probably it was not my best day today, even if I fought," said Nadal.
"Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. I had a big chance. There were some crazy points but there was fatigue there."
Djokovic finished with 50 winners; Nadal committed 55 unforced errors under the relentless assault.
Djokovic had two break points in the opening game of the first set which stretched to 10 minutes but was unable to convert. Nadal made him pay, sprinting away for a 5-0 lead before the top seed got on the board. Djokovic clung on, retrieving one break to get to 2-5 but Nadal eventually prevailed after one hour on court even if he required seven set points to edge ahead.
As a sign of the tension of the occasion, Nadal complained to chair umpire Eva Asderaki-Moore that he needed more time to collect his towel.
Djokovic aired his bemusement at the amount of clay on the baselines.
The old rivals exchanged breaks in the second and third games of a big-hitting second set but it was Djokovic who repeated the feat for a 4-2 lead before levelling the tie.
Twice in the third set Djokovic edged ahead, only to be reeled back in by Nadal who broke back in the 10th game as the world number one served for the set.
Djokovic then had to save a set point with an ice-cool drop shot in the 12th game.
A 92-minute third set ended with Djokovic taking the tiebreak.
In a further twist on a dramatic evening, the 5,000 spectators inside Court Philippe Chatrier were allowed to watch the conclusion of the match despite it passing the 11pm Covid-19 curfew.
"In agreement with the national authorities, the match will come to an end in your presence," said a stadium announcer told delighted fans.
Nadal then broke in the first game of the fourth set but Djokovic levelled for 2-2 and broke again for 4-2. He finished it off on a second match point when Nadal hit wide and long.

PSG Sign Wijnaldum From Liverpool



PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain have completed the signing of Dutch international midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum from Liverpool on a three-year deal, the French club announced.
Wijnaldum, 30, is a free agent with his contract at Anfield expiring at the end of this month, meaning there will be no transfer fee involved.
Barcelona had been keen to sign the former Feyenoord, PSV Eindhoven and Newcastle United player, and are understood to have been close to completing a deal before PSG persuaded him to move to the Parc des Princes instead.
"Signing for Paris Saint-Germain is a new challenge for me," Wijnaldum, who is currently with the Netherlands squad preparing for Euro 2020, said in a statement published on PSG's website.
"I'm joining one of the best squads in Europe and I want to bring all my desire and commitment to this ambitious project."
Wijnaldum has spent the last five seasons at Liverpool and was a key player in the side that won the Champions League in 2019 as well as the Premier League title last year.
He is the first signing made by PSG since they missed out on the Ligue 1 title last month to Lille.

McLaren to Join Extreme E in 2022

PARIS (AFP) - McLaren are to join the Extreme E electric off-road championship next year, the Formula One team announced on Friday.
Extreme E was set up by the man behind Formula E, Alejandro Agag, to draw attention to some of the world's most pressing environmental issues. "This new venture is true to our roots of participating in a variety of categories, innovation and bravery," said McLaren team boss Zak Brown.
For Brown, Extreme E is "a force for good in confronting some of the biggest challenges facing our world today and in the future".
The British F1 outfit supplied Lewis Hamilton with his first world title and Hamilton's X44 team is competing in the inaugural season of Extreme E.
The RxR team of Hamilton's former teammate at Mercedes, 2016 world champion Nico Rosberg, is leading the series after wins in the opening two races.
Brown noted that while they would be competing against some familiar big names "we are there to win".
Brown has overseen a sharp revival in McLaren's fortunes in Formula One with Lando Norris placed fourth in the drivers' standings and the team occupying the same position in the constructors' standings.

Brisbane 2032 Not a Done Deal Yet

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's top Olympic official John Coates said on Friday that Brisbane winning the right to host the 2032 Summer Games was not a done deal, despite the International Olympic Committee's executive board approving the bid.
The IOC executive board signed off on the bid on Thursday and, under a new system designed to make bidding cheaper and more efficient, a full session of the sporting body will now vote on it on July 21.
With Brisbane the sole preferred candidate, some media critics have suggested the IOC session will simply rubber-stamp the decision but Coates, who was a key figure in the reform of the bidding process, said that was not the case.

