

Iran's President-Elect Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi Was Invited to Attend the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Scotland's Glasgow, Slated for Oct.21-Nov.12

IRAN NEWS

A Motion Has been Submitted to the Presiding Board of the Iranian Parliament Which Calls for Banning Any Negotiations Between Iranian And American Authorities

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Minister Refutes Allegations Over Failed Satellite Launch

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN — Iranian Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi on Wednesday refuted reports by the U.S. media outlets claiming failure of two satellite launches by Iran, saying no satellite has been launched.

“The Pars 1 and Nahid satellites have all gone through their processes and are in the Space Organization. The news of the failure of the launch is not confirmed by us,” Azari Jahromi said after a cabinet meeting. He added that the ministry has not delivered the satellites yet and is following their launch.

The Associated Press had claimed earlier in a report on Wednesday that satellite imagery, a U.S. official and a rocket specialist all confirmed the failed launch, which took place earlier this month at Semnan's Imam Khomeini spaceport.

CNN also quoted several U.S. defense officials on Wednesday as saying that the U.S. Department of Defense was “watching another failed attempt by Iran to send satellites into orbit earlier this month.” While U.S. defense officials did not identify the missile used in the launch earlier this month, experts tell CNN it is likely to be the same “Simorgh” missile built on a North Korean plan.

But Jahromi refuted the claim and reiterated that Iran will soon send a satellite into the orbit with higher accuracy.

Raisi Says Judiciary Must Act Authoritatively



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Judiciary Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iran's president-elect stressed that the Judiciary must act authoritatively; this is not personal authority and is the power given to the body by the law.

Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the Judiciary Week on Wednesday after paying homage to the Founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini (R) by attending his mausoleum, Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said: “We must not have trial and error today.”

This ceremony is held so that high-ranking judicial officials renew allegiance with the ideals of the Founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini.

Raisi added: “We should try to do what Imam Khomeini and the martyrs and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution want.”

The chief of the judiciary went on to say: “Today we have to work hard to administer justice, and the executive apparatus must rule in all layers of this apparatus of justice so that the number of cases entering the judiciary is reduced.”

Raisi pointed out: “In the judiciary during the transformation period, we focused on justice to advance the ‘document of transformation’, and in the presidential election, the message of the people was ‘change’, and this change is also centered on the administration of justice.”

The Judiciary Chief and senior judicial officials also renewed allegiance with the aspirations of the martyrs by visiting the tombs of 72 people martyred in a bomb explosion in the office of the Islamic Republic Party in June 28, 1981.

On 28 June 1981, the Haft-Tir bombing occurred, where the Judiciary Chief and the Secretary of the Islamic Republic Party Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, four cabinet ministers (health, transport, telecommunications, and energy ministers), twenty-seven members of the Majlis (Parliament), including Mohammad Montazeri, and several other government officials were assassinated.

Since then and to commemorate the martyrdom of Beheshti and his comrades is marked as the Judiciary week.

U.S. Has Agreed to Lift Oil, Shipping Sanctions

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran said that Washington had agreed to remove all sanctions on Iran's oil and shipping, and take some senior figures off a blacklist, at talks to revive Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with global powers which are now on a pause.

The remarks, by outgoing president Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff, were consistent with previous assertions by officials in Rouhani's camp that Washington is prepared to make major concessions at the talks, under way since April in Vienna.

The talks adjourned on Sunday for a break, two days after Iran held a presidential election won by Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the head of Iran's judiciary who is on the US blacklist. Raisi is due to replace Rouhani in August.

“An agreement has been reached to remove all insurance, oil and shipping sanctions that were imposed by (former U.S. President Donald) Trump,” presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said.

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Iran Foils Act of Sabotage Against Atomic Organization Building

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has thwarted an act of sabotage targeting one of the buildings belonging to its Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI).

The hostile attempt occurred early Wednesday, but did not result in any casualties or damage owing to tight security precautions adopted following similar acts of sabotage against Iranian nuclear sites and the assassination of prominent scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh last year.

Investigations are ongoing to identify the perpetrators and determine the facts surrounding the incident. Such attempts to disrupt Iran's peaceful nuclear activities have failed thanks to the vigilance of Iran's security and defense organizations.

Back in April, Iran's Natanz nuclear facility was hit by an act of sabotage, which Iran called “nuclear terrorism” and a “war crime.” The attack, blamed on Israel, targeted the electricity distribution network of the enrichment facility and caused a blackout.

The Natanz attack was the latest in a series of incidents targeting Iran's nuclear facilities in 2020 and 2021. It coincided with the beginning of high-profile talks in the Austrian capital, Vienna, aimed at reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, a deal that Israel has great antipathy toward and lobbied the US intensely to abandon in 2018.

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Tehran Calls for Effective Support for Afghan Military, Security Forces

NEW YORK (IRNA) - Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi called on Tuesday for effective support for Afghan military and security forces when foreign troops leave the country.

The security situation in Afghanistan is a source of serious concern, Ravanchi said at the UN Security Council's meeting on Afghanistan on June 22.

The Islamic Republic of Iran calls on all sides to prioritize Afghan people's interests higher than others', Ravanchi said. Due to the complete withdrawal of the foreign forces from Afghanistan, the country has faced a dilemma, the ambassador noted.

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UN Looks Forward to Continued Cooperation With Iran Under New President

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations says it seeks to maintain cooperation with Iran under its new administration that will be formed by President-elect Ebrahim Raisi in the weeks to come.

Addressing a daily press briefing on Monday, Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, said the world body had taken note of Raisi's victory in Iran's June 18 presidential election.

The UN chief, he added, “looks forward to the continued cooperation with the Iranian authorities on issues of mutual respect for the benefit of Iran and the people and of the region.”

Asked whether the UN chief would send a congratulation message to the Iranian president-elect or there was a statement regarding the election in general, as always, Dujarric said, “The usual process will be followed, I have no doubt.”

But, he added, the process would come “usually closer to the time of inauguration...at least six weeks from now.”

Raisi was elected Iran's eighth president after he garnered almost 62 percent of the votes in the June 18 election. He will succeed President Hassan Rouhani, who has served two four-year terms in office.

Many world leaders, senior foreign officials, prominent figures, and regional resistance leaders have so far offered congratulations on his victory in the presidential election.

UNHRC Anti-Iran Report Based on Political Mandate

LONDON (Dispatches) - Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh said the anti-Iran report of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is entirely based on political mandate.

“The report presented today is based on an entirely political mandate initiated by a group of like-minded, or rather ‘similarly-biased’, countries that have for long instrumentalized human rights as part and parcel of their adversarial agenda against Iran,” Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh said addressing the 47 Session of the Human Rights Council on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to the protection and promotion of human rights, and respects its international obligations. Just yesterday, we submitted Iran's fourth national report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to the Human Rights Committee. We cannot afford to be dissuaded from consolidating our efforts on promotion and protection of human rights because of unfair pressures and baseless allegations.

“We urge all States to uphold the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues and the elimination of double standards and politicization”, he added.

“We also call upon all who truly care for human rights to recognize the imperative of rule of law and the centrality of judicial systems in preserving the rule of law and protecting human rights,” Bagheri noted.

The Iranian official further noted that “the Iranian people have shown ‘maximum resilient’ against the cruel unilateral coercive measures strategized by Trump regime to put so-called ‘maximum pressure’ on Iran as part of their obsessive addiction to unilateralism and their hostility toward Iran. The U.S. continues to carry on with the unlawful and inhuman legacy of the former administration in complete defiance of international law and basic principles of humanity. We should never forget that the U.S. even tightened its unilateral sanctions during the pandemic leaving no doubt as to their true intention to immiserate a whole nation, in bold disrespect to the ICJ's ruling of 3 October 2018 which ordered the US to remove any impediment to export foodstuffs, medicine and medical devices to Iran.

The U.S. and its enablers and those States that have been enforcing its unilateral coercive measures must be held to account for the massive systematic and gross violations of human rights. The United States is allegedly one of the major advocates of this reporting scheme and I leave it to my audience to make their judgment if an imposer of such atrocious unilateral coercive measures can logically claim to care for the human rights of the Iranians?!”

He went on to say that “the report presented today is based on an entirely political mandate initiated by a group of like-minded, or rather ‘similarly-biased’, countries that have for long instrumentalized human rights as part and parcel of their adversarial agenda against Iran. The product of such prejudicial mandate is unavoidably biased toward reinforcing the prejudices.

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Iran Closely Following Alarming Developments in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh says the country is closely monitoring the "alarming" developments in Afghanistan. "Iran calls for immediate deescalation, respect for rule of law, and inclusive dialogue," Khatibzadeh tweeted on Tuesday night. The spokesman said the "destructive policies of the U.S." have had lingering consequences in the region and now "its utterly irresponsible conduct is taking a toll."

President Calls for Supporting President-Elect Raisi

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani called the holding of the June 18 elections with full security and according to health protocols one of the important tasks and great achievements of the 12th Government and said, "Elections are one of the pillars of the system and the republic will not be achieved without elections".

Speaking on Wednesday at the cabinet meeting, Rouhani said, "Republic and Islam are two very important pillars of the system and all our efforts should be to maintain these two pillars so that they are not shaken. All we have tried until today has been to preserve the Islamic and republic aspects of our system".

Explaining the importance of the Islamic aspect, he stated that we should all try not to harm Islam with our behavior, adding, "Islam itself has clear policies, ethics and rules, and has justice and respect for all ethnicities and genders, and in Islam Everything is in its own place".

