

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 85,694 With 151 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

The Chief Commander of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi Underscores That the Army Stands Against Enemies With Authority

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DOMESTIC

500,000 Persons Per Day Can Be Vaccinated

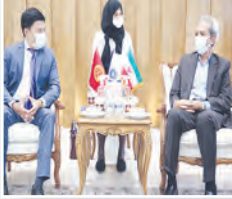


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Seoul, Washington Hold Talks Over Releasing Iran Frozen Assets

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Senior economy officials from South Korea and the United States have held talks to discuss cooperation in various areas including releasing Iran's frozen oil money in Korean banks.

South Korean Finance Minister Hong Nam-ki and the U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held a meeting in Venice, Italy, on Friday on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit to discuss the mentioned issue, according to the South Korean Economy and Finance Ministry.

As reported, South Korea has proposed to use a Swiss channel for transferring Iranian money to be used for purchasing basic goods and medicine and the U.S. has agreed to cooperate in resolving the issue. Some seven billion dollars of Iranian oil revenues have been frozen in two South Korean banks since September 2019, when Washington's sanctions waiver for South Korea's imports of Iranian oil expired.

The two sides now appear to be moving toward a solution for the thorny issue after a few rounds of failed negotiations in January, in which both countries proposed a number of solutions none of which broke the deadlock over the issue.

Earlier in February, Abdolnasser Hemmati, the former governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI), met with the South Korean Ambassador to Iran Ryu Jeong-Hyun to discuss the issue and the two sides announced they have reached a deal on how to release the assets blocked in South Korean banks.

Tehran, Havana Cooperation in Making COVID19 Vaccine, Strategic

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Finlay Vaccine Institute of Cuba and the Pasteur Institute of Iran in a joint statement announced that Tehran and Havana are conducting strategic cooperation in producing coronavirus vaccine.

'Cuba and Iran have a long history of cooperation in the biotechnology sector. In particular, the collaboration between the Finlay Vaccine Institute of Cuba and the Pasteur Institute of Iran on the Covid-19 vaccine is based on a strategic relationship in the field of research and development of vaccine technologies,' the statement reads.

'Based on the successful development by the Finlay Institute of the SOBERANA 02 vaccine against COVID-19 and that it uses the same technological platform of the Cuban anti-pneumococcal vaccine, which had been the subject of a Technology Transfer Agreement, both institutions agreed to include in the said contract the transfer of technology for the production in Iran of SOBERANA 02, it added.

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Eurasia Expo an Opportunity To Expand Trading With EAEU



IRAN NEWS ECONOMICDESK

TEHRAN - ead of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization Hamid Zadboum said that holding the first Eurasia Expo in Iran is a good opportunity to facilitate free trade talks with members of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Referring to the significance of holding this expo, Zadboum described it as an environment to better recognize Iran's export capacity to EAEU member states.

Emphasizing that the EAEU with a population of 185 million people is one of Iran's most important trading partners, the official said that a temporary agreement on free trade of 862 goods was signed between Iran and the EAEU in 2018 and was effective from 2019.

He noted that Iran tries to turn the agreement into a permanent free trade agreement with the EAEU.

Zadboum linked the relatively low participation in the expo by Iranian and foreign visitors to the coronavirus pandemic and consequent restrictions and said that he hoped participation would increase in the next edition of the event.

Eurasian Economic Commission Chairman Danil Ibrayev, Russian- Iranian Business Council Vladimir Obydenov, Head of Iran's Foreign Ministry Multilateral Trade and Financial Cooperation Aziz Mansouri, Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali and several other Iranian and Russian officials attended the inauguration ceremony of the expo.

The Eurasia Expo 2021 is held July 9-14 in Tehran.

As reported, 30 companies from Russia, 30 companies from Kyrgyzstan, more than 10 companies from Armenia, more than 10 companies from Kazakhstan, and some companies from Belarus are participating in this four-day exhibition along with Iranian companies.

The companies participating in this exhibition are active in the fields of banking and finance, technology transfer, construction of large factories, silos, ports, wharves, oil tanks, shipbuilding, steel, and cement, as well as large sellers of livestock inputs and oil and agricultural products.

On the first day of the event, the members of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and the Eurasian chambers of commerce held a meeting to exchange views on ways of boosting trade between the two sides.

