

**Health Ministry Announced on Friday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 85,543 With 146 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**An Iranian Parliamentary Delegation Held Separate Meetings With Syrian Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, Parliament Speaker And Some Other Syrian Officials On Thursday in Damascus**

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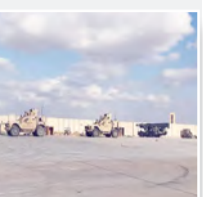
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## U.S. Plays With Iranians' Health for Political Gains

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent envoy to the United Nations identifies the U.S.'s illegal and inhumane sanctions targeting the country as means of endangering the Iranian nation's health towards political goals.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks on Thursday, addressing the UN General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on AIDS.

He made mention of Iran's progress in the area of the health situation of the HIV positive patients and those who are subject to the unwelcome phenomenon. The official noted how Iranian scientists had managed to enable prevention of the disease's transfer from affected mothers to their children, and also contain the disease's adverse effects.

Despite the notable progress, Iran is still suffering from the sanctions that prevent its access to medical products, technology, and cooperation with the international financial institutions, he said.

The U.S. returned the sanctions in 2018 after leaving a historic multi-party nuclear deal with Iran and others that is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

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## Denying IAEA Inspection Access Lets Riyadh Hide Nuclear Activities

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations says the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been denied even the "minimum" authorities for verifying the nuclear activities in Saudi Arabia, warning that such situation allows the kingdom to pursue a covert atomic program.

Kazem Gharibabadi made the remarks in a post on his Twitter account on Thursday after the Saudi envoy to the IAEA Prince Abdullah Bin Khalid Bin Sultan expressed concerns about Iran's recent nuclear measures.

"For the KSA, the IAEA is not being provided with even minimum necessary verification authorities," Gharibabadi said. "A failure to implement the safeguards by rescinding the SQPs, could allow them to hide certain nuclear activities without them being subject to the IAEA inspections," he added, referring to small quantities protocols to a comprehensive safeguards agreement.

Earlier this week, Iran announced that it had informed the IAEA of its plan to produce uranium metal enriched to 20 percent purity, which would be used as fuel for a research reactor in the capital, Tehran.

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## Tehran, New Delhi Urged To Prioritize Close Ties



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's President-elect Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has highlighted the role of Iran and India as two influential players in the region, saying collective security and broad economic cooperation are among the top priorities in ties between the two countries.

"Collective security with the participation of regional countries, including Iran and India as two important players in the region besides extensive economic interactions are among the important priorities in relations between the two countries," Raisi said in a meeting Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Tehran.

He added that "stable and lasting" relations between Tehran and New Delhi, especially in the economic field, depended on regulating the bilateral ties in a manner that they would solely serve the two countries' national interests.

Raisi said the U.S. "maximum pressure" policy against Iran had failed, as acknowledged by the Americans themselves, and the Islamic Republic would continue down its path to progress vigorously.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian president-elect expressed Tehran's support for stability, security and peace in Afghanistan.

Iran has on several occasions reaffirmed its support for measures and talks aimed at establishing peace and ending the conflict in war-battered Afghanistan.

The Indian foreign minister, for his part, said it was vital for Tehran and New Delhi, as two close regional partners, to work together to tackle different challenges.

Jaishankar pointed to the very critical situation in Afghanistan and urged all the country's neighbors to boost cooperation in an effort to help resolve the crisis in the war-torn country.

He handed over Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Raisi and said the premier had expressed confidence that strong mutual relations would continue to grow under the next Iranian administration.

The Indian foreign minister also said Modi had officially invited the Iranian president-elect to pay a visit to New Delhi.

"Appreciate [Raisi's] warm sentiments for India. Deeply value his strong commitment to strengthen our bilateral ties and expand cooperation on regional and global issues," Jaishankar tweeted after his meeting.

Earlier in the day, Jaishankar held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran, which hosted a round of talks among Afghan groups. The two top diplomats underlined the need for the promotion of intra-Afghan talks which could culminate in inclusive political participation of all parties in Afghanistan.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Iran, Well-Wisher of Its Neighbors

The Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979 and in almost its 43 years of existence has emphasized the peace, security and respecting national security of its neighboring states and even in other countries in the world, and it has proved its policies by taking initiatives for resolving problems of countries.

On Wednesday, Tehran hosted a two-day meeting of intra-Afghan parties for resolving the current clash and dispute in this neighboring state whose insecurity will even affect Iran's security. The meeting saw different reactions by the friends and foes of the Islamic Republic as some accused the Islamic Republic of Iran of supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan and is fanning the flame of war but actually the truth is that the Islamic Republic of Iran wants immediate peace and security in Afghanistan because the violence may affect Afghanistan's neighbors, too.

On Thursday, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif advised all political sides involved in the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan to end the war as soon as possible and pave the way for the development of the war-ravaged country.

Zarif made the remarks while addressing the final session of intra-Afghan talks hosted in the Iranian capital, Tehran.

"A nation who has been suffering for 40 years has every right to be opposed to war. What I want from you is to take advantage of this opportunity and end the war in Afghanistan as soon as possible to provide the people of Afghanistan with an opportunity for development," Iran's top diplomat said.

"The Islamic Republic is always ready to facilitate the continuation of your talks in any way you wish," Zarif stressed.

Expressing gratitude to both delegations for prioritizing peace and well-being of the Afghan people in the talks, the Iranian foreign minister said, "Showing courage in peace is more important than showing courage in war; because to achieve peace, one must sacrifice and forgive and ignore maximum demands and [instead] heed the demands of the other side, especially in these negotiations where ... both sides are brothers and in pursuit of peace and well-being of the Afghan nation."

At the end of the meeting, the two Afghan delegates issued a joint statement in which they thanked Iran's efforts to restore peace to Afghanistan.

Moreover, the warring parties described the Tehran meeting as a new opportunity to reinforce the political solution to the Afghan crisis.

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## Iran Signs Declaration On Caspian Sea Environment Protection

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Caspian Sea littoral states signed a joint Declaration on the protection of the environment and biological resources of the Sea today on St. Petersburg.

The Prosecutors General of Russia, Azerbaijan Republic, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan signed a joint Declaration on the protection of the environment and biological resources of the Caspian Sea.

The document was signed at the international conference of the Heads of Prosecutors of the states of the Caspian region, which was held on July 7 in St. Petersburg by the Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov.

Iranian prosecutor general Mohammad Jafar Montazeri took part in the event via videoconference.

The Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali signed the declaration on behalf of Iran's Attorney General.

Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov said before signing the document: "The Caspian Sea is of great strategic importance for all five states and connects their territories into a single ecological system."

He added: "Therefore, joint activities, which are envisaged by the Declaration of the Prosecutor Generals of the Caspian Region States on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection and the Use of Natural Resources of the Caspian Sea, will have a positive impact."

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## Iran Names Syria Decision-Maker as Astana Meeting Wraps Up

TEHRAN (MNA) - A senior Iranian diplomat said that decisions for the future of Syria will be made by the country's people and government.

Speaking to Ria Novosti at the end of Thursday's Astana-format meeting in Nur-Sultan, Senior Assistant to Iranian Foreign Minister in Special Political Affairs Ali-Asghar Khaji noted that not all views of Iran and Russia regarding Syria are the same. "We should not forget that neither we nor Russia are decision makers for Syria; we have viewpoints but the Syrian people and government will make decisions." The main decision for resolving the Syrian issues should be taken by the country's people and government, he highlighted.

Elsewhere, he said that any humanitarian aid to Syria should be done through the Syrian government with a respect to the country's territorial integrity.

The Iranian delegation held separate meetings with delegations from Lebanon, UN, Red Cross, and Iraq regarding the Syrian issue on Thursday.

During the meetings, different issues were discussed including the status of Syrian refugees in other countries and their repatriation, and swapping of prisoners of war.

Here excerpts of the statement by representatives of Iran, Russia and Turkey on the 16th International Meeting on Syria in the Astana Format (Nur-Sultan, 7-8 July 2021)

The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey as guarantors of the Astana format:

\*Reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as well as to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and highlighted that these principles should be universally respected and complied with;

\*Expressed their determination to continue working together to combat terrorism in all forms and manifestations and stand against separatist agendas aimed at undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria as well as threatening the national security of neighboring countries. Condemned the increasing terrorist activities in various parts of Syria which result in loss of innocent lives including the attacks targeting civilian facilities.

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## Iran RCS Delivers 5th Shipment of COVID-19 Vaccine

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Red Crescent Society spokesman said the fifth consignment of COVID-19 vaccine purchased by the society entered Iran and delivered to the Health Ministry. Mohammad-Hassan Qosian Moqaddam stated that Thursday morning, the consignment was delivered to the officials of the Health Ministry at Imam Khomeini Airport. He had previously announced that the Iranian Red Crescent Society had imported 4,400,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine in four stages, and another one million doses will be imported soon.

## War Not Solution to Afghanistan Crisis

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a statement issued at the end of the intra-Afghan talks in Tehran, officials of the Afghanistan government and the Taliban political leaders agreed that war is not the solution to the Afghanistan crisis.



A 6-clause statement was issued by the officials of the Afghanistan government and the Taliban political leaders who attended the second day of intra-Afghan talks on Thursday in Tehran.