Emphasizing that we must avoid lying, the president said, "We must have a society where no one pays attention to liars, and in fact, this is Islam and not chanting slogans". Stating that honesty, sincerity, respect and good faith in the people and



not undermining the reputation of the people are important principles in Islam, Rouhani said, "We should all try to have Islam rule the society in full".

Referring to the importance of the republic as the second pillar of the Islamic system, the president said, "In a republic, if you can have 50% of the people, it is the minimum, if you can have 70%, you are in an acceptable point and by having 90%, you have reached the peak".

Emphasizing that in the elections and the republic, we should open the space and embrace the people, Rouhani said, "Rejecting the people is not a skill, and worrying the people is useless".

The president clarified, "Let's not create a false reason for low turnout in the elections, economic problems have not been the main reason for the decrease in participation".

Raisi, Rouhani Hold Second Meeting

TEHRAN (IP) - The president-elect and the current president of the Islamic Republic of Iran met for the second time.

Iranian President-elect Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi went to his office on Wednesday to meet with current Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Rouhani's first meeting with the President-elect of Iran took place on Saturday morning after the preliminary results of the presidential Election were announced.

Raisi was elected as the eighth President of Iran in the 13th Presidential Election in the country with 17 million 926 thousand and 345 votes.

IRGC Dismantles Counter-Revolutionary Team

TEHRAN (MNA) – IRGC forces succeeded in identifying and dismantling a five-member counter-revolutionary team in Baneh and Sarvabad in the Kordestan province during operations.

According to a statement by the Public Relations of IRGC's Martyr Shahramfar Headquarter in Kordsetan province, a counter-revolutionary team has been identified and dismantled in this province.

A few days before Iran's elections, the IRGC forces identified a counter-revolutionary group in the public area of Baneh and Sarvabad who intended to infiltrate and sabotage, especially during the elections, the statement read, adding that during two special operations, five counter-revolutionary members killed in the clash between them and IRGC forces.

In addition to injuring three members, significant quantities of weapons, ammunition, equipment and technical facilities were seized during the operation, the statement said.

Iran's Border With Afghanistan Herat Province Reopened

TEHRAN (MNA) – Local officials in Afghanistan's Herat said Tuesday the reopening of Iran's border for travelers with business, medical, student and resident visas.

Local officials of the Afghan Foreign Ministry in Herat announced on Tuesday the reopening of the shared Iran-Afghanistan border in Herat for Afghan people who have business, medical, student and resident visas.

But, the Afghan officials said that the people who want to travel to Iran for holidays and pilgrimage purposes cannot enter Iran through the border crossing in accordance with the Iranian officials' decision.

Iran's land border with Afghanistan was closed about two months ago in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, after which the price of a Herat-Mashhad flight tickets increased.

The closure of the land border created many problems for travelers and provoked protests on the parts of residents of the western provinces of Afghanistan and the provinces bordering Iran.

It is not clear yet when the land border will be fully open to all travelers.

More Than 800 Schools in Iran's Capital Are Dilapidated

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The general director of Tehran's education department announced Wednesday that the city's fire department has warned of impending danger from 827 dilapidated school buildings in Iran's capital.

Abdolreza Fooladvand called attention to critical safety conditions at schools, as officials have been sounding the alarm in recent years, especially about educational buildings outside the capital and in remote regions.

Fooladvand told local media that his department is planning to sell many smaller and older school buildings and use the money to repair about 200 schools. Schools currently in operation in Tehran are crowded by students but some older and smaller buildings in prime locations can fetch high prices.

Officials and members of parliament have repeated warnings that many schools in the capital are unsafe. Farideh Oladghobad, a former member of parliament warned in January 2018 that 50 percent of school buildings were dilapidated and presented. Tehran has around two million students in primary and secondary education, who prior to the Covid-19 pandemic went to schools in morning and afternoon shifts because of lack of classrooms.

Iran Wins 38 Int'l Medals in Various Fields



TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's International Innovation team won 38 medals in curing COVID-19, genetics and other fields of medical engineering in the last three months.

Attending a press conference and a ceremony for unveiling medals, the Head of Iran's Innovation Team, Amir-Abbas Mohammadi-Koushki stated that all innovations were conducted within Iran's Innovation Team to help students enter the markets and establish knowledge-based companies.

He noted that the ideas had been supported to conduct international projects.

"Although it was so difficult due to sanctions, Iran could register two of its projects at MIT University at this time," he pointed.

"Although Iranian university students have top ideas, due to unfair sanctions, Iran cannot have easy access to various universities and international organizations to introduce its research results," he added.

"Genetics of Success" by Mohammad-Arian Akbari is one of the top ideas which introduces a new formula to predict an individual's likelihood of success and could raise 187,500 \$ fund from Turkey.

This project is also verified by top universities and organizations, namely the ones in the United States.

Raisi: People Voted for Change

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President-elect Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said people during the recent presidential election voted for change and stressed that the focal point in all developments especially in economic areas should be justice.

The President-elect made the remarks while addressing people in a ceremony to mark the birth anniversary of the eighth Shiite Imam Reza (AS). The ceremony was held in Imam Reza holy shrine in the city of Mashad, capital of Razavi Khorasan.

In another part of his speech, Raisi stressed that "just as people voted for change in this election, there must be change in the country."

Raisi added that this change should take place to guarantee the interest of the people and also the values of the revolution. He said people through their voted expressed their desire for formation of an efficient government.

He went on to underline that "as a government, we should not allow the slightest right of the people to be lost, and I, as the representative of the nation, will not allow any right of the nation to be lost."

The President-elect emphasized that the need for preserving the dignity of the people and observing economic justice, in all issues like domestic issues and education.

He said that unhealthy administrative practices, corruption, oppression and any unjust behaviours are against human dignity.

In Islamic system the government is people's servant, not a haughty master and all state officials must consider themselves people's servants, he said.

Raisi added "today everyone should know that anyone who serves the people anywhere in the country in the name of Imam Reza (AS), he must respect the prestige of the people and nobody is allowed to disrespect the people the slightest bit."

The President-elect said that in Imam Ali's government, too, paying close attention to the people and their rights was emphasized by the holy Imam (AS), because the path towards God passes through the people's masses.

The meaning of serving, too, is different today, as everyone on the earth claims to be serving the people, but serving with a materialist mind, in which matter is the axis and gaining benefits is the objective is one type of service, while when the human beings and humanity is in mind, then serving for God's sake and in order to gain His satisfaction, while also heeding the interests of the people is another type of service, that is achieved in the light of loving God," said Raisi.

"We as the government should not allow the slightest right of the people to be trampled on, and I as the representative of the people will not allow any of the people's rights to be denied," he added.

"As a servant of this nation I will from the beginning of this government's tenure put top priority on Corona vaccination of the public, to safeguard the people's lives and good health, because today Corona has worried the people," he said.

He also appreciated the people for attending the voting ballots, despite the difficulties due to the Corona pandemic, and those who cast their votes abroad despite some anti-revolutionary individuals' indecent deeds.

Raisi said: I am the servant of both those who voted for me, and those who voted for other candidates, and also those who did not vote.

"Some people wish to devalue the glorious presence of the people at the elections with their analyses, but thanks to God's blessings and Imam Reza's kindness, that presence was quite spectacular, and all of us state officials should appreciate that much kindness and affection of the people and humbly and not expecting anything in return serve the people to make up for their kindness," he concluded.

Religious Minorities' Rights Respected in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Archbishop of Armenian Diocese of Tehran Sepuh Sargsyan said efforts prove that there is no discrimination in Iran regarding religious minorities and their rights are respected.

Sargsyan said thanks to the efforts made by official in the government, city council and municipality, the Armenian Cemetery of Tehran (the Bureast) has turned out to be a tourism center.

It shows the fact that Iran has always been a place for coexistence of religions, he added.

Meanwhile earlier, Archbishop of the Armenian Diocese in northwest Iran Grigor Chifchian hailed Islamic Republic of Iran's attention to ethnic tribes and faiths, saying that the country has turned into a place for brotherhood among monotheistic religions.

"We are thankful of the facilities provided for Armenians in Iran," he said, noting that the Iranian statesmen are trying to provide welfare to religious minorities.

The Iranian government pays special attention to sacred sites of the religious minorities, as it help repair and maintain them in the best manner, he said.

Noting that monotheistic religions are not against one another, the archbishop added that that's followers of the religions who rose against each other not the religions.

Ethnic groups in Iran respect each other, he reiterated.

Police Announce Discovery of Largest Cryptocurrency Farm

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Tehran' police chief announced the discovery of the "largest" cryptocurrency farm with the activity of more than 7,000 cryptocurrency extraction machines (miners) in the Chitgar area.

Hossein Rahimi announced that following joint cooperation between the police and Tehran's electricity department, the fluctuations and amount of electricity in an abandoned factory located in chitgar area were investigated and 7,000 cryptocurrency extraction devices were discovered during operations to investigate the site.

A number of these miners were active and others were being installed, he said.

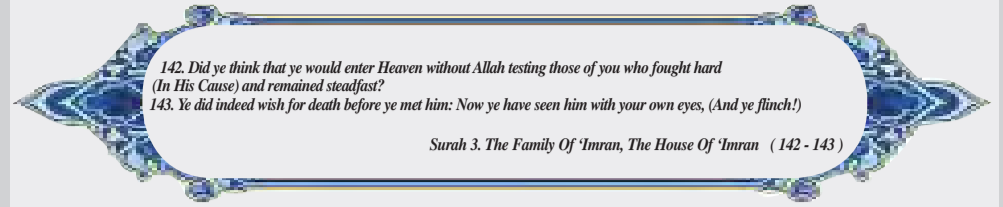
According to experts, Rahimi said that if all miners operated, about four percent of the country's electricity consumption would have been used. According to the Police Chief of Greater Tehran, the activities of this cryptocurrency mining frontier, which had a direct impact on electricity shortages in Tehran, were completely halted and the site was sealed off.