According to the Managing Director of Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) Hassan Zamani, due to the special conditions created by the coronavirus pandemic in the country, the exhibition is not open for the public and only traders, scholars, and businessmen whose field of work is related to the EAEU are allowed to visit the exhibition.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

U.S. Officials Accepted Defeat Against Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's First Vice President underscored that the American officials had accepted the defeat against Iran.

Eshaq Jahangiri said: "Iranians become victorious against the U.S. maximum pressure with maximum resistance."

"The U.S. current and the former officials have accepted the defeat," Jahangiri added.

"Under the current condition, we need dialogue, empathy, and recognition of the country's elites, and intellectual capital so that we can use all our capacities to solve the people's problems," the first VP noted.

He also praised President-elect Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi for contacting with all political fronts in the country and said that the country can overcome the problems over unity and empathy.

He also blamed shortage in rainfall as the main reason for recent blackouts in the country, adding that production of electricity by dams has decreased from 12,000 megawatts to 3,000 megawatts, reiterating that only through national unity the country can overcome challenges and problems.

U.S. Illegal Unilateral Coercive Measures "Decorative Slogan"

NEW YORK (IRNA) - The first Counselor of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN described developments amongst illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the U.S. as decorative slogan.

'The illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the US and the passivity of the international community towards it, have turned the development into a decorative and absurd slogan,' Ali Hajilari said addressing the High-Level Political Forum of the UN Economic and Social Council in New York.

'The U.S.' illegitimate unilateral coercive measures, including the imposition of illegal unilateral sanctions on developing countries, on the one hand, and the international community's inaction towards that, on the other hand, have turned the pivotal ideal of sustainable development namely "no one should left behind" into a purely decorative, absurd and meaningless claim,' he added.

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Pakistan Welcomes Iran's Initiative to Advance Afghan Peace Process

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan on Friday welcomed the holding of a peace meeting in Tehran with the participation of Afghan groups, including Taliban, and the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in advancing the peace process.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri in a statement said that Pakistan considers the role of Iran in the Afghan peace process important. "Iran, like Pakistan, is a neighboring country of Afghanistan and host to millions of Afghan refugees."

"Pakistan welcomes Iran's engagement with Afghan parties to achieve a negotiated political settlement," he said.

He added that "we hope that the Afghan parties would seize the opportunity and achieve an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement".

The intra-Afghan dialogue summit was hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran on Wednesday and Thursday this week with the participation of representatives of the Afghan government, senior figures and the Taliban High Political Committee.

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Ex-Israeli Army Chief Warns of Hezbollah's Unmatched Rocket Threat

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Former Israeli army chief of staff has warned of the threat posed by Hezbollah to the occupying regime, saying the Lebanese resistance movement is in possession of thousands of long-range rockets and dozens or more precision-guided missiles.

Speaking to The Jerusalem Post newspaper, Gadi Eisenkot discussed "the unmatched more than 150,000 rocket threat," which the group presents to Israel.

Israel had "achievements and also more than a few missteps" in dealing with the threat from Lebanon and Syria over the past 15 years, he said.

The impact of Israeli attacks on Hezbollah during the 2006 war was "that for 15 years there has been a good security situation on the Lebanese border, though at the same time Hezbollah has strengthened its capabilities," Eisenkot added.

Lebanon fought off two Israeli wars in 2000 and 2006. On both occasions, battleground contribution by Hezbollah proved an indispensable asset, forcing the Israeli military into a retreat.

Lebanon and the occupying entity are technically at war since the latter has kept the Arab country's Shebaa Farms under occupation since 1967.

Eisenkot further predicted that in a major war between Israel and Hezbollah, Israelis could spend several days in bomb shelters and the damage to Israeli properties could be extensive.

The Israeli army had previously warned that any future war with Hezbollah could lead to much larger casualties, sometimes tossing out numbers like 1,000 dead Israelis.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the retired Israeli chief of staff said Iran's threat to Israel is central not existential.

"I do not now see an existential threat to ... Israel. If Iran were to obtain nuclear capabilities, then it would become an existential threat."

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Croatian President Felicitates Raisi

TEHRAN (MNA) – Presidents of Croatia on Sat. congratulated Iranian President-Elect Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi for his victory in Iran 2021 election.

Zoran Milanović, President of Croatia, in a message to Raisi, congratulated his victory on behalf of the Croatian nation. He hoped for the expansion of mutual ties under Raisi's tenure.

Milanović also hoped for success for Iran and the Iranian nation as well.