- 1: The delegations commend the efforts and goodwill of the Islamic Republic of Iran in securing peace in Afghanistan as well as its hospitality toward Afghan representatives.
- 2: Stating that war is not the solution to the Afghanistan crisis, both sides agree that the continuation of the civil war is dangerous and it would hurt Afghanistan's situation. All efforts must be directed towards a political and peaceful solution.
- 3: The conversations took place in a cordial atmosphere and all issues were discussed in detail and explicitly.

4: Some critical issues such as permanent peace, the agreed Islamic system, and how to achieve it, will be discussed and concluded during the next meeting, which will be held as soon as possible.

5: The parties consider the intra-Afghan meeting held in Tehran as a new opportunity to strengthen the political solution to the Afghanistan problem.

6: Both sides strongly condemn the attacks on homes, offices, mosques, hospitals as well as the destruction of public institutions that result in the death of Afghans, and demand that the perpetrators be punished.

## Military Presence of Extra-Regional Powers Harms Regional Security

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's representative to the committee on the Indian Ocean at the United Nations said that the military presence of extra-regional powers and the desire for an arms race have undermined regional security.

Haidar Ali Balouji at the biennial meeting of the Committee on the Indian Ocean, which was attended by representatives of member states at the UN Secretariat, said, "Following the adoption of the 'Declaration on the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace' fifty years ago, the aforementioned region and Declaration have not only retained their importance but also gained even more relevance, given the existing figures on the issue at hand."

Balouji added, "Taking into consideration that this region is home to major sea routes connecting the Middle East, Africa and East Asia with Europe and the Americas, these vital sea routes facilitate maritime trade in the Indian Ocean region, carry more than half of the world's sea-borne oil and host 23 of the world's top 100 container ports."

"However, the region faces a range of serious security challenges. When taking into account the traditional security threats that are faced, one should not lose sight of emerging threats, such as piracy and drug trafficking as well as environmental degradation, which all pose a significant threat to the growth of the region. Therefore, regional security serves as a public good that can aid both the region and the entire world while simultaneously preventing major powers from competing for control over the resources and sea lanes in the region."

Iran's representative to the committee on the Indian Ocean added, "Furthermore, the Declaration has also envisaged that the area should be free of nuclear weapons, which is a component necessary for sustainable security in this region. In the same vein, it is still true that devoting the available resources to alliances other than military ones results in heightened tensions incompatible with and requested by the Declaration, which is very much needed."

"We believe that establishing such a zone in the Indian Ocean region for the foreseeable future and implementing the required commitments would greatly contribute towards relaxing international tensions while strengthening international peace and security." He stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to work with all regional countries "for the advancement of the aforesaid Declaration and assist the Ad-hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean in delivering its required services." The Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean was established on 15 December 1972 to study the implications of the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 1971.

## Leader Condolences Demise of Palestinian Leader Ahmed Jibril



TEHRAN (MNA) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Thursday expressed his deep condolences on the death of Secretary-General of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine 'Ahmed Jibril'.

The condolence message of the Leader is read as follows,

I offer my deep condolences on the death of tireless and indefatigable Palestinian Resistance leader Mr. 'Ahmed Jibril' to the Palestinian people, all activists in the field of Palestinian struggles as well as all elements of the Resistance Front in the West Asian region.

This brave and hard-working leader spent his life fighting for his oppressed Palestinian people and his homeland 'Palestine'.

I ask the God Almighty to bestow him a great reward and pray him a divine mercy and forgiveness. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command announced the death of its Secretary-General, Ahmad "Abu Jihad" Jibril, who passed away on Wednesday in a hospital in the Syrian capital Damascus.

Ahmed Jibril, a Palestinian leader born in 1938, founded the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, because of his belief in the "armed struggle to liberate Palestine."

## Iran Ready to Boost Ties With Caspian Sea Littoral States

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The prosecutor general of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced at the Caspian Sea Littoral States Prosecutors Conference that Iran was ready for boosting cooperation with Caspian Sea littoral states.

The first Caspian Sea littoral states prosecutors conference, comprised of the prosecutors of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, was convened on Wednesday through videoconferencing hosted by the prosecutor general of Russia in Saint Petersburg.

Hojjatolislam Mohammad Jafar Montazeri in the videoconference elaborated the most important challenges and difficulties faced by the Caspian Sea littoral states, announcing Iran's readiness for both hosting the next conference of this kind and boosting cooperation with the Caspian Sea littoral states.

Saying that the Caspian Sea that is 346,000 square kilometers and the largest lake in the world, he hoped the videoconference meeting would play a good role in strengthening the relations among the countries and pave the way for a greater and better level of cooperation for safeguarding the environment of the Caspian Sea because all countries that have interests in this water body.

The ecosystem of this lake is very rich; so rich that it is the habitat of about 400 sea creatures, such as the estrogon fish that produce the world's best caviar. In addition to the living resources in Caspian Sea, this lake has the 3rd largest oil and gas resources in the world after the Persian Gulf and Siberia. The Caspian Sea has meanwhile provided jobs for millions of people who live by its shores and is considered their income resource, said Montazeri, addressing his counterparts in Caspian Sea countries.

## Iranian Co. Denies U.S. Sabotage Affected COVID Vaccine Unit

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Shifa Pharmed pharmaceutical company has rejected reports suggesting that its coronavirus vaccine production lines had been affected by a US sabotage act.

Shifa Pharmed manufacturers Iran's flagship coronavirus vaccine under the brand name of Coviran Barekat. The company said in a Thursday statement that vaccine production lines were operating normally.

"The news on the sabotage act by America is not true and Coviran Barekat vaccine production line is working at full capacity," said the statement published in the official IRNA agency.

The announcement comes a day after Iran finally included Barekat in its inoculation program against the coronavirus.

The home-made jab has proven to be effective against variants of the disease, allowing the Iranian health ministry to approve it for emergency use.

Confidence in the vaccine increased after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei received a first dose of the jab last month.

The vaccine was officially rolled out for public injections in several provinces on Wednesday using a supply of 800,000 jabs provided by Shifa Pharmed.

However, reports in the social media and several local news outlets had suggested that an American sabotage act had caused delays in the rollout of the vaccine in Iran.

In its Thursday statement, Shifa Pharmed categorically denied there has been any halt to vaccine manufacturing processes whatsoever. It added that new batches of the Barekat vaccines will be supplied to health authorities within the next few days to speed up the vaccinations.

Iran has relied on foreign supplies for more than six million vaccinations carried out in the country since December.

## Iran Needs 120m Doses of Vaccine to Acquire Immunity Against COVID-19

TEHRAN (IFP) - A high-ranking Iranian lawmaker says the country needs 120 million doses of vaccine to acquire immunity against the novel coronavirus, but the total number of foreign and domestic vaccines does not meet this need.

The first deputy chairman of the Health Commission

of Iran's Parliament, Jalil Mirmohammadi Meibodi has told ILNA news agency it is true to say that six vaccines are being produced in the country.

"Two vaccines have been mass-produced with emergency permission; that is, while they were in the third phase of the clinical study, they were allowed to be mass produced. Given that about 20,000 people received these vaccines without showing any side effects, COVIran Barekat and Pasteur jabs received mass production permission," he noted.

Mirmohammadi went on to say that the four or five other companies, such as Noura, Fakhra, etc., are still in the first phase of human studies and experimental phases and are not yet allowed to produce vaccines to meet our needs.

"On the other hand, the COVIran Barekat vaccine, which has been licensed for production, can now be produced at a maximum capacity of 3 million doses per month. It is also announced that by the end of September, our capacity will reach a level where we can produce 10 million doses per month."

This member of the parliamentary health commission stated that despite providing foreign currency and paying for the vaccine, the total vaccines that Iran could import is about 5.7 million doses, which is due to the sanctions that keep Iran from importing the vaccines.

## Iran's Aid Arrives in Georgia To Fight Coronavirus

TEHRAN (IP) - During a ceremony at the Republic Hospital in Tbilisi, a shipment of Iranian humanitarian aid to Georgia to fight the corona was delivered to the country's authorities.

The ceremony was attended by Akbar Ghasemi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Tbilisi, Ara Shaverdian, the Armenian representative in Tehran and the north of the country in Iran's Parliament, and Giorgi Tsiklauri, Deputy Minister of Health of Georgia. Ghasemi said: "Corona is a common issue and Iran and Georgia must work together to combat the virus."

Georgia's Deputy Minister of Health also thanked Iran for its help to his country in the fight against Corona and said: "Iran's aid shows that countries must fight the virus together."

Iranian humanitarian aid packages include ventilators, corona diagnostic kits, thermometers, Pulse oximetry, face masks, and disinfectants, all of which are products of Iranian knowledge-based companies.

In the name of God

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



**Brief Notice of International Tender No. 39476**

Esfahan Steel Co. intends to purchase 10 set's Refractory Materials for the Converter through international tender No.39476.

Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.'s Website at [www.esfahansteel.ir](http://www.esfahansteel.ir) (Tender & Bids, Suppliers Comprehensive System) to get the tender documents no later than 13.July.2021.