Of course, a spokesperson for Iran's electricity industry said Sunday that 188,000 unauthorized cryptocurrency extraction devices with a consumption of 551 megawatts of electricity have been discovered across the country so far. This amount of electricity is equivalent to about 1 percent of the country's total electricity generation, and naturally 7,000 miner cannot consume four percent of the country's electricity.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:03
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:50



Iran-Europe Trade Hits Lowest Level

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran's exports to Europe in the first four months of 2021 have been around 262m euros and the trade between Iran and European states has hit the lowest level.

Deputy Head of Iran-Sweden Joint Chamber of commerce Mr. Alireza Shamsfar says the trade with Europe is in its lowest level and as long as a mechanism for banking transactions between the two sides is not restored, the trade with Europe will not pick up.

According to the latest statistics released by European Trade Center (ETC), the trade between Iran and EU in the first four months of 2021 has been valued around 1.45b euros which shows one percent slump comparing to the same period in 2020.

The statistics show that EU's exports to Iran in the first four months this year are valued at 1.188b euros and in return the value of Iran's exported goods to EU stands at 262m euros. So the trade balance in four months is negative and minus 900m euros in favor of EU.

Also the report shows that Germany, Italy and Spain accounted for almost 70 percent of Iran's exports to EU countries while 54 percent of Iran's total imports from EU belongs to these three countries. Germany has been the major European trade partner of Iran as Iran exported goods worth of 93.9m euros to Germany, 60.22m euros to Italy and 23.14m euros to Spain.

Germany has had biggest share of Iran's imports from EU countries with exporting goods worth of 490.5m euros and the Netherlands with 154.69m euros and Italy with 142.12m euros trailed Germany.

While Iran's export to EU states have been narrowed, Turkey's exports to EU states in the same period stood at 24.7m euros which shows 21 percent growth comparing to the same period in 2020. So Turkey's exports to Europe have been 94 times more than Iran's.



Deputy Head of Iran-Sweden Joint Chamber of Commerce Mr. Shamsfar blames lack of a banking transaction mechanism for the insignificant trade between Iran and Europe. He believes as long as Iran does not join the FATF even with reaching agreement in the Vienna talks and the revival of the JCPOA, the trade volume between Iran and European countries will not bounce.

This economic activist believes that Iran's exports to Europe in recent years have declined significantly comparing to its imports and the reason for this negative balance is lack of access of Iranian exporters to the banking and monetary mechanisms which are accepted by European states.

He admitted currently the trade with Europe has hit its lowest level, and only Europe exports humanitarian goods to Iran and Iran's exports to Europe are also limited to the food products.

Shamsfar said that Iran's trade with Europe experienced highest level in 2018 with trade volume over 20b euros and some countries like Austria in those days had set Iran as a target for trade more than 2b euros. The trade with Europe since 2018 has stared downward trend and the reason is the lack of mechanism for financial and banking transactions.

He said European countries now provide their needs through other countries and Iran is losing its European markets and it will make the condition very tough for Iranian exporters for trade with Europe and even after the removal of sanctions, it will be very difficult for them to return to the European markets.

Iran Inflation Rate Reaches Highest Level in 26 Years

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran reported in its latest monthly report on Tuesday that inflation in the 12 months ending in June this year has reached 43 percent compared to the same period last year.



This is the highest annual inflation rate in Iran since 1995, when the inflation rate peaked at 49.4 percent.

The Statistical Center of Iran says inflation in food items was much higher than other items and services.

The annual inflation of food and beverage items reached about 52 percent in June.

Among this group of commodities, the highest price growth was related to edible oil, which grew about 70 percent and was in the next category of red meat, fruit and vegetables. Of course, these figures are related to the annual inflation rate, i.e. price growth in the 12 months ending in June compared to the same period a year ago, but the increase in prices in June itself is much higher than in June (point-to-point inflation) last year.

For example, the increase in the price of edible oils in June of this year was about 113 percent compared to last June, more than twice as much as last year. Also, the price of bread and cereals grew by nearly 51 percent and red meat inflation was about 70 percent.

The inflation rate of all goods and services in the country also reached 47.6 percent in June. Iran's inflation last year was 36 percent and will peak at 39 percent this year, according to its assessment by the international body.

In the main group of "foods, beverages and tobacco" the highest price increase compared to the previous month was related to the group "vegetables" (tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant), the group "fruit and dried fruits" and the group "sugar, sugar and sweets" (pasteurized ice cream, candy and sugar).

In the main group of "non-edible goods and services", "clothing and footwear", "miscellaneous goods and services" group (18 ct gold and paper towels) and "hotel and restaurant" group (foods served in restaurants) had the highest price increase compared to the previous month.

Iran Improves Rank in Global Innovation Index

TEHRAN (MNA) - Knowledge-based companies and creative startups have grown over the past five years, and Iran has risen 45 places in the Global Innovation Index, according to the UNESCO 2021 Report.

The Global Innovation Index in Iran from 2015 to 2019 has risen from 106 to 61 with continuous improvement, showing 45 steps growth. The development of accelerators and innovation centers over the last five years has led to a rapid increase in startups and knowledge-based companies.

Between 2014 and 2017, exports of knowledge-based goods grew by a factor of five, before slumping in 2018 after the U.S. withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015), commonly referred to as the nuclear deal, and re-imposed sanctions. The increase in exports, as well as their focus and encouragement to increase production and provide knowledge-based services in the country, are examples of this rapid growth.

The report has also mentioned various reforms and legislation designed to remove barriers to competition in the Iranian market, calling it an effective step in providing innovation and significant improvement of science and technology in the Islamic Republic. The report states that innovation in Iran has developed rapidly over the past five years, and by the end of last year, 49 accelerators and 113 innovation centers had provided services to start-ups with the participation of the private sector.

Currently, some 6,000 knowledge-based companies are active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large amounts of foreign currency.

Isfahan-St Petersburg Scientific, Cultural Festival Underway

MOSCOW (IP) - The first Isfahan-St Petersburg Scientific and Cultural Festival is being held at the University of Isfahan in cooperation with the University of St. Petersburg to develop academic relations.

The festival is held to strengthen the twinning pact between Isfahan and St. Petersburg.

Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, who participated in the festival via video conference, said: "Iran-Russia relations are in excellent condition in political, military, defense and security dimensions, but they need to be developed culturally and economically."

Emphasizing that the Russian language is vital for Iran's national security, he said: "Due to the lack of content in Russian and Persian, the Iranian nation's knowledge of Russia and vice-versa is at a low level that must be addressed."

Mehran FTZ to Link Iran to Mediterranean Economies



ILAM (IRNA) - Mehran city enjoys good economic capacities; therefore, it can link Iran to the Mediterranean economies, an Iranian official says.

Hamid Reza Momeni, advisor to the President and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Zones, inspected Mehran Free Trade Zone on Wednesday, saying that Mehran belongs to the entire Iranian nation and that the development of the important city, which played a key role during the sacred defense of the Iranians in the face of Iraq's Baathist regime (1980-1988), should be expedited so that the people of the region can experience the shift of turning into a free trade zone will affect their livelihood.

The president's advisor noted that the people living in Mehran should know the change will improve their living standard, because the free trade zone enjoys the capacity to connect Iran's economy to the Mediterranean economies.

Proper planning and attracting investors will pave the way for the development of the project and turn the city into a free trade zone, which is missioned to bridge the Iranian and Mediterranean economies, he added.

Director General of Customs Administration of Ilam province Ruhollah Gholami told IRNA on Wednesday that the export of commodities from Mehran international border point stood at 208 million dollars in first three months of this Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21). During the mentioned period, 443 tons of goods have been exported from the border point, including construction materials, fruits, plastic and industrial products, mirror, home appliances as well as metal products, Gholami noted.

Other export items such as iron, ceramic, and petrochemical products were exported to Iraq from the border point in last Iranian year (March 20, 2020 to March 20, 2021), the director general of customs administration added. The Iraqi and Iranian merchants, as well as the customs personnel, observe all health protocols amid the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Mehran border point, he mentioned.

Gholami went on to say that Mehran city is 230 kilometers far from Baghdad, capital of Iraq; so, the Iranian city has become a hub for export activities and pilgrimage route.

Turkey Seeks to Win Iran's Traditional Markets

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Secretary of Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services says some political pressures are on Afghanistan officials in order they do not give their developmental projects to Iranian companies, adding that Turkey is trying hard to take hold of Iran's traditional markets.



Speaking to ILNA, Bahman Salehi Javid said that political pressures are on the rise on Afghan officials for not handing over their projects to Iranian companies. He added that the pressure comes both from Islamic Development Bank and also from the governments.

He said they believe that if the resources of the IDB are to be allocated to any project in Afghanistan, Iranians should not be involved. Of course these pressures mostly are from Saudi Arabian government, he added.

On the condition of exports of technical and engineering services, Salehi Javid said that the advisor to minister of roads and urban development has stepped into the issue of export of technical and engineering services in Afghanistan and he is progressing well but regarding Syria, no agreement has been reached by the association, yet.

He said Iranian companies have won big tenders in Afghanistan like the project of Kabul Ring but a series of political pressures has created problem for Afghanistan government on this issue and for this reason the association is pursuing ways to start the project.