500,000 Persons Per Day Can Be Vaccinated

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that about 500,000 Iranians can be vaccinated on a daily basis in the country.

Making the remarks addressing the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, Rouhani said: "There are above 60 million people over the age of 18, 65% to 70% of whom must be vaccinated to break the chain of the virus spread, i.e., over 40 million people."

"The administration is ready to vaccinate more than 400,000 to 500,000 people a day," he added.

As he said, Iran has entered the fifth peak of Covid-19 in some provinces.

He also informed that flights to specific countries have been halted and quarantine restrictions have been imposed in areas designated as being in red or orange conditions. He urged that the schools and universities must be reopened by mid-September.

Referring to the report of the Health Committee on the special conditions and the fact that the fifth wave of the disease is more dangerous than the previous waves, the President emphasized, "Necessary measures should be taken to increase monitoring by different agencies and institutions and also to inform people more about the consequences of the new outbreak of the disease and its spread".

Implementation of vaccination operations and its acceleration in recent days due to more imports of foreign vaccines and also the gradual entry of domestically produced



vaccines into the consumption cycle was another issue raised by the Health Committee in this meeting.

Referring to the plans and measures taken in the field of supply and production of vaccines, the President expressed hope that despite the existing problems and obstacles, vaccination operations would be carried out more quickly by increasing the import of foreign vaccines and strengthening the production of domestic vaccines.

Alireza Raeisi, Spokesman for National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, said Wed. 8.1 million doses of anti-Covid-19 vaccines have been delivered to the health sector in Iran so far, of which 7.8 million doses have been distributed across the country while 7 million citizens have received the first doses.

Tehran, Belgrade Ties in Best State



QAZVIN (IRNA) - Serbia's Ambassador to Tehran Dragan Todorovic on Saturday termed the relationship between Iran and Serbia "at its best state in history" and said that Belgrade is willing to even expand the ties.

In a meeting with Qazvin Province Governor-General, Todorovic said that Serbia was willing to expand its ties with Iran.

He said the two countries were good friends, as they have always enjoyed good ties.

The Ambassador further noted that Serbia doesn't restrict its ties with Iran to Tehran, as it tries to establish tourism, cultural, scientific and economic ties with all of Iran's cities, including Qazvin city.

Iran, especially Qazvin Province, has a high capacity in tourism industry and Serbia can have good cooperation in this area with Iran, the diplomat added.

In the cultural arena, the ambassador said, there are many commonalities between Iran and Serbia and over 130 volumes of Farsi books have been translated into Serbian language and many Serbians know famous Iranian poets.

He went on to highlight the efforts by the two countries to produce a joint film.

Serbia is an Eastern European country with a population of about 7.5 million people. It borders with Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Iran, Brazil Discuss Developments in Bilateral Relations

TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian ambassador to Brazil met with the speaker of Brazil's lower house of Congress.

Iranian Ambassador to Brazil Hossein Gharibi met with the Speaker of Brazil's Lower House of Congress Arthur Lira.

They discussed the latest developments in the bilateral relations as well as the prospects of



economic relations between the two countries.

Gharibi stressed the important role of the Brazilian Parliament in helping to develop and diversify trade between the two countries.

Arthur Lira, for his part, stressed the bilateral parliamentary cooperation and announced that Brazil's Congress was ready to facilitate good relations with Iran.

IRGC Navy Ready to Set Up Field Hospitals in Areas Hit by Pandemic

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy expressed readiness to expand the capacity of its medical centers and build field hospitals in Iran in the battle against the fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

In comments on Saturday, IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri said his forces are prepared to set up field hospitals in the areas of Iran that have been categorized as red zones with high risk of infection.

The IRGC Navy has offered all of its capacities to help in the struggle against the fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic, he added, noting that his forces can help the country's medical society by establishing mobile hospitals wherever necessary.

The IRGC Navy's hospitals are currently accepting coronavirus patients in the cities of Chaloos, Shiraz, Bushehr and Bandar Abbas, the general stated.

The IRGC Ground Force has already set up three field hospitals in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, one of the regions hit hardest by the outbreak of the new Indian variant of coronavirus.

In March 2020, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei assigned the Armed Forces to work on the necessary methods to prevent a further spread of coronavirus, in addition to the other activities such as treatment of patients and establishment of medical centers like field hospitals and convalescent homes.

The death toll from COVID-19 in Iran has surpassed 85,500.

