

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 83,711 With 123 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi Has Said That Iranian President-Elect Seyed Ebrahim Raisi Has Invited Him to Visit Tehran, Adding That Will Visit Tehran After He Forms His Government

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SUNDAY JUNE 27, 2021 - TIR 6, 1400

2 DOMESTIC


Use of Iranian Vaccine by Leader, Encouragement For Scientists



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran's Electricity Imports Up by 1.8 Times



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Biden Meets Afghan Leaders as U.S. Troops Leave



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

George Leads Clippers Over Suns in Semis



> SEE PAGE 8

Leader Approves Pardons, Reduced Terms for Inmates

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has approved pardons and sentence reduction or adjustment for 5,156 of prisoners convicted by general and revolution courts as well as the Justice Organization of the Armed Forces in marking the blessed birth anniversary of Imam Reza (PBUH) - the eighth Shia apostle.

This came after the Chief of Iran's Judiciary Branch and President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, in a letter to the leader, requested the pardon and reduction or revision of convictions of the selected offenders whose cases have been reviewed by the judiciary's amnesty and pardon commission and were determined to be qualified for discounted sentences, Fars news agency reported Saturday.

The official amnesty request was approved in line with the implementation of the 11th paragraph of the Constitution's Article 110, according to the report.

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

The election was held amid a massive political and media negative campaign by the US as well as its Western and regional allies in attempts to falsely portray the vote as "undemocratic."

Many world leaders, senior foreign officials, prominent figures, and regional resistance leaders have so far offered congratulations on Raisi's victory.

Raisi is due to assume office on August 3 after being sworn in.

Tehran Warns Against Illegal Presence of Foreign Forces in Syria

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A top Iranian diplomat has warned against the illegal presence of some foreign forces in Syria, stressing that the years-long crisis in the Arab country must be resolved peacefully in line with the principles of international law.

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi on Friday warned against the illegal presence of some foreign forces in Syria and said the Syrian crisis must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with the principles of international law.

He made the remarks at a meeting of the UN Security Council held on the situation in the Middle East with a focus on Syria.

See Page 7

Iran Committed to Safeguards Agreement No More No Less



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations has reminded the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that the country is only committed to honor its obligations under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements (CSA).

Kazem Gharibabadi made the remarks after the UN nuclear agency demanded "an immediate response" from Iran on whether it would extend a monitoring deal that expired overnight.

The IAEA's statement summarized a report by its chief Rafael Grossi to the Agency's Board of Governors.

Back in February, Iran stopped the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards Treaty, which stipulates enhanced access to nuclear sites and snap inspections by the IAEA.

The halt came under the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed in December 2020 by the Iranian Parliament, and adds to Iran's previous steps away from the 2015 nuclear deal in response to the US's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and the other parties' failure to fulfill their commitments.

At that time, the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) reached a temporary bilateral technical understanding, under which the latter would continue to use cameras to record information at its nuclear sites for three months, but it would retain the information exclusively. If the US sanctions were lifted completely within that period in a verifiable manner, Tehran would provide the footage information to the UN nuclear watchdog, otherwise it would be deleted forever.

The understanding expired in May amid diplomatic efforts in Vienna, Austria, to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran and the IAEA agreed to extend the understanding for a further month until June 24 allowing the agency to continue necessary verification and monitoring work in the country.

Gharibabadi said, "Data recording was a political decision by Iran to facilitate, including, the political talks and to help its success and shouldn't be considered as obligation in relation with the Agency."

"Since Iran is continuing the implementation of its CSA, continuation or discontinuation of recording has nothing to do with Iran's safeguards obligations. Undoubtedly, any decision to be taken by Iran in this regard, would only be based on its political considerations, and the Agency cannot, and should not, consider it as something it was entitled to," he added.

The Iranian envoy also criticized Grossi for reporting to members of the IAEA's Board of Governors, saying that the Agency has no obligation to report on the expired joint understanding as well as data recording.

"What Iran is committed to fulfill are obligations under Safeguards Agreement, no more or less," he stressed.

Hezbollah Blasts U.S. Over Seizure of Websites

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The secretary-general of Lebanon's Hezbollah has rejected as a "bunch of lies" accusations by some political parties that the resistance movement is obstructing efforts to form a new government and end the months-long deadlock gripping the country's political scene.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks in a televised speech on Friday, in which he discussed the latest political developments in Lebanon as well as the region.

"These parties seek to use any incident to tarnish others' reputation and to settle political scores," said Nasrallah. "They put their own interests above those of the nation."

He further said Lebanon's main parties should join hands to facilitate government formation and end the power vacuum in the Arab country.

Hezbollah, he said, had been seeking to pave the way for government formation since the day Prime Minister Saad Hariri was tasked with setting up a cabinet.

He also noted that the United States is seeking to link Lebanon's case to the negotiations over the 2015 nuclear deal. "Certain sides are bent on pinning the blame for the failure to form a government on Iran and Hezbollah," said Nasrallah. "The U.S. is after tying Lebanon's case to the negotiations with Iran, while Iran opposes that."

Nasrallah said the accusations that Hezbollah is blocking the formation of a new government in Lebanon are a bunch of lies.

Lebanon plunged into a political vacuum in August 2020, when the previous administration, led by former Prime Minister Hassan Diab, resigned following a devastating explosion at the port in Beirut that destroyed swathes of the capital and left more than 200 people dead.

Hariri has visited the Lebanese president multiple times since his designation to form a new government, but the pair has reached no agreement on the make-up of the cabinet to date.

See Page 7

Raisi Vows to Reform Administrative System, Fight COVID-19

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President-elect Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi says making reforms in the administrative system, creating job opportunities and fighting COVID-19 will be among his topmost priorities after taking office in less than two months.

Raisi made the remarks in his first televised interview speaking from the holy city of Mashhad on Friday.

"What has preoccupied my mind more than everything is the issue of occupation. The issue of coronavirus that the [Iranian] people are grappling with has also preoccupied my mind."

He noted that his administration would also focus on increasing the availability of housing for the public as pledged during his election campaign.

He, however, said people are aware that some measures would take time and emphasized that his administration would make utmost efforts to solve problems as soon as possible.

The Iranian president-elect said he intends to maintain close interaction with the people and sets no limitation in this regard.

Raisi called for national unity to overcome the problems the country is struggling with.

See Page 7

U.S. Not to Lift All Trump-Imposed Sanctions on Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - U.S. Special Envoy for Iran's Affairs Robert Malley said that the new U.S. administration is not going to lift all of the sanctions that the Trump administration imposed on Iran.

Speaking to NPR and in response to a question of what Tehran wants from the administration that is hard for the United States to give up, Malley said, "Well, what they've asked for - in principle, they've said they want all of the sanctions that President Trump's administration reimposed or imposed since 2018 to be lifted. And that's a lot. And we've said we're prepared to remove those that we think we need to remove to be back in compliance with the JCPOA. But we're not going to lift all of the sanctions that the Trump administration imposed."

"We're not desperate for a deal any more than we believe Iran is desperate for a deal. But we would walk away if the deal that Iran is prepared to accept is not one that we feel meets our bottom-line interests," he said in response to a question whether the United States prepared to walk away, despite its desire to return to the JCPOA.

Earlier, a U.S. media quotes informed sources as saying that the United States considers many of the sanctions imposed on Iran during Donald Trump's presidency legal.

The United States is unwilling to lift all sanctions imposed by former U.S. President Donald Trump on Iran to return to the JCPOA, Politico quoted informed sources as saying.

Iran Embassy Hits Back At Shea Over Oil Ships

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Iranian embassy in Lebanon on Saturday lashed out at U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea over remarks related to Hizbullah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's call for buying fuel from Iran.

"The arrival of Iranian oil tankers in Beirut is not hinging on the trifles of U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea," the embassy tweeted.

"The ambassador should not interfere in the brotherly relations between the two countries and between the Iranian and Lebanese peoples," the embassy added.

The tweet included a file photo of an Iranian oil tanker. Sources meanwhile told al-Jadeed TV that the tweet was a "political response" to Shea's remarks and does not signal the actual arrival of any Iranian ships in Lebanon.

See Page 7

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South African President Congratulates Iran President-Elect

TEHRAN (RNA) - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in a message congratulated Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi on his victory in the 13th Presidential election.

In his message, Ramaphosa said Pretoria is ready to establish cooperation with Tehran. He lauded holding calm and successful election in Iran.

President Ramaphosa noted that South Africa considers Iran as a strategic trade partner in West and Central Asia.

Use of Iranian Vaccine by Leader, Encouragement For Scientists

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's decision to use Iranian-developed vaccine is the best encouragement for scientists.

The country should be proud of the anti-coronavirus vaccine made by Iranians, President Rouhani said at a national anti-coronavirus headquarters meeting in Tehran.

