

**Iranian Foreign Minister
Mohammad Javad Zarif Reportedly
Met and Held Talks With EU
Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell
In Antalya, Turkey, on Friday**

IRAN NEWS

**Health Ministry Announced on
Friday That the Number of Deaths
From the Coronavirus Pandemic
In Iran Increased to 82,836 With
127 More Iranians Killed by the
Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

2 **DOMESTIC**

**(P)GCC Hostage to
Excessive Demands of a
Raucous Minority**
> SEE PAGE 2



**Tangible Progress
Made in Vienna Talks on
Revival of JCPOA**

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top negotiator in Vienna talks aimed at reviving the 2015 landmark nuclear agreement between Tehran and world powers says the participating delegations have made tangible progress in negotiations.

Abbas Araqchi, who is also Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, made the remarks in an interview with Al Jazeera television network, the outlines of which were published on Thursday.

"Good and tangible progress has been made on various issues during Vienna talks. We believe that we are closer to a [final] agreement than any time before, but there are still certain outstanding issues, which need more deliberation," Araqchi said.

Iran's top negotiator said all sides must take tough decisions, noting that Tehran has already made this difficult decision by remaining committed to the deal, which is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), despite the withdrawal of the United States from it.

Araqchi, added, "If the nuclear deal is still alive, it has been owed to Iran's actions."

See Page 7

Iran Holds Election, Showcases Democracy



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Iranians went to polls to elect the 13th president of the Islamic Republic of Iran amid negative propagations from the foreign-based opposition and enemies of the country.

Under observing sanitary protocols for the COVID-19 pandemic, polls have opened nationwide in Iran's 2021 presidential election. Over 59.3 million Iranians are eligible to vote for one of four candidates running.

See Page 7

3 **DOMESTIC**

**Iran Industrial Exports
Up 80% This Year**
> SEE PAGE 3



ViewPoint
By: Hamid Reza Naghashian
**Yemenis Not to
Bow Down to Threats**

Yemeni Muslim forces will continue their resistance and fight against the outside pressures and threats until they celebrate total freedom and having an independent country free from the West's mercenaries.

According to reports, the Yemeni army launched a fresh retaliatory attack against Abha International Airport in Saudi Arabia's southwestern region of Asir, using two domestically-manufactured Qasef-2K (Striker-2K) combat drones.

The spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said in a brief statement posted on his Twitter page that the unmanned aerial vehicles struck the designated military targets at the airport with great precision on Thursday noon.

He added that the airstrikes come within Yemen's legitimate right to respond to the Saudi-led coalition's devastating military campaign and all-out blockade.

The development took place only three days after Yemeni army forces and their allied fighters struck the same Saudi airport.

See Page 7

In an interview with the CEO of Mashhad Ring Manufacturing Company

We Can Send Two Million Dollars of The Company's Products to Neighboring Countries

introduce yourself. Describe the amount of production and the type of production of the products. Do you have a plan to produce new products?

Mashhad Ring Manufacturing Company with 50 years of experience is known as the largest producer of riding and heavy steel rims in the country. The company uses specialized personnel and advanced technology in the world and has the ability to produce rims for all types of passenger cars, heavy tubs from 16 to 22.5 inches and ROM and protective tray under the engine. The process of assembling rims and riding tires and spare parts of the Ram complex is performed in production halls located in Binalood and Tehran. In addition, the Binalood production hall is responsible for pre-assembling the body of the Peugeot family

According to the company's strategic plan and sales development policy, it should enter the market of Saipa, Khodro and Kerman Motor companies. The field of riding and development, cooperation and development of new projects with Bahman Group and Mammoth Group are on the agenda. During 2021, the composition of the company's sales portfolio will change by 30%. In this regard, we can mention J4 rim and ROM projects, Tiba rim, Tara ROM, Dena Plus automatic ROM, new 24, 22.5 and 16.5 inch heavy rims. Peugeot door heming production line has been installed in Khorasan and in Binalood site. According to economic studies, this measure has reduced logistics costs by 25 billion tomans. It has also improved the quality and supply conditions for Iran Khodro Khorasan. This project is in the process of reviewing and concluding a contract with Sapco. It will start working as soon as the contract is exchanged. Also, with the approach of export development and the introduction of new technology of steel rims of aluminum design and removal of caps, a new concept of rims will be presented to the market in the second half of the year. This will create a huge change in the production of the country's steel rims. It will also provide a huge export opportunity.

What is the company's production capacity? Is this capacity produced?

Annual capacity Riding and heavy automotive factory	
Car wheel steel rims	4.000.000 Ring
Pressing all kinds of metals	10.000 Ton
Metal painting	65.000 Ton
ROM under engine and ROM assembly	200.000 Number
Production of car doors	500.000 Number

Unfortunately, about 30% of the company's capacity is empty due to reduced car circulation and lack of funding and steel sheets.

What is the volume of your exports to the countries of the region and other countries of the world? And with regard to visa problems in the export sector, what problems do you face?

Mashhad Ring Manufacturing Company, based on its business studies, has the ability to send at least \$ 2 million of its products to neighboring countries.

Unfortunately, due to the Corona pandemic crisis and restrictions on the supply of sheets and resources required by the bank, this issue has faced many difficulties and obstacles.

Considering the history of parts manufacturing in the country, why are we not a global brand in this field? What do you think is the main problem in this area?

The country's parts manufacturing complex as well as Mashhad Ring Manufacturing Company have taken valuable measures during the previous and current years with an engineering and principled approach to maintain its competitive advantage and develop sales markets in the markets of neighboring countries. Unfortunately, it has failed for many reasons, including:

- The sharp increase in receivables and the lack of updating of commodity prices in line with the real inflation of the country and the exchange rate, has seriously reduced the financial capacity of companies and the possibility of new investments has deprived them.
- The absence of intellectual property laws makes it easy for a company to make all of a company's investment in new technology.
- Lack of government support for branding development in global markets, development of the country's rail and air logistics lines, impossibility of financial exchange to cooperate with top global brands, etc.
- Improper policy in the field of trade, too much attention to imports instead of domestic production. Calculation of customs currency at the rate of 4200 Tomans or issuance of import licenses
- Impossibility of receiving the raw material from the stock exchange in proportion to the needs and production capacity
- Lack of effective and serious fight against smuggling of goods
- It seems that the country's parts manufacturing industry is in dire need of sound policy and strong support. If, instead of support, things are only ordered and followed up, these problems will be exacerbated and potential markets will be lost.

Most of the problems of parts manufacturers are related to settlement and arrears. What problems have you encountered in this area?

Unfortunately, there is a very high accumulated loss in the country's automotive sector. Automakers are struggling to settle prices. Also, the severe contractionary system of banks and the definition of very low credit limits have faced companies with a serious liquidity crisis in the current production and development process. Stock exchange companies such as Mashhad Ring Manufacturing have also lost the possibility of financing from the stock exchange due to the serious stock market crisis and the distrust of shareholders.

Do you think the lifting of sanctions will improve the situation of parts manufacturers?

The lifting of sanctions will provide many benefits in terms of the possibility of financial transactions, export development and attracting foreign investment. But if the component companies abandon the logical process of self-sufficiency, the country's component manufacturing sector will face serious losses and the impossibility of competitiveness.



Therefore, it seems that by taking advantage of the experience of sanctions and government support, it is possible to create new benefits for customers and new export markets by maintaining the current production capacity.

Given that your company is present in the capital market, how do you predict the status of this presence given the current tensions?

Unfortunately, wrong policies have caused capital to flee the stock market. The trend of public distrust has risen due to ambiguity and repeated concerns about exchange rate uncertainty, the negotiation process, the election results and the new government's approach. The new government must seriously resolve the crisis in the stock market as soon as possible by conducting an expert and comprehensive review. Withdrawal of liquidity from the stock exchange and its entry into any other sector, including currency, housing, currency and coin codes, will have very severe consequences in the long run. Solving its problems is no longer easy. Funding and financial resources from the stock exchange will be achieved by restoring the trust of esteemed shareholders and reducing interference in the stock exchange.