Iran Borders Secure Amid Reports of Taliban Seizure of Key Crossing

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has affirmed that the country's border areas are in full security amid reports about the Taliban's capturing of a key district in western Afghanistan that includes an important border crossing with Iran.

"Borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran are in full tranquility and security due to the zealous border guards of our country, and there is no insecurity on our country's border with Afghanistan," Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Friday.

Given clashes in Islam Qala and in Sheikh Abu Nasr Farahi crossings inside Afghanistan's territory, a

number of Afghan workers came to Iran, he added.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will take the necessary measures in accordance with the laws and regulations and in line with border agreements with Afghanistan and within the framework of good neighborliness," Khatibzadeh said.

In a statement on Thursday, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) 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 trade had been halted through Dogharoun and Mahirood border crossings located along Iran's eastern border with Afghanistan.

The Taliban militant group said it will try to shortly put back into operation the Islam Qala border crossing in Herat province.

Islam Qala is the second key border crossing the Taliban have captured since they launched a sweeping offensive in early May.

Deputy chief of the Iranian Army Ground Force's Operations Brigadier General Farhad Arianfar said on Friday that full security is preserved at Iran's eastern borders.

"With the clever presence and efforts of the Iranian Ground Force in hundreds of kilometers along the eastern borders, as well as the efforts of zealous border guards in the border areas with Sistan and Baluchestan Province and coordination with the dear forces of the IRGC, we closely monitor the slightest movements near the borders and will not allow the slightest illegal motion through these borders," he said.

Iran Railway Company Denies Cyber-Attack, Disruptions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN — Iran's national railway company on Saturday denied having been hit by a cyber-attack following reports of disruptions at train stations across the country, local media reported.

The announcement came a day after Fars news agency reported "unprecedented chaos" at stations with hundreds of trains delayed or cancelled.

In the now-deleted report, it said the incident followed "a widespread disruption in ... computer systems that is probably due to a cyber-attack."

Sadegh Sekri, a spokesman for Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, told ISNA news agency on Saturday that "there has been no disruption or cyber-attack for passenger, cargo or intercity trains."

The company had said in a statement late Friday that trains were arriving and departing on schedule with "no problems".

This followed the Fars report, which had included a picture of a station's departures and arrivals board showing rows of cancelled trips with a message reading "long delays due to cyber-attacks".

Enemy's Media Politicize Mellat Park Blast

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy chief of Tehran police stated that politicizing the explosion in Mellat park was orchestrated by the enemies' media.

In response to the reports of the ill-wisher media regarding the explosion heard from Mellat Park, Deputy Chief of Tehran Police Hamid Hadavand said: "This is the work of the counter-revolution media. Only a few leaves and branches fell on the ground due to the blast, and we had no financial damages or casualties."

Hamid Hadavand added: "The video released in cyberspace and the reports of explosion of some buildings in the capital are not true, and these videos are not related to this incident."

According to the police official, the cause of the incident was under investigation and the details of that would be published soon.

On Saturday morning, some media outlets reported the sound of an explosion around Mellat Park in Tehran, after which firefighters were sent to the site of the explosion.

500,000 Doses of COVID Vaccine Enter Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced the entrance of 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine in the country.

Mehrdad Jamal Arvanaghi announced that a consignment of COVID-19 vaccine containing 500,000 doses in 32 pallets had entered Imam Khomeini Airport on Saturday morning.

He added that the consignment was delivered to the Health Ministry.

According to him, 20 COVID-19 vaccine consignments consisting of 9,403,800 doses have been imported to Iran within the past 6 months.

He noted that the imported vaccines had been from different countries, including Russia, India, Italy and South Korea.

Tabrizi Artists Weave Tokyo Olympics Carpet

TABRIZ (IRNA) - A carpet depicting Olympics atlas was woven for the first time by Tabrizi artists in Iran on the wake of Tokyo Olympics 2020 which would start this month in Japan.

The exquisite carpet has a size of 230 cm in 170 cm with 250 colors and 2.3 million knots in 55 rows woven by weaving masters in Tabriz in East Azarbaijan Province, northwest Iran. The carpet can be considered a sort of Olympic Games encyclopedia since it depicts historic moments of different editions of the event.

It was woven with the intention of showcasing Iran and Azarbaijan's handicrafts and the huge capacity of this industry in Iran, said Mohammad Aramesh, the designer and investor of the project.