He reiterated all political pressures are aimed at throwing Iranian companies out of the projects and IDB sets condition for granting loan for the projects provided that Iran is not involved in the projects.

Referring to Syria's market, he said that Iranian contractors are present in Syria traditionally but the current condition is not satisfactory for them and today winning a tender and contract in Syria is not easy because there are other companies from China, Russia and UK which are serious rivals for Iranians.

On the presence of Turkey in reconstruction of Karabakh, Salehi Javid said that Turkey in any condition is a very serious rival for Iran and it systematically and very organizedly is taking hold of Iran's markets especially in the neighboring countries. He said everybody knows that Iran ranks first in the markets of the neighboring states but every country can enter these markets based on their capabilities.

He added that Turkey can have the trans-regional markets due to its political relations and industrial development but the interesting point is that Turkey is seeking to dominate in the markets where Iran is present. He said it seems Turkey does have not enough self-confidence in marketing and finding new markets and it tries to take control of Iran's traditional markets especially its neighboring countries like Azerbaijan.

Salehi Javid expressed his disappointment over Iran's weak presence in Karabakh reconstruction projects and said some projects worth of \$10b are expected to be carried out in reconstruction of Karabakh but unfortunately so far no project has been given to Iranians.

He expressed hope in the next government Iran can save its traditional markets from being won by other countries and the country once again returns to its golden days of 2011 to 2013 and increases its export of technical and engineering services to \$5b per year.

Iran Among IHO's 30 Active Members

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran is one of the 30 active members of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) Council that decides on the actions to be taken by the organization and approves its work program, an official with the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) said.

Speaking on the occasion of World Hydrography Day, Nader Pasandeh, PMO's director-general for maritime safety and protection said: "Due to its access to the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in the south of the country, Iran has 5,790 kilometers of coastline, about 3,000 kilometers of which is accessible for maritime trade and a large part of the country's international trade is done through ports."

According to the official, most of the country's maritime trade is carried out through the southern ports and maritime transportation to the Persian Gulf nations, as well as countries in the Indian Ocean and the Far East account for a big share of the country's trade exchanges.

Pasandeh noted that in recent years, maritime transportation between Iran and Europe has also been increasing and Iran has been able to have direct exchange of goods with European countries by accessing international waters.

"Undoubtedly, one of the necessities of safe maritime transportation is having access to up-to-date maps of known sea routes and waterways, which is provided by the collection of marine data, using hydrography," he said.

"With hydrography, navigation is done safely in oceans and sea waterways and it can also be used to survey and determine navigable areas," he added. According to Pasandeh, in addition to promoting maritime safety, the hydrographic industry engages in other marine activities, including the exploitation of marine resources such as aquatic and mineral resources, the management and protection of the marine environment, maritime demarcation, defense and maritime security, and accident prevention.

The International Hydrographic Organization is an intergovernmental organization representing hydrography. In January 2021 the IHO comprised 94 member states. A principal aim of the IHO is to ensure that the world's seas, oceans and navigable waters are properly surveyed and charted.

Colombia's COVID-19 Deaths Pass 100,000

BOGOTA (Reuters) - Reported deaths from COVID-19 in Colombia passed 100,000, the country's health ministry said, amid warnings of potential scarcity of treatment drugs and oxygen in hospitals during a long and brutal third peak of infections and deaths.

The country of 50 million people has reported more than 3.9 million cases of coronavirus infections, as well as 100,582 deaths.

Colombia has seen record numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths in recent weeks, with some medical officials warning certain medical supplies are running low.



Dutch Coalition Talks Postponed to August

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - Talks to form a new Dutch government were postponed until mid-August on Tuesday, as conservative caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte and the leader of the second-largest party began writing a draft coalition pact.

Rutte and Sigrid Kaag, the leader of the centre-left D-66, are expected to put together a framework for the country's COVID-19 recovery and climate policies and will then seek support from at least two other parties to achieve a majority in parliament. Rutte, one of Europe's longest-serving prime ministers, had hoped to quickly embark on his fourth term in office after his VVD Party won national elections in March with 24% of the vote.



North Korea Warns U.S. Misinterpreting Signals Risks Disappointment



SEOUL (Reuters) - The sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned the United States on Tuesday it would be disappointed were it to seek comfort in comments by her brother, while a U.S. envoy met South Korea's president aiming to revive talks with North Korea.

Kim Yo Jong, who is also a senior official in North Korea's ruling party, released a statement in state media saying the United States appeared to be interpreting signals from North Korea in the "wrong way."

She was responding to U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who on Sunday said he saw as an "interesting signal" a recent speech by Kim Jong Un on preparing for both confrontation and diplomacy with the United States.

"It seems that the U.S. may interpret the situation in such a way as to seek a comfort for itself," she said in the statement, carried by the North's KCNA state news agency.

"The expectation, which they chose to harbor the wrong way, would plunge them into a greater disappointment."

In response, the U.S. State Department said on Tuesday that Kim Yo Jong's comments had not changed its desire to explore diplomacy with North Korea.

North Korea's nuclear weapons program has been an intractable problem for Washington for years and in trying to change that, President Joe Biden's administration conducted a review of policy and said it would seek "calibrated and practical" ways to persuade Pyongyang to denuclearize.

North Korea has rebuffed U.S. entreaties for diplomacy since Biden took over in January from former President Donald Trump, who had three summits with Kim but failed to persuade him to give up his nuclear weapons.

In South Korea, President Moon Jae-in told the U.S. special representative for North Korea, Sung Kim, he would seek to get inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korea relations back on track and expressed hopes for progress toward denuclearization and peace on the Korean peninsula, spokeswoman Park Kyung-mee said.

On Monday, Sung Kim said he was willing to meet the North Koreans "anywhere, anytime without preconditions" and that he looked forward to a "positive response soon." read more

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Tuesday that the United States was aware of Kim Yo Jong's comments and added: "They have not changed our view on diplomacy; we remain prepared to engage in principled negotiations with (North Korea) to deal with the challenge of its nuclear program.

"We continue to hope that (North Korea) will respond positively to our outreach and we'll have to wait and see if these comments are followed up with any more direct communication about potential paths forward," Price told a regular news briefing.

In a sign seen in South Korea as a positive U.S. gesture, the allies discussed scrapping a joint "working group" that analysts say Seoul has seen as an irritant in relations.

Macron Fails to Haul Up Fledgling Party in French Regional Polls

PARIS (Dispatches) - A bruising setback in local elections has highlighted Emmanuel Macron's failure to turn his political party into a grassroots force and has whet the appetites of would-be challengers - though analysts caution against drawing lessons for next year's presidential bout.

Blame it on Covid-19 restrictions or on the ruling party's latest debacle, the Elysée Palace's summer-greeting techno party had a distinctly subdued air on Monday night - the seated and socially-distanced revellers reduced to tapping their feet in the mansion's famous courtyard.

In past editions, President Macron and his wife Brigitte had gamely joined in the dancing. But the French leader had little to celebrate just 24 hours after his party suffered another shellacking at the polls.

Macron had set his fledgling La République en marche (LREM) party two modest goals in regional elections: to gain a foothold in local government and play a "kingmaker" role in the June 27 runoff. By the end of the first round of voting, it was obvious the party had made only minimal progress in its first aim - and flopped entirely in the second.



Myanmar Militias Vow to Take on Army After City Firefight

YANGON (Reuters) - Myanmar security forces backed by armored vehicles clashed on Tuesday with a newly formed guerrilla group in the second biggest city Mandalay, army-run media, the militias and a witness said, resulting in at least two casualties.

Since the army seized power on Feb. 1 and removed Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, troops have put down pro-democracy demonstrations and strikes and killed or arrested hundreds of protesters.

In response, people's defence forces have sprung up across the Southeast Asian country to take on security forces.

Until now, fighting involving lightly armed militias has been mainly in small towns and rural areas, but a group claiming to be Mandalay's new People's Defense Force said its members responded after the army raided one of its bases.

"The fight has started. There will be more fights," a militiaman identified as Captain Tun Tauk Naing said by telephone.

The sound of repeated gunfire could be heard in video footage taken by a resident in Mandalay, a hotspot for anti-coup protests.

Army-owned Myawaddy Television said on its Telegram message channel that security forces raided a house and "armed terrorists" fought back with small weapons and bombs. It said four were killed and eight arrested and some members of the security forces were seriously hurt.

The junta typically describes its opponents as "terrorists".

Local news site Myanmar Now said about 20 soldiers conducted the raid, sparking a firefight, and three armored vehicles were deployed.

Another official from the militia group told the Mizzima news portal that six of its members had been arrested and two soldiers were killed.

An activist in Mandalay told Reuters he heard gunfire and saw about 10 armoured vehicles. "We are all afraid, but at least we know we have the support of the nation," he said. "Everyone in Myanmar knows the situation in Mandalay now."

Taliban Captures Afghanistan's Main Tajikistan Border Crossing

KABUL (Dispatches) - The Taliban has captured Afghanistan's main border crossing with Tajikistan, an Afghan provincial official and army officer said on Tuesday, with some security forces abandoning their posts and fleeing across the frontier.

The seizure of Shir Khan Bandar, in the far north of Afghanistan about 50km (30 miles) from Kunduz city, is the most significant gain for the Taliban since it stepped up operations on May 1 when the US began the final stages of its troop withdrawal.

"Unfortunately this morning and after an hour of fighting the Taliban captured Shir Khan port and the town and all the border check posts with Tajikistan," said Kunduz provincial council member Khaliddin Hakmi.

An army officer told the AFP news agency: "We were forced to leave all check posts ... and some of our soldiers crossed the border into Tajikistan."