Ayatollah Khamenei received a dose of Iranian-developed coronavirus vaccine on June 25.

About the situation of coronavirus worldwide, the President said that new wave of the deadly virus has been seen in neighboring states in east and west of the country. Further, he called on all to follow health protocols.

Elsewhere, the President expressed satisfaction over the country's oil export and said it has been 10.7 billion dollars during the first three months of the Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21).

Rouhani stated that these days in different countries in Europe, Russia and East Asia, we are witnessing a new wave of the disease.

He added, "This is why we cannot talk about the future with certainty, and observing the health protocols is still necessary," he said.

Explaining the measures and efforts made over the past 16 months to combat COVID-19, Dr Rouhani said, "Since the beginning of the outbreak of this disease in the country, both in the management of the disease and reducing its consequences on various sectors, great work has been done and we have minimized the social, economic, educational and cultural effects of COVID-19".

Rouhani further referred to the measures taken to produce vaccines in the country and said, "Vaccine production was considered by the government from the first day



and we decided to support vaccine production centres. While many viewed domestic production of the vaccine as a waste of time, the government pursued a policy of encouragement and assistance".

"As soon as knowledge-based companies and experts started researching the production of COVID-19 vaccines, some people questioned the purchase of vaccines from abroad, but we believed that this was also wrong, and we acted to buy foreign vaccines".

Rouhani stated that the two vaccines of Barekat and Pasteur have received the license for public injection and other samples will be released in the coming weeks and months, adding, "Today, we are facing a good variety of vaccines and the arrival of these vaccines can meet a large part of the needs of the country and we may also export them".

Since its outbreak in December 2019, the coronavirus pandemic has killed near four million people worldwide.

The number of the dead in Iran has passed 83,000.

The first group who received the COVID-19 vaccine were medical personnel, doctors and nurses, the President said in his remarks.

Although the country produces indigenous vaccines, foreign vaccines are still needed, he noted, adding that the country may not need vaccines from foreign states in next months.

Rouhani also expressed hope that the country would export vaccine when it met domestic needs.

Tehran, Moscow Play Most Important Role in Reconstructing Syria

SYRIA (IP) - Iran's Ambassador to Syria said since Tehran and Moscow stood by Syria during the ISIS war on the country, they have had the most important roles in the reconstruction of Syria.

Mahdi Sobhani said three construction expositions were held in Syria during the last two months, wherein Iranian companies participate actively.

Sobhani added that the goal of the Iranian companies' participation in the expositions was to improve relations with their Syrian counterparts with the aim of the expansion of economic ties between the two countries and playing a more effective role in the reconstruction of Syria.

"Let's not forget that the enemies of Syria do not abandon animosity in the reconstruction phase until they achieve their objective that was not fulfilled in the war, and we are sure that the Syrian government is fully aware of these plans," he stressed.

The Iranian envoy reiterated that as his country stood by Syria during the war on terror, it will continue to support the Damascus government at the reconstruction stage.

Iran's Ambassador to Syria made the remarks on the sidelines of the Buildex construction fair which opened in Damascus on Thursday.

Tokyo Ready to Promote Ties With Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The head of Japan-Iran parliamentary friendship group, in his meeting with Iranian ambassador in Tokyo, congratulated Iran's president-elect Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi on victory and emphasized his country's interest in expanding parliamentary ties with Iran.

According to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Japan, The head of Japan-Iran parliamentary friendship group in Tokyo "Fumio Kishida", met with the Iranian Ambassador to Japan in his residence in Tokyo.

Earlier, Japan's top government spokesman Katsunobu Kato said Tokyo intends to deepen friendly relations with Tehran.

"We hope Iran will play a constructive role in easing tensions in the Middle East and stabilize the situation under President-elect Raisi," Kato was quoted by a Japanese media as saying.

"Peace and stability in the region are extremely important to Japan," given about 90 percent of Japan's crude oil imports come from the Middle East, he added.

Iran Denies Nomination for UNSC Non-Permanent Membership

NEW YORK (IRNA) - An Iranian official in the United Nations said Iran has not asked for support from countries in this election.

He said that according to the rules of the general assembly and the method of holding elections, it is possible to write the names of all UN member states in the election papers and if the name of a non-candidate country is written by any member, the votes of that country will be counted.

He further continued: This has caused the names of non-volunteer countries and the votes obtained to be reflected in the final results due to the mistakes of some members in the present board and in the election process of international institutions under the UN general assembly.

Literacy Among Iranian Youth 6% Above Global Average

TEHRAN (MNA) - The average literacy rate of the youth (15-24-year age group) in Iran is estimated at 97.4 percent, which is almost 6 percent higher than the global average, Shapour Mohammadzadeh, head of the Literacy Movement Organization, has stated.

The global youth literacy rate is estimated at 91 percent, he further stated, IRNA reported on Saturday.

In the age group of 15 years and above, the average literacy rate is 86 percent in the world and in Iran, Mohammadzadeh noted.

The rate of literacy among Iranians between 10-49 years has reached 96.6 percent, Mohammadzadeh stated in January.

Iran Self-Sufficient in Dealing With Coronavirus

TEHRAN (IP) - Health Minister emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is now self-sufficient in various fields to deal with the coronavirus.

Saeed Namaki said on Saturday: "Corona crisis started when the country needed to import medicine, masks, and ventilators, which were difficult to obtain due to the difficult conditions of sanctions."

Iran's Health Minister said: "In less than two months, domestic producers were able to meet the country's needs in these areas."

Namaki also added: "Very soon we were in a situation where with the efforts of domestic producers, after self-sufficiency, we can export these items."

Iran's Health Minister emphasized: "With the arrival of the India and South Africa's version, we must be prepared for possible coronavirus waves."

On Saturday, the production of Sputnik V, a vaccine for the coronavirus developed by Russia, began at an Iranian company.

In a ceremony attended by Namaki, the production of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine under license started in Iran on Saturday.

The Iranian producer, Actoverc, is a major pharmaceutical and food factory in the region.

Iran has now joined more than 60 other countries that produce the Russian vaccine under license, including Germany, Italy, Spain, India, China, South Korea, and Brazil.

The Gamaleya Research Institute, part of Russia's Ministry of Health, has developed Sputnik V vaccine. Gamaleya published a study in February showing that two doses of the vaccine had an efficacy rate of 91.6 percent. Russia is using it in a mass vaccination campaign, and the vaccine has been approved for emergency use in dozens of other countries.

The Gamaleya Scientific Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology has also submitted documents to Russia's Health Ministry for permission to conduct clinical trials of the Sputnik V vaccine against the coronavirus among teenagers.

Iran has already granted emergency use authorization to Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine, Covaxin made by India's Bharat Biotech, Oxford/AstraZeneca developed by Russia's R-Pharm Group, and the AstraZeneca-SKBio made in South Korea.



U.S. Has to Return to JCPOA By Lifting Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says it is the United States that unilaterally left the nuclear agreement with Iran -officially named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - and hence, it is Washington that must return to the landmark deal by lifting sanctions and implementing its obligations.

"It is the United States that must make its decision and return to the JCPOA by removing illegal sanctions [against Iran] and effectively fulfilling all its commitments" under the accord, said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh at a press conference on Friday.

He stressed that the Islamic republic had "never left the JCPOA to return to it."

Now, the new U.S. administration says it wants to compensate for Trump's mistake and rejoin the deal if Tehran first suspends its countermeasures taken in response to US violations and reimposition of sanctions.

Tehran insists that all the sanctions should first be removed in a verifiable manner before the Islamic Republic reverses its remedial measures. Furthermore, it says the onus is on the US to revive the deal as it was Washington, not Tehran, that left the internationally recognized accord in defiance of global criticism.

"The United States and the Europeans know best that Iran made its decision when, despite the US unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, the imposition of illegal and oppressive sanctions against the Iranian people and the inaction of Europe, it remained in agreement and kept the JCPOA alive," Khatibzadeh further said, responding to a question about the position announced by the US and French foreign ministers that they are waiting for Iran's decision to return to the nuclear deal.

He said that during the Vienna talks, whose sixth round has come to an end, it was repeatedly stated that it was the U.S. that had upset the balance of JCPOA and that practically prevented the implementation of the deal in a fully non-compliant manner.

"It has also been repeatedly emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to suspend compensatory measures and resume the implementation of its obligations under the JCPOA if the US fully implements them," Khatibzadeh noted, adding that other parties of the deal are well aware of Iran's position.

"Our position has not changed since the beginning of the Vienna talks. We demand the full removal of US sanctions in a verifiable manner, and then the cessation of compensatory measures and the resumption of Iran's commitments," the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman stressed, saying that it is the opposing parties that have to make their decision.

About 2,000 Persian Manuscripts Kept in Austria

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's National Library said in a meeting with Austrian ambassador to Tehran that about 2,000 Persian manuscripts are being kept at Austria's National Library.