He added that the carpet portrays Olympics history, Japanese symbols, participating countries, different editions of the event and influential figures related to the event.

Intra-Afghan Talks, Solution of Afghanistan Crisis

TEHRAN (IP) - Director general of West Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the Intra-Afghan talks are the solution to the crisis.

Noting that the civil war in Afghanistan must be prevented, Rasoul Mousavi stressed that the Afghan factions must carry out the peace talks.

Mousavi added that Iran intended to mediate between Afghan groups about four years ago, but the US did not allow this to happen.

Regarding the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Iranian diplomat pointed; what is going on in Afghanistan results from the definite defeat of the US in Afghanistan.

The U.S. attacked Afghanistan under the pretext of fighting terrorism and tested its various weapons on the Afghan people for 20 years, yet it suffered defeat, he added.

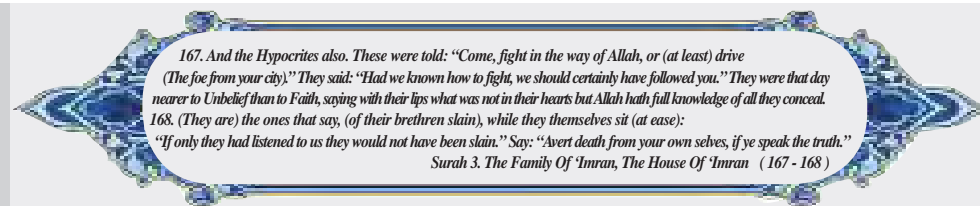
Ever since the Americans realized their military defeat, they have tried to turn the failure into a kind of political escape, raising the issue of withdrawal from Afghanistan and starting negotiations with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, and rescued themselves, he added.

"Although the Americans had a strategic security pact with the Afghan government, they negotiated unilaterally with the country's armed opposition, the Taliban, and unfortunately caused the current trend," he concluded.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:09
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:42
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:14
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:58



Tehran, Bishkek Call for Strengthening Rail Route For Transit of Goods

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei met visiting Head of Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Kyrgyzstan Mr. Danil Ibrayev and during the meeting both sides called for reinforcing the rail route of south to north from Bandar Abbas to Sarakhs and to the EAEU states.

In the meeting, Mr. Ibrayev raised to proposals in line with developing the level of ties between Iran and Kyrgyzstan: monthly specialized talks and meeting in the fields that both countries have good capacities for bilateral ties and also the support of the ICCIMA from reinforcing the rail route from Bandar Abbas to Sarakhs and transit of goods from India, China and the Persian Gulf states to Kyrgyzstan and other regional states and vice versa.

The both sides in the meeting also raised and emphasized defining an integrated mechanism in the field of trade between Iran and Kyrgyzstan.

Ibrayev added that specialized videoconferences between economic activists of the two countries in those fields that there are good capacities for bilateral cooperation. He went on to say that the monthly meetings will have positive effects on boosting the bilateral relations, adding that the two sides agreed to hold the first meeting in the upcoming months.

He then pointed to the restrictions for transfer of money for trade with Iran and called it a serious hurdle for boosting bilateral trade and stated that businessmen of both countries have found the ways for restoring ties and called for defining a unified mechanism accepted by the two sides.

Ibrayev went on to say that the other problem overshadowing the trade relation between Iran and Kyrgyzstan is in the field of transportation, adding that during Kyrgyz President's visit to Turkmenistan some problems for the transit of goods have been



resolved and called for reinforcing railway route of Bandar Abbas to Sarakhs in Iran.

He said by improving this rail route, the level of transit of goods from the south to the northern countries like Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and other countries will increase. He added that by the assistance of this route, goods from China, India, Persian Gulf states and Iran can be transported to the EAEU states.

He also called for signing the agreements in the field of free and preferential trade between the two states and asked Mr. Shafei to express his opinion regarding the types of goods and tariffs.

Meanwhile in the meeting and regarding the problems in the banking field, Shafei raised the idea of using bartering trade and announced the beginning of the process for launching the Iran-Kyrgyzstan Commercial Council in the ICCIMA, and said the need for launching this joint council was badly felt and in this line some actions have been taken and expressed hope they would bear fruit very soon.

He also pointed to the trade and production capacities in Kyrgyzstan and said strong and stable laws in Kyrgyzstan in line with strengthening the private sector, support of foreign investment and moving towards free elections are of the main factors for alluring investment.