What strategies did you take to increase the quality of your products?

Based on strategic studies and the position of Mashhad Ring Manufacturing Company, the following strategies have been selected as future plans. After becoming operational plans and monitoring them, the organization is driven to achieve macro goals in the field of profitability. Target markets also expand as quality increases.

- Development of ring making organization in the form of horizontal and vertical integration of the organization
- Increasing the current market share by entering Saipa and other passenger and commercial car manufacturers in the country
- Market development and attracting new customers in the field of non-automotive such as home appliances
- Development of the organization's product portfolio (homogeneous and heterogeneous products simultaneously)
- Increase productivity and reduce costs as a current and continuous pattern
- Invest in the field of improving machines and eliminating all modes in the process
- Partnership with Ferdowsi University of Mashhad and engineering interaction with Mobarakeh Steel Complex to design and manufacture ROMs and rings with higher mechanical properties and lighter weight
- Equipping automation and simulation processes and completing the laboratory in order to empower the design level and reduce the time of development of new products

Tehran-Helsinki Emphasize Expanding Cultural Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP) - The Niavaran Cultural Center and the Finnish Embassy in Tehran signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate, strengthen and expand cultural and artistic co-operations, and in the first step, agreed to hold an exhibition of works by a famous Finnish architect.

The MoU was signed between Ebad-Reza Eslami, Director of Niavaran Cultural Center, and Keijo Norvanto, Ambassador of Finland to Iran.

Both sides have agreed to hold an exhibition of the works of Hugo Alvar Henrik Aalto, a Finnish architect in Tehran in the first month of summer.

(P)GCC Hostage to Excessive Demands of a Raucous Minority

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign ministry spokesman has strongly rejected "baseless and repetitive" allegations in the final statement of the latest meeting of the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council ((P)GCC), noting that the council has been taken hostage by a raucous minority of its member states.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Saeed Khatibzadeh dismissed the council's final statement on Iran's nuclear program at the end of its 148th meeting, saying, "The (P) GCC is practically hostage to excessive demands resulting from failed policies of a raucous minority of its member states."

He also slammed the council for its double-standard policies toward Iran, which on the one hand, claims to be seeking improved ties with Tehran, but on the other, levels baseless charges against the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian spokesman said taking such contradictory positions toward the Islamic Republic of Iran will weaken "dialog-based approaches," and turn the region into a stockpile of Western companies' weapons, thus paving the way for foreign interference in the region.

Rejecting the (P) GCC's claims about Iran's nuclear program, Khatibzadeh said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has been always complying with international law and its obligations. Therefore, it allows no interference in its nuclear and missile programs ... and these countries better start fulfilling their outstanding commitments toward international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency."



"Those countries whose interventionist policies in other countries have led to massacre of innocent civilians, especially in Yemen, and spread of insecurity and terrorism in the region, are trying through projection, to cover up their crimes against human rights and evade international punishment," Khatibzadeh said.

He expressed hope that the (P) GCC member states will stop issuing outdated statements, pay more attention to regional realities, and orientate their approaches toward promotion of regional dialogue.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its own strategic views and principled policies, considers interaction and cooperation the main solution to regional problems and welcomes any positive initiative aimed at promoting relations on the basis of international rules and regulations," he said.

Khatibzadeh's remarks came in response to the latest GCC statement on Wednesday in which the council members claimed that it would be dangerous to separate global powers' nuclear deal with Iran from Tehran's missile program and "destabilizing" behavior" in the region.

Iran Protests Saudi Decision to Bar Pilgrims From Hajj

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top government authority on Hajj has protested against a recent decision adopted in Saudi Arabia to impose restrictions on the annual pilgrimage for a second year over coronavirus concerns.

Abdolfattah Navvab, who serves as representative of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on Hajj issues, said on Wednesday that Iran will continue to press Saudi Arabia to observe the rights of the Iranian pilgrims in this year's Hajj season beginning mid-July.

Navvab suggested in remarks published by the official IRNA news agency that some 45,000 of the pilgrims that would be allowed to Hajj ceremony in Saudi Arabia this year will be nationals of other countries.

That comes as Saudi Arabian government has announced it will restrict the Hajj pilgrimage to a maximum of 60,000 people from within the kingdom who have been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Navvab said, however, that Saudi Arabia's decision to impose restrictions on Hajj pilgrims is against Islamic principles. "Saudi Arabia should respect the quota for pilgrims from our country," said Navvab.

"It is a right bestowed upon all Muslims by God that they should set foot in the Land of Revelation ..., no matter they are in Saudi Arabia or not," he said.

Saudi Arabia has for a second consecutive year barred Muslims from other countries to perform their rituals in the annual Hajj pilgrimage due to the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Hajj has become a contentious issue between Iran and Saudi Arabia since fatal incidents in the 2015 ceremony which led to more than 460 deaths among Iranian pilgrims.

A senior Iranian administration official on Hajj issues said on Wednesday that the government had sent correspondences to Saudi Arabia regarding the rights of the Iranian pilgrims in this year's Hajj.

Due to Public Turnout, Enemy Cannot Do a Damn Thing

TEHRAN (IP) - The secretary of the Guardian Council, along with Abbas Ali Kadkhodai, the spokesman of the body entered the Guardian Council's 1594 polling station on Friday morning to cast his vote, saying due to people's turnout enemies cannot do a damn thing.

After casting his ballot, Ayatollah Jannati said: «I have three recommendations, the first participation, the second participation, the third participation»

He said: «I hope the people are present on the scene as always as passionate and because of the presence of the people, the enemy could not do a damn thing.»

The 13th Presidential Election, the 6th city and rural Islamic councils' election, the mid-term election of the 5th term of the Assembly of Experts, and the mid-term election of the 11th term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly are underway across Iran.

Iran to Continue Supporting Peace, Stability in Afghanistan

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister stressed the continuation of Iran's policy in supporting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Mohammad Javad Zarif made the remark in a meeting with Afghanistan's former foreign minister Salahuddin Rabbani in Turkey on Thursday.

Zarif underlined the need for cooperation of all sides in Afghanistan in dealing with the unfavorable security situation in the country. For his part, Salahuddin Rabbani praised Iran's stands in helping to establish peace and security in this country.

Ran's foreign minister also met with Afghanistan's chief executive officer, Abdullah Abdullah during which he expressed concern over the security conditions in Afghanistan. In the meeting Abdullah appreciated the constructive efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and briefed Zarif on the latest situation in Afghanistan.

Zarif left Tehran on Thursday at the invitation of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said. "At this forum, Zarif will deliver a speech about the Islamic Republic of Iran's doctrine of good neighborliness and elaborate on our country's policies in this regard," Khatibzadeh added.

On the sidelines of the forum, the top Iranian diplomat will also hold talks with a number of participating officials and foreign ministers and also take part in a trilateral meeting with his Turkish and Afghan counterparts.



GC to Act According To Constitution



TEHRAN (IP) - The Guardian Council's spokesman highlighted that the Council's actions are under the law, and the qualifications of the candidates are based on the Islamic Republic of Iran's Constitution.

In response to Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's remarks on Wednesday, Abbas Ali Kadkhodai said: "After the Leader's speech, the Guardian Council has stated that if any organizations have done false reports regarding the elections, they should compensate for it."

In his Wednesday TV speech addressing the nation, Ayatollah Khamenei said that if in the qualification and eligibility of any candidates from any organization any false report issued or for any case injustice happened for any candidate, it should be compensated by the responsible organization.

There is no law to declare the reasons for disqualification, but it will be done to anyone who wants to, Kadkhodaei added.

"For the Guardian Council, the vote of the majority of the Guardian Council members is the final criterion for qualification or non-qualification of the candidates."