Date of opening envelopes "A" & "B": 14.July.2021

For further information, prospective bidders may contact us via the following

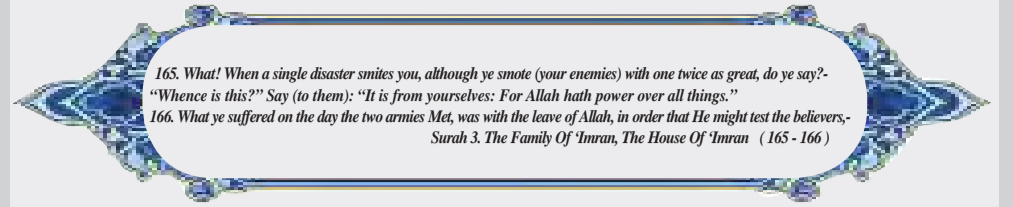
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■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:43
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:14
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:57



## President Opens 50,000-Ton Copper Cathodes Project

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani launched a new project to produce 50,000 tonnes of copper cathodes a year, using bioleaching technology which the plant's CEO calls revolutionary.**

The project carried out by the Iranian Babak Copper Co. (IBCCO) with 40 trillion rials (\$166 million) of investment was inaugurated by President Rouhani via videoconference on Thursday.

Copper cathodes are a basic form of copper used to make products such as copper rods and tubes. The plant is located in Shahr-e Babak in Kerman province, home to the Middle East's largest open cast copper mine.

It uses tank bioleaching process (metal solubilization by microorganisms) which is considered an environmental-friendly and economic method for separating copper from copper sulfide.

"With this opening, we will see the introduction of the latest environmental-friendly technology in the production of copper cathodes to Iran and the world, which will pave the way for a new revolution in copper cathode production," IBCCO Managing Director Mohammad Reza Mirzaei said.

"The most important factor that makes this production complex an unparalleled example in the world is the use of bioleaching technology for the first time in the world on an industrial scale," he added. The opening of the project, Mirzaei said, provides sustainable direct employment for 400 people.

IBCCO is a subsidiary of the Middle East Industries Development Holding Company (MIDHCO) which has initiated copper industry projects since 2010.

As of 2020, Iran produced about 309,000 tons of copper, according to data from the World Bureau of Metal Statistics. It aims to boost that to 800,000 tons by 2025.

The country has 2.6 billion tons of copper reserves. One of the major mines is the Sarcheshmeh complex in the southeast Kerman province.



Another major prospect, Sungun mine in East Azarbaijan province, is the largest open-cast copper mine in northwest of Iran, but it is in the primary stages of extraction.

On Thursday, President Rouhani also inaugurated national projects to equip 181 mining fleets belonging to the Middle East Mines Industries Development Holding Company (MIDHCO) in Kerman Province on Thursday morning through a video conference.

Close to 40,000 billion tomans have been invested in the projects in Kerman Province in the south of the country. During the 79th plan of the 'Prudence and Hope for Surge in Production' campaign, five national projects of the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade of the Middle East Mines Industries Development Holding Company (MIDHCO) came operational.

In the video conference inauguration ceremony of these national projects on Thursday, President Rouhani said that the inauguration of projects worth 40,000 billion tomans in one province shows the nation's capability, and the government's proper planning and efficiency. Rouhani added that was the 79th plan of the 'Prudence and Hope for Surge in Production' campaign, adding that the remaining plans will be inaugurated by the end of his administration.

He noted that inauguration of projects have a very important meaning for both friends and enemies; it sends the message to Iran's friends that the great nation of Iran, with its talent, knowledge-based companies, banks and investments, stock exchanges, the presence of the people and the optimal use of all the country's facilities and important technologies, is able to produce and jump in production in times of economic war.

Last week, Rouhani inaugurated six national projects throughout the country via video conferencing.

## Iran-Cuba Joint Vaccine Development Continues

TEHRAN (IP) - The chairman of Iran's Pasteur Institute announced that the cooperation of Iran and Cuba to develop vaccines continues.

"The process of joint production of Corona vaccine with the Finlay Institute is going well and we can reach mass production with a capacity of 3 million doses per month from October," Alireza Biglari said.

Biglari further said that the contract for the joint production with Cuba was concluded following the previous cooperation agreements, and the process was going well.

He noted: "The vaccine has passed the third phase of the clinical trial in both Iran and Cuba, and its production has progressed well with the delivery to the cell bank of Iran."

According to Biglari, the first shipment of the vaccine, which is one of the most effective ones in the world, is ready to be delivered to the Ministry of Health of Iran.

## Chadormalu Co. Was Ahead of All Schedules Last Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, addressing the annual general meeting of the company, said that last fiscal year of the company was a good one as the company was ahead of all of its schedules.



Eng. Naser Taghizadeh said last Iranian calendar year was a good year for Chadormalu Company as the company enjoyed 22 percent growth in concentrate production, 8 percent in pellet, 10.5 percent in sponge iron and 8.2 percent in production of steel ingot.

He added that the company could set a record for sponge iron production of 1,602,843 tons and ranked sixth in the country in sponge iron production and experienced one percent growth in sponge iron production comparing to the preceding year.

Taghizadeh went on to say that the company last year also set a record in production of dry concentrate and it posted 19 percent growth comparing to the preceding year. He added that in the field of concentrate and pellet production, the company has two projects in the pipeline that one of them is a four-million-ton concentrate production unit and the other one is a five-million ton pellet production unit which both are underway.

He noted that the company also set a new record for steel ingot production last year and it produced 1.025m tons of steel ingot, reiterating that he can say the company was definitely ahead of all of its planned schedules.

Taghizadeh said that the company earned 25,000b tomans which showed 170 percent growth comparing to the preceding year.

He went on to say that the sales of Chadormalu last year were over 10m tons and reached 260b tomans in value, adding that 21 percent of the company's sales through exports was through the export of ingot.

Taghizadeh concluded that the company in making profit had a very good growth last year, adding that profitability needs some factors like increase of production, more precision in providing raw material and increasing the price of the product.

## Minister Denies Selling Mines



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Reacting to the Order of the Islamic Republic's General Prosecutor's Office to halt auctions in President Hassan Rouhani's administration until the start of the government of Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ibrahim Raisi, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade said, "The auctions of 6,000 mines are not mining and there is no money, but railing for the next government."

According to Tasnim news agency, Alireza Razm Hosseini told Iranian television on Wednesday evening, that of the 6,000 minerals auctioned, "about 2,400 mines have been assigned and the rest do not have applicants." He also stressed that "there is no doubt about the auctions and that the assignments were done before the elections."

The remarks by the Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade are a reaction to the remarks of Iran's Deputy Attorney General, who on Wednesday announced the issuance of a directive to prosecutors across the country to postpone all auctions until the establishment of a new government.

Saeed Omrani, Deputy Attorney General, said that the decisions of the Industry Ministry of President Rouhani's government to hold auctions and tenders were "not in any way against the law," but stressed that "the interests of the country require that the holding of auctions and tenders be postponed for now."

The judicial official did not elaborate on the "interests of the country," but the minister said the ministry was "not a political enterprise," adding that "the prosecutor's representative is present in all these auctions."

Critics of mine liberalization claim that the declared points "account for 30 percent of the total area of mines, and the government's move is to offset the budget deficit." But Razm Hosseini says it will take about a year to transfer and operate the mines, so all the funds will be taken in the next government, but "there are some interests and media in the mining sector and there is a mining mafia."

## Iran Halts Trade Through Afghan Border Crossings

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's customs office IRICA has urged businesses not to send export shipments to two main border crossings with Afghanistan after reports showed that Taliban insurgents had occupied facilities on the other side of the border.

IRICA spokesman Rouhollah Latifi said in a statement on Thursday that trade had been halted through Dogharoun and Mahirood border crossings located along Iran's eastern border with Afghanistan.

Latifi said the closures were imposed after developments were reported on the opposite side of the border affecting the Afghan customs offices in Islam Qala and in Sheikh Abu Nasr Farahi crossings.

The announcement came just after reports showed that Taliban forces had stormed customs offices in the two locations. The Taliban has launched an all-out offensive since earlier this month to take control of many urban and rural districts across Afghanistan.

That has come after international forces led by the United States announced that they were withdrawing from Afghanistan some 20 years after they occupied the country to depose a Taliban government.

However, Afghan security sources said on Thursday that they would take back control of customs offices and other administrative buildings occupied by the Taliban in western provinces bordering Iran.

Local authorities in the province of Herat said the withdrawals against Taliban forces had been tactical, saying they will launch a fresh offensive to take back control of government premises in two cities that have been affected by Taliban incursions.

IRICA's Latifi said that trade between Iran and Afghanistan was flowing normally through a third major border crossing in Milak in southeastern Iran.

## Iran Mobile Internet Capacity Up by 30%

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's telecoms ministry says high-speed mobile internet capacity in the country would increase by 30% now that the two main mobile operators have access to a new bandwidth.

Hossein Fallah, a deputy telecoms minister, said in a tweet that Iran's communications regulatory body had issued licenses for the first operator the MCI and its rival the Irancell to access the 2,300 MHz band.

Fallah said that once fully deployed by the two operators after the installation of equipment, the new band will increase the capacity of fourth generation (4G) internet in Iran by 30%.

The 2,300 MHz band is popular among mobile operators for its wide spectrum and short range as it allows service providers to cover a large number of customers in densely-populated areas.

Iran's regulatory authority CRA had decided in March to allocate the bandwidth through holding an auction between the mobile operators in the country.

The decision came after demand for internet services in Iran soared amid the spread of the coronavirus pandemic which had caused many services to move online.

Mobile internet accounts for a bulk of high-speed

network in Iran where over 125 million SIM cards are active. That comes as the total number of fixed internet customers in the country is below 8.5 million, according to a CRA report published in October.

Iran's Association of Mobile Phone Importers said on Wednesday that the number of mobile phones switched on for a first time on the network had topped 1.85 million in the month to late June.