Shafei also noted that a large number of Iranians have invested in the major free zones of Kyrgyzstan and called for easing the trend for joint cooperation between the two states. He added that both countries can have good cooperation in the agro products, tourism and energy sector.

He also pointed to the Iran-Kyrgyzstan passenger plane crash and the halt in the activities of the airlines and said the halt has had negative impact on the bilateral trade and expressed hope the direct flight between the two states would restore soon as it will boost the bilateral trade relation.

Tehran, Moscow Visa Waiver Big Step in Expanding Tourism

ISFAHAN (IRNA) - Russia's Consul General in Isfahan Boris Burmistrov said that waiving general visas between Iran and Russia was a big step in expanding tourism and facilitating travel between the two countries.

Iran and Russia Joint Plan of Action this year for waiving visa requirements for tourism groups of 5-50 people led to better deployment of tourism and cultural capacity of the two countries, Burmistrov said.

Highlighting Russia's support of the Joint Plan of Action, the Consul General added that Tehran and Moscow have made several agreements in recent years on expanding tourism to speed up traveling between Iran and Russia and now travel agencies must take action to play their role.

Referring to programs of teaching Russian and Persian languages, the diplomat pointed to the establishment of the Russkiy Mir Foundation in Esfahan in which Iranians can learn the Russian language and literature.

He also highlighted sports ties between Iran and Russia, saying that a group of Zenith football teams in Russia made agreements with Isfahan's Sepahan football team.

Isfahan is the center of Isfahan Province in central Iran. Over 2 million people live in Isfahan which is a symbol of Iranian culture and history and is a hub of politics, economy, tourism, industry, and science in Iran.

The city has been sister with over 15 historical cities around the world, including Saint Petersburg in Russia.

IME Posts 14% Growth In Weekly Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed the trade of 1,322,000 tons of commodities worth more than 486 million dollars, showing 30% and 14 % of growth in volume and volume of trade respectively, as compared to the previous week.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 945,515 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$305m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 342,413 tons of steel, 3,32 tons of copper, 5,450 tons of aluminum, 27 tons of precious metals concentrate, 28,605 tons of zinc, 475,750 tons of cement, 10 kg of gold bars, 13,000 tons of sponge iron and 80,000 tons of iron ore.

Furthermore, the IME saw trade of 372,006 tons of commodities on both export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor with a total trading value of more than \$179m.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 93,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 109,405 tons of bitumen, 84,402 tons of polymeric products, 30,739 tons of chemicals, 32,000 tons of lube cut, 3,795 tons of base oil, 110 tons of argon, 25,500 tons of sulfur and 260 tons of insulation.

It's worth noting that the IME also played host to trading 5,080 tons of commodities on its side market.

Armenia Envoy Stresses Cinematic Cooperation With Iran



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Armenia's Ambassador to Iran Artashes Toumanian has called for continuation of cinematic cooperation based on an existing memorandum of understanding between the two countries on.

Toumanian made the remark in a meeting with the director of Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation Alireza Tabesh in Tehran to discuss collaborations between the Foundation and the National Cinema Center of Armenia.

Tabesh pointed out to the MOU between the two countries, noting that Jehovah movie is the first successful experience of joint venture between Armenian and Iranian artists, which has been welcomed in international arena, and that this kind of cooperation can be a ground for future collaborations in producing movies.

Iran has had a successful history in cinematic diplomacy, the Iranian director said, adding that the presence of Armenian films and artists in international events has been very significant.

Toumanian referred to multilayers of ties between Armenia and Iran, noting that amicable relations between governments of both countries has its roots in deep relationships of both nations.

Pointing to the 2021 Yerevan International Film Festival, the ambassador called for more collaborations and participation of Iranian cinema professionals in the event.

Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation and the Foundation and the National Cinema Center of Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding in 2017 to expand cinematic cooperation.

Localization of Transportation Equipment in South Pars Gas Platforms

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the construction committee inside the production and operations management of Pars Oil and Gas Company announced the localization of a new type of transport device on the South Pars platforms in cooperation with a local knowledge-based company.

According to the public relations of Pars Oil and Gas Company, Ghanbar Khademi, referring to the development and implementation of the company's internal manufacturing regulations since late 1997, said: "Considering the importance of safe and stable gas extraction from South Pars gas rigs and the need to remove obstacles due to conditions." Sanctions in the field of supplying parts and equipment to the offshore sector, localization of the required goods with the priority of participation of Iranian knowledge-based companies have been on the agenda for the past two years.