Ashraf Boroujerdi, the head of the National Library and Archives Organization of Iran, in the meeting with Austrian Ambassador to Iran Stefan Scholz pointed to the historical relations between Tehran and Vienna, adding that there has been a long history of relationship between Austria and Iran, including in political and cultural arenas.

She went on to say that the National Library and Archives Organization of Iran welcomes transfer of Austria's cultural sources to be placed in the Iranian organization.

Iran needs to use the experiences of Austrians in digitalizing books and other documents, the Iranian official noted.

Boroujerdi also said that she held a virtual conversation with her counterpart in Austria, discussing digitalized sources of national libraries of Austria and Iran and that she was informed in the conversation that there are about 2,000 Persian manuscripts in Austria's National Library.

She further suggested that thinkers and scholars of both countries can initiate scientific cooperation, which can be fruitful for the current and future generations.

Stefan Scholz, for his part, said that given the historical facts, relationships between Iran and Austria dates back to more than 700 years and that there has been no conflict between the two nations.

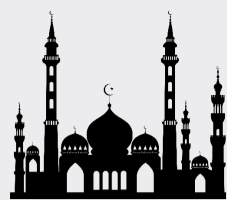
He also expressed satisfaction that there is an atmosphere for Austria's cultural sources in Iran's National Library.

According to the ambassador, Austria's delivered books consist of different topics, including art, culture, nature, and cooking.

Emphasizing the current positive relations between national libraries of Iran and Austria, Schultz went on to say that he promotes expanding and deepening of the cultural cooperation.

The meeting was held on June 23. Some other officials with the National Library and Archives Organization of Iran were present and spoke about the potentials to expand collaborations.





PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 13:08 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 20:45 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 04:05 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 05:51 |

146. How many of the prophets fought (in Allah's way), and with them (fought) Large bands of godly men? but they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. And Allah Loves those who are firm and steadfast.
147. All that they said was: "Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and anything We may have done that transgressed our duty: Establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist Faith."
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (146 - 147)

Iran's Electricity Imports Up by 1.8 Times

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Spokesman for Electricity Industry Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi says this year the import of electricity will be 1.8 times more than last year and the country imports electricity from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

Mr. Rajabi said that the country has imported normally 400 to 500 megawatts of electricity in the past year but this year the figure has reached 650 megawatts and it will definitely hit 700 megawatts which is almost 1.8 times more than last year.

He admitted that power industry is experiencing continuous outages and this may continue for some time.

He blamed the decrease in the rainfalls as the major factor behind electricity shortage and the outages, adding that sanctions and lack of developing the power plants are the other factors behind the shortage of the electricity in the country.

He said the hydro-power plants produced some 10,000 megawatts of electricity last year and currently the country should not consume more than 4000 megawatts of electricity on average produced by the hydro-power plants in order to pass the upcoming heat of the summer.

Rajabi noted that this year the country will face the shortage of 3000 megawatts of electricity and it needs the consumption management by subscribers to get past of this critical stage.

He said due to the decrease in the rainfalls and shortage of electricity, the government has decided to import electricity from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan



as the electricity from Azerbaijan has started since June 10 and currently 73 megawatts of electricity.

He noted that the country imports some 140 megawatts of electricity from Turkmenistan to meet the national demands.

According to a research conducted by Iran's chamber of commerce, Iran ranks 16th in terms of electricity production and 18th in terms of electricity consumption.

The research claims electricity is the major challenge for most of businesses in the country and recent outages have caused damages to many businesses and industries. This has made Iran's place in the global business climate rankings fall.

The national electricity industry needs major investment in building power stations as well as wise consumption of electricity by the public.

A couple of weeks ago Rajabi Mashhadi had said the country will import 140 megawatts (MW) of electricity from Turkmenistan in a bid to meet domestic power need.

Emphasizing the ministry's efforts for meeting the country's electricity requirement, he said that 140 MW of electricity will be imported from Turkmenistan at the first stage, that will meet the power need of some part of Khorasan region (northeastern Iran).

Volume of Commodities Traded on IME Rises by 25%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,030,000 tons of commodities worth almost \$420m, showing 25% and 8% of growth in volume and value of trades respectively.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange played host to trading of 664,176 tons of commodities valued at more than \$233m on its metals and minerals trading floor.

On this floor the exchange saw trades of 259,914 tons of steel, 760 tons of copper, 1,315 tons of aluminum, 27 tons of precious metals concentrate, 78,440 tons of zinc, 306,720 tons of cement, 10 kg of gold bar, 7,000 tons of sponge iron and 10,000 tons of iron ore.

Next trading floor was the IME's oil and petrochemical, which sold on its both domestic and export rings 364,262 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$187m.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 87,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 134,304 tons of bitumen, 94,783 tons of polymeric products, 36,913 tons of chemicals, 8,000 tons of lube cut, 3,420 tons of base oil and slack wax, 110 tons of argon, 1,300 tons of sulfur and 405 tons of insulation.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 2,133 tons of various types of commodities sold on it.

Call for Support of National Energy Production in Sanctions Era



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company in meeting with the members of Majlis Energy Commission said today constant production especially in the field of required energy by the public requires full support.

Addressing the joint meeting of Majlis Energy Commission and Hormuzgan Oil Industries hosted by Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company, Eng. Hashem Namvar said that today in the economic war, production units especially oil companies which provide fuel and energy for the country are in the front line of this war.

He added that improvement and continuation of production in the oil companies have direct impact on the lives of all people in the society and it needs support.

Referring to the cruel sanctions which create many financial pressures and problems and also to the coronavirus pandemic, Mr. Namvar said that due to the efforts and endeavors of personnel and experts of the company, no slump in the production has happened in this company, and with taking effective measure and using all capacities, the amount of the production also increased.

He said that the company, by taking some certain measures in the refinery which were carried out in two stages in 2012 and 2021 without investment improved its nominal refining capacity and in each stage the refining capacity of the refinery increased by 30,000 barrels which helped the oil products to increase and to meet the fuel demands of the country.

Namvar added that although the country is under sanctions and it has problem for exporting crude oil, with implementing some projects, the country could sell more crude.

Imagining "Apple" at Artland Gallery

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

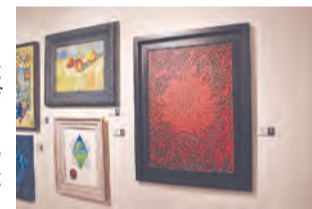
TEHRAN - The collective exhibition on visual arts in the field of painting under the name of Sib (Apple) opened on Friday at Artland Gallery of Tehran under curatorship of Reza Alizadeh and Kambiz Hazratpoor.

According to reports, Hazratpoor said people's welcome of the exhibition was more than his expectation and then Alizadeh called for continuation of holding art events like this at this gallery.

Meanwhile Behdad Najafi, one of the artists participating in the opening ceremony of the exhibition, said that such programs are a place for exchange of views and different styles and it is of the factors for activating the innovation and expansion of the art activities.

In this exhibition, works of 40 artists like Kambiz Derambakhsh, Ali Golestaneh, Hojjatollah Shakiba, Manouchehr Niazi, Saeedeh Arian, Behzad Shishehgran, Mohammad Hadi Fadavi, Akbar Nikanpoor, Garnik Hakoupian and Bahman Niko have been out on display and it will be open to the public from 16:00 to 21:00 hrs (except Saturdays) until July 5.

The Artland Gallery is located at Avein, beginning of Shahid Kachooi Street.



Wells of Felman Completely Dried

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Manager of the monitoring the quality of water and wastewater of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company refuted some rumors gone viral about the pollution of water of the wells of Felman and said that this year water supply of all wells of Felman on the suburb of Zayandehrud River has been zeroed and they have left out of the network.

Ms. Fahimeh Amiri said that it is said the wastewater of Islamabad power station has entered the wells of Felman and has polluted its water is not true because first this power station is located lower than the wells of Felman and its wastewater does not enter the river and secondly, the wells of Felman have completely dried and it provides no water.



She said required water of 57 towns and 380 villages of the province is provided by Baba Sheikhalı Treatment Plant, adding that the quality of drinking water and the health of the citizens are the redlines of the company and for this reason the quality of the supplied water in the Great Isfahan water supply system is constantly checked by the experts at the quality control lab of the company and by the health office of the province, and it is tested and monitored based on the ISO 1053 and 1011 standards.

Amiri noted that so far no infection to the digestive diseases has been reported due to using the drinking water, and she reiterated that all water being supplied by the company is fully perfect and healthy and it needs no re-boiling or re-treatment. Felman is a small town in Isfahan Province and in vicinity of Zayandehrud River.

Developmental Trend of MSC Will Never Halt

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Manager of Design and Engineering Unit of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) says the developmental trend at the company will never halt and every year at least a defined basket of project is launched by the company.