"By the morning, they (Taliban fighters) were everywhere, hundreds of them," he said on condition of anonymity.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the fighters had seized the border crossing across the Pyanj River.

"Our Mujahideen are in full control of Shir Khan Bandar and all the border crossings with Tajikistan in Kunduz," he told AFP.

The attack comes as the UN special envoy on Afghanistan warned that Taliban fighters have taken more than 50 of 370 districts in the country since May and that increased conflict "means increased insecurity for many other countries, near and far".

"Those districts that have been taken surround provincial capitals, suggesting that the Taliban are positioning themselves to try and take these capitals once foreign forces are fully withdrawn," the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan Deborah Lyons told the UN Security Council.

Fierce fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces has taken place on the outskirts of three provincial capitals in the northern provinces of Faryab, Balkh and Kunduz provinces in recent days, officials said.

Taliban gains and the steady withdrawal of the remaining 2,500-3,500 U.S. troops and 7,000 NATO forces have lent an urgency to efforts to find a negotiated end to Afghanistan's protracted conflict.



More Than 8,500 Children Used as Soldiers in 2020

NEW YORK (Reuters) - More than 8,500 children were used as soldiers last year in various conflicts across the world and nearly 2,700 others were killed, the United Nations said on Monday.

U.N. chief Antonio Guterres' annual report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict covers the killing, maiming and sexual abuse of children, abduction or recruitment, denial of aid access and targeting of schools and hospitals.

The report verified that violations had been committed against 19,379 children in 21 conflicts. The most violations in 2020 were committed in Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen.

It verified that 8,521 children were used as soldiers last year, while another 2,674 children were killed and 5,748 injured in various conflicts.

The report also includes a blacklist intended to shame parties to conflicts in the hope of pushing them to implement measures to protect children. The list has long been controversial with diplomats saying Saudi Arabia and Israel both exerted pressure in recent years in a bid to stay off the list.

Israel has never been listed, while a Saudi-led military coalition was removed from the list in 2020 several years after it was first named and shamed for killing and injuring children in Yemen.

In an effort to dampen controversy surrounding the report, the blacklist released in 2017 by Guterres was split into two categories. One lists parties that have put in place measures to protect children and the other includes parties that have not.

There were few significant changes to the lists released on Monday. The only state parties named on the list for not putting measures in place are Myanmar's military - for killing, maiming and sexual violence against children - and Syrian government forces - for recruitment of children, killing, maiming and sexual violence against children and attacks on schools and hospitals.



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Background: A cityscape with skyscrapers under a blue sky.

Volkswagen Sticks to 2021 Profit Margin Forecast

BERLIN, June 22 (Reuters) - A global chip shortage that is hitting carmakers will not impact Volkswagen's profit 2021 forecast, the company said on Tuesday, in response to a media report that the German carmaker expected a production drop due to the bottlenecks. Volkswagen still expects to achieve a 2021 operating profit margin of between 5.5% and 7% for the group and a margin of 3% to 4% for its main brand, a spokesperson for the company said.

"Fortunately, been we have able to notably limit the negative impact on our customers and thus on delivery figures so far, for example by selling off inventories and other measures," the spokesperson said.

Business Insider reported on Tuesday that the Wolfsburg-based firm did not expect to be able to produce more than 800,000 vehicles this year due to semiconductor bottlenecks.



G20 to Endorse Deal on Global Minimum Corporate Tax

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The world's financial leaders will endorse on July 9-10 a deal setting a global minimum corporate tax and call for technical work to be finished so they can approve the framework for implementation in October, their draft communique showed.

"After many years of discussions and building on the progress made last year, we have achieved an historical agreement on a new, fair and stable international tax architecture," the draft said.

It made no mention of a specific rate for a global minimum corporate tax nor other key details, which remain to be agreed by nearly 140 countries known as the Inclusive Framework meeting online next week in talks hosted by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Details agreed at that meeting will then be sent to finance ministers and central bank governors from the world's 20 biggest economies (G20) for approval at the July 9-10 meeting in Venice.

"We endorse the core elements of the two pillars of the profit reallocation of multinational enterprises and the global minimum tax as set out in the statement released by the G20/OECD Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)," the G20 draft said in anticipation of the talks next week.

The first "pillar" of the OECD agreement is to ensure that international companies, especially digital giants like Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple or Microsoft, pay taxes in countries where they make profits, rather than in low-tax jurisdictions chosen to minimize tax payments.

The second "pillar" is a minimum level of corporate tax globally, so that governments do not compete with each other by lowering taxes to attract investment from large multinationals.

G7 finance ministers backed earlier this month a global minimum tax rate of at least 15% and thresholds for divvying up governments' rights to tax the profits on cross-border commerce, but the G20 draft did not make any reference to that number.

"We call on the G20/OECD Inclusive Framework on BEPS to swiftly finalize the remaining technical work with a view to approving the framework for implementation of the two pillars by our next meeting in October," the draft, seen by Reuters, said.

Intense bilateral discussions are currently underway ahead of the OECD-hosted talks to get countries on the same page in the face of stiff resistance from low-tax countries, which in Europe include Ireland, the Netherlands, Hungary and Luxembourg.

The G20 draft also supported the G7's push to force banks and companies to disclose their exposure to climate-related risks read more :

"Quality data and consistent frameworks of disclosure are crucial for addressing climate-related financial risks and mobilizing sustainable finance," the G20 draft said.

"We recognize that a more comprehensive assessment of environmental and climate-related macro-economic risks can help develop innovative solutions to make our economies more sustainable, resilient and inclusive," it said. The G20 will also agree to invest in sustainable infrastructure and new technologies for clean energy sources "including the phasing-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and other carbon pricing mechanisms," the draft showed.

Russia, Syria Finalizing Economic Cooperation Agreement

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - The preparation of an intergovernmental agreement on trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Syria is at the final stage, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov said on Tuesday. He was speaking at a meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus.

"We are at the final stage of preparing a future intergovernmental agreement, which will regulate all our trade and economic interaction for a long term," he said.

Borisov also confirmed that Russia is ready to continue to provide military and humanitarian aid to Syria.

Earlier on Tuesday, Borisov met in Damascus with Minister of Presidential Affairs of Syria, Mansour Azzam.

At that meeting, Borisov said that Russia aims to strengthen bilateral relations with Syria to restore energy, industry, transport and agriculture in Syria.

The Russian official underscored the strengthening of positive trends in the development of the situation in Syria. According to him, with the active assistance of Russia, it was possible to achieve compliance with a stable cessation of hostilities. Borisov stressed that further normalization should be ensured not so much by military-political as by socio-economic means.



"We reaffirm our readiness to continue to provide our Syrian friends with comprehensive assistance in all areas. We attach great importance to the development of the entire range of bilateral cooperation, while at the current stage we pay the greatest attention to issues related to the intensification of bilateral ties in such priority sectoral areas as energy, industrial cooperation, transport, agriculture," he said.

On behalf of the Russian leadership and himself, Borisov congratulated Mansour Azzam and the entire Syrian people on the victory of Bashar al-Assad in the presidential elections on May 26. He noted that the results of the vote fully confirmed Assad's political authority and the public's confidence in the course under his leadership to quickly stabilize the situation in Syria and strengthen its state institutions.

ECB Policymakers at Odds On Inflation Strategy

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - European Central Bank (ECB) policymakers are still some way apart on their new inflation strategy but hope to reach an agreement before debating the future of their pandemic-fighting program in September, sources told Reuters.

ECB rate setters agreed on some side issues at a retreat last weekend, such as including environmental considerations into their policy decisions and adding owner-occupied housing costs to their measure of inflation, the three sources close to the matter said.

But there were still some differences when it came to the core of the ECB's strategy review: the definition of price stability and how to achieve it, the sources added.

One source said there was general consensus at the June 18-20 gathering that the ECB could tolerate inflation exceeding its new goal, to be set at 2%, as it has been stuck below that level for most of the past decade. But the source said policymakers had yet to agree on how to phrase that message and how specific it should be about the extent to which inflation would be allowed to overshoot and for how long.

The matter was going to be debated by rate setters in the coming weeks.

"There will be lots of drafts going around in the next few days," one of the sources said.

Two sources said the ECB was still hoping to wrap it all up before the Sept. 9 meeting of the Governing Council, when rate setters may decide on the future of their Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme.

An ECB spokesman declined to comment.

ECB President Christine Lagarde said on Sunday she and her colleagues had made "good progress" at the three-day retreat. Slovak central bank chief Peter Kazimir meanwhile said he hoped the review would be done in the "coming weeks".



UAE Central Bank Sees Inflation Picking Up in H2

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The UAE central bank pegs its currency to the dollar and monetary policy tends to move in lockstep with the U.S. Federal Reserve.

The United Arab Emirates central bank expects consumer prices to start rising again in the second half of 2021. Prices dropped an average -0.3 percent in the first six months of 2021, the Persian Gulf country's central bank said in its economic quarterly review. This is because real estate prices and private consumption are still recovering from the coronavirus pandemic and the rout in oil prices, but "a move into positive territory is expected to start in the second half of 2021", the regulator said.

The Persian Gulf nation's Consumer Price Index has been deflationary since 2019, weighed down mainly by its real estate basket, which accounts for more than a third of the gauge.

Property prices in Dubai, one of the UAE's seven emirates and its main travel destination, declined an average 5.5 percent on an annual basis during the first quarter of the year, while rents fell about 4.3 percent. In the capital, Abu Dhabi, residential property prices marked their first year-on-year gain in more than five years, according to the review.