He stated that the production and operations management of Pars Oil and Gas Company, in accordance with the repair needs of South Pars rigs, has been followed by various methods in the field of in-house construction and achievements in the past years, and specified: In continuation of this approach, by forming The Internal Construction Committee systematically focuses on this issue and the internalization process is followed up and finalized during the continuous exchange of information with the manufacturing companies.



Khademi evaluated the process and results of cooperation with Iranian manufacturers and knowledge-based companies as favorable and announced the internalization of several foreign equipments, including electrical boards and a new type of MAN TRANSFER BASKET on South Pars platforms.

The head of the construction committee inside the production and operations management of Pars Oil and Gas Company said about the use of the personnel carrier: considering the working conditions in the offshore sector and the need for safe movement of manpower in non-level environments, including huge structures at sea, The means of access and transfer of employees to high places is used.

He described the localization of the X-904 series as a successful result of cooperation with an Iranian knowledge-based company and said: "Due to the monopoly of production of the X-904 by American and European companies, as well as the problem of supplying this product despite the conditions." Sanctions, internalization of this device were on the agenda, and after about a year of intensive reverse engineering activities, the work was completed and the first sample was sent to the platform after performing the necessary tests.

According to Khademi, the construction of the X-800 series of this device, which is less complex in terms of engineering than the X-904 model, had already been completed and used by the mentioned company.

Improving Quality of Products to Help Increase Export to Iraq

AHVAZ (IRNA) - The increase of Iraq-Iran trade exchanges has a direct link to the improvement of quality of export goods, an Iranian official believes.

Vice President of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Shahla Amouri told IRNA on Friday that she held talks with an Iranian diplomat in Baghdad, capital of Iraq, and stressed that the infrastructure of export of commodities in joint borders between Iran and Iraq should be developed in order to pave the way for speeding up the trade process.

The head of Ahvaz Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture went on to say that the governments of both countries are expected to supervise activities of Iraqi and Iranian exporters and importers in a bid to decrease problems and differences.

Arbitration centers of chambers of commerce in both countries should be improved more than ever, she argued.

Amouri further expressed hope that the upcoming visit by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture Gholam Hossein Shafei to Iraq within a few weeks will help develop trade ties between the two countries and pave the ground for holding better trade fairs in different parts of Iraq.

The officials of both nations are expected to hold talks on implementation of certain memoranda of understandings (MOUs) during the visit, she noted.

An Iraqi official said in a meeting in Baghdad in June that the current volume of trade ties between the two countries stands at more than seven billion dollars, which can reach to 20 billion dollars or more.

Turkmenistan Prevents Iranian Airliner From Crossing Its Airspace

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Zagros Airlines passenger plane bound for Uzbekistan landed at Mashhad Airport "due to Turkmenistan's denial" of its passage through its airspace.

According to Tasnim news agency, the plane left Tehran for Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, with 170 passengers on Friday morning, July 9, but the plane was returned to Mashhad airport due to Turkmenistan's denial of the flight crossing over the country's territory.

Tasnim quoted some of the passengers on the flight as saying that Iran's denial of the right to fly past flights to Turkmenistan was the reason for preventing the plane from continuing to fly in its airspace.

The passengers also said they were not even allowed to leave the plane and enter the terminal because the stamp of departure was on their passports.

The Civil Aviation Authority and Zagros Airlines have so far not responded to the news.

One-Third of Russians Support Ban on Navalny's Groups

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Thirty-two percent of Russians support the extremism ban on jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's political network while 27% oppose it, according to an opinion poll by the Moscow-based Levada Centre published on Friday.

Levada, which polled 1,630 people on June 24-30, said 38% had voiced indifference over last month's ruling that designated Navalny's groups as "extremist". It also said that support for Navalny's activities had dipped to 14% from 20% last September.

Ivan Zhdanov, a close ally of Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most outspoken critic, declined to comment on the figures, but said that anti-Navalny state "propaganda" had intensified and could be having an impact.



France to Pull Out Up to Half Its 5,000 Troops From Sahel

PARIS (Reuters) - France will be left with between 2,500 and 3,000 soldiers in West Africa's Sahel region once it has completed a troop drawdown, President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday.

Macron, who gave no time frame for completing the troop reduction, was speaking after a virtual summit with Sahel region leaders.