"In an election, candidates must have at least seven affirmative votes to qualify in the Guardian Council, the votes of the candidates in the Guardian Council are different, and I cannot announce the secret votes of the members of the Guardian Council to the candidates, he underlined."

Responding to the other Iran press question on the priority of vote counting, he stressed that priority of counting begins with the votes of the presidential elections by the Guardian Council and the Interior Ministry, followed by the parliament and assembly of experts, and finally the city council.

On elections day, Guardian Council is duty-bound to protect public votes, so the Council's inspectors (between 3 and 5 people) are present in the polling stations to monitor everything closely, and any possible violations will be thoroughly prosecuted, Guardian Council's spokesman said.

Iran Takes Delivery of 1m Doses of Coronavirus Vaccines

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Red Crescent Society (RCS) has taken delivery of one million doses of coronavirus vaccines amid a reported shortage in supplies that has caused delays to giving second shots to the elderly.

A spokesman of the Food and Drug Administration of Iran said on Thursday that the new consignment of vaccines had arrived in Tehran's Imam Khomeini airport early in the morning.

Kianoush Jahanpour corrected a earlier statement by the RCS suggesting that the new batch of coronavirus vaccines had contained two million doses, saying the supply delivered to the health ministry had contained one million doses.

Earlier RCS statements suggest the international organization

will import up to 7.5 million doses of coronavirus vaccines in the calendar month to June 21.

That comes as vaccination sites in Iran had reported a shortage of Sinopharm vaccines for second dose administrations planned for earlier this month. Health ministry officials said last week that there would be no concerns about second shots while insisting that supplies will arrive in the country with a short delay.

Iran has been using coronavirus vaccine supplies from Russia and China to proceed with a nationwide inoculation program against the disease that kicked off in late December.

The government has vowed to accelerate vaccinations by introducing supplies of home-made jabs in the upcoming weeks.

People's Vote Defining in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Judiciary Chief who is also a presidential candidate said on Friday that the Islamic Republic is proud of the fact that people's vote has a defining role in the governing system.

After casting his vote on Friday morning, Raisi made the remarks to reporters as a president hopeful, castigating western countries as the democracy purporters who only pretend to be respecting people's votes.

He asked those responsible for running or supervising the voting centers to be trustworthy, urging people to vote, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or political views.

Asked about the promises he would make if elected, Raisi said that he would keep all the promises he made during his campaign.

Manufacturing of Refrigerators, Freezers Rises 29.6% in 2 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Manufacturing of refrigerators and freezers in Iran during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- May 21) has risen 29.6 percent from that of the same period of time in the previous year, IRNA reported citing the data released by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The ministry's data show that 279,600 refrigerators and freezers have been manufactured during the two-month period of this year.

As reported, over 15 million sets of home appliances have been manufactured in the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), which was 78 percent more than the output in its preceding year.

Rise in home appliances manufacturing and export has been also planned for the current year.

Iran's Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki has stated that the production of home appliances in the country has increased by 36 percent following the exit of foreign brands.

"Following the imposition of U.S. sanctions and the withdrawal of South Korean companies from Iran, the production of Iranian home appliances increased by 36 percent," Niaraki said on the sidelines of a visit to a production unit.

According to Niaraki, the indigenization of the knowledge for the production of such products has also increased by 20 percent since the Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018).

"Currently, Iranian producers have indigenized the knowledge for manufacturing about 70 percent of the country's home appliance needs, and the figure has reached 90 percent for some products," he said.

People's Vote Must Be Well Protected

TEHRAN (IP) - The Interior Minister expressed hope that the executive officials and election observers should do their duty well in safeguarding the people's vote and holding a legal, and healthy elections with the observance of health protocols.

Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli pointed out on Friday morning that executive officials and election observers were stationed in 66,000 presidential election polling stations and more than 75,000 city and rural council polling stations.

Emphasizing that the observers should carefully carry out the responsibility of monitoring, the Iranian Interior Minister stated: "Given that the people's vote is a manifestation of their will to transfer power and govern Iran, it must be well protected."

Iran Stands Firmly by Cuban People

TEHRAN (MNA) - Stating that siege of Cuba by the United States is 'cruel oppression and an illegitimate economic war', Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that Islamic Republic of Iran has firmly stood by the Cuban people.

In a tweet on Thursday, Saeed Khatibzadeh Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman wrote that the blockade of Cuba by the United States is cruel oppression and an illegitimate economic war against the people of Cuba.

He reiterated that the Islamic Republic of Iran has firmly stood by the Cuban people and government.

His remarks came after Cuba called for an end to the unjust and inhumane economic, trade and financial blockade that has been imposed by the United States against Cuban people for more than six decades which showed a more severe form of genocide during the coronavirus global pandemic.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48

132. And obey Allah and the Messenger, that ye may obtain mercy.
133. Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (132 - 133)

Iran Industrial Exports Up 80% This Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) says the country's industrial exports have grown by 80 percent this year while the coronavirus pandemic had halted exports in different countries in the past year.

During a meeting to review the problems of the industrial units in the town of Khomein, Ali Rasoulia said despite all pressures because of the U.S.'s cruel unilateral sanctions and COVID-19 threats, last year industry sector in the country grew 8 percent and it can be said the achievement was the result of support from the domestic production, resistance economy and the growth of the domestic industries.

He further said that industrial parks is one of the honors of the Islamic Republic establishment and said the launch of the industrial parks was one of the prudent and wise actions of the country which has had a large number of fruits in the process of the industrial development of the country since 1983.

Rasoulia also stated that since the first day of the Islamic Republic, more than 828 industrial towns and region have been readied for handing over to the investors and economic activists to be established in the production units.

He added that over 47,500 production units are deployed in the industrial parks and



areas of the country and around 950,000 people are busy in those units directly.

He reiterated that the year before last year, over 30b rials has been invested in the infrastructures of the industrial towns and areas of the country.

Rasoulia pointed to the supports to the small industries which has been tripled, adding that support from the production units will be directed to the export-centered and brand-centered.

He went on to say that attracting the foreign investment, export consortium, financing, educational courses, creating brands, opening offices abroad, participation in the overseas exhibitions and issuing guarantee letters are of the supports offered to the small industries which have become five-fold.

Rasoulia further said that the organization backs the participation of the private sectors in the industrial towns and areas because these parks should move in direction of being private industrial parks.

KSC Manager Meets Members of Khuzestan Province Small Industries



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of Khuzestan Steel Company (KSC) Mr. Amin Ebrahimi last week met members of Khuzestan Province Small Industries

Addressing the meeting where some senior officials of KSC were present, Head of Ministry, Mine and Trade Office of Khuzestan Province Mr. Amir Hossein Nazari said that the whole set of KSC has always been supportive of the small industries and he expects this support to continue like the past. He added he believes activities of the small industries both guarantees occupation and investment development and providing security of the province. He also called for monthly or quarterly meeting between the company and managers of industrial companies and producers for getting familiar with the needs of the steel industry and creating equal opportunity for active industries.

Nazari added that KSC is one of the biggest units of the province and all is tasked with moving in direction of the success of this company as the company has moved on course to value added. The CEO of KSC Mr. Ebrahimi, for his part, said that in steel industry for occupation, 23 occupations are created in the chain of steel, adding that KSC with producing 3.8tn tons ranks second in the national steel industry.

He noted that to retain current position in the 2025 Outlook, the company needs all-out direct investment and some part of this investment for development of KSC is done by the small industries.

Ebrahimi reiterated that Khuzestan Province should move on course to developmental approach and in case it happens, the small industries will benefit along with the growth of the big and effective industries in the national economy. He noted in the past years, the first exhibition on indigenization was held with presence of 65 provider companies and inter-provincial par-manufacturers and its achievement was signing of several contracts and cooperation between KSC with the knowledge-based companies and the second edition of the exhibition was to be held last year that it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Iran Electricity Supply to Iraq Slashed by a Fourth

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran state electricity company Tavanir says power supplies to Iraq have been slashed by a fourth after an explosion in the Iraqi territory that is believed to have been carried out by the Daesh terrorist group.