Alireza Ghafarpoor said that all investment projects of the company (development and optimization) are defined at the design and engineering unit of the company, adding that each year at least one basket of project is defined and some services of the designing type are offered for different units of the company. He added that the document and layout center is present beside the contractual and technical services units, and it is considered as one of the important factors for advancing the engineering projects.

He added that the type of engineering unit services are of the types of development, optimization and support and it has been predicted for the company since the beginning.

Ghafarpoor noted that on average, every year between 150 to 200 prioritized projects out of 700 suggestions enter the engineering unit of the company and all the prioritized projects have to be carried out and completed in one year but sometimes due to some unexpected problems they take more than one year but at least 70 percent of the project should progress in the first year of the project.

He then pointed to some different projects which are in the pipeline by the company and pointed to the importance of implementing the developmental and optimized projects in the company. Ghafarpoor said that it is predicted the value of this year's projects in the engineering unit of the plant is estimated at 3500b tomans while the figure was around 1800b tomans last year, and reiterated that the developmental trend in the company will never halt.



Offering Steel Products on IME To Help Transparency

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Commercial Director at Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company Dr. Hossein Etmian says major profits in the steel chain go towards the steel-makers and providers of the raw materials have no share of these profits.



Speaking at an online conference on the challenges of iron ore and steel on mercantile exchange, Dr. Etmian pointed to the unbalanced profits from offering steel materials in the country and said major profit earned in the steel chain goes towards steel-makers and the providers of the raw materials are deprived of this profit.

By reminding the commanding the price in recent years especially in the steel industry has been unable to have positive effect in the process of demand and supply and imposed some woes on this industry, Mr. Etmian said that Chadormalu Company in offering its products on the mercantile exchange has been pioneer while Chadormalu is of the few companies which enjoy having complete production chain.

He added that the goal behind this decision which has been emphasized by the ECO of the company has been to actualize the price of iron ore, because today one of the reasons behind lack of progress in the private sector in the mining sector is the lack of price attraction.

Etmian also supported offering of all products on the mercantile exchange, and said offering of all products on the mercantile exchange will pave the ground for necessary transparency and a relatively stable chain.

He added that but this did not happen last year and caused a headache among the mining sector activists, therefore, today lack of a standard process for pricing is a big and fundamental problem in this field.

Etmian reiterated that the company is strongly after balancing the mining chain which is the main solution is to offer all products under a free mechanism aimed at pricing based on a free competition.

Fifteen U.N. Peacekeepers Wounded in Northern Mali attack

BAMAKO (Reuters) - Fifteen U.N. peacekeepers, including several from Germany, were wounded in northern Mali on Friday in an attack on their camp involving a vehicle-borne explosive, the U.N. mission in Mali and the German military said.

The attack targeted a temporary base set up by the peacekeepers near the village of Ichagara in northern Gao region, where Islamist insurgents linked to Al Qaeda and Islamic State are active.

The wounded were being evacuated, the U.N. mission said in a post on Twitter without giving further details. Several German soldiers were among the wounded, a spokesman for the German military said.



Taiwan, U.S. to Hold Long-Stalled Trade Talks

TAIPEI (Reuters) - Taiwan and the United States will hold trade talks next week, the de facto U.S. embassy in Taipei said on Friday, resuming long-stalled discussions as Washington seeks to deepen its support for the Chinese-claimed island.

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement talks, or TIFA, stalled after former U.S. President Barack Obama left office in 2016 and his successor Donald Trump's trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, focused his attention on China, the world's second-largest economy.



Biden Meets Afghan Leaders As U.S. Troops Leave



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Joe Biden meets Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his former political foe, Abdullah Abdullah, on Friday to discuss Washington's support for Afghanistan as the last U.S. troops pack up after 20 years of war and government forces struggle to repel Taliban advances.

The Oval Office meeting may be as valuable to Ghani for its symbolism as for any new U.S. help because it will be seen as affirming Biden's support for the beleaguered Afghan leader as he confronts Taliban gains, bombings and assassinations, a surge in COVID-19 cases and political infighting in Kabul.

"At a time when morale is incredibly shaky and things are going downhill, anything one can do to help shore up morale and shore up the government is worth doing," said Ronald Neumann, a former U.S. ambassador to Kabul. "Inviting Ghani here is a pretty strong sign that we're backing him."

Biden's embrace, however, comes only months after U.S. officials were pressuring Ghani to step aside for a transitional government under a draft political accord that they floated in a failed gambit to break a stalemate in peace talks.

Biden's first meeting as president with Ghani and Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, will focus on "our ongoing commitment to the Afghan people" and security forces, said White House deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

Biden has asked Congress to approve \$3.3 billion in security assistance for Afghanistan next year and is sending 3 million doses of vaccines there to help it battle COVID-19.

Biden will urge Ghani and Abdullah, foes in Afghanistan's two last presidential elections, "to be a united front" and he will reaffirm U.S. support for a negotiated peace deal, Jean-Pierre said.

U.S. officials, however, have been clear that Biden will not halt the U.S. pullout - likely to be completed by late July or early August - and he is unlikely to approve any U.S. military support to halt the Taliban's advances beyond advice, intelligence, and aircraft maintenance.

Ghani and Abdullah spent Thursday discussing the situation in Afghanistan with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

The visit comes with the peace process stalled and violence raging as Afghan security forces fight to stem a Taliban spring offensive that threatens several provincial capitals and has triggered mobilizations of ethnic militias to reinforce government troops.

The crisis has fueled grave concerns that the Taliban could regain power - two decades after the U.S.-led invasion ended their harsh version of Islamist rule - allowing a resurgence of al Qaeda. U.S. and U.N. officials say the extremists maintain close links with the Taliban.

Russia Warns UK, U.S. Not to Tempt Fate in Black Sea

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia warned Britain and the United States on Friday against "tempting fate" by sending warships to the Black Sea, and said it would defend its borders using all possible means including military force.

In a statement broadcast on state television, the Defense Ministry said it was ill-advised for British and U.S. vessels to approach the coast of Crimea, a peninsula Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

"We call on the Pentagon and the British navy, which are sending their warships into the Black Sea, not to tempt fate in vain," Major General Igor Konashenkov, the ministry's spokesperson, said. HMS Defender, a British destroyer that sailed through waters off Crimea on Wednesday, was "not more than a target" for the Black Sea fleet's defenses, he said.

Russia considers Crimea part of its territory, but the peninsula is internationally recognized as part of Ukraine.

Russia said on Wednesday it had fired warning shots and dropped bombs in the path of a British warship to chase it out of Black Sea waters off the coast of Crimea. Britain rejected Russia's account of the incident. It said it

believed any shots fired were a pre-announced Russian "gunnery exercise", and that no bombs had been dropped.

It confirmed HMS Defender had sailed through what it said were waters belonging to Ukraine.

The British embassy in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgian the South Caucasus, wrote on Twitter on Friday that HMS Defender was set to arrive in the port city of Batumi on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said separately that Washington and London were sowing strife by failing to accept Crimea was part of Russia, and that Russia was ready to defend its borders using all means, including military force.

Moscow warned Britain on Thursday that it would bomb British naval vessels in the Black Sea if what it called provocative actions by the British navy were repeated off the Crimean coast.

Russia's Defense Ministry said separately on Friday that it was beginning joint navy and air force exercises in the eastern Mediterranean, where Moscow operates an air base on Syria's coast.



Palestinians Attend Funeral for PA Critic

GAZA (Dispatches) - Thousands of Palestinians turned out on Friday in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron to attend the funeral of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority (PA), who died in the custody of PA forces on Thursday.

Mourners travelled from across the occupied West Bank to attend Banat's funeral prayers at Wasaya al-Rasool Mosque in Hebron and marched through the streets along with his family and friends before he was buried. The funeral began with the transfer of Banat's body to his family home for a final farewell.

"People here are incredibly angry at the Palestinian Authority," Al Jazeera's Stefanie Dekker said, speaking from Hebron. "They are calling for the downfall of the regime, and are saying they are under a double occupation. They accuse the PA of being hand in hand with Israel."

The chants also included calls for PA President Mahmoud Abbas to resign. Abbas, who has been president since 2005, technically finished his mandate in 2009, but continued to rule in the absence of new elections.

Banat, 43, intended to run in parliamentary elections before they were cancelled earlier this year. He was a harsh critic of the PA, which governs parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and called on Western nations to cut off aid to it because of its growing authoritarianism and human rights violations.

The PA receives millions of dollars in foreign aid as it is recognised by the West to represent the Palestinian people.

Banat was in bed in his home in Dura in southern Hebron, when some two dozen PA officers broke into his home and started beating him in the early hours of Thursday morning, according to his family. He was dragged away screaming, local media quoted them as saying, and he was beaten on the head with batons and pieces of metal.