## Shalman Gallery Getting Ready for Tammuz Exhibition

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The collective exhibition of visual arts in the field of painting with the title of "Tammuz" has been planned to be held at Shalman Gallery of Tehran according to the schedule and in case the restrictions for the Coronavirus pandemic are lifted, the exhibition will be inaugurated on next Thursday, July 15 by director general of the Culture and Islamic Guidance Office of Tehran Mr. Ahad Javdani.

The director of Shalman Gallery Mr. Ali Mazarei announced the news and said the title and theme of the exhibition has been inspired with the hot and beautiful summer season and it covers selected works from artists like Saeedeh Emdadian, Hamid Jafari Shakib, Khadijeh

Rajabi, Moloud Azimpoor, Reza Ebadi, Morteza Shamisa and Behdad Najafi Asadollahi. He added that the start of the online Shalman Gallery in the near future which is in its final stages of designing and preparation.

Behdad Najafi, one of the participant artists in this art event hailed both welcome of artists and art-lovers from the art activities despite restrictions and observance of sanitary protocols, and stated that wheel of art should never come to a halt and therefore the periods when public and collective activities are restricted due to the public interests national can used as a golden opportunity for creating works, planning and managing exhibitions and future activities.

Holding collective exhibitions is an appropriate occasion for many of artists to display their works and to get acquainted with different minds and beliefs.



## Tehran, Belgrade Sign Scientific, Academic Agreement

BELGRADE (IP) - Two memorandums of scientific and academic cooperation between Iran and Serbia were signed by Iva Draskic Vicanovic, Dean of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade, and Mehdi Shirazi, the Iran Embassy's cultural attache in Serbia.

Referring to the educational activities of the Persian language chair of the University of Belgrade, Iran's Ambassador Rashid Hassanpour expressed his satisfaction with the high number of students interested in learning Persian. He also emphasized the need for more communication between Serbian professors, students, and researchers with Iranian academic and scientific centers.

During the meeting, Iva Draskic Vicanovic also said: "The spiritual structure of this college is based on the pillars of Persian language and literature." While praising the high scientific level of Iranian universities, he welcomed scientific and academic relations between the University of Belgrade and Iranian educational institutions.

## Japan Imposes Virus State of Emergency in Tokyo Area

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's government on Thursday announced a new virus state of emergency stretching throughout the Tokyo Olympics, as reports said organizers could bar fans from almost all events at the Games.

"We will impose the state of emergency in Tokyo," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said at a government meeting on infection measures. "The period will be until August 22."

With just two weeks until the July 23 opening ceremony, coronavirus infections are rising in the capital, and the spread of the more infectious Delta variant has spooked officials. The rising cases threaten to derail plans to let up to 10,000 local fans into Olympic venues, and could mean Tokyo 2020 is the first-ever Games held behind closed doors.



## S.Africa's Ex-President Zuma Could Be out in 4 Months

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma, who has been in police detention since Wednesday night as he starts a 15-month prison sentence for contempt, will be eligible for parole after around four months, the justice minister said.

Zuma turned himself in to police to begin his jail term for defying a court order to attend an inquiry into corruption while he was in power from 2009 to 2018. The ability of authorities to bring Zuma to book has been seen as a major test of the rule of law in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Zuma will be held in isolation for 14 days in line with COVID-19 protocols, Justice Minister Ronald Lamola said on Thursday.



## Series of Attacks Target U.S. Personnel in Iraq and Syria



BAGHDAD (Reuters) - U.S. diplomats and troops in Iraq and Syria were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks in the past 24 hours, U.S. and Iraq officials said, including at least 14 rockets hitting an Iraqi air base hosting U.S. forces, wounding two American service members.

While there were no immediate claims of responsibility for the attacks - part of a wave targeting U.S. troops or areas where they are based in Iraq and Syria - analysts believed they were part of a campaign by militias.

Iraqi militia groups aligned with Iran vowed to retaliate after U.S. strikes on the Iraqi-Syrian border killed four of their members last month. Two people were slightly wounded in the rocket attack on the Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq, said coalition spokesman U.S. Army Colonel Wayne Marotto. The rockets landed on the base and its perimeter. He said earlier that three people were wounded.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two personnel injured were U.S. service members. One suffered a concussion and the other had minor cuts, one of the officials added. Two rockets were fired at the U.S. Embassy inside Baghdad's Green Zone early on Thursday, Iraqi security sources told Reuters.

The embassy's anti-rocket system diverted one of the rockets, said one of the sources - a security official whose office is inside the Green Zone. The second rocket fell near the zone's perimeter, security officials said.

Sirens blared from the embassy compound inside the zone, which houses government buildings and foreign missions, the sources said.

In Syria, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces said no damage was done by a drone attack on the Al Omar oil field in an eastern area bordering Iraq where U.S. forces came under rocket fire but escaped injury on June 28.

The Pentagon said a drone had been brought down in eastern Syria and that no U.S. service members had been injured and there had not been any damage.

Iraqi army officials said the pace of recent attacks against bases hosting U.S. forces with rockets and explosive-laden drones was unprecedented.

Iraqi military sources said a rocket launcher fixed on the back of a truck was used in Wednesday's attack and was found on nearby farmland set on fire.

On Tuesday, a drone attacked Erbil airport in northern Iraq, targeting a U.S. base on the airport grounds, Kurdish security sources said.

Three rockets also landed on Ain al-Asad on Monday without causing casualties.

Hamdi Malik, an associate fellow at the Washington Institute and a specialist on Iraq's Shi'ite militias, said the attacks were part of a coordinated escalation by militias in Iraq.

The attempt to strike in eastern Syria appeared to be the first example of operations being carried out simultaneously in both countries.

## Taliban Surround Afghan City as Commandos Launch Counterattack

HERAT (Dispatches) - Taliban fighters on motorbikes roamed a provincial Afghan capital Thursday after a day of heavy fighting that saw them storm the city in their most brazen assault since the United States stepped up its troop withdrawal.

The government flew in hundreds of commandos to Qala-i-Naw in Badghis, the first provincial capital to face an all-out assault by the Taliban since May 1 when the insurgents launched a blistering campaign to capture new territory.

With the U.S. troop pullout "90 percent complete", according to the Pentagon, fears are mounting that Afghan forces will be stretched without the vital air support of the U.S. military.

Residents in Qala-i-Naw had either fled the city or stayed indoors Thursday after more than 24 hours of intense fighting that saw the Afghan air force launch strikes on Taliban positions.

"The Taliban are still in the city," resident Aziz Tawakoli told AFP.

"You can see them going up and down the streets on their motorcycles."

He said many of the city's 75,000 people had fled their homes -- either to neighbouring districts or to Herat.

"The shops are closed and there is hardly anyone on the streets," Tawakoli said, adding that helicopters and planes had bombed Taliban targets through the night.

Badghis provincial council member Zia Gul Habibi said the Taliban suffered casualties, but also surrounded the city. "All districts are under their control... People are really in fear," she said.



## EU Will Never, Ever Accept Two-State Deal on Cyprus

NICOSIA (Reuters) - The European Union will "never, ever" accept a two state deal on ethnically-split Cyprus, the head of its executive said on Thursday.

Ursula von der Leyen, who was visiting Cyprus, said the European Union spoke with one voice on the conflict, which has dragged on for decades and is a key hurdle in Turkey's ambitions of joining the bloc.

"I want to repeat that we will never, ever accept a two state solution. We are firm on that and very united," von der Leyen told a news conference.

Cyprus was split in a Turkish invasion in 1974 triggered by a brief Greek inspired coup. The south is run by an internationally recognised government which represents the entire island in the European Union, while the north is a breakaway Turkish Cypriot state recognised only by Ankara.

United Nations-led efforts which predate 1974 events have failed to unite the island. The present stalemate is steeped in disagreements of the form unification could take - a union of two independent states advocated by a new Turkish Cypriot leadership, or as a loose federation advocated by Greek Cypriots representing Cyprus internationally.

Talks in Geneva earlier this year on the matter ended inconclusively.

Disagreement has also focused on competing claims over offshore energy reserves, a dispute connected to quarrels between Turkey and Greece, a key ally of the Greek Cypriots.

"Our neighbours have (an) interest in good bilateral relations. If this is the case, and we also have an interest in good bilateral relations, I want our neighbours to know that if they speak to one of our member states, like for example Cyprus, in whatever tone, they speak to the European Union," von der Leyen said.

"All shops and government institutions are closed. There are still reports of sporadic fighting."

Parisila Herawai, a rights activist in the city, expressed concern for the safety of women in particular. "It is an emergency situation for all women, especially activists," she told AFP.

"If the Taliban plan to remain in the city, we will not be able to work."

On Wednesday, the Taliban briefly seized the police headquarters and the local office of the country's spy agency but were later pushed back.

As news of the assault spread, social media was flooded with videos of clashes -- with some showing armed Taliban fighters on motorbikes entering the city, as onlookers cheered.

Local officials said some security officers had surrendered to the Taliban, and the insurgents opened the gates of the city jail, freeing hundreds of prisoners.

Most had since been recaptured, officials said.

## Haitian President Heard Gunshots for Two Hours

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Dispatches)- Haitian president Jovenel Moïse was assassinated the night of July 6 in his home in the Pèlerin 5 neighbourhood in Pétionville. A video posted online the morning of July 7 shows several armed men near his home. A neighbour living just 300 metres from the president's home said that the gunfire began shortly after midnight and continued until 2 a.m.