Tavanir spokesman Mostafa Rajabi said that the explosion a day earlier in Iraq's eastern Diyala province had targeted one of the four lines used for transmission of electricity from neighboring Iran.

Rajabi said Iraq would be responsible for the entire

operation to repair the line as well as for evaluations related to losses suffered to supplies because of the explosion.

He said repairs on the damaged transmission line should finish within the next two or three days.

Iraq security sources have blamed the Daesh terrorist group for the explosion in Diyala where the blast has caused power cuts in swaths of lands in the territory.

Iran started to slash electricity supplies to Iraq by more than 60% in June amid increased domestic demand for power and the fact that Iraqi government had failed to

settle its previous energy supplies debts to Tehran.

Iraqi authorities have been shuttling between Baghdad and Tehran to find a settlement on the issue of energy arrears as they seek a restoration of electricity and natural gas supplies from Iran in the run up to hot summer months in the Arab country.

Rajabi said increased household and industrial demand for power has caused Iran's imports of electricity to outpace exports, adding that demand is expected to further increase amid rising temperatures.

Statistics show the development of lead and zinc project in Mehdiabad;

The Countdown to the Opening of the First Phase of the Processing plant has now Begun

What is the current status of the project? What performance have you had in the fields of extraction, production and supply of equipment?

The latest progress of the Mehdi Abad project can be examined in three sections: mining, factories and infrastructure. The project has been delayed for decades due to various reasons, including the need for very large investments, technical problems such as water supply, technical knowledge and low mineral content; During the last four years, serious measures have been taken to exploit it. The result of these efforts has been solving Imidro's problems in the private sector.

Access to sulfide mineral was achieved

In the mining sector, 77 million tons of extraction and tailings have been done and 180 meters in depth, about seven million tons of oxide minerals have been extracted and access to minerals that can be used in the sulfide plant has been achieved. Thus, one of the problems of Mehdiabad mine, which was the location of the mineral in depth, has been solved.

Production plan for 800 thousand tons of zinc concentrate with full launch of the project

In the factories section, the construction operation is planned in three phases, the first two phases are for the production of 400,000 tons of sulfide concentrate and the third phase is related to the extraction of oxide soil.

The production capacity of the factories with the full commissioning of the phases of this project will be 800,000 tons of zinc concentrate with a grade of at least 35% or equivalent as the main product and 80,000 metric tons of lead-silver concentrate with a grade of 60% lead as a by-product.

About 60% of physical progress in the largest concentrate plant on the country

Currently, the first phase of the project is underway to build a factory with a feed of two million tons of input and the equivalent of 200,000 tons of zinc concentrate product with 55% physical progress. This is the first phase of the largest lead and zinc concentrate plant in the country.

Supply of all project equipment

In this section, all equipment such as crushers, Asia, flotation line were provided by the best brands in the world. It is then concreted. The high volume of input has caused all the equipment to face very large scale and very heavy workload. 25,000 cubic meters of concreting for the first phase shows

this. This equipment is one of the largest equipments in the mining industry of the country.

Due to the water shortage crisis in the country and Yazd province, one of the main problems of the project will definitely be water supply. What measures have been taken in this regard?

In the infrastructure section, a 100 km long water transmission line with a flow rate of 100 liters per second will enter the site from the Yazd effluent treatment plant, which is currently more than 95 km long, and pumping stations (three stations) are under construction. Is. This Bahman line will be put into operation this year, before the start-up of the factory, and will solve the most important problem of Mehdiabad, which was the supply of water. In the electricity sector, the initial measures, including the payment of the branch fee and the necessary permits and related studies have been completed and the contractor for the construction of the substation and the power transmission line has been selected. An electric substation is currently under construction. The relevant transformer, the order made, will be transferred to the relevant place for installation soon.



How much investment has been made in this national plan and how many people will be employed with its launch?

The total required investment is estimated at about one billion dollars, in the first phase so far more than 4 thousand billion tomans have been invested. According to the plan, the first phase will be operational by the end of 2021. With the launch of this project, more than 2% of the metal content in the world will be produced in Mehdi Abad.

■ The employment of Mehdiabad reaches 1500 people
■ So far, more than 500 people have worked on the project, mostly locals. After the operation of the project, this

number will reach 1500 direct people.

■ Financing; The main pillar is the advancement of project goals. Given the special circumstances of the country due to the most unprecedented sanctions, what measures have been taken in this area?

Project financing in the face of severe sanctions

■ So far, all shareholders' cases have been done in accordance with the commercial law, and financing at the required time is definitely the most important feature of the investor, which has been done in the best way in the current difficult sanctions and economic conditions. Therefore, any increase in capital or composition of shareholders is commensurate with the participation in financing and in accordance with the commercial law and is one of the internal issues of the project company, which has been well followed by the private sector.

How do you assess the composition of investor shareholders and their participation in capital increase and financing?

Mehdiabad and Imidro lead and zinc complexes follow the progress of the project according to the contract, and the composition of shareholders and how to participate in the capital increase is one of the internal issues of the investor company, which has progressed according to the commercial law. The important thing is the volume of financing at the right time, which has been done well in the current difficult conditions, and in recent years, despite the high investment risks in Mehdi Abad, timely financing has been done, which results in physical progress and infrastructure. The projects are quite obvious.

Concluding remarks

■ Mehdiabad lead and zinc project; A clear example of government-private partnership

■ Imidro, Mehdiabad Complex and the investor are removing the obstacles and progress of the project with all their might and speed.

■ We are very pleased to announce the Mehdiabad lead and zinc project; A clear example is the partnership between the government and the private sector.

■ Expectation from all the sympathizers of the country and the owners of industries and media in the year of «production and removal of barriers to facilitate and remove obstacles» from the project is high. We hope that the result of this project will benefit the country, industry and employment.



The first phase of the largest lead and zinc processing plant in the Middle East will be completed by the end of the year. Mehdiabad lead and zinc complex is managed by a specialized management team. Imidro support has accelerated development efforts since 2017. This year, the largest lead and zinc processing project in the country will be unveiled. According to the director of the complex, this project has achieved significant achievements in three areas: mining, factory and infrastructure. Despite the conditions of the embargo, all its equipment was supplied, and most importantly, the project was financed in the best possible time. Amin Safari believes: The Mehdiabad lead and zinc project is a clear example of real government-private partnership. In order to reflect the plans, achievements and the latest news of the above plan, we have arranged an interview with him. You can read the details below:

The Mehdiabad lead and zinc project had been halted for several years for various reasons. But today we are seeing acceleration in the implementation of programs. There has been a kind of national convergence to launch it. When did development start in Mehdiabad?

Imidro started investing in Mehdiabad mine in 2016 in accordance with the rules and regulations. This region is known as the largest lead and zinc reserve in the country. Investment, financing and execution of mining operations began. It put up for auction through a public and international call to build factories and provide the necessary infrastructure. The tender was well received by the bidders. In a competitive process, a consortium of five companies won the auction. After that, according to the contract and with the official consent of all the members of the consortium of the company, a project called Pishgaman Sanat Sarb and Zinc Mehdi Abad Company was established to implement the contract and the contract related to the mentioned company was transferred through an annex. From 2017, the studies of the advance period and then the executive operations began. In this regard, Imidro has done its legal duty well.

Swedish Gov't Set to Lose Confidence Vote

STOCKHOLM (AFP) - Sweden's minority government could be toppled next week after a group of four parties in parliament announced Thursday they would back a no confidence vote, potentially triggering a snap election.