After conducting an autopsy, a Palestinian rights group said Banat took blows to the head, adding the wounds indicated "an unnatural death". Since Banat's death,

Palestinians have been widely sharing his previous writings and videos. Videos shared on social media on Friday showed large crowds of mourners protesting against the PA following Banat's funeral.

UN Urges Israel to Immediately Halt Settlement Expansion

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations accused Israel of flagrantly violating international law by expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, urging the country's new government to halt their enlargement immediately.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Mideast envoy Tor Wennesland reported on the implementation of a 2016 Security Council resolution that declared settlements have "no legal validity". The global body demanded a halt to the settlement expansion, which jeopardises the possibility of a future Palestinian state.

Wennesland said in a briefing to the council on Guterres' 12-page report that he was "deeply troubled" by Israel's approval of a plan to add 540 housing units to the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem as well as the establishment of settlement outposts. He said that is "illegal also under Israeli law".

"I again underscore, in no uncertain terms, that Israeli settlements constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international law," the UN envoy said.

"They are a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

"The advancement of all settlement activity must cease immediately," Wennesland said.

Settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories

are regarded as illegal under international law and by much of the international community. Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live in more than 250 illegal settlements (130 official, 120 unofficial) in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel disputes its settlements are illegal.

Both Guterres and Wennesland also called on Israeli authorities to end the demolition of Palestinian homes and other property and the displacement of Palestinians - another flashpoint - "and to approve plans that would enable these communities to build legally and address their development needs".

The Israeli plan to forcefully displace Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods in occupied East Jerusalem last month sparked protests across Palestinian territories, as well as inside Israel by its Palestinian citizens.

Hamas, which governs the besieged Gaza Strip, fired rockets in Israel against the displacement of Palestinians and the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque - Islam's third holiest site - by Israeli forces after Israel ignored a deadline to remove its forces from the mosque compound. Israel then launched an 11-day war on the enclave of two million people which has been under a 14-year-old land, air and sea blockade.



Macron Urges EU States to Coordinate Rules for Non-EU Travelers



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron has said the EU must take a coordinated approach to opening borders to non-EU countries, including the UK, due to concerns over the spread of the Delta variant of Covid-19.

It comes after German Chancellor Angela Merkel told the German parliament on Wednesday that she wanted all EU states to impose a quarantine-on-arrival rule on travelers from the UK, in line with current German rules.

"In our country, if you come from Great Britain, you have to go into quarantine - and that's not the case in every European country, and that's what I would like to see," she said.

Rules to enter EU countries from the UK, for example, vary greatly with some countries, such as Germany and Belgium, demanding quarantine on arrival, and others, such as Spain, not even requiring pre-departure tests.

"We must all be vigilant because the much-talked-about Delta variant is coming, which spreads much more rapidly than the other variants and affects people who are not vaccinated or who only have had one dose," Macron said.

"For me one of the issues of discussion is to be really taking coordinated decisions in terms of opening of borders to third [non EU] countries and on recognising vaccines because at this stage we have to limit this to the vaccines that have been approved by the European medical authority." A spokesperson for the UK government responded to these comments, saying: "Currently, it is down to individual EU member states to decide on the rules governing their borders. We are moving at speed through our vaccination programme to help us curb this latest variant."

"We will continue to have discussions with our European partners on the reopening of international travel but we're very confident that our vaccination program is providing a good way forward." People who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 can visit France for tourism or leisure reasons, as long as they have proof of a negative Covid-19 test. They do not need to quarantine on arrival.

People who are not fully vaccinated against Covid-19 can only enter if they have an essential reason, most of which involve having the right to live or work in France. For people with an essential reason, they will need to self-isolate for seven days on arrival.

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Singapore May Manufacturing Jumps 30% y/y

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Singapore's industrial output beat forecasts to rise 30.0% year-on-year in May, its fastest pace in about 10 years, buoyed by a low base effect due to the city-state's coronavirus lockdown measures last year, official data showed on Friday.

Economists had expected a 23.6% increase, according to the median forecast in a Reuters poll. The rise was the biggest since November, 2010.

On a month-on-month and seasonally adjusted basis, industrial production increased 7.2% in May, data from the Singapore Economic Development Board showed. Economists had expected a 0.9% decline.



China Blasts U.S. Over Trade Restrictions on Xinjiang Firms

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China on Friday hit out at a "bandit-like" US government after Washington banned imports of solar panel materials from a Chinese company and placed trade restrictions on four others for alleged use of forced labor in Xinjiang.

The White House said in a statement Thursday that the use of forced labor was part of Beijing's systematic effort to repress millions of ethnic Uyghurs and other minorities in the far-west region.

Washington said that Hoshine Silicon Industry would not be able to sell its products in the United States due to "reasonable indications" of forced labour in its manufacturing process.

The Commerce Department also announced that Hoshine and four other Xinjiang firms would be subject to tight restrictions on their ability to acquire US commodities, software and technology.

"The United States believes that state-sponsored forced labour in Xinjiang is both an affront to human dignity and an example of the PRC's unfair economic practices," the White House said.

China lashed out at the order, calling it a "bandit-like act no different from pillaging other people's property" that creates "forced poverty and forced unemployment" among Xinjiang's people.

"The U.S. uses human rights as a pretence... to unscrupulously oppress the industrial development of Xinjiang," said foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian at a routine briefing Friday.

Zhao said the United States "politicizes normal economic and trade cooperation" and "wantonly oppresses Chinese companies... to hold back China's development".

The Xinjiang region supplies close to half of the world's polysilicon used in solar panels.

The four other companies include two producers of polysilicon materials -- Daqo New Energy and Xinjiang GCL New Energy Material Technology -- plus aluminium processor Xinjiang East Hope Nonferrous Metals and state-owned Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, already sanctioned for alleged forced labor in cotton processing.

An official from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which issued the block on Hoshine imports, estimated that the United States imported goods from the company worth \$150 million over the past 30 months.

Asked if the U.S. trade actions could conflict with promoting solar energy, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said stopping forced labor comes first.

"Our environmental goals will not be achieved on the backs of human beings in a forced labor environment," Mayorkas told reporters.

The import ban on Hoshine follows similar action against producers and users of cotton and tomato products from the region as well as hair products such as weaves.

The United States also recently placed a ban on imports from a leading Chinese fishing company, Dalian Ocean, for its alleged use of forced labor, unrelated to Xinjiang.

U.S. Inflation Likely to Remain Elevated for Up to Four Years

LONDON (Reuters) - BofA expects U.S. inflation to remain elevated for two to four years, against a rising perception of it being transitory, and said that only a financial market crash would prevent central banks from tightening policy in the next six months.

It was "fascinating so many deem inflation as transitory when stimulus, economic growth, asset/commodity/housing inflations (are) deemed permanent", the investment bank's top strategist Michael Hartnett said in a note on Friday.

Hartnett thinks inflation will remain in the 2%-4% range over the next 2-4 years. U.S. inflation has averaged 3% in the past 100 years, 2% in the 2010s, and 1% in 2020, but it has been annualising at 8% so far in 2021, BofA said in the note. Global stocks were holding near record highs hours ahead of the reading of May core personal consumption expenditures index, an inflation gauge tracked closely by the Fed. The gauge is estimated to rise 3.4% year-on-year.

U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell vowed on Tuesday not to raise interest rates too quickly based only on the fear of coming inflation. The comments were seen as a move to soothe investor nerves after a hawkish monetary policy meeting last week suggested officials believed interest rates would rise as soon as 2023, perhaps a year earlier than anticipated.

BofA clients were still heavily invested in equities, with cash allocations well below long-term averages at 11.2%. In the week to Wednesday, investors pumped \$7 billion into equities and \$9.9 billion into bond funds, while pulling \$53.5 billion from cash funds, BofA calculated, using EPFR data.

Within equities, emerging market funds saw outflows of \$1.6 billion - the largest since September 2020.

Indian Refining Giant Reliance Unveils \$10-Billion Green Energy Plan

CHENNAI (Reuters) - Reliance Industries, operator of the world's biggest refining complex at Jamnagar in western India, will invest \$10.1 billion in clean energy over three years in a drive to become a net carbon zero company by 2035.

Reliance's plan mirrors strategies of global oil majors such as Royal Dutch Shell Plc and BP Plc that have set a goal to become net zero carbon by 2050 amid pressure from investors and climate activists.

"The world is entering a new energy era, which is going to be highly disruptive. The age of fossil fuels, which powered economic growth globally for nearly three centuries, cannot continue much longer," Chairman Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man, said at a shareholder meeting on Thursday.

Policymakers and regulators globally want financial institutions to do more to help accelerate

the push to low-carbon economies and meet United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

A group of 30 asset managers with more than \$9 trillion under management last year launched the Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative to help clients ensure their portfolios are carbon neutral by 2050.