The UAE central bank pegs its currency to the dollar and monetary policy tends to move in lockstep with the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Gross domestic product is seen rising 2.4 percent this year and 3.8 percent in 2022, while oil growth is expected to contract one percent in 2021.

The UAE's economy is set to benefit next year from neighbor Qatar hosting the World Cup, and from the World Expo in Dubai, which is scheduled to open its doors in October this year.

Dubai's hotel occupancy rate during the first quarter was at 64 percent compared with 69 percent a year earlier.

5.2m People Become Millionaires in 2020

LONDON (Dispatches) - There are now 5.2 million more millionaires in the world than there were before the coronavirus pandemic, despite the toll COVID-19 has taken on global economies.

The Credit Suisse (CS) Global Wealth Report showed that certain actions taken by governments around the world, such as the slashing of interest rates and stimulus measures, sometimes ended up helping the assets of the rich grow in value.

Many ended up benefiting from surging

stock and house prices.

56.1 million people had assets worth more than \$1m (£720m) in 2020 and those who are millionaires in dollar terms now account for more than 1% of the global population for the first time in history.

"The top wealth groups are relatively unaffected by reductions in the overall level of economic activity and, more importantly, they have also benefited from the impact of lower interest rates on share prices and house prices," the report said.

In the UK, 258,000 people become millionaires in 2020. The country now has 2.5 million individuals with assets worth more than \$1m.

Nearly one-third of the new millionaires were in the US, where the total number of millionaires is now 22m.

Around 41,000 people have also joined the ranks of "ultra high net worth individuals" which means their assets are worth more than \$50m.

This was a 24% increase from 2019. The total number of super-rich individuals in the world is now 215,030.

"There's a sort of disconnect between what's been happening to the wider economies - which have been in serious trouble and required a lot of government intervention - and what's happened to household wealth, which seems to have just continued as if nothing has been happening," the Guardian quoted Anthony Shorrocks, an economist at the University of Manchester and one of the report's authors, as saying.

Meanwhile, a report from November 2020 showed that the UK's wealth disparity is widening as a result of the pandemic.

Almost half of those who found things "very difficult" financially before lockdown are now reporting things are "much worse," with a further 23% saying things are "worse."

IMF's SDR Cash Will Still Leave Poorest Nations Short



LONDON (Reuters) - The world's poorest countries will still require nearly \$200 billion to restock depleted reserves after an imminent injection of new money from the International Monetary Fund, credit rating agency S&P Global has estimated.

The IMF is putting the finishing touches on a record \$650 billion allocation of its Special Drawing Right quasi-reserve asset as part of efforts to help low-income countries hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

Because the IMF's cash gets divided between all its countries, including rich ones, only 7% or \$42 billion will go to the 44 poorer nations with the lowest S&P sovereign credit rating scores.

It would still be enough to restore the financial reserves of Zambia, Jordan, El Salvador, Benin and Togo to adequate levels - roughly defined as enough to cover three months of imports, all short-term external debt payments or 20% of the money circulating in the economy, S&P said.

An additional two of the 44 - Democratic Republic of Congo and Suriname - would see at least one of three reserve adequacy measures restored.

Nevertheless, another \$189 billion would be required to bring the reserves of all remaining 'B+' rated countries up to adequate levels, although that did include the likes of Turkey too.

There is a potential solution. The United States and other Group of Seven nations are considering redistributing \$100 billion of the \$280 billion they will get from the new SDR handout. If all richer countries are included, it goes up to nearly \$440 billion.

"We calculate a reallocation of an estimated 42% of wealthy country SDR allocations to low-income countries would be what it would take to bring the reserve levels in all rated LIC up to complete reserve adequacy," S&P said.

Seven countries - Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Kenya, Bolivia, Congo Republic, Belize, and Suriname - would need less than \$1 billion each to shore up their reserves.

Websites of Iranian TVs, Yemeni al-Masirah Blocked by U.S.

TEHRAN (MNA) – Media say the US government has shut down the websites of Iran Arbaic-Language TV Al-Alam; English language Press TV as well as the website of Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television.

There are reports by media that the US government has blocked the Tehran-based Arabic-Language TV Al-Alam website as well as the website of Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television. Tehran-based English-language Press TV has also been reported to have been blocked by the US administration.



Turkey After Greater Share of Foreign Investments

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's strategy on foreign direct investment will serve as a road map to securing value-added funding in the sectors that the economy needs, the nation's president said Tuesday.

"(The roadmap's) main objective is to increase our market share in global direct investments to 1.5% by 2023, in line with the 11th Development Plan," President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said.

He was elaborating on a new strategy document for 2021-2023 released by the country's Investment Office and published in the Official Gazette.

Thanks to its advantageous location, Turkey has access to a huge market of \$26 trillion (TL 226.29 trillion) and 1.3 billion people within a four-hour flight distance, noted Erdoğan.

Besides these commercial advantages, Turkey is one of the most reliable routes for the transportation of energy resources to European countries on the east-west route, he added.

Underlining that Turkey has managed to attract approximately \$225 billion of international direct investment since 2003, the president said that companies that choose to invest in the country increased their investments over time and "positioned our country as a production, export and management center."

The government is determined to improve Turkey's economic development and investment environment by joining hands with both existing investors and new entrepreneurs in the next period, he underlined.

"For this purpose, under the coordination of our Presidential Investment Office, we have prepared our country's international direct investments strategy in cooperation with all relevant public and private sector institutions."

The president noted that Turkey had enacted a special law in 2003 that provides assurances for international direct investments, adding that Ankara had also inked mutual investment protection and double taxation prevention agreements with many countries.

Separately, addressing the Qatar Economic Forum via a video message, Erdoğan said the strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7% in the first quarter of the year has bolstered prospects for the remaining period of the year.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) forecast the economy would grow 5.7% this year and 3.4% in 2022.

This, Erdoğan said, is one of the strongest rebounds among the OECD member states.

"Hopefully, we will exceed these projections," the president noted.

Turkey's economy expanded 1.8% in 2020, one of only a few globally to avoid a contraction due to the pandemic thanks to a state-lender-led credit boom mid-year.

The recent sharp momentum in the country's COVID-19 vaccinations, which has seen more than 1 million doses being delivered each day over the last week, is also raising hopes of a strong economic performance in the second half of the year.

JP Morgan last week revised its full-year economic growth forecast up to 6.8%, citing the pace of vaccinations.



Turkey began easing curbs in recent weeks, limiting the lockdown to Sunday and opening restaurants to a limited number of guests, after daily cases began to fall from a peak above 60,000 in April.

Erdoğan Monday said Turkey will further relax restrictions from next month, after the number of daily cases in the country fell to around 5,000.

Lockdowns that had been imposed on Sundays and curfews from 7 p.m. GMT on weekdays will be lifted from July 1.

Pointing to global economic figures that illustrated the extent of the fallout caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Erdoğan said the world's least developed and developing countries had been "left to their fate."

"We witness the same carelessness displayed on vaccines," he asserted, adding that global economic recovery would not be possible unless vaccines and drugs are made available to all countries in a fair way.

A Turkish-developed COVID-19 vaccine is expected to be available for use by late 2021, Erdoğan said, adding: "I would like to share the good news that the COVID-19 vaccine developed by Turkey will hopefully be the vaccine of all humanity, as well as our nation."

Erdoğan noted that while the pandemic threatens economies, it has also opened windows of opportunity.

U.S. Has Agreed to...

FROM PAGE 1

"About 1,040 Trump-era sanctions will be lifted under the agreement. It was also agreed to lift some sanctions on individuals and members of the supreme leader's inner circle."

None of the foreign officials involved in the Vienna nuclear talks have yet confirmed the agreements.

In contrast, it is the first time that Islamic Republic officials have announced agreements to lift sanctions.

This comes after Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser at the White House, said in an interview with ABC News on Sunday, June 20, that there remains a significant gap to address key issues such as lifting sanctions and returning Iran to its nuclear commitments.

Sullivan said on Sunday there was still "a fair distance to travel", including on sanctions and on the nuclear commitments that Iran has to make. Other Western and Iranian officials have also said the talks are a long way from a conclusion.

Iran Foils Act of...

FROM PAGE 1

Back in November 2020, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top nuclear physicist was assassinated in a terrorist attack near the Iranian capital, Tehran. Fakhrizadeh's name had been mentioned by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had publicly singled out the scientist as a threat.

The Natanz facility, a uranium enrichment center located in the city of the same name in Iran's central Isfahan Province, was also targeted in July 2020, in an incident that caused material damage to one of its inactive sheds in an open area.

Tehran Calls for...

FROM PAGE 1

He went on to say that if all sides agree to hold talks and halt years of bloodshed, reconciliation can happen; but if one side tries to compel others to accept peace by force, it will fail. And the international community should not let the latter occur because it would not be the real peace and would not be sustainable either, Takht Ravanchi stated.

Surely, a more secure, stable and wealthier Afghanistan will benefit the country, its people, its neighbors and the world, the ambassador stressed.

To reach that end, a process of peace should start in Afghanistan with the help of the United Nations, he said, adding that such a process should basically serve a sustainable peace.

After the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Afghanistan, Talibn has no excuse for bullying, Ravanchi noted, stressing that it should stop aggression and take this unprecedented opportunity to honestly help establish sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, any process of peace will fail in the absence of other players, the ambassador underlined. Process of peace will be successful only if it is supported strongly, he added.

Iran still calls on the UN to play a leading role in the intra-Afghan peace process of talks, he noted.

Referring to the critical security situation in Afghanistan, Takht Ravanchi condemned terrorist attacks on religious minorities, women and girls in Afghanistan.