Japan May Keep Some Virus Curbs Until Games Start



although authorities remain concerned about the spread of variants and the continued strain on medical resources.

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Japanese government is considering ending a state of emergency in Tokyo and several other prefectures as scheduled on June 20, but keeping some curbs such as on restaurant hours until the Olympics start in July, the Mainichi daily reported.
New coronavirus infections in Olympics host Tokyo have inched down during the last month of emergency restrictions about the spread of variants and the

On Friday, the head of Japan's main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, Yukio Edano, called for the Games to be postponed or cancelled, saying there was an "extremely high risk" of an explosive outbreak in August and September if they went ahead.
The Mainichi newspaper reported on Friday the government would ask restaurants to keep shorter hours and impose other curbs under the targeted quasi-emergency measures. Bars and restaurants are now asked to close by 8 p.m. and are banned from serving alcohol.
A final decision is expected late next week, a few days before the end of the current emergency state, which also covers the northern island of Hokkaido, host of the marathon event.
Polls have shown many of the Japanese public oppose holding the Games this year, worried about the flood of athletes and officials from overseas. Japan has effectively been closed to foreign visitors since the pandemic broke out last year.

Italy Get Euro 2020 Off to Impressive Start



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Italy got their Euro 2020 campaign off the mark with an impressive 3-0 win over Turkey in the curtain-raiser for the postponed continental tournament at home in Rome on Friday.
Playing their first major tournament in five years after failing to qualify for the 2018 world Cup, all the goals came in the second half in front of a Stadio Olimpico that was filled to a quarter of its capacity.
Merih Demiral's own goal put Italy ahead before Ciro Immobile and Lorenzo Insigne netted for Roberto Mancini's side in the Group A opener.
The win capped an emotional night in the Italian capital which saw 16,000 fans return to the Stadio Olimpico.
A spectacular sound and light show and fireworks preceded kick-off for the month-long 24-team event, which will be played across 11 countries having been delayed for a year because of the coronavirus pandemic.
There was a performance by the Italian National Police orchestra, a parade of huge inflatable balloons on the pitch, tenor Andrea Bocelli sang 'Nessun Dorma' before a virtual performance from Martin Garrix, Bono and The Edge.
Former Italy World Cup winners Alessandro Nesta and Francesco Totti, who played for Lazio and Roma during their careers at the Stadio Olimpico, carried the ball to the centre of the pitch before kick-off. On the pitch, Italy dominated early on with a three-man attack led by Immobile, who plays for Lazio.

UEFA Has to Adapt To a Special Situation To Finish Euro 2020



ROME (AFP) - UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told AFP on Friday that the teams would have to deal with "a special situation" to complete Euro 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
"It's not the usual Euro because it's in 11 countries and on top of it there's a pandemic which makes travelling even more difficult," Ceferin said in Rome.
"So every team will have to adapt to a special situation to finish this Euro."
A year after being postponed due to the pandemic, the 24-team tournament spread across 11 venues throughout Europe gets underway on Friday with Italy facing Turkey in front of an estimated 16,000 fans in a Stadio Olimpico filled to around a quarter of capacity.
Despite positive Covid-19 tests for players in the Spain, Sweden and Russia squads in the days building up to the kickoff, Ceferin remains confident the competition will continue without disruption until the final at Wembley on July 11.
"I don't think matches will be postponed," said the 53-year-old Slovenian.
"I think the 'bubbles' will be very strict, our health protocol is very strict.
"Even the officials who are vaccinated have to be tested before every single match.
"We are all very much protected, the players even more, I think it's quite safe tournament.
"Of course you never know if a case happens, but I'm pretty confident that everything will be fine."
The decision to postpone last year was the right one, he believes, given that last year the tournament would have had to be played in empty stadiums. "Now we've realised, it was good to postpone because last year we would have had Euro without fans and now at least we have a number of fans which is very important for the Euro because it's a festival of football.