"With this capex plan spread over three years Reliance will reap benefit from its green energy push over the next many more years. Currently investor appetite is good for businesses that are much more carbon conscious," said Mayuresh Joshi, head of equity research at research firm William O'Neil.

"Reliance will definitely have first mover advantage and have scale both locally and globally," Joshi said.

The oil-to-telecoms conglomerate will invest 600 billion rupees to build four 'giga factories' at Jamnagar to produce solar cells and modules, energy storage batteries, fuel cells and green hydrogen, Ambani said.

It will also invest 150 billion rupees in value chain and other partnerships relating to its new renewable energy business, he said, adding a transformation of legacy business into sustainable and net zero carbon business would provide growing returns over several decades.

Reliance will also build solar capacity of at least 100 gigawatts (GW) by 2030, accounting for over a fifth of India's target of installing 450 GW by the end of this decade.

"A significant part of this will come from rooftop solar and decentralized solar installations in villages," Ambani said, adding his group would also tap green funds and banks to meet its goal.

"We will achieve our goals by enabling a platform to source long-term global capital for these investments at the most attractive terms," he said.

Reliance's entry into the renewable energy business in India will put it in competition with companies such as Adani Green Energy Ltd and Goldman Sachs-backed ReNew Power.

Turkey Expects Around 20% GDP Growth in Q2

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economy is expected to have grown around 20% in the second quarter of this year and will expand more in 2021 than the government forecast of 5.8%, Treasury and Finance Minister Lutfi Elvan said Friday.

The strong rate of growth in the second quarter will largely be thanks to the so-called base effect due to a nearly 10% contraction in the April-June period of 2020.

Speaking to businesses in the southern city of Gaziantep, Elvan said a recent acceleration in COVID-19 vaccinations would support tourism and the services sector.

"We expect double-digit growth in the second quarter of the year due to a strong base effect. We expect a growth of around 20%," he said.

"It is probable that we see a growth rate for the full year higher than the medium-term economic program due to investments, industrial production and foreign demand," the minister noted.

Turkey was one of few countries to grow in 2020, expanding 1.8% thanks to a state-lender-led credit boom mid-year. It grew 7% in the first quarter of this year.

Prospects for a strong economic performance in the second half of the year have been revived by a sharp fall in daily coronavirus cases to around 5,000 from a peak of more than 60,000, as well as an acceleration in vaccinations.

The inoculation drive has seen more than 1 million doses being delivered each day over the last week. JP Morgan last week revised its full-year economic growth forecast up to 6.8%, citing the pace of vaccinations.

Turkey has also been working to bring down inflation, which has been stuck in the double digits for most of the last four years.



Elvan said the central bank's stance on price stability was important, and that macroprudential measures will be implemented if needed to fight inflation.

The minister said the economy faced a problem of inflation and volatility in the exchange rates.

"We have to get rid of high inflation," Elvan noted.

"Disciplined and predictable policies will bring success in fighting inflation. This country needs low inflation and exchange rate stability. Without price stability, we cannot talk about sustainable growth and prosperity growth."

Inflation unexpectedly dipped below 17% in May, falling from a two-year high thanks largely to limited price increases during a full lockdown in the first half of the month.

Elvan said the central bank should take a decisive stance focused on price stability.

IMF Says Constructive Talks With Pakistan Under Way



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday it was holding open and constructive discussions with Pakistan on the 6th review of its financial package and stood ready to support the country in achieving its objectives of debt sustainability.

In July 2019, the IMF approved a 39-month arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Pakistan for an amount of \$6 billion to support Islamabad's economic reform programme.

Asked at a news briefing to comment on the status of the program's sixth review, IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice said: "We welcome the open, constructive discussions we are having with the Pakistani authorities. We stand ready to continue to support Pakistan achieving its objectives of debt sustainability and a strong sustainable growth."

The completion of the review would "require continued discussions on the sustainable fiscal path, structural reforms, particularly on the tax and energy sectors and social spending enhancements envisaged in the authorities' reform program that's supported by the IMF resources," the official said.

"As the recovery gains strength, it will be important to accelerate the implementation of policies and reforms needed to address some of the longstanding challenges facing the Pakistani economy," he added.

The IMF spokesperson acknowledged that a "recent mission (for talks on the sixth review) could not complete these discussions" but "we remain fully engaged with the authorities, aiming to resume the discussions in the period ahead".

Mr Rice, however, did not say if the IMF had halted or continued the disbursement during the interim period.

Lebanon Approves Financing Fuel Imports at Weaker Exchange Rate

BEIRUT (Reuters) - Lebanon's caretaker prime minister on Friday approved a proposal to finance fuel imports at the rate of 3,900 Lebanese pounds to the dollar, instead of the previous 1,500 pound rate, amidst worsening gasoline shortages.

The weaker exchange rate, which will effectively decrease the subsidy on fuel, is expected to raise the price of gasoline for consumers but enable the government to supply fuel for a longer period of time.

Lebanon is in the throes of a financial crisis described by the World Bank as one of the deepest depressions of modern history. Fuel shortages in past weeks have forced motorists to queue for hours for dribbles of gasoline.

Lebanon's subsidy programme, introduced last year as the country's economic meltdown translated to harsher living conditions, covers basic goods such as wheat, medicine and fuel and costs around \$6 billion a year.



Half of that amount is spent on fuel.

Lebanon's central bank asked the government on Thursday to provide it with a legal basis to lend it foreign currency from its mandatory reserves to fund the subsidised fuel imports, an indication that the bank has all but run out of reserves.

Mandatory reserves - hard currency deposits parked by local lenders at the central bank - represent a percentage of customer deposits and are usually not drawn upon except in exceptional circumstances, with the correct legal permission.

Lebanon's foreign currency reserves stood at slightly more than \$15 billion in March. The Central Bank has not given an updated figure since then.

Iran Blames Foreign Powers For Rise in Drugs in Neighbors

TEHRAN (MNA) – The head of Iran’s body for fighting narcotics described on Saturday the increase in illegal drug production in neighboring countries as one of the major challenges, saying that the trend is supported by foreign powers.

“One of the major challenges in our region is the huge increase in drug production in our country’s neighborhood, which is done

with the support of trans-regional countries,” Brigadier-General Eskandar Momeni, the Secretary-General of National Headquarters for Fighting Narcotics said on Saturday.

Momeni described methamphetamine as one of the illegal drugs that its production in the Eastern neighboring countries is on the rise with the suspected help of trans-regional powers.



Investing in Balanced Prevention, Control of Drug Use Saves Lives

TEHRAN (UNIC)—United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26 June 2021, said that investing in balanced prevention as well as control of drug use and drug use disorders produces solid returns -- saved lives, healthier populations, improved workforce participation and productivity, and reduced criminal justice costs.

The full text of his message reads:

Science and trust in science are the hero and lesson of the pandemic; the world needs both to win against the virus. Scientists delivered safe and effective vaccines in record time. Access to reliable and verifiable information is making the difference between life and death.

Action based on evidence is crucial for our responses to drugs, too.

The world drug problem remains an urgent challenge that threatens to exacerbate pandemic impacts and hinder a healthy and inclusive recovery. The forthcoming World Drug Report 2021 from the United Office on Drugs and Crime shows that deaths attributed to disorders related to drug use have nearly doubled over the past decade. New HIV infections among adults worldwide have declined in recent years, but not among people who inject drugs, who accounted for 10 per cent of new infections in 2019.

International cooperation has helped to limit the proliferation of new psychoactive substances, but the problem is shifting to poorer regions where control systems are weaker. Dark web drug sales continue to rise, and non-medical use of pharmaceuticals, including opioids, is expanding. Drug trafficking and organized crime fuel and perpetuate cycles of violence and conflict. Armed groups and terrorists profit from the illicit drug trade, and the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has left millions of people even more vulnerable to drug crime and illicit crop cultivation.

Disparities in access to essential controlled medicines in low- and middle-income countries have been further heightened in the pandemic. For example, medical professionals in West and Central Africa in 2019 had four doses of pain medication every day for one million inhabitants; in North America, the number of doses was nearly 32,000.

Investing in balanced prevention as well as control of drug use and drug use disorders produces solid returns -- saved lives, healthier populations, improved workforce participation and productivity, and reduced criminal justice costs. Many of the risk factors associated with crime and violent behavior are also drivers of drug use, and targeted efforts



focusing on these overlapping dynamics -- including childhood maltreatment and lack of social support -- can help to strengthen prevention. Moreover, research suggests that law enforcement and policing need to go after the criminals at the upper levels of the drug trafficking chain, who reap the highest profits and wreak the greatest violence.