Although sustainable peace should be seriously followed up in Afghanistan, economic development in that country should not be ignored, the ambassador underlined.

Iran has stood by Afghanistan, the diplomat added.

Even After Biden Tax Hike, U.S. Firms Would Pay Less Than Foreign Rivals

NEW YORK (Reuters) - U.S. companies pay less income tax than their overseas competitors and would likely continue to do so under a tax hike proposed by President Joe Biden, according to a Reuters analysis of filings by hundreds of U.S. and international firms.

The analysis undercuts arguments by some company executives and trade groups that Biden's plan would leave U.S. firms paying some of the world's highest taxes and struggling to compete against foreign rivals. Industry representatives have aggressively lobbied against the proposal, which would increase the corporate tax rate to 28%, from the current 21%. The president also wants a minimum tax of 21% on overseas income, up from 10.5%. U.S. corporations typically pay less - sometimes much less - than those statutory rates because the U.S. tax code is unusually generous with tax breaks and deductions, and in allowing overseas tax planning, according to the Reuters analysis. The analysis was reviewed by four academics with experience in measuring corporate tax payments.

Reuters examined the effective tax rates - reflecting the actual tax payments companies reported - of 52 of the largest U.S.-based multinational firms, and then compared them to the rates paid by these companies' main overseas competitors. The U.S. companies paid an average effective tax rate of 16% in 2020 compared to an average rate of 24% paid by 200 foreign companies that the U.S. firms named as their competitors in filings.

If Biden's proposed tax rates were applied to the U.S. firms' 2020 earnings, the companies would have paid effective rates averaging about five percentage points higher, or 21%, the Reuters analysis found.

That's still lower than the average rate paid by their overseas competitors. Moreover, U.S. firms would likely retain a bigger tax advantage over their foreign rivals than the analysis shows, for two reasons. First, the Reuters calculations do not account for the impact of new tax breaks for U.S. firms that Biden proposes to encourage domestic manufacturing and clean-energy investments. Second, the Biden plan would also require foreign companies with U.S. operations to pay higher taxes on their U.S. income.

Business lobby groups have argued that the Biden proposal, which requires congressional approval, would leave domestic firms at the mercy of their foreign rivals.

"Such tax increases would make the United States uncompetitive as a place to do business and make U.S. companies uncompetitive globally," said Joshua Bolten, chief executive of the Business Roundtable, which represents about 200 large U.S. companies, when the measures were first announced on March 31. The trade group said comparisons of effective tax rates, as in the Reuters analysis, can be "informative" but are only one of many valid ways to analyze how taxes impact the global competitiveness of U.S. firms. The organization said that simpler comparisons of statutory tax rates among nations - without considering deductions, credits and overseas tax planning - also accurately reflect the incentives for firms to locate in one nation versus another.

UN World Heritage Sites in Danger

PARIS (Dispatches) - From Australia's Great Barrier Reef to the city of Budapest and the watery wonderland that is Venice, several beauty spots risk losing their treasured UN World Heritage status because of environmental damage, excess development or overtourism.

In a draft report released ahead of a key meeting next month, the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended Monday a major revamp of the heritage list. Here are some of the sites that risk losing their treasured Heritage Site status, a move that could seriously dent their tourist appeal.

*Great Barrier Reef: in Danger

Stretching 2,300 kilometers (1,400 miles) along Australia's northeast coast, the world's largest coral reef system, a huge draw for tourists, has been battered by global warming.

In the past five years rising ocean temperatures have caused three episodes of mass coral bleaching, when the invertebrates expel the algae living in their tissues that supply a crucial source of nutrients. The site, which has also been lashed by cyclones and attacked by crown-of-thorns starfish, has lost half its corals since 1995.

Canberra twice narrowly avoided having UNESCO put the reef on its endangered list, in 2015 and 2017.

Four years on, UNESCO acknowledges the government's efforts to shore up the site but notes that Australia's own outlook for the ecosystem has been downgraded from "poor" to "very poor." It recommends adding the reef to its list of sites in danger, a first step towards it being stripped of its World Heritage status.

*Venice: in Danger

The former city-state of Venice was inscribed on the Heritage list in 1987 as "an extraordinary architectural masterpiece in which even the smallest building contains works by some of the world's greatest artists."

But for years now UNESCO has been echoing warnings by residents' groups about the damage caused by overtourism, saying it is driving an exodus from the city.

While noting that tourist numbers "drastically decreased" during the Covid-19 pandemic, UNESCO said the health crisis "also highlighted the need for more sustainable tourism management and the development of a more diverse resilient economic basis."

It also noted that although Venice recently banned giant cruise ships from docking inside the city centre at UNESCO's request, "it has no practical effect, as no alternative exists for the mooring of these large ships."

It proposes therefore to also add Venice to its endangered heritage list.



*Budapest: in Danger

The central European city on the Danube, which was conquered by the Turks and destroyed during World War II, won its UN listing as "an outstanding example of urban development."

But it now risks being delisted over a major renovation of the Buda Castle quarter, aimed at restoring it to its pre-World War II glory.

UNESCO argues that the reconstruction flouts international conservation norms and called for the work be halted.

The body said that the works are driven mainly by "ideological" considerations aimed at promoting Hungary's pre-Communist "national identity," and go beyond the minimal intervention recommended for historical monuments.

As a result it has called for Budapest to be placed on the endangered heritage list.

*Liverpool: Faces Delisting

Liverpool played a major role in Britain's emergence as a pre-eminent trading power in the 18th and 19th centuries, with its port serving as a hub for the mass movement of people and goods between Europe and America.

But the redevelopment of its historic waterfront and northern dock area have landed it in hot water with UNESCO.

The agency has chided the city for failing to cap the heights for new buildings and said that plans for a new football stadium in Bramley-Moore Dock will lead to a "further deterioration" of the waterfront's "outstanding universal value."

Saying that years of warnings have gone unheeded, UNESCO recommends taking Liverpool off the World Heritage list altogether.

*Tanzania Game Reserve: Faces Delisting

Selous Game Reserve gained World Heritage status in 1982 as one of the biggest remaining wilderness expanses in Africa, teeming with wildlife including elephants and black rhinos.

But in 2014, it was downgraded to the endangered heritage list as poachers began to decimate the elephant population.

The UN has also expressed alarm over the sale of logging rights inside the reserve as well as more recent plans for the construction of a dam on the Rufiji river, the country's largest.

Lamenting Tanzania's decision to forge ahead with the project, despite the ecological threat to the floodplain, UNESCO says the reserve's "outstanding" character has suffered "irreversible" damage and recommended that it be taken off the World Heritage list.

Envoy Urges Deepening Iran-Russia Ties in Economics, Culture

ISFAHAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali on Tuesday said that the cultural and economic relations between Iran and Russia are in serious weakness and should be bolstered by applying capacities and content production.

Iran-Russia relations are in excellent condition in political, military, defense and security aspects, he said, adding that both sides need to further boost the cultural and economic areas.

Due to the lack of content in Russian and Persian in two countries, the two states should get to know each other, he underlined.

In sharing scientific, academic, urban management, and tourism experiences, the officials of Isfahan and St. Petersburg should take more serious action, he further noted.

Chinese Swimmer To Miss Olympics

LAUSANNE (AFP) - Chinese swimmer Sun Yang will miss the Tokyo Olympics after the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Tuesday decided he had violated anti-doping rules.

CAS ruled that Sun be suspended for four years and three months starting on February 28, 2020.

The swimming competition in Tokyo is due to start on July 24.

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Norwich Sign Rashica From Werder Bremen

LONDON (Dispatches) - Premier League new boys Norwich signed Kosovo winger Milot Rashica from Werder Bremen in a reported £9.4 million (\$13 million) deal on Tuesday.

Rashica agreed a four-year contract to join Norwich after Bremen were relegated from the Bundesliga.

The 24-year-old is Daniel Farke's first signing since the Canaries clinched promotion from the Championship.

"I'm really excited to play in front of the Norwich fans and in the Premier League," Rashica told Norwich's website.

Croatia, England Cruise Into Knockout Stage of Euro 2020

LONDON (Dispatches) - After a 23-year wait to qualify for a major tournament, Scotland's Euro 2020 experience lasted just eight days after a 3-1 defeat to Croatia extinguished their hopes of reaching the last 16.

The Tartan Army will fondly remember frustrating England in a 0-0 draw at Wembley on Friday from their return to the international football limelight.

But a masterclass from Croatia's Luka Modric sent Steve Clarke's men packing from the tournament with a reminder of the class it takes to succeed at this level.

"They were unbelievable tonight, Modric especially," said Arsenal defender Kieran Tierney, who is accustomed to coming up against world-class opponents on a weekly basis in the English Premier League.

"I think his performance was incredible."

Three years ago, most of Scotland cheered as Croatia beat England to reach the World Cup final.

On Tuesday, fans of the Three Lions had their revenge as they celebrated Scotland's exit while watching their side beat the Czech Republic 1-0 at Wembley to secure top spot in Group D.