The far-right Sweden Democrats party announced it was calling for a motion of no confidence for Monday after the Left Party earlier warned it would seek a similar move over a dispute on rent controls for newly constructed apartments. "There is now a majority in parliament that wants to dismiss the prime minister," Henrik Vinge, parliament group leader for the Sweden Democrats, told a press conference.



Prosecutor Seeks Prison Time for Sarkozy

PARIS (Reuters) - French prosecutors have requested a six-month prison term for former president Nicolas Sarkozy at his campaign financing trial, BFM TV reported on Thursday.

A spokesman for the prosecutor's office could not immediately comment on the report.

On Tuesday, Sarkozy denied wrongdoing at his trial over the illegal financing of his failed 2012 re-election campaign, saying its expenses were not his responsibility.

Prosecutors allege that Sarkozy's conservative party spent nearly double the 22.5 million euros (\$27 million) allowed under electoral law on extravagant campaign rallies, then hired a friendly public relations agency to hide the cost.



Russia Ready for Further Dialogue If U.S. Is Willing



MOSCOW (AFP) - The Kremlin was guarded about future dialogue with Washington on Thursday, a day after the first face-to-face meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. counterpart Joe Biden.

The two leaders met in Geneva on Wednesday to ease soaring tensions between Moscow and Washington, with relations at their lowest since the end of the Cold War.

Putin said Russia was ready to continue the talks provided Washington was also willing to do so.

"We are ready to continue this dialogue to the same extent as the American side is," Putin said in televised remarks.

The Russian leader said the meeting was "quite friendly" and that he and Biden "were able to understand each other on key issues". Putin said the US president was a "professional" and "you have to be very attentive when working with him so as not to miss something".

"So what that he sometimes confuses things," Putin said.

"His press secretary is a young, educated, beautiful woman -- she herself constantly confuses things," Putin said, referring to White House press secretary Jen Psaki.

"It is not because she is poorly educated or has a bad memory, just when people think that some things are secondary they don't focus too much attention on them," he said.

Putin said "Americans think that nothing is more important than themselves".

After talks that lasted more than three hours, the leaders issued a brief statement agreeing to start dialogue on nuclear arms control, a key issue after Biden's predecessor Donald Trump withdrew from a bilateral arms accord with Russia.

On Thursday, the joint statement was hailed by senior Kremlin officials.

"Even though it's a very short text, the joint statement on strategic stability realises the special responsibility of our two countries not only to our people but to the whole world," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a radio interview on Thursday.

Earlier on Thursday, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said the rejection of the possibility of a nuclear war by the two sides was a "significant achievement".

Since the extension of the New START nuclear treaty under Biden, "this is Washington's second step in restoring common sense and a responsible approach to key aspects of international security," Ryabkov told Kommersant business daily.

New START is the last remaining arms reduction pact between the two nuclear states that hold more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Diplomatic relations between Moscow and Washington had all but broken down since Biden took office, with tensions high over a long list of disputes, from cyberattacks and election meddling to human rights violations.

UN Climate Talks Wrap Up After Meagre Progress

PARIS (Dispatches) - UN climate negotiations wrapped up Thursday after three weeks of virtual talks that failed to make major headway on crucial disputes between nations ahead of a crunch summit in November.

The discussions, which were all informal, saw "good progress made" on a number of issues, UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa told journalists by videoconference.

But she added: "I cannot say there were any breakthroughs."

The talks were supposed to tackle a range of topics, including final elements of the "rulebook" to the 2015 Paris Agreement governing carbon markets and how financial contributions to the climate fight are reported.

The discussions were the first under the UN's watch since December 2019, and come amid growing public alarm at the climate emergency.

Sonam Wangdi, chair of the Least Developed Countries Group negotiating bloc, said the talks had made "slow progress".

"Current plans and pledges to cut emissions are extremely inadequate; far from enough to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C", the most ambitious Paris goal, Wangdi said.

Rich nations have yet to live up to their pledge to provide \$100 billion (82 billion euros) a year to countries most at risk from the impact of climate change.

Last week G7 leaders recommitted to that goal, yet funding available for climate mitigation and adaptation remains significantly below the target.

Developing nations are desperate for funding to help them recover from the damage caused by extreme weather events made more likely by climate change, as well as to prepare their infrastructure for future shocks.

But Espinosa told AFP this week that the issue of finance was not discussed during the three-week talks.

Failure to advance on this and other issues meant that nations face a "daunting task" to finalise the rulebook of the Paris deal by the end of November's climate change summit, known as COP26, Wangdi said.



Protests Against Police Brutality Spread Across Tunisian Capital

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Protests against police abuse in the Tunisian capital have spread to several other working-class districts more than a week after violence broke out in the Sidi Hassine neighborhood over the death of a man in police custody.

The protesters gathered in Ettadhamen and Intilaka - among the capital's poorest districts -, blocked roads, burned tyres and threw stones at police, as officers chased demonstrators and fired tear gas.

Last week, a video of police stripping and beating a young man shared on social media triggered widespread anger among the public. A few days later the death of a man in police custody sparked protests in Sidi Hassine, in the outskirts of Tunis.

The man was arrested on suspicion of dealing drugs but the family accused the police of beating him to death. Tunisia's Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi, who is also the interim interior minister, has denied the allegation.

On Tuesday, hundreds gathered in Sidi Hassine with slogans against the government and called on officials to stop police abuse and punish those involved.

They chanted: "Freedom, freedom, the police state is over."

The United Nations human rights office in Tunisia said on Monday it was concerned about repeated allegations of serious violations by the Tunisian police amid violent protests.

Forty-three organisations, including the journalists' syndicate, unions, the lawyers' syndicate and the Human Rights League, called for a massive national protest on Friday to end what they say is police impunity.

They said that they filed a lawsuit against Prime Minister Mechichi.

More than 10 years after the Arab Spring revolutionary protests against poverty, injustice and a police state, Tunisia has made progress towards democracy but its economic problems have worsened, which has led to repeated protests.

During the most recent January protests, police arrested more than 2,000 people, most of them minors. Human rights organizations said that hundreds of them were subjected to ill-treatment and torture.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Casts Shadow Over Armenia's Snap Poll

BAKU (Dispatches) - A polarized Armenia is preparing to vote in snap parliamentary elections viewed as a test of whether hard-won democracy can survive the political turmoil caused by defeat in last year's Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The outcome of Sunday's election will define post-war Armenia and the future of a 30-year conflict with Azerbaijan, yet many voters are undecided in what is seen by some as a choice between bad and worse.

Four blocs and 22 parties will go up against caretaker prime minister Nikol Pashinyan, who stepped down in April following months of protests over his signing of a peace deal last year that ended six weeks of fighting.

At least 6,000 people, from both sides, died in the conflict, most of them soldiers. The agreement, brokered by Russia, was widely seen as favoring arch foe Azerbaijan and saw Armenia return swathes of territory in and around Nagorno-Karabakh to its neighbor, but Pashinyan has insisted he had no choice in the face of even heavier losses.

In what experts say are perhaps the most competitive elections in the history of modern Armenia, four former leaders of the current republic are participating in the parliamentary election. With threats and insults being exchanged and populist rhetoric rife, some believe there is a risk of confrontation spilling into the streets.

The frontrunners include Pashinyan, a former journalist who came to power after spearheading peaceful protests in 2018 dubbed the Velvet Revolution, and Robert Kocharyan, an ex-president who to some represents a corrupt old guard that was deposed in the uprisings.

While Pashinyan and his Civil Contract party promised during their time in office to separate business from politics, Kocharyan still faces a bribery investigation over an alleged \$3m bribe from a businesswoman during his final months as president in 2008.

Pashinyan came to power after spearheading the 'Velvet Revolution' in 2018 [Tigran Mehrabyan/PAN Photo via Reuters]

In total, six of the candidates are facing criminal charges. Kocharyan, heading the Armenian Alliance, is also a former leader of Nagorno-Karabakh and hails from its capital, Stepanakert. He is positioning himself as an experienced and security-minded politician who is coming out of retirement to steer Armenia through difficult times.