Public-private partnerships - with tech companies, postal and courier services, and shipping companies - represent an essential frontline response in the new fight against drug traffickers, who are increasingly exploiting the legal cargo trade and postal services to move their illicit product.

Better data is also helping to identify trends and enable real-time monitoring of rapidly shifting trafficking routes. Science-driven early warning systems are helping to predict emerging drug threats. Greater international cooperation and support are needed to help low-income countries to take advantage of these advanced capabilities.

The theme of this year’s observance of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, “Share facts on drugs. Save lives” is a call for solidarity. I urge all Member States to listen to the science and take action, building on agreed international frameworks and drawing on United Nations support for health and justice.

UAE Could Become First OPEC Producer to Pledge Net-Zero By 2050



LONDON (Dispatches) - One of OPEC’s largest producers, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is considering the potential adoption of a net-zero by 2050 goal, Bloomberg reported on Thursday, citing sources with knowledge of the talks.

If the Persian Gulf oil producer joins major industrialized nations in the net-zero emissions commitments, it will become the first major petrostate to balance major emission-reduction goals with its important oil and gas industry. Around 30 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) is directly based on oil and gas output, according to OPEC. Oil discoveries in the UAE, the first in the late 1950s, have made the emirates a wealthy country with a high standard of living.

According to Bloomberg’s sources, the UAE could be looking to make a net-zero announcement ahead of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November.

The UAE is “certainly working on a whole-of-government approach to see at what point it would be feasible to achieve net zero,” Hana AlHashimi, who heads the office of Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Group CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), said on a U.S.-UAE Business Council call this week, as quoted by Bloomberg.

Net-zero emissions from oil and gas operations in the UAE would technically mean that the country could achieve net-zero within its borders without considering the emissions from the use of the oil it is shipping abroad, Bloomberg notes. Currently, ADNOC continues to target expanding its oil production capacity to 5 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2030.

Last December, the UAE said it would aim to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 23.5 percent compared to “business as usual” by 2030, targeting an absolute emission reduction of around 70 million tons. The country also looks to increase its installed clean power capacity, including solar and nuclear, to 14 gigawatts (GW), and to strengthen climate resilience of its priority sectors, including energy.

If the UAE announces a net-zero target, this could pressure other U.S. allies in the Middle East to pledge such goals, including the world’s largest oil exporter Saudi Arabia.

Iraq Targets 90% Self-Sufficiency in Natural Gas by 2025

RIYADH (Dispatches) - The Iraqi Ministry of Oil plans to attract a contractor to invest in Akkas gas field, to produce 4,000 million cubic feet of gas by 2025, which represents 90 percent of Iraq’s need for electric power production, said Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabbar.

Iraq will need more gas for electric power by 2030 to keep pace with the rise in the population, which is expected to increase by 10 million people to 50 million by then, he told Asharq.

Iraq will still need to import 15 percent of the gas fuel it needs, he said. Infrastructure is being built in the south to open new outlets to import gas from other countries such as Qatar when needed, he said.

There are currently new projects in the governorates of Dhi Qar and Maysan, Abdul Jabbar said.

Iraq currently consumes about 3,500 million standard cubic feet of natural gas, of which 1,300 cubic feet is produced in Iraq and the rest imported from Iran, while the actual need for Iraq amounts to 4,500 million cubic feet, he said.

Iraq is planning to build a number of power plants in the coming years in partnership with international and Arab companies. Some will use solar energy, while others will run on fossil fuels, including gas that is produced during the extraction of oil, by introducing it into the electricity production system, Abdul Jabbar said.

Iraq plans to end gas flaring altogether by 2025, he said.

One Major Side Effect of Reheating Frozen Foods

LONDON (Dispatches) - Let’s be real, we all want to be the person who makes elegant home-cooked meals every night, serving our families dinner that we’ve meticulously crafted in our well-organized kitchens—but very few people have the time to make that dream a reality. Most of the time, it’s way easier to just toss a frozen meal in the microwave.

Whether it’s a prepackaged meal from the grocery store or something you made...a while ago that’s ready to heat up, reheating frozen food in the microwave is a simple and fast way to put a meal together, but it could also be dangerous as heating frozen food up in a microwave can lead to you ingesting bacteria that are still living in the cold spots of the food.

Anyone who has ever used a microwave has probably noticed that some bites of your reheated food will be scalding hot while others will be lukewarm. That’s because microwaves, while effective at heating foods up quickly, don’t cook them evenly. That can be a shame as sometimes your meal will have varying temperatures depending upon where you dig into first, but it can also pose a problem as the uneven cooking does not effectively get rid of any bacteria that may be in the food.



In addition to cold spots, it has been reported that microwaves also don’t heat up frozen food as well as other heating methods. This is because water molecules found in frozen food are immobilized by ice crystals, which doesn’t allow the heat to distribute through the food effectively.

A study from Michigan State University said that even microwaves that

include turntables may not properly heat up the food, and bacteria may continue to live in the frozen food after it is reheated in the microwave.

Consuming bacteria can lead to food poisoning, which typically results in nausea, vomiting, fever and diarrhea. To help avoid the bacteria from living in the cold spots of food, Clemson University’s Home&Garden Information Center recommends stirring or rotating food “midway through the cooking,” and turning large items upside down to “prevent cold spots where harmful bacteria can survive.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also recommends heating food in the microwave “until it reaches at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit” throughout the entirety of the dish, as well as allowing for standing time, which is when the food continues to cook even though the microwave may be off.

Tehran Warns...

FROM PAGE 1

“Parts of Syria continue to be occupied by foreign forces, dominated by groups with separatist tendencies, or controlled by Security Council-designated terrorist groups. At the same time, the Israeli regime continues to commit acts of aggressions against Syria in flagrant violation of international law,” Takht Ravanchi said.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since 2011.

The U.S. has over the past years been leading a military coalition conducting airstrikes against purported targets of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group inside Syria without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

Furthermore, the Israeli regime almost regularly carries out airstrikes against targets inside the Arab country while Turkish troops and their allied militants have occupied regions in northern Syria claiming that they want to eliminate US-backed Kurdish militants purportedly tied to Turkey’s homegrown Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group.

The Iranian envoy also warned of the impact of the consequences of this situation on regional stability and international peace and security.

“This unstable situation has far-reaching implications for security and stability of this volatile region and international peace and security at large. The Security Council must live up to its responsibilities and ensure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of this country,” Takht Ravanchi added.

“In this context, all foreign forces who are unlawfully present in Syria must leave without any precondition and delay; terrorist groups must not be allowed to use millions of civilians as human shield to continue their heinous activities; and the Israeli regime must be forced to put an end to its aggression against Syria,” he stressed.

Elsewhere in his statement, Takht Ravanchi lambasted the “unlawful unilateral sanctions” against the Arab country, saying that such measures create “serious problems” for people in Syria.

The Iranian envoy to the UN also emphasized that the decade-long Syrian crisis must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with the principles of international law.

“In conclusion, we reiterate once more that the Syrian crisis must be settled peacefully and in accordance with principles of international law, particularly respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal or external affairs and peaceful settlement of international disputes,” he added.

Raisi...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi, the incumbent Judiciary Chief of Iran, was elected Iran’s eighth president after he garnered about 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.

The election was held amid an ear-splitting political and media campaign by the United States as well as its Western and regional allies trying to portray the vote as “undemocratic.”

Many world leaders, senior foreign officials, prominent figures, and regional resistance leaders have so far offered congratulations on Raisi’s victory.

Iran Embassy...

FROM PAGE 1

Shea had on Friday said that the import of fuel from Iran is “really not a solution” for crisis-hit Lebanon.

“What Iran is looking for is some kind of satellite state that they can exploit to pursue their agenda,” Shea said.

“There are other alternatives to provide fuel and electricity to the Lebanese people,” the ambassador went on to say, noting that eradicating corruption is one of the solutions.

“There are much better solutions than turning to Iran,” she added.

Hezbollah...

FROM PAGE 1

Compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanon is experiencing its worst economic crisis in decades as prices are skyrocketing and more than half of the population is now living below the poverty line.

The United States has also taken Lebanon under sanctions, taking issue with the prominent status and popularity of the Hezbollah resistance movement in the country. The U.S. has blacklisted the group, which has fought off several Israeli wars and is part of the country’s defense power

against any potential recurrence of aggression.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Nasrallah pointed to the United States’ seizure of website domains tied to pro-resistance media, saying these outlets play an important role in supporting the Palestinian cause against Israeli occupation and take a stand against US domination, sedition and Takfiris.

He also stressed that the seizure of these sites exposed the US administration’s false claims about democracy and freedom of speech.

Fraser-Pryce, Thompson-Herah Advance at Jamaica Trials

KINGSTON (AFP) - Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Elaine Thompson-Herah advanced safely into the 100m semi-finals at Jamaica's Olympic athletics trials in Kingston. Two-time Olympic 100m gold medallist Fraser-Pryce, the fastest woman in the world this year with a best of 10.63sec, came through her heat in 10.97sec at the National Stadium. Reigning Olympic champion Thompson-Herah meanwhile cruised into the semi-finals with a time of 10.97sec.