The video, which is 27 seconds long, shows five armed men advancing slowly towards the gate of a home, using a flashlight to light the way.

This Tweet, posted July 7, reads: "A video of the commando who attacked the private residence of President Jovenel Moïse is circulating. The First Lady is injured."

One of the men has a gun that strongly resembles an AK-47 assault rifle. "C'est parti," they say, a French phrase indicating that something has begun.

A wall covered by graffiti appears in the last seconds of the video -- a tiny detail that provides proof the video was filmed near Moïse's home. The graffiti on the wall contains the words "team" and "jove..."

The same graffiti-covered wall appears in videos of numerous protests held in front of Moïse's home, located in the south of Pétionville, a few dozen metres from a police station. On the left, a screengrab of the video posted on Twitter July 7, in which several groups of letters are visible. On the right, the same letters on the wall are visible in a video taken in June 2020 at a protest in front of the president's home.

Using this video alone, it is not possible to determine whether these men are the assassins or part of the police forces that were eventually deployed to the scene to arrest them.

There have been no other armed attacks reported in the vicinity of the president's home since he was elected in 2017. The initial footage also shows a white car in the centre. The next day, a video filmed at the scene of the attack showed a white car of the same make and model riddled with bullets.

These visual clues make it very likely that the video does indeed show the attack on the president's home on July 6.

Our Observer Niepce Zéphirin lives just 300 metres from Moïse's residence. He heard the attack as it happened.

We started hearing gunshots at around midnight or 12:30. Everyone at home was shocked. I'd say the shooting lasted about two hours. Since then, we've stayed indoors. We have no idea how the situation will evolve. I just saw armoured police vehicles drive down the street.

The social and political situation in Haiti has become increasingly fraught over the past few months. For around a month, gangs have blocked the southern entrance to the capital, Port-au-Prince. The gangs have been gaining ground and spreading fear and chaos. The government has been weakened and I'm afraid that this assassination will just make the situation worse.



## Key Malaysian Party Withdraws Support For Embattled PM



KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) - The biggest party in Malaysia's ruling coalition said Thursday it was withdrawing support for the embattled prime minister and urged him to step down.

There was no immediate reaction from Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, but analysts said he was likely to hold on to power in the short term.

His administration has been racked by instability for months -- it only has a razor-thin majority in parliament, and is beset by infighting between different factions.

Pressure has mounted since a state of emergency was declared in January to fight the coronavirus under which parliament was suspended, with critics charging Muhyiddin was using the crisis to cling to power.

After a meeting of its top decision-making body that stretched into the early hours of Thursday, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the biggest party backing the premier, withdrew its support.

"UMNO respectfully urges Muhyiddin Yassin to step down to allow a new prime minister to be appointed for a limited period," party president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said in a statement. The new leader would steer the country through a worsening virus outbreak, before fresh elections can be held, he said.

"This is important to allow a new government that is truly stable and holds the mandate of the people to be formed," he added.

The UMNO leader listed a string of what he said were missteps by the government, that included botched handling of the pandemic and failing to provide for those affected by on-off lockdowns.

Muhyiddin, who leads a party called Bersatu, took power last year following the collapse of a reformist administration. UMNO held 38 of the 115 parliamentary seats in Muhyiddin's National Alliance coalition, although allegiances have been changing rapidly in recent months.

A party needs 112 to command a majority.

But UMNO itself is deeply divided, with some such as Zahid pushing for Muhyiddin to quit while others still support his government.



## EU Fines BMW and Volkswagen Group \$1b

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Commission said on Thursday three German carmakers breached EU antitrust rules by restricting competition in emission cleaning for new passenger diesel cars, fining BMW and Volkswagen Group a total of 875 million euros (\$1 billion).

The EU executive said the trio had colluded on technical development in the area of nitrogen oxide cleaning, but Daimler was not fined because it revealed the existence of the cartel.

"The five car manufacturers Daimler, BMW, Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche possessed the technology to reduce harmful emissions beyond what was legally required under EU emission standards. But they avoided



## Inflation Could Hamper Economic Recovery

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Rising inflation, particularly in the United States, is among the risks facing the global economy amid a "worsening two-track recovery," the International Monetary Fund warned on Wednesday.

"There is a risk of a more sustained rise in inflation or inflation expectations, which could potentially require an earlier-than-expected tightening of U.S. monetary policy," Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF managing director, wrote in a blog post.

The IMF, which is based in Washington, forecasts the United States economy to grow 7 percent this year, the fastest pace since 1984, and said that although this speedy recovery could benefit many other countries by increasing trade, there was the risk that it could raise the inflation rate, leading to other problems.

Higher interest rates could lead to a "sharp tightening" of financial conditions around the world and "significant capital outflows" from emerging economies, Ms. Georgieva wrote. This could cause "major challenges" to countries with high debt levels.

For now, however, inflation expectations are stable, she wrote. Federal Reserve policymakers have been grappling with data showing faster-than-expected increases in prices and several months of wage growth. But their mandate is to promote price stability, and most officials expect this period of high inflation to be just temporary.

Even while warning about the risk of inflation, Ms. Georgieva said monetary stimulus was also needed to aid the economic recovery. "In countries where the recovery is accelerating, including the U.S., it will be essential to avoid overreacting to transitory increases in inflation," she wrote.

Central banks will have to carefully communicate their future monetary policy plans to avoid bouts of market volatility, she added.



## New Covid Outbreaks a Top Risk to Economic Recovery

PARIS (Dispatches) - New outbreaks of Covid-19 remain one of the top risks to a global economic recovery, the OECD's secretary-general has warned, calling for developed nations to support less-developed nations with their vaccination programs.

"We must do what we can to get as many people as we can, all around the world, vaccinated. There is a particular responsibility for developed economies and it's not just a matter of charity or benevolence, it's actually a matter of self interest both in terms of making sure we keep our populations safe ... and also to ensure the economic recovery can be sustained," Mathias Cormann, secretary-general of the OECD, said Thursday.

"New outbreaks are still one of the biggest downside risks in terms of the sustained economic recovery moving forward," he told CNBC's Annette Weisbach.

"There is a race on between getting as many people vaccinated all around the world including and in particular in developing economies and the risk of new variants appearing, and variants that may be resistant to the vaccines currently available," he noted.

Cormann is not alone in worrying that the ongoing spread of Covid-19, particularly the latest highly transmissible delta variant among younger and unvaccinated people, could derail an economic recovery.

Bruno Le Maire, France's finance minister, told CNBC on Tuesday that "the single thing that might jeopardize the economic recovery in France is a new wave of the pandemic."

On Wednesday, the World Health Organization reiterated its call for wealthier nations to help poorer countries by sharing Covid vaccines, particularly for health and care workers, and the elderly. The coronavirus pandemic might be the most urgent issue in terms of global public health but governments have been turning to other pressing matters in the meantime, including international tax reform.

In June, finance ministers of the most advanced economies, known as the Group of Seven, backed a U.S. proposal calling for corporations around the world to pay at least a 15% tax on earnings and the agreement has now garnered support from many more countries.

Last Thursday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced that at least 130 nations had agreed to a global minimum tax on corporations, part of a broader agreement to overhaul international tax rules.

Cormann said the agreement was much-needed, noting that "131 countries have reached an agreement on an internationally consistent way forward when it comes to fair taxation. Globalization and the digitalization of our economies created distortions in efficiencies and serious inequities in our tax system and businesses weren't paying their fair share of tax everywhere where they should."

"We now have an agreement where the winners of globalization including and in particular the major multinational digital companies do pay their fair share of tax, or would pay their fair share of tax once (the deal is) implemented in the markets in which they generate their profits."

He noted that all the 131 countries have agreed that the minimum global corporate tax rate should be 15%, as well as those in the Group of 20 industrialized nations. "So that already sets a floor on the level of tax competition globally."

Some low corporate tax jurisdictions, like Ireland and Hungary, have misgivings over the agreement but Cormann said they were engaged in the negotiation process: "Some countries obviously come at this from a different starting position," he noted, "but 131 out of 139 countries (members of the G20/OECD Inclusive Framework who are collaborating to reform tax rules) are on board and that's a significant milestone."

## Asian Companies See Smallest Earnings Upgrade in 12 Months

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Asian firms received their smallest upgrade in 12 months in June, hit by a resurgence of COVID-19 infections in the region which prompted new restrictions on people's movement to curb fresh coronavirus outbreaks.

Analysts lifted their forecasts for Asian companies' forward 12-month profits by 0.2% in June, the smallest upgrade in a year, Refinitiv data showed. The manufacturing activity grew at a slower pace in China and Japan as raw material prices rose, while activity shrank in Vietnam, Malaysia and India, where governments imposed tougher restrictions to contain new outbreaks.

The spread of the Delta variant continues to drive global case counts higher, with South Korea reporting its highest ever one-day number of infections on Thursday after Indonesia reported record deaths on Wednesday.

China, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysian firms faced cuts to their forward earnings forecasts last month. Growth in China's factory activity slowed to a 15-month low in June, hit by supply chain woes and a resurgence of COVID-19 cases. Japan and Hong Kong had small upgrades. On the other hand, Australian firms' profits were lifted by 3%, thanks to a surge in commodity prices.

Analysts also raised their forward 12-month earnings estimates for Vietnamese companies by 9.3% in the last month as a recovery in developed economies bolstered the country's exports.