But a lack of faith in current and former authorities could translate into low voter turnout. According to a March poll by the U.S.-based International Republican Institute, more than 40 percent of respondents said they would not vote in an election. Voters interviewed by Al Jazeera expressed apathy towards all sides of the political spectrum.



Erdogan Tells Biden Turkey To Keep Stance on S-400s

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he told his United States counterpart, Joe Biden, that Ankara will not change its stance on its Russian S-400 missile defenses over which it has been sanctioned by Washington.

The two leaders sounded upbeat after their face-to-face talks on the sidelines of a NATO summit on Monday, although there was no announcement of any significant breakthroughs in disputes, including the S-400s, Syria and other issues.

Turkey's purchase of the S-400s has strained ties with the US and other NATO allies over concerns that the systems are not compatible with the alliance's defenses and may threaten the US F-35 fighter jets. Ankara, which was expelled from the jet program over the Russian systems, rejects the concerns.

"I told [Biden] that they should not expect Turkey to take a different step on the F-35 and S-400 issues because we did what we had to for the F-35s and gave the necessary money," Erdogan told reporters on a return flight from Azerbaijan on Thursday. "We must monitor developments closely. We will be following up on all our rights," he said.

"In the next period, our foreign ministers, defense ministers and defense industry chairs will be moving this process forward by meeting with their counterparts."

Ankara and Washington have been trying to put aside their differences and focus on areas of cooperation, such as Afghanistan and Syria, although Turkey has been infuriated by the US support for the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in Syria, which it considers "a terrorist group".

Erdogan said he conveyed Turkey's views on the issue at his meeting with Biden, according to state-run Anadolu news agency. Turkey has also offered to guard and operate Kabul's airport after US and NATO forces withdraw. NATO head Jens Stoltenberg said on Monday Turkey would play a key role there but that no decision was made at the summit. "Following the U.S. decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, Turkey can take up a lot more responsibilities here," Erdogan said, without elaborating.

Last week, the Taliban said Turkey should withdraw troops from Afghanistan under the 2020 US pullout deal, effectively rejecting Ankara's proposal over the Kabul airport.



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Niavaran Apt (\$2000)

250sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, L.balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Jordan Villa (\$5000)

1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
marble fl
Fully Furn

Jordan (\$1800)
180sq.m, 3bdrs
balcony, F.F

Velenjak (\$2400)
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, F.F

Darrous Villa
1200sq.m, 5bdrs
S/p, yard, & F.F

Farmanieh Apt (\$1500)
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, & F.F
(\$3000)

Elahieh (\$2600)
260sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, balcony
pkg, & Fully Furn

Jordan office (\$40 per sq.m)
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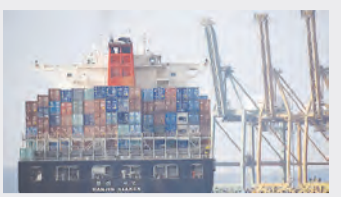
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Singapore's May Exports Rise 8.8% y/y

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Singapore's May non-oil domestic exports (NODX) expanded 8.8% from a year earlier, official data showed on Thursday, driven mainly by non-electronic shipments such as specialised machinery, petrochemicals and primary chemicals.

The year-on-year export growth was below economists' expectations in a Reuters poll for a 16% rise and compared with 6% growth in April.

On a seasonally adjusted month-on-month basis, exports fell 0.1% in May, Enterprise Singapore data showed, versus the prior month's 8.8% contraction. Economists had forecast 4.7% growth.



China's Economic Growth Moderates

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economic growth moderated in May as flattering comparisons to the pandemic-hit economic figures early last year tapered off and Chinese consumers continued to keep a close eye on their pocketbooks.

Factory output, a key growth pillar in China's pandemic recovery for more than a year, remained resilient last month, but investment and domestic consumption fell short of expectations despite a boost from a long holiday, weighed down by a fresh wave of Covid-19 infections.

China's industrial production rose 8.8% from a year earlier in May, slowing from April's 9.8% pace, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed Wednesday. The reading of factory output, which was buoyed by strong overseas demand for Chinese-made goods, matched the median forecast made by economists polled by The Wall Street Journal. The key gauge of factory activity was 13.6% higher than the level recorded in May 2019, long before the Chinese economy was hit by the new coronavirus, the statistics bureau said. Officials have been comparing monthly economic data with the same period two years earlier to filter out distortions from last year's pandemic shock.

The double-digit percentage growth compared with pre-virus levels is much higher than the roughly 6% year-over-year expansion that China's industrial sector was logging each month before the pandemic, underscoring the strength of the current rebound in China's industrial sector.

But if China's factories have continued to top expectations, its consumers have been consistent in disappointing policy makers, who have been hoping for a pivot toward domestic spending as the main driver of the economy.

Retail sales, a key gauge of China's consumption, rose by 12.4% last month compared with a year earlier, slowing from the 17.7% year-over-year growth rate in April and falling short of the 13.6% gain anticipated by economists.

Unlike the U.S.'s pandemic stimulus program, which put money directly into households' bank accounts, Beijing's response boosted investment and helped businesses hit by Covid-19.

"The direction of China consumption is to further improve, but the pace of its recovery will be slow," said Hui Shan, chief China economist at Goldman Sachs. Ms. Shan said that even more than a year after the initial outbreak, Chinese consumers' propensity to save rather than spend remained high.

That tendency toward caution has made domestic spending a laggard in China's economic recovery, which has instead been powered primarily by industrial production, exports and government-backed investment.

The hoped-for pickup in consumer spending didn't materialize despite further signs of improvement last month in China's labor market. The country's headline measure of joblessness, the urban surveyed unemployment rate, fell for a third consecutive month, to 5.0% in May—its lowest level in two years.

Bo Zhuang, a China economist for London-based economic research firm TS Lombard, blamed the lackluster spending figures on sluggish wage growth, a relatively slow vaccination campaign and longer-term behavioral changes induced by the pandemic.

Germany's Ifo Institute Cuts 2021 Economic Growth Forecast to 3.3%

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The Ifo Institute has lowered its forecast for economic growth for Germany in 2021 to 3.3% from 3.7% forecast in March, because of bottlenecks in the supply of intermediate products.

"Reopening businesses triggered a strong recovery, but this is now getting pushed back a bit further than we thought in the spring," Timo Wollmershaeuser, head of forecasts at Ifo, said.

In contrast, the Ifo Institute raised its forecast for 2022 to 4.3% gross domestic product growth from 3.2% previously estimated. According to the Ifo Institute calculations, the cost of the coronavirus crisis for the years 2020 to 2022 amounts to 382 billion euros (\$463 billion). Given these estimates, the German economy would grow during that time period by an average of 1.2% per year.

Given the strong recovery, the number of short-time workers, which was still 2.3 million in May, is expected to fall rapidly and reach its pre-crisis level of about 100,000 next year, the Ifo Institute said.

The number of unemployed people should fall more slowly, from 2.70 million, or 5.9% of the workforce, in 2020 to 2.65 million, or 5.8%, this year and then 2.4 million, or 5.2%, in 2022, the Ifo Institute said.

Ifo's analysts expect the inflation rate to accelerate temporarily, from 0.6% in 2020 to 2.6% this year, driven mainly by higher energy prices and the renewed increase in value-added tax. After that, the rise in consumer prices should level off again at 1.9% in 2022.

The German government's funding gap is expected to initially widen slightly to EUR150.4 billion in 2021 from EUR149.2 billion in 2020. Next year, it is predicted to narrow sharply to EUR49.6 billion, although Ifo highlighted that this outcome depends on the election results.

Foreign trade will increase significantly, with exports growing by 10.4% this year after contracting by 9.4% in 2020. Imports should even grow by 11.4% after contracting by 8.4% last year. In 2022, the increases will be smaller, 5.6% in exports and 7.3% in imports, the Ifo Institute said.