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Golf-Rahm Tops Final Olympic Golf Rankings

LONDON (Reuters) - Spaniard Jon Rahm's thrilling victory at last weekend's U.S. Open vaulted him past American Justin Thomas and into the top spot in the final Olympic Golf Rankings, which were released on Tuesday. Americans rounded out the top five with Thomas, Collin Morikawa, Xander Schauffele and Bryson DeChambeau expected to represent Team USA this summer in Tokyo.

George Leads Clippers Over Suns in Semis

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Paul George scored 27 points and grabbed 15 rebounds to power the Los Angeles Clippers over Phoenix 106-92 Thursday, delivering their first victory in the NBA semi-final playoff series.

Reggie Jackson added 23 points and Croatian center Ivica Zubac had 15 points and 16 rebounds as the Clippers pulled within 2-1 of the Suns in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals with game four set for Saturday in Los Angeles.

It was a crucial victory for the Clippers as no team in NBA history has ever won a best-of-seven series after losing the first three games.

But for the third playoff series in a row, the Clippers won game three after dropping the first two.

"This team is tough. We'll do whatever it takes," George said. "We trust one another. We've got each other's backs."

"We've just got great resilience. The team does a great job making adjustments, counters -- we just play hard."

The Clippers remained without star Kawhi Leonard, out with a sprained right knee, while Devin Booker scored 15 points for the Suns with a protective mask due to a broken nose.

George played 43 minutes and with Leonard sidelined, he has stepped up to lift the Clippers. "I'm going to make the extra plays. I'm going to give everything I have. I don't care how many minutes I have to play. I'm just going to leave it all on the floor."

Bahamas big man Deandre Ayton led Phoenix with 18 points while Chris Paul had 15 points and 12 assists for the Suns.

Paul returned to the Phoenix starting lineup after missing 11 days while in Covid-19 safety protocols, missing his first six shots from the floor before hitting a jumper late in the second quarter.

The Clippers remained without star Kawhi Leonard, out with a sprained right knee, while Devin Booker scored 15 points for the Suns with a protective



mask due to a broken nose.

The Suns took a 48-46 half-time lead but Clippers guard Terance Mann scored eight points of his 12 points in just over three minutes to start the third quarter to put the hosts back on top.

The Clippers scored 11 straight points to open a 21-3 run that produced a 71-56 lead, with Mann netting eight to spark the spurt.

"This team is resilient. We never say die," Mann said. "We find ways to impose our will on opponents. We're just hungry."

George made a half-court jumper at the buzzer to end the third quarter, giving the Clippers an 80-69 edge entering the last 12 minutes and they kept the Suns at bay in the final period.

"My teammates allow me to play," George said. "Tonight I got on their backs in the fourth quarter."

The Clippers led 29-21 after the first quarter, their largest lead in the series to that point, after holding the Suns to 37% shooting from the floor in the first 12 minutes.

Halep Withdraws From Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Defending champion Simona Halep pulled out of Wimbledon with a calf injury as Novak Djokovic learned Friday he will face Britain's Jack Draper at the start of his quest for a 20th Grand Slam title.

Romanian Halep, who beat Serena Williams in the final in 2019, tore her left calf muscle in Rome last month and was forced to miss the French Open.

She travelled to London earlier this week but announced her withdrawal minutes before the draw for the championships, which return on Monday after they were cancelled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"I can honestly say that I'm really down and upset about having to take this decision," said the world number three. "This period has been difficult but to miss the last two Majors has made it even more challenging mentally and physically."

Halep's withdrawal follows that of four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, who pulled out of the French Open after citing struggles with depression and anxiety.

World number one Ashleigh Barty, who was forced to retire from her second-round match at Roland Garros with a hip injury, opens her campaign against Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro, who is playing her final Wimbledon before retirement after recovering from cancer.

UEFA Eliminates Away Goals Tiebreaker in Champions League

LONDON (Dispatches) - The away goals rule is disappearing from the Champions League.

UEFA said that it was axing the controversial way to break ties in favor of a different tiebreaker format. Away goals has long been used as the tiebreaker in two-game home-and-home series that are tied after both games. If the match was tied 2-2 after both games and one team scored two goals on the road while the other scored one goal away from home, the team with the two road goals would advance in the tournament.

Extra time and penalty kicks, if needed, will be the new way to break ties after a two-game series. The changes go into effect with the 2021-22 Champions League and Europa League.

"The away goals rule has been an intrinsic part of UEFA competitions since it was introduced in 1965," UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said in a statement. "However, the question of its abolition has been debated at various UEFA meetings over the last few years. Although there was no unanimity of views, many coaches, fans and other football stakeholders have questioned its fairness and have expressed a preference for the rule to be abolished."

Paris Saint-Germain is now the last team to advance in the men's Champions League on the away goals rule. PSG tied Bayern Munich 3-3 in their home-and-home series in 2021 but advanced to the semifinals by virtue of more away goals.

UEFA cited myriad factors in the elimination of the rule. It said that statistics from the mid-1970s showed that more away teams won games in recent years in the men's Champions League and that home team scoring has decreased in the last 40 years while away scoring has increased to devalue the benefit of an away goal.

Home teams now score 1.58 goals per game in the men's UCL while away teams score 1.15 goals per game. Scoring in the women's Champions League is at 1.92 goals per game for home teams and 1.6 goals per game for away teams.

Man City Lining Up £100m Bid for Grealish



The Villa captain, 25, has been admired by Guardiola for some time and City will submit a bid which they hope will make Grealish the most expensive player in English football.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Aston Villa are in talks with Jack Grealish over a new contract, as Manchester City line up a £100 million record-breaking offer for the England international.

Grealish is one of Pep Guardiola's main targets as he prepares to defend the Premier League title and City are prepared to make their move when England's Euro 2020 campaign is over.

But Villa are determined to keep Grealish at the club and have made initial moves to improve his £125,000-a-week contract, less than a year after he signed a new long-term deal with the club.

Villa have already signed Emiliano Buendia for a club record £33 million this summer, and have also made an ambitious move for Arsenal's Emile Smith Rowe, with the club's owners Nassef Sawiris and Wes Edens keen to continue their upward momentum under Dean Smith.

Sawiris and chief executive Christian Purslow held talks with Grealish last summer and persuaded him to stay, with the attacking midfielder subsequently producing his best season in the Premier League.

Matthaus Unhappy With Joachim Low's Germany Tinkering

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany coach Joachim Low has created insecurity in the squad with his changes of tactics and personnel, according to Lothar Matthaus.

Low's side required an 84th-minute equaliser from Leon Goretzka against Hungary to book their place in the last 16 at Euro 2020, and they will now face England at Wembley on Tuesday.

It was confirmed in March that Low, who led Germany to World Cup glory in Brazil in 2014, would leave his post after the finals. Matthaus believes the connection between the players and Low is missing, with former Bayern Munich boss Hansi Flick having already been announced as his successor.

Matthaus, who featured in five World Cups and four European Championships, said: "I don't have the feeling I had seven years ago when he won the World Cup. "I was missing the connection between himself on the bench and the players on the field. He changed so many things. He changed one player for another and also the system."

"Joshua Kimmich played four positions (against Hungary). He started on the line, playing like a number seven. Then at the start of the second half he was playing number eight. "After 10 minutes, he was number six where (Toni) Kroos was playing before. And then we had to go all in because we needed a goal and he was playing in the back four as a right-back! "OK, in the end we had a result, but how can each player feel confident generally when we are changing so many things during a game? From the position of a player to the changes. There's no security for the team."



Murray to Face Basilashvili on Wimbledon Return

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray will make his Wimbledon return with a tricky-looking clash against 24th seed Nikoloz Basilashvili while teenage wild card Jack Draper has drawn defending champion Novak Djokovic.

Murray is playing singles at the All England Club for the first time since his hip problems became acute in 2017 and has ongoing concerns over a groin issue.

He has played only four tour-level matches this year and will have his work cut out against Georgian Basilashvili, who has won two titles in 2021 and reached the semi-finals of the grass-court event in Halle last week.

Draper, 19, showed he loves the big stage by winning his first two ATP Tour matches at Queen's Club last week and he will find himself on the biggest stage of all against Djokovic.

The defending men's champion traditionally opens proceedings on Centre Court on the first Monday of the tournament.

Draper, who reached the junior final at the All England Club three years ago, should relish the opportunity to take on the man going for a third consecutive grand slam title.

The defending women's champion usually plays the opening match on Centre on the first Tuesday but that will not be the case this time after Simona Halep withdrew just before the draw because of a calf injury.