The data showed Asia is expected to post an earnings growth of 34.7% in 2021, compared with Europe's 63.4% and the United States' 45.5%.

## Global Tax Reform Plan Goes to the G20

LONDON (Dispatches) - G20 finance ministers meeting in Venice on Friday and Saturday could rally the world's top economies behind a global plan to tax multinationals more fairly that has already been hashed out among 131 countries representing 90 percent of world output.

On the face of it, the Group of 20 -- the world's 19 biggest economies plus the European Union -- have already backed the framework for global tax reform agreed on July 1 among members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) alongside China and India.

But negotiations continue behind the scenes to convince low-tax EU countries such as Estonia, Hungary and Ireland, who declined to sign up to the OECD deal to tax global companies at a rate of at least 15 percent.

Italian Finance Minister Daniele Franco, whose country holds the G20 presidency, said he is

"confident" of reaching a "political agreement" in Venice that would "radically change the current international tax architecture".

"We will do our utmost to convince the European states to join this compromise," said French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire.

The hold-out European countries have relied on low tax rates to attract multinationals and build their economies.

Ireland, the EU home to tech giants Facebook, Google and Apple, has a corporate tax rate of just 12.5 percent, while Hungary has one of 9.0 percent and Estonia almost only taxes dividend payments.

However, the support of these three countries is crucial for the EU, as the adoption of a minimum tax rate would require unanimous backing from member states.

The minimum rate is one of two pillars of global tax reform.

The other is less controversial -- a plan to tax companies where they make their profits rather than simply where they are headquartered.

It has its sights digital giants such as Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple, which have profited enormously during the pandemic but pay tax rates that are derisory when compared to their income.

When the new tax regime is in place -- the OECD is aiming for 2023 -- then national digital taxes imposed by countries such as France, Italy and Spain will disappear.

However, the EU plans to announce its own digital tax later this month to help finance its 750-billion-euro post-virus recovery plan.

Washington sees it as discriminating against U.S. technology giants, and US officials have warned the proposal could "completely derail" the global tax negotiations.

Countries have for years been debating how to stop multinational companies taking advantage of different tax systems to limit the amount they pay.

Negotiations became bogged down during the US presidency of Donald Trump, but were revived with Joe Biden's arrival at the White House, and the G7 richest nations made a historic commitment on the issue in London last month.

## BOJ to Offer Zero Rate, Long-Term Loans in Climate Scheme

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's central bank will likely offer zero interest, long-term funds to commercial lenders that provide loans or investment for activities aimed at combating climate change, said sources familiar with its thinking.

The plan will be part of an outline due out next week that lays out details of the Bank of Japan's new loan scheme, which is designed to encourage green finance. The move would put the BOJ in line with a growing number of central banks stepping up efforts to address the economic fallout of climate change.



Under the proposal, the BOJ would offer longer-than-usual loans that extend for several years at zero interest, five sources said on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Discussions are still preliminary and subject to change as there is no consensus yet within the BOJ on the terms of the funding, the sources said.

However, the sources said many policymakers are wary of adding more incentives, such as paying interest to banks that tap the scheme, due to a lack of clarity over which loans are considered "green".

As such, the BOJ may opt to provide longer-dated loans rather than pay the 0.1% or 0.2% interest it offers to banks under existing loan schemes, such as the one for firms hit by the pandemic. The BOJ will decide an outline of its scheme at its next policy meeting on July 15-16, and aims to roll out the first batch of loans by the end of this year.

## Turkey Ready to Build Beirut Port Damaged in Major Blast



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has conveyed to the Lebanese government that it is ready to rebuild the Port of Beirut, which was damaged in a massive explosion last year that left Lebanon without its major export facility, a Turkish trade official said.

Abdulkadir Akkuş, head of the Foreign Economic Relations Board's (DEIK) Turkey-Lebanon Business Council, told Anadolu Agency (AA) that they met with Lebanese Trade Minister Raul Name at the end of last month and conveyed Turkey's intention of constructing the port with a build-operate-transfer method.

The Mediterranean country, whose capital city was once dubbed the Paris of the Middle East, has been in economic havoc for almost three years due to the long-enduring effects of Lebanon's former civil war, regional conflicts and political instability.

The recent economic crisis first surfaced in October 2019 and further deepened in August 2020 when the explosion -- which left over 100 dead, injured thousands and damaged at least 3,900 buildings and over 4,000 vehicles -- occurred. According to estimates, the blast's total economic cost is around \$15 billion.

Akkuş said Turkey has an experienced construction sector that operates globally and can be a good candidate for the port construction, although Lebanon is also in negotiations with France and China.

Commenting on bilateral trade relations, he noted that approximately \$200 million of exports from Turkey to Lebanon were made during the first two months of the year. "We may achieve \$1 billion in exports through this year," he said. The close proximity of Iskenderun and Mersin ports in Turkey's southern shores allows easy and fast transportation possibilities to the Beirut port.

Saying that trade diplomacy can be improved with mutual steps, Akkuş said a Turkish businessperson opening a factory in Lebanon could also export its products to all other Middle Eastern countries due to Lebanon's free trade deals in the region. Speaking on the general economic outlook in the Levantine country, Akkuş said \$1 is currently traded for 18,000 Lebanese liras at currency exchange offices, and that the central bank is close to no longer being able to subsidize its fuel and medical sectors.

## Iran Turned to Regional Power in Science, Technology

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's vice president for science and technology said that the country should be the first power in the region in the field of science and technology by 2025.

On the sidelines of a visit to the Alborz Science and Technology Park on Thursday, Sorena Sattari said: "In specific areas such as nanotechnology, stem cells, and

aerospace, we have made significant progress, with more than 6,000 companies."

Noting that the knowledge-based companies were developing at a good pace, Sattari said the growing movement in the field of the knowledge-based economy in the country began.



## Russia Faces a Stagnant Decade of 1.5% GDP Growth

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - With a falling working population and low levels of investment Russia's growth in the next decade will be capped at about 1.5%

Iikka Korhonen, chief economist at Bank of Finland Institute for Economics in Transition (BOFIT), released a paper looking at Russia's long-term growth potential and the outlook is bad. Unless the Kremlin can transform the way the economy works it will stagnate for the next decade and maybe longer.

Russia's economy has bounced back from the corona-crisis faster and stronger than anyone was expecting. The government only invested about 3% of GDP into stimulus spending – one of the lowest amounts of any government – yet the recession in Russia (a 3% contraction in 2020) was milder than in most other large markets of the world.

The reason, economists speculate, is that the pandemic hurt the service industry first and foremost and Russia's service industry remains relatively underdeveloped, giving it more resilience than most other countries.

Another contributing factor was after the initial lockdown in April last year, the government did not impose subsequent lockdowns when the second wave started at the end of the summer, which also helped support the recovery.

Now a third wave is sweeping Russia, and with daily infection rates leaping to over 20,000 a day at the start of July the government is still trying to avoid another economically debilitating lockdown, imposing instead stricter rules on testing and a coronavirus (COVID-19) passport system in the form of a government-issues QR code that shows the holder has either been vaccinated, tested in the last three days or has recovered from the virus and has antibodies. But the main thrust of the government strategy this summer is to persuade, cajole, pressure and outright order the population to get vaccinated.

As of June 7 the campaign seems to be working, as long queues have formed at inoculation stations and the share of those who have been vaccinated leaped 2pp in a week from 13% where it has been stuck for at least a month.

The Russian economy is anticipated to grow around 4% this year (estimates vary due to lingering uncertainty over the progress of the pandemic) but beyond that everyone agrees that growth will slow in 2022 and beyond as the bounce-back effect wears off.

The official growth estimates for this year are 3% growth slowing to 2.5% in 2022 and then rising again to 3% in 2023. However, Korhonen has one of the most pessimistic long-term views, saying that Russia's growth will be limited to only 1.5% in the medium term to 2040.

There are many factors driving this gloomy prediction, but the most important is a



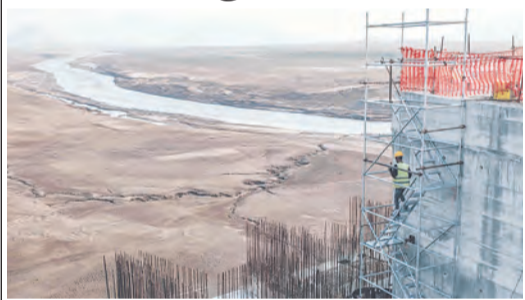
shrinking labour pool and low levels of labour productivity which have plagued Russia's economy for years.

"Russia's economy has grown relatively slowly during the past decade, partly because of [its] declining labour force. In my revised framework, growth recovers after the negative COVID-19 shock, but remains subdued as the working-age population continues to dwindle. Productivity growth remains lower than in the early 2000s, while average GDP growth settles at approximately 1.5% p.a.," says Korhonen.

Russia's population returned to growth in 2008 and the demographic recovery outstripped even the most optimistic forecasts made by the international financial institutions (IFIs) at the start of the last decade. The Kremlin launched a highly successful children support programme that saw birth rates rise strongly and inbound immigration has also bolstered the growth of the natural population.

"Russia's working-age population, which entered into decline over a decade ago, will continue to diminish during the next two decades. Immigration and raising of the retirement age can alleviate some of this contraction, but such measures are insufficient to stem the declining trend," says Korhonen.