This means Germany's current-account surplus will fall from EUR231 billion to EUR206 billion before reaching EUR184 billion. The surplus would thus be below the 6.0% mark, which the European Union considers critical, for the first time in years in 2021 and 2022.



Vaccines Will Be The Most Important Economic Policy This Year

LONDON (Dispatches) - Vaccine policy will top all other economic policies this year as the world tries to recover from the coronavirus crisis, International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said Wednesday at CNBC's Global Evolve Summit.

"Vaccine policy this year, probably next year, is going to be the most important economic policy, may beat even monetary and fiscal policy in terms of significance," Georgieva told CNBC's Geoff Cutmore. "A prerequisite to bring the world to a sustained high level of growth everywhere is to vaccinate all people and that's not yet done. We have [a] two track vaccination path right now; we have to overcome that," she said.

The IMF said in April that the end of the crisis was "increasingly visible." At the time, the institution raised its economic projections for the global economy based on higher vaccination rates and the ongoing monetary and fiscal stimulus. As a result, the IMF projected a global GDP growth of 6% for this year and 4.4% next year. But the forecasts are heavily dependent on how vaccination programs evolve, including in low-income nations.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva delivers her curtain raiser speech previewing the key issues to be addressed in the Annual Meetings in Washington, DC, on October 8, 2019.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva delivers her curtain raiser speech previewing the key issues to be addressed in the Annual Meetings in Washington, DC, on October 8, 2019.



Restoring Degraded Land Would Generate an Extra \$1.4 trillion in Agricultural Production Each Year

TEHRAN (UNIC) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, 17 June 2021, said that restoring degraded land would generate an extra \$1.4 trillion dollars in agricultural production each year.

The full text of his message reads:

Humanity is waging a relentless, self-destructive war on nature.

Biodiversity is declining, greenhouse gas concentrations are rising, and our pollution can be found from the remotest islands to the highest peaks.

We must make peace with nature.

The land can be our greatest ally. But the land is suffering.

Land degradation from climate change and the expansion of agriculture, cities and infrastructure undermines the well-being of 3.2 billion people.

It harms biodiversity and enables the emergence of infectious diseases, such as COVID-19.

Restoring degraded land would remove carbon from the atmosphere.

It would help vulnerable communities adapt to climate change.

And it could generate an extra \$1.4 trillion dollars in agricultural production each year.

The best part is that land restoration is simple, inexpensive and accessible to all.

It is one of the most democratic and pro-poor ways of accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

This year marks the start of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

On this International Day, let us make healthy land central to all our planning.



Australia Minimum Wage to Rise 2.5% as Economy Rebounds From COVID-19

CANBERRA (Reuters) - Australia's minimum wage will rise by 2.5% for the financial year starting in July, a faster pace than this year, which the country's independent wage-setting

body said reflected its strong economic recovery from the coronavirus-induced recession.

The lowest paid employees will now receive A\$20.33 (\$15.65) an hour, totalling A\$772.60 per week for full-time workers.

The Fair Work Commission had set a rise of 1.75% for the current year ending on June 30, and its President Iain Ross said on Wednesday the new minimum wage level comes as the economy rebounded from its first recession in nearly three decades due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"There was a broad consensus in the submissions before us that the current performance of the economy has exceeded expectations and that the economic recovery is well underway," Ross said in an emailed statement.

The commission's minimum wage levels are now legally enforceable in Australia.

However, the wage rise will be delayed for some workers in sectors still reeling from COVID-19.

Those working in retail will receive the increase from Sept. 1, while employees in aviation, fitness, tourism and parts of retail and events sectors will receive a wage increase from Nov. 1, the Fair Work Commission said.

Trade unionists, who wanted a increase of more than 3%, criticized the delay.

"It is extremely disappointing that the commission has delayed increases for any workers - but especially those who have worked throughout the pandemic and whose employers have posted record profits," said Sally McManus, secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

U.S. Not to Back Global Tax Plan With Carve-Outs for China



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States will not agree to any type of special treatment for China or other countries that would weaken a global minimum tax regime, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said.

Yellen said the United States and other countries were continuing their efforts to convince China to support plans endorsed on Sunday by the Group of Seven advanced economies.

She said she was hopeful Beijing would decide it was in its interest to support the plans - which calls for a global corporate minimum tax of at least 15% - but made clear that Washington would not endorse a weak agreement.

"We would not agree to any type of carve-out that would meaningfully weaken a robust global minimum tax regime. Not for China, not for other countries," Yellen told the Senate Finance Committee at a hearing.

"We want this to work and not be filled with loopholes."

G7 finance officials on June 5 agreed to support a minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15%, a move endorsed by G7 leaders on Sunday.

But some countries, including China, are reluctant to give up tax incentives to advance policy priorities ranging from boosting research and development to attracting foreign investment, including special economic zones with low taxation to attract foreign investment.

One official briefed on the G7 talks told Reuters that China was against the 15% agreed by the G7 and winning carve-outs would be its condition for getting behind the rate. Finance officials from the Group of 20 major economies - which include China - will focus on the U.S. global minimum tax proposal when they meet in Venice in July. Yellen told senators that the United States was pursuing every avenue to ensure that countries suspended or rolled back digital services taxes that Washington says discriminates against U.S. technology companies, but would keep tariffs as an option if that does not happen.

Ledecky Punches Ticket to Tokyo in 200m Freestyle

OMAHA (Dispatches) - Katie Ledecky won the 200m freestyle to complete the first half of a daunting double at the U.S. Olympic swimming trials on Wednesday that concludes with the 1,500m free final.

Ledecky, added the 200m to the 400m free victory on Monday, giving herself a chance to defend two of the titles she won in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Trailing Allison Schmitt at the halfway mark, Ledecky surged home to win in 1min 55.11sec with Schmitt, the 2012 Olympic gold medalist, second in 1:56.79 to put herself in line for a trip to Tokyo.

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ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran 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

Gattuso Poised To Exit Fiorentina

ROME (Dispatches) - Gennaro Gattuso could be set to leave Fiorentina three weeks after being appointed coach, according to reports in Italy.

The former Napoli boss arrived on May 25 on a two-year contract and had been due to take up his position on July 1. Problems are reported to have arisen over the transfer strategies of the Tuscany club. A sticking point were negotiations for Porto midfielder Sergio Oliveira and Valencia winger Goncalo Guedes, Sky Sport Italia and La Gazzetta dello Sport reported.

Netherlands, Belgium Cruise Into Euro 2020 Knockouts

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Netherlands are through to the last 16 at Euro 2020 after Memphis Depay's penalty set up a 2-0 win over Austria on Thursday, their second straight victory securing top spot in Group C as coach Frank de Boer declared there is much more to come from his side.

Depay made no mistake from the spot in the 11th minute in Amsterdam after David Alaba's foul on Denzel Dumfries was spotted by the Israeli referee only after he came across to review the images.

Dumfries, so impressive in the thrilling opening 3-2 win over Ukraine, added another midway through the second half, his second goal of the tournament.

The Dutch were comfortable at home in the Johan Cruyff Arena and De Boer's side are so far making a success of their first major tournament since the 2014 World Cup.

That is great news for De Boer, whose predecessor as national coach, Barcelona boss Ronald Koeman, was among the spectators.

"I know we can beat anybody when we are at our best but I think other teams are thinking the same so let's go game by game and see where that takes us," De Boer said.

The Dutch now cannot be caught at the top of the group after Ukraine beat North Macedonia earlier in Bucharest, with the Balkan outsiders already eliminated.

That means De Boer can rest players for the final group game against North Macedonia, safe in the knowledge that the Dutch will go to Budapest for a last-16 tie on June 27 against a third-place finisher. "We need to decide how to prepare for the next game, whether to keep working on the system and improve that or give some players extra time off," De Boer added.