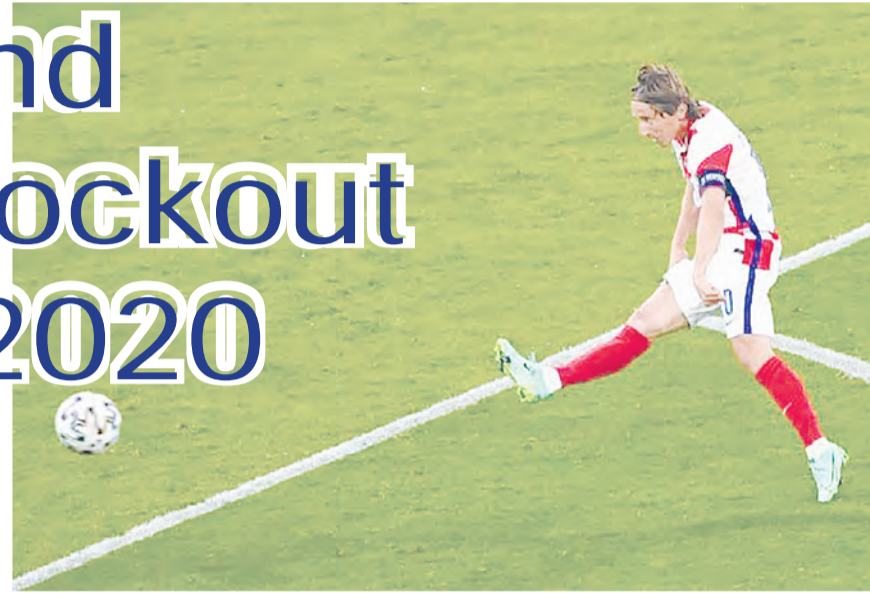
With both sides needing a win to secure their place in the knockout stages after taking just one point from their opening two games, Croatia's greater experience in controlling their nerves across 90 minutes was telling.

After conceding early to Nikola Vlasic, Scotland struck back with their first goal of the tournament through Callum McGregor to go in level at half-time.

But their energy reserves ran dry in the second-half as Croatia kept the ball and finally ended the Scots' resistance in style.

Modric is the only man since 2007 to deny Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo the Ballon d'Or and showed why he belongs in such exalted company.

The 35-year-old, playing in his 62nd



game of the season for club and country, received the ball on the edge of the box and fired into the top corner with the outside of his right foot.

"No one is sure how Luka manages that," Croatia boss Zlatko Dalic said of the Real Madrid midfielder.

"We expect that Luka will go down, lose his strength, but he is the force that pulls the whole team. He never gives up."

Manager Steve Clarke said Scotland will need to follow that example with the 2022 World Cup less than 18 months away.

His side will face a much tougher task to reach Qatar with just 13 spots available to European nations compared to 24 at Euro 2020.

However, Clarke was keen to stress the progress Scotland have made in his two years in charge since a humiliating 3-0 defeat to Kazakhstan ended Alex McLeish's reign as manager at the start of Euro 2020 qualifying.

"Tonight we were against a team that are tournament hardened and who knew how to play the third game in the group -- and we probably didn't. That's why we are going home and Croatia are going through," he said.

"I promise you it won't be 23 years till the next one."

For Croatia, next up is a trip to Copenhagen on Monday to face one of Spain, Sweden, Slovakia or Poland. After a lacklustre opening two games, Dalic complained his side had been unfairly written off back home.

But the surprise package of the 2018 World Cup are not done yet thanks in large part to their inspirational captain.

"We were not happy with performances in the first two matches and we knew we could be better," said Modric. "When we play like this, we are dangerous to everyone."

Shakhtar Donetsk Signs Brazilian Defender

DONETSK (Dispatches) - Ukrainian runners-up Shakhtar Donetsk have signed Brazilian defender Marlon from Serie A side Sassuolo, the club announced on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old center-back followed his former coach Roberto De Zerbi, who left Sassuolo for the Ukrainian club last month.

"I'm very happy. It's a great honor for me to sign a contract with Shakhtar. I feel like the chosen one," said Marlon, who signed a five-year deal.

"The club has the same goals and vision as I do. I moved here to help and be part of the team," he added.

Marlon, who becomes the 12th Brazilian on Shakhtar's roster, made 69 appearances for Fluminense in his native Brazil.

He was loaned out to Barcelona in 2016 before signing a three-year contract the next year. But the Brazilian made just two appearances in La Liga and one in the Champions League before moving to Sassuolo in 2018, where he played in 66 games, scoring nine goals.

Shakhtar did not disclose the financial terms of the deal, but local media reported that the club paid Sassuolo at least 12 million euros (\$14.3 million).

Marlon is the club's third costly newcomer this off-season after fellow Brazilian midfielder Pedrinho and Burkino Faso forward Lassina Traore, both of whom joined Shakhtar after De Zerbi was appointed.

Eugene, Oregon To Host Diamond League Final in 2023

EUGENE (Reuters) - Oregon's new Athletics stadium, due to host of the 2022 world championships, will be the venue for the 2023 Diamond League final, making it the first time the meeting has been held outside Europe, the league's top official told Reuters on Tuesday.

"We are very pleased to have the final in Eugene, Tracktown USA in the year after the world athletics championships at the iconic and new Hayward Field arena," Petr Stastny, chief executive officer of the Diamond League, said in an email.

The \$270 million stadium on the campus of the University of Oregon opened this year and is currently hosting the U.S. Olympic trials.

The Diamond League final is the climax of the 14-meeting global series and attracts the world's top athletes.

Usually held in Zurich or Brussels, it will begin rotating among other Diamond League cities after Eugene, Stastny said.

"It will rotate annually as we intend to give more member meetings of the Wanda Diamond League the opportunity to host the final," he added.

Denmark Unit Rides Wave of Emotion Into Wales Last-16 Clash

LONDON (Dispatches) - Denmark is a nation united behind its football team after they charged into the Euro 2020 knockouts on a cathartic night in Copenhagen which sets them up well for the rest of the tournament.

Considered by many a dark horse before the Euro started thanks to a squad packed with talent, Denmark will face Wales in the last 16 and on the evidence of Monday's thrilling 4-1 thumping of Russia will be favourites to make the last eight.

Before the tournament started, coach Kasper Hjulmand said he wanted his side to "dare to dream" of going all the way as in 1992, and on Monday their resolve shone through after a rough fortnight in which the players had to deal with seeing teammate Christian Eriksen nearly die on the pitch.

Yastremska Cleared to Play After Doping Ban Squashed



KIEV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian tennis player Dayana Yastremska was on Tuesday cleared of doping after a failed test last November that ruled her out of the Australian Open.

The 21-year-old, ranked 29 in the world at the end of 2020, received an initial ban after testing positive for a banned anabolic agent, mesterolone metabolite, used in male infertility treatment.

She first appealed to the International Tennis Federation (ITF)'s independent tribunal which upheld her ban on January 23.

Following a secondary hearing, the tribunal said on Tuesday that it "accepted Ms. Yastremska's account of how the mesterolone entered her system and determined that she bore no fault or negligence for the violation". Yastremska's provisional suspension was lifted with immediate effect, and "she will not serve any period of ineligibility for her violation", the ITF said.

The decision is subject to appeal by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the Ukrainian anti-doping agency to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Yastremska has won three WTA titles in her career, with her best Grand Slam performance a run to the fourth round at Wimbledon in 2019.

Wembley to Have Crowd of 60,000 for Euro Semis and Final

MANCHESTER (Reuters) - Crowd capacity at Wembley Stadium will be increased to more than 60,000 fans for the semi-finals and final of Euro 2020, the British government said on Tuesday.

The new levels mean the stadium will be at 75% capacity for the final three games, which conclude with the final on July 11.

All ticket holders will need to have either a negative COVID-19 test or proof of full vaccination - two doses received 14 days before the fixture.

The announcement came after Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi called on Monday for the final to be moved from England due to rising COVID-19 cases in the country.

Wembley's capacity has been set at 22,500 for the three group and the round of 16 match between Italy and Austria on June 26 but will rise to 40,000 for the other round of 16 match on June 29 which could feature England.

"We are thrilled that more fans will now be able to walk through the Wembley turnstiles and enjoy the finals of Euro 2020," said culture secretary Oliver Dowden.

"As we continue to make progress on our roadmap out of lockdown, keeping the public safe remains our top priority. We have worked extremely closely with UEFA and the FA to ensure rigorous and tight public health measures are in place whilst allowing more fans to see the action live," he said.

UEFA has been negotiating with the UK government about relaxing quarantine restrictions on overseas fans travelling to London for games but there was no mention of any change in the statement. Currently, COVID-19 regulations require visitors from most European countries to quarantine for 10 days after arriving in the UK.



Pohang, Nagoya Begin ACL Campaign With Wins

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Former winners Pohang Steelers of South Korea eased past Thailand's Ratchaburi 2-0 as the Covid-hit Asian Champions League resumed in sedate fashion in Bangkok on Tuesday.

The tournament rushed through its western zone group phase in April at bio-secure venues in the Gulf and India, but the five groups in the eastern region are moving on a more drawn-out schedule over 19 match days in Thailand and Uzbekistan.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian striker Boris Tashchy gave Pohang the lead in the Group G match in the 11th minute, heading home from near the six-yard box off a cross from Manuel Palacios at the Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok.

Pohang, who won the tournament in 1997, 1998 and 2009, were dominant from the start. Ratchaburi, getting their first taste at the continental level, also had their chances as Kritsananon Srisuwan just missed after he was allowed space and Sanrawat Dechmitr sent his header thundering into the bar in the first half.

Pohang also missed on a couple of occasions before the break, notably when Colombian Manuel Palacios' shot from inside the box was expertly saved by Ratchaburi goalkeeper Kampil Pathom-Attakul.

Kampil foiled Palacios again in the first minute of the second half and made a couple of other notable contributions before Lim Sang-Hyub struck with a powerful shot in the 81st minute to help Pohang consolidate. In another Group G match on Tuesday, Japan's Nagoya Grampus scraped to a 1-0 victory over Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim.