## Ethiopia's Controversial Mega-Dam



PARIS (AFP) - Ethiopia's construction of a massive dam on a tributary of the Nile River, which the UN Security Council meets about on Thursday, is raising regional tensions notably with Egypt, which depends on the Nile for 97 percent of its water supply.

At 6,695 kilometres (4,160 miles), the Nile is one of the world's longest rivers and a crucial supplier of water and hydropower in a largely arid region.

Its drainage basin of more than three million square kilometres (1.16 million square miles) covers 10 countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

The two main tributaries -- the White Nile and the Blue Nile -- converge in Khartoum before flowing north through Egypt and into the Mediterranean Sea.

Around 84 billion cubic meters of water is estimated to flow along the Nile every year.

Ethiopia in 2011 launched construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile, roughly 30 kilometers from the border with Sudan.

The \$4.2-billion dam will produce more than 5,000 megawatts of electricity, making it Africa's biggest hydroelectric dam and doubling Ethiopia's electricity output.

Ethiopia began the first phase of filling the reservoir for the 475-foot (145-metre) dam in mid-2020.

Egypt, an arid nation of nearly 100 million people, depends on the Nile for most of its water needs, including for agriculture.

Cairo claims a historic right to the river dating from a 1929 treaty between Egypt and Sudan represented by colonial power Britain, that gave Egypt veto power over construction projects along the river.

A 1959 treaty boosted Egypt's allocation to around 66 percent of the river's flow, with 22 percent for Sudan.

Ethiopia was not party to those treaties and does not see them as valid.

In 2010 Nile basin countries, excluding Egypt and Sudan, signed another deal, the Cooperative Framework Agreement, that allows projects on the river without Cairo's agreement.

Ethiopia, one of Africa's fastest growing economies in recent years, insists the dam will not affect the onward flow of water. But Egypt fears its supplies will be reduced during the time it takes to fill the 74-billion-cubic-metre capacity reservoir.

## Denying IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

"This measure, which will significantly improve the quality and quantity of radiopharmaceutical production, will make the Islamic Republic of Iran one of the leading countries in the field of nuclear technology," Gharibabadi tweeted.

Prince Abdullah, however, said that Iran's real intentions are a matter of concern, claiming that the silicide fuel plate is not used for peaceful purpose.

Tehran's "approach negatively affects any negotiations related to the nuclear agreement," the Saudi envoy to the IAEA alleged. "The escalatory steps announced by Iran do not match with its statements about the peacefulness of its nuclear program and confirm its intentions and pursuit of the capabilities to produce a nuclear weapon."

Saudi Arabia's nuclear ambitions have prompted worries in the global community over the past few years, especially after Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman hinted in 2018 that the kingdom may go for nukes.

Citing Western officials, The Wall Street Journal reported last August that Saudi Arabia, with Chinese help, has built a facility for extraction of yellowcake from uranium ore near the remote town of al-Ula.

The New York Times also said American intelligence agencies had spotted what appeared to be an undeclared nuclear site not too far from the Saudi town of al-Uyaynah.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, Iran showed the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — in 2015. The accord was also ratified in the form of a UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

## Iran Names Syria...

FROM PAGE 1

Agreed to continue their cooperation in order to ultimately eliminate DAESH/ISIL, AlNusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaeda or DAESH/ISIL, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the UN Security Council, while ensuring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian law. Expressed serious concern with the increased presence and terrorist activity of "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham" and other affiliated terrorist groups as designated by the UN Security Council that pose threat to civilians inside and outside the Idlib de-escalation area;

\*Reviewed in detail the situation in the Idlib de-escalation area and highlighted the necessity to maintain calm on the ground by fully implementing all agreements on Idlib;

\*Condemned continuing Israeli military attacks in Syria which violate the international law, international humanitarian law, the sovereignty of Syria and neighboring countries, endanger the stability and security in the region and called for cessation of them;

\*Expressed their conviction that there could be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and reaffirmed their commitment to advance viable and lasting Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, UN-facilitated political process in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2254;

\*Reiterated grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Syria and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents a profound challenge to all Syria's health system, socio-economic and humanitarian situations. Rejected all unilateral sanctions, which are in contravention of international law, international humanitarian law and the UN Charter, particularly in the face of the pandemic.

\*Emphasized the need to increase humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country without discrimination, politicization and preconditions. In order to support the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Syria and the progress in the process of the political settlement, called upon the international community, the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, to enhance the assistance to Syria, inter alia by developing early recovery projects, including the restoration of basic infrastructure assets – water and power supply facilities, schools and hospitals as well as the humanitarian mine action in accordance with the international humanitarian law;

\*Highlighted the need to facilitate safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their original places of residence in Syria, ensuring their right to return and right to be supported. In this regard, called upon the international community to provide the necessary assistance to Syrian refugees and IDPs and reaffirmed their readiness to continue interaction with all relevant parties, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other specialized international agencies;

\*Welcomed the successful operation on mutual release of detainees on 2 July within the framework of the Working Group on the Release of Detainees / Abductees, Handover of Bodies and Identification of Missing Persons. The operation confirmed the willingness of Syrian parties to strengthen the mutual trust with the assistance of the Astana guarantors. It also reaffirmed the determination of the Astana guarantors to increase and expand their cooperation within the Working Group.

\*Expressed their sincere gratitude to the Kazakh authorities for hosting in Nur-Sultan the 16th International Meeting on Syria in the Astana format;

## Iran, Well-Wisher of...

FROM PAGE 1

The two sides strongly condemned attacks that target people's homes, government offices, mosques and hospitals as well as the destruction of public institutions, and called for the perpetrators to be punished.

The Afghan government's delegation was headed by former Vice President of Afghanistan Yunus Qanuni, and Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the head of Taliban's political office in Qatar's Doha, also led the militant group's delegation to Tehran.

Iran has on several occasions reaffirmed its support for measures and talks aimed at establishing peace and ending the conflict in war-battered Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always asked Afghan parties to resolve their problems through dialogue and has urged them not to let the foreigners dictate their own will on their fate.

Foreign forces in Afghanistan through the decades have shown that they do not care about the nation and country and their presence in Afghanistan is just for the sake of their own interest by looting wealth and deploying troops for show of their power in the region.

Only nations and countries can shape their own fates, and aliens are not able to restore peace and unity in the countries, and Afghan warring parties should do the same by relying on their own determination rather than the assistance of the aliens to resolve their differences.

The Islamic Republic of Iran with this wise initiative once again proved the world that the country is really well-wisher of its neighboring states and it will benefit more through peace and security in those countries rather than creating rift among the parties, and it will respect the nations' choices and this is the right of any nation to choose its own government and rulers and no one is allowed to meddle.

Now it is Afghans' turn to show unity to resolve this problem in order to save their country from more bloodshed and damage because aliens will make the most of their internal conflicts in any country and they will be the real winners, and Afghans should not play in their game.

The Tehran meeting was a small part of Iran's well-wishing nature for its neighbors and we hope Afghan groups settle their differences through dialogue rather than firing bullets because war will let foreign forces stay in Afghanistan and the region, while the region does not need the aliens' assistance and meddling any more.

## U.S. Plays With...

FROM PAGE 1

It then began forcing third countries into abiding by the sanctions and stopping their trade with Iran. Washington's European allies, including the UK, France, and Germany, which are also JCPOA members, have been among those that have devotedly toed the sanction line.

"The United States' oppressive and unilateral sanctions run counter to the principles and goals sought by the UN Charter as well as the international law and the essential norms that govern the international relations," Takht-Ravanchi said.

The official underscored that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the negative impact of the coercive measures, especially on women, children, adolescents, the elderly, and those with handicap.

Endangering the general public's health and security towards political purposes is not only illegal, but amounts to a "war crime and crime against humanity" that carries international accountability, he said.

The official finally noted that moral responsibility dictated that the country poses strong opposition to the economic bans and demand their speedy removal.

## Iran Signs Declaration...

FROM PAGE 1

"There are plenty of problems in the Caspian - oil production and its negative consequences, emissions of hazardous production wastes, illegal development of the coastal strip. This meeting and signing of the document will lay the foundation for further five-sided interaction in the Caspian," Igor Krasnov said.

"I am sure that it will be intense and productive," Krasnov expressed confidence, proposing to hold meetings at the expert level in early 2022 to discuss cooperation issues in the field of environmental protection of the Caspian Sea in more detail.

Iran's ambassador Jalali also met with the Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov to discuss cooperation between the two countries to fight against drug crimes and other areas of mutual interest.

He also met with the attorney generals of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan.

In the meeting, issues such as cooperation of the Caspian Sea littoral states in the fight against narcotics and human trafficking, human rights cooperation, and extradition of prisoners were discussed.



## Southeast Asian Games Postponed Over COVID-19 Crisis

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - The Southeast Asian Games due to be held in Vietnam later this year has been postponed until 2022 by the Games federation, Malaysia's Olympic Council said on Thursday.

"The SEA Games Federation members praised the work done thus far by the Vietnam organising committee but took note of the current conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Southeast Asian region," it said in an announcement on its website after a meeting of the federation on Thursday.

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## Czechs Join Trio in Clinching Olympic Berths

BELGRADE (Reuters) - The Czech Republic became the last team to seal a berth in the Tokyo Olympics men's basketball tournament after blowing away Greece 97-72 in the final of their qualifying event on Sunday.