Sixers Stunned as Young Leads Hawks Comeback

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Trae Young scored 39 points as the Atlanta Hawks completed a stunning second-half comeback to defeat the top-seeded Philadelphia 76ers 109-106 in their Eastern Conference semi-final clash.

Roared on by a raucous home crowd, the Sixers appeared to be poised to claim a 3-2 advantage in the best-of-seven series after surging into a 26-point lead early in the second half.

But a magnificent Atlanta offensive performance led by Young saw the Hawks steadily chip away at the deficit. Young's 18-foot pull-up shot cut Philadelphia's lead to four points at 104-100 with just under three minutes remaining.

Young then nailed a floater to make it 104-102 before drawing a foul to earn three free throws which he promptly drained to give the Hawks their first lead of the game at 105-104 with 1:26 remaining.

Danilo Gallinari's fadeaway put Atlanta 107-104 ahead and the Sixers' fate was sealed when Joel Embiid missed two late free throws that could have put Philadelphia back within striking distance.

Instead, Atlanta regained possession and two more free throws from Young extended the Hawks lead to make the game safe.

The win means the Hawks can clinch a series victory in front of their home fans on Friday when game six heads back to Georgia.

"We just kept fighting," Young said afterwards. "We have confidence in each other. We're, we're a great group, good to be around."

"We all love you to each other's company and it shows on the court and we never stopped believing until the final buzzer."

That belief has left the fifth-seeded Hawks now on the brink of a place in the Eastern Conference finals, a remarkable turnaround for a team that axed head coach Lloyd Pierce on March 1.

Under interim coach Nate McMillan, the Hawks surged in the standings to secure a playoff spot and Young has blossomed with the support of the Atlanta caretaker.

"It's great that I have a coach that trusts me," Young said Wednesday. "I still have a lot to learn a lot to get better at. "But I feel that right now we're in a good place and we just got to keep winning and keep believing in each other."



Meanwhile Kevin De Bruyne inspired Belgium to a 2-1 victory over Denmark in Copenhagen on Thursday, securing them a place in the Euro 2020 knockout stage as fans and players showed their support for Christian Eriksen.

Yussuf Poulsen gave the hosts a second-minute lead, but De Bruyne came off the bench at half-time to make his first appearance of the tournament after injury and teed up Thorgan Hazard to equalise before scoring the winner with a fine strike.

The match was paused after 10 minutes -- a reference to Eriksen's number 10 -- for a minute's applause for the Denmark midfielder, who suffered a cardiac arrest in his team's game against Finland last weekend.

The 29-year-old Inter Milan player is recovering in hospital and will have a defibrillator implanted. A section of fans in the 25,000 crowd held up a banner reading "All of Denmark is with you, Christian" as the match was halted.

"The only thing I'm disappointed by is the result, I didn't expect much from this game, but I can't describe the pride I feel about this squad," said Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand.

"Four days after almost losing one of their best friends, they get up and they play such a game, it's just amazing."

If the Danes were traumatised by Eriksen's collapse or worried about facing the world's top-ranked team, they did not show it.

Federer Suffers Shock Second-Round Defeat in Halle

HALLE (Dispatches) - Roger Federer suffered a setback in his preparations for Wimbledon after crashing out of the second round of the ATP grass court tournament in Halle.

Federer, who will bid to win a ninth title at Wimbledon which starts June 28, suffered a shock 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 defeat to 20-year-old Canadian Felix Auger Aliassime, who is almost half Federer's age.

"It's amazing, for sure I didn't expect this," Auger Aliassime told Eurosport after beating one of his heroes at the first attempt on the ATP tour.

"I wanted to win, but Roger Federer is my idol and it was a huge honour to play him."

Federer is exactly 19 years older than Auger Aliassime as the pair share the same birthday on August 8, when the Swiss ace turns 40 this year.

"I always thought he would be gone by the time I joined the tour," admitted the Canadian, who turned professional in 2017.

"I was a little nervous when I realised I could win, but I was playing really well, almost perfect tennis."

Federer had pulled out of the fourth round of the French Open last week to give himself extra rest after two operations on his right knee in 2020 and a year of rehab.



Ramos Says Goodbye to Real Madrid



MADRID (Dispatches) - Sergio Ramos broke down in tears, saying leaving Real Madrid was one of the most difficult moments of his life as he bid farewell on Thursday after 16 years at the club. The defender played 671 games for Real Madrid and will be remembered as one of the club's greatest ever players, having won five La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues.

The 35-year-old, who struggled for fitness and form last season, was unable to agree an extension to his contract and will become a free agent on July 1.

Ramos and Real Madrid president Florentino Perez delivered short speeches in a presentation room at the club's training ground, with Ramos' family in the audience.

"The moment has come, one of the most difficult in my life, because you are never ready to leave Real Madrid," Ramos said.

"The fans supported me in the good moments and the bad. I would have liked to say goodbye in the stadium.

"A wonderful stage is closing, one that has been unique in my life, but an exciting new chapter begins and I go into it with a lot of desire to show my quality for many years to come."

Ramos said he wants to "add more titles" to his record and added "this is not a goodbye but a see you later because sooner or later I will return to Real Madrid".

Perez said it was "not an easy day", remembering how he signed Ramos, aged 19, from Sevilla for 27 million euros in 2005.

"He arrived wanting to take on the world," said Perez. "You are undoubtedly one of legends of Real Madrid. You have grown as a player here and been our iconic captain for years."

Doctors Killed Maradona Through Negligence

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - A lawyer for a nurse under investigation in the death of Argentine football great Diego Maradona said Wednesday that doctors killed him through negligence.

"They killed Diego," attorney Rodolfo Baque told reporters after his client, nurse Dahiana Gisela Madrid, was questioned by prosecutors.

Maradona died of a heart attack last November at the age of 60, weeks after undergoing brain surgery for a blood clot.

Madrid, 36, is one of seven people under investigation for manslaughter after a board of experts looking into Maradona's death found he had received inadequate care and was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonising period."

Baque insisted it was the doctors treating Maradona while he recovered from the brain operation, not his client, who were to blame for the soccer legend's death.

He said Maradona was being treated for heart trouble but at the same time was on psychiatric medication that sped up his heart rate.

Also, Maradona fell while in the hospital, and when Madrid asked to have a CAT scan done on him, an aide to Maradona refused, arguing that if the press found out it would look bad, Baque said.

"In the end, there were many warning signs that Maradona was going to die, give or take a day. And none of the doctors did anything to prevent it," Baque said during a break in the interrogation of Madrid, which went on for more than eight hours.

Madrid was Maradona's daytime nurse and one of the last people to see him alive.



Berrettini Outclasses Murray At Queen's

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray's latest comeback came to an abrupt end in the second round at Queen's on Thursday as top seed Matteo Berrettini outclassed the former world number one 6-3, 6-3.

The British three-time Grand Slam champion chased after several Berrettini thunderbolts without showing signs of being troubled by the groin problem that had prevented him playing singles since March.

However, the result showed the size of the task facing Murray, who has won the grasscourt tournament on five occasions, as he prepares for Wimbledon, which starts on June 28.

The Italian's big serve took center stage in London as he saved all three break points he faced during the match, which lasted an hour and 25 minutes.

The world number nine, 25, broke Murray twice in the first set and took an early break in the second for a 3-0 lead. He never looked back, mixing powerful groundstrokes with some deft touches at the net.

Berrettini will face another British player, Dan Evans, in Friday's quarter-finals. Evans beat France's Adrian Mannarino 6-4, 7-6 (9/7).

"This was really hard. We all know who Andy is, he is a great player and he was always there even until the last point," said Berrettini. "I'm really happy for my performance."

"I know how tough it is to come back from an injury, so I wish him the best of luck. I think he played great today. I played better. I am just happy that he is back."