Patrik Auda led the charge with 20 points as the Czechs, who stunned tournament hosts Canada 103-101 in Saturday's thrilling semi-final, will join holders the United States, France and Iran in Group A at the July 23 to Aug. 8 Olympics.

# Pliskova to Face Barty in Wimbledon Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - It's women's semifinals day at Wimbledon, and by the end we'll know who will be playing on Saturday for the trophy. In the first game, Ashleigh Barty is trying to get to her first Wimbledon final and her first Grand Slam final since she won the 2019 French Open, while Angelique Kerber is looking to continue her unexpected run after a few disappointing seasons. In the second game, Karolina Pliskova will be attempting to avenge her recent fall out of the WTA top-10, while Aryna Sabalenka is trying to get to her first Grand Slam final.

The match between Aryna Sabalenka and Karolina Pliskova was as hard fought as any at Wimbledon so far. Every set, every game, every point was a battle. Sabalenka was playing for her very first trip to a Grand Slam final, and Pliskova was playing for her first Grand Slam final since the 2016 U.S. Open.

Sabalenka will have to wait for her first final appearance, because Pliskova took the match 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 and will face Ash Barty in the Wimbledon finale.

This match was a clash of the giant serves. Sabalenka used it to fight off eight straight break points in the first set, then Pliskova used hers to regroup and change the momentum in the second set. Both played highlight reel tennis, continually trading eye-popping shots.

Sabalenka played every point like it was her last, like at any moment Wimbledon officials could come out onto the court and tell her that she'd lost due to a little-known rule violation. She took huge risks, and while they paid off in the first set, halfway through the second set they began to backfire on her. She really began beating herself, reaching for shots that weren't hittable or rushing and sending balls into the net. Her serve also began to desert her, which is when panic appeared to set in.

By comparison, Pliskova stayed calm throughout, even when she was trying and failing to catch up to Sabalenka in the first



set. She never panicked, and her steadiness paid off. After Sabalenka powered her way to a first set victory, Pliskova took the second set with consistent, measured play, taking advantage of Sabalenka's weakness on second serve.

It all came down to the third set. Pliskova took a 4-2 lead, and it was up to Sabalenka to respond. She tried, taking two more games, but Sabalenka's panic gave Pliskova the chances she needed to nail down the final two games.

Just a month after being forced to retire from the French Open due to injury, Ashleigh Barty is headed to her first Wimbledon final, defeating Angelique Kerber 6-3, 7-6 (3) in a match that lasted just short of 90 minutes.

It was a statement win for the No. 1-seeded Barty, who showed off power and a killer instinct. She dominated easily at the start, taking the first three games while Kerber couldn't get anything going. Kerber finally broke through in the fourth game and got on the board, but she couldn't quite make a comeback. Barty was simply on fire.

Momentum shifted drastically at the start of the second set. Kerber came out swinging, nailing down the first three games in quick succession. But then Barty began clawing back with increasing intensity. Down 5-2, she won the next three games, getting stronger with each point. By the time Barty had evened up the score at 5-5, she had won 10 straight points. Coming all the way back from three games down, Barty forced a tiebreak at 6-6.

## Sergio Ramos Joins PSG on 2-Year Contract

PARIS (Dispatches) - Sergio Ramos, the former Real Madrid stalwart considered one of the best defenders in the world, has signed a two-year contract with Paris Saint-Germain, the French club said Thursday.

Ramos, 35, won the Champions League four times with Real and is a World Cup winner and a two-time champion of Europe with Spain.

The veteran, who has won 180 caps and scored 23 goals for his country, arrives with PSG desperate to add experience to their squad for another assault on an elusive first Champions League title.

PSG sporting director Leonardo has also brought in Dutch midfielder star Georginio Wijnaldum from Liverpool and Moroccan defender Achraf Hakimi from Italian champions Inter Milan as the Parisians seek the right blend to conquer Europe and persuade France striker Kylian Mbappe to sign a new deal beyond 2022.

"It's a big change in my life, a new challenge and a day I shall never forget," Ramos said in a PSG statement.

Ramos, who cut his teeth with Sevilla before joining Real in 2005, played almost 500 games for Los Blancos, marshalling their defence for 16 seasons and winning La Liga five times.

## FINA Says Podium Protests Banned for Tokyo Games

HONG KONG (Reuters) - Swimming's world governing body FINA said athletes will be allowed to express their opinions at news conferences and via media channels at the Tokyo Olympics but protests during medal ceremonies are prohibited.

Podium protests have emerged as a controversial issue ahead of the Games with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) deciding to retain a regulation forbidding any kind of "demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda" in venues and other Olympic areas.

That has prompted criticism from some athletes, including Britain's Olympic swimming champion Adam Peaty, who said they have a right to express their opinions without being punished. FINA's latest guidelines were issued just two weeks ahead of the start of the Games following discussions with the IOC, the swimming federation said in a news release on Wednesday.

The pool deck should remain a sanctuary for sport and nothing else, said FINA President Husain Al Musallam, adding that the same level of respect should be given to the podium.

"It is a moment that commands respect and triumph for sporting results and should not be remembered by individual expression," he said. FINA's guidelines come around two years after it warned Britain's Duncan Scott over his refusal to share a podium or shake the hand of China's Sun Yang at the 2019 world championships because of a doping controversy.

## Pickford Breaks England Goalkeeper Record Stretching

LONDON (Reuters) - Jordan Pickford became the England goalkeeper with the longest spell without conceding a goal on Wednesday, narrowly breaking a record stretching back to the Three Lions' triumphant 1966 World Cup campaign.

The goalkeeper surpassed Gordon Banks' milestone of 720 minutes during England's Euro 2020 semi-final victory over Denmark, as they reached their first major tournament final since 1966 with a 2-1 win after extra time.

# Neuer Remains Bayern Munich Captain



After two successful seasons with RB Leipzig, Nagelsmann, who turns 34 later this month, has taken charge of Bayern, replacing Hansi Flick, who is Germany's new head coach.

Nagelsmann confirmed that Germany goalkeeper Neuer, who at 35 is a year older, will be his captain having done an "outstanding" job since Philipp Lahm retired as Bayern skipper in 2017.

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich's new head coach Julian Nagelsmann has confirmed Manuel Neuer will remain the club's captain next season and backed embattled winger Leroy Sane to prove his critics wrong.

At his first press conference as Bayern coach Wednesday, Nagelsmann backed Sane to bounce back from criticism after poor displays for Germany at the Euro 2020 finals.

"Of course, I get the discussions. We would do well to leave him alone in the media," said Nagelsmann.

The 25-year-old Sane has yet to impress at Bayern, a year after a high-profile transfer from Manchester City.

However, Nagelsmann is "sure we'll see a stronger Leroy Sane, who will have a big impact on success at FC Bayern."

Nagelsmann hails from Landsberg am Lech near Munich and slept under an FC Bayern duvet as a child.

"Bayern are the biggest club in Germany. It was always a dream to be a coach here," he admitted.

## Southgate Hails Incredible Job

LONDON (Dispatches) - Gareth Southgate praised the "incredible job" done by his players as England ended a 55-year wait to reach a major tournament final by beating Denmark 2-1 at Euro 2020.

England came from a goal down before Harry Kane converted the rebound from his missed penalty in extra time to send his team through to a showdown with Italy.

"I'm so proud of the players," Southgate told ITV.

"It's an incredible occasion to be a part of -- we knew it wouldn't be straightforward, we said to the players we'll have to show our resilience and come back from some setbacks, and we've done that tonight."

England conceded their first goal of the tournament when Mikkel Damsgaard drilled a free-kick past Jordan Pickford, but the hosts soon equalised as Simon Kjær turned into his own net.

"I felt we would get there -- I knew we would have different sorts of battles because Denmark are so underrated as a team," said Southgate.

"They did cause us a lot of problems, when you've waited as long as we have to get through a semi-final, the players, considering the limited international experience some of them have had, they've done an incredible job."

Southgate credited Kane for keeping his nerve after having his penalty saved initially by Kasper Schmeichel. "There's nobody you've rather have on it, but you're up against a great goalkeeper who he's obviously faced a lot of times -- but thankfully that's now immaterial."



## Federer Crashes Out At Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Roger Federer crashed out of Wimbledon in the quarter-finals at the hands of Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, potentially bringing down the curtain on the Swiss legend's All England Club career.

Federer, the 20-time Grand Slam title winner who turns 40 next month, lost 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-0 to a player 15 years his junior.

It was only the eight-time Wimbledon champion's 14th defeat at the tournament in 119 matches and his first straight-sets loss since an opening round exit against Mario Ancic in 2002.

It was also the first time he had lost a set 6-0 at Wimbledon.

"It's super special to have played Roger here, it's a dream come true," said Hurkacz.

"He's done so many special things here."

World number 18 Hurkacz, 24, had never got beyond the third round of a Grand Slam before this Wimbledon.

However, boosted by having defeated world number two Daniil Medvedev in five sets in the last 16, he was a break up on a sluggish-looking Federer in the sixth game of the opening set.

The Swiss star, who underwent two knee surgeries in 2020, carved out a break for 2-0 in the second set.



He couldn't hang on and Hurkacz levelled in the seventh game from 1-4 down before dominating the tiebreak.

Federer looked punch drunk and he was quickly down 0-2 in the third set before Hurkacz wrapped up the decider in just 29 minutes. He is only the second Polish man to reach the semi-finals at Wimbledon -- Jerzy Janowicz being the other in 2013.