France currently has a little over 5,000 soldiers fighting Islamist militants in the Sahel.



Taliban Claim They Control 85% of Afghanistan



KABUL (Reuters) - Taliban officials said on Friday the Sunni Muslim insurgent group had taken control of 85% of territory in Afghanistan, and international concern mounted over problems getting medicines and supplies into the country.

Afghan government officials dismissed the assertion that the Taliban controlled most of the country as part of a propaganda campaign launched as foreign forces, including the United States, withdraw after almost 20 years of fighting.

But local Afghan officials said Taliban fighters, emboldened by the withdrawal, had captured an important district in Herat province, home to tens of thousands of minority Shi'ite Hazaras.

Torghundi, a northern town on the border with Turkmenistan, had also been captured by the Taliban overnight, Afghan and Taliban officials said.

Hundreds of Afghan security personnel and refugees continued to flee across the border into neighboring Iran and Tajikistan, causing concern in Moscow and other foreign capitals that radical Islamists could infiltrate Central Asia.

Three visiting Taliban officials sought to address those concerns during a visit to Moscow. "We will take all measures so that Islamic State will not operate on Afghan territory... and our territory will never be used against our neighbors," one of the Taliban officials, Shahabuddin Delawar, told a news conference.

He said "you and the entire world community have probably recently learned that 85% of the territory of Afghanistan has come under the control" of the Taliban.

The same delegation said a day earlier that the group would not attack the Tajik-Afghan border, the fate of which is in focus in Russia and Central Asia.

Asked about how much territory the Taliban held, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declined direct comment.

"Claiming territory or claiming ground doesn't mean you can sustain that or keep it over time" he said in an interview with CNN. "And so I think it's really time for the Afghan forces to get into the field - and they are in the field - and to defend their country, their people."

"They've got the capacity, they've got the capability. Now it's time to have that will," he said.

As fighting continued, a World Health Organization (WHO) official said health workers were struggling to get medicines and supplies into Afghanistan, and that some staff had fled after facilities came under attack.

The WHO's regional emergencies director, Rick Brennan, said at least 18.4 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 3.1 million children at risk of acute malnutrition.

"We are concerned about our lack of access to be able to provide essential medicines and supplies and we are concerned about attacks on health care," Brennan, speaking via videolink from Cairo, told a U.N. briefing in Geneva.

Colombian Suspects in Haiti President's Killing Arrived Via Dominican Republic

BOGOTA (Reuters) - Several Colombians who were part of a heavily armed commando unit that assassinated Haitian President Jovenel Moise this week entered Haiti from neighboring Dominican Republic, sources in the Colombian army and national police said on Friday, and spent more than a month there before the killing.

Moise, 53, was fatally shot early on Wednesday at his home by what officials said was a group of foreign, trained killers. The assassination pitched Haiti deeper into turmoil amid political divisions, hunger and widespread gang violence.

Haitian authorities said on Thursday that the group of assassins comprised 26 Colombians and two Haitian Americans. Seventeen of the men were captured after a gun battle with Haitian authorities in Petionville, a hillside suburb of the capital Port-au-Prince, while three were killed and eight are still at large, according to Haitian police.

Officials have not given a motive for Moise's killing. He had faced mass protests against his rule since taking office in 2017 - first over corruption allegations and his management of the economy, then over his increasing grip on power.



Colombian officials have confirmed they received requests for information from Haiti on six suspects, two of whom had apparently been killed and four who are under arrest. Initial investigations showed the men were retired members of Colombia's armed forces, the defense minister said.

Four of the men took an Avianca flight on June 4 to the resort of Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, the police and army sources told Reuters. Two days later they crossed the border into Haiti.

One of the men - who Colombian newspaper El Tiempo said had previously been part of the Colombian military's urban anti-terrorism special forces unit - has 16 photos on his Facebook account that appear to have been taken in the Dominican Republic.

The newspaper reported that another of the men, who it said took the same flight and posted photos from the same locations, was a nurse at the naval hospital in Cartagena.

Bolsonaro Disapproval Rating Rises to All-Time High

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's disapproval ratings rose to the highest level since he came to power 2-1/2 years ago, with the far-right leader also slipping further behind his main rival ahead of the election in 2022, two polls showed.

According to a Datafolha poll, 51% of Brazilians disapproved of Bolsonaro, up from 45% in the previous poll in May and the highest since he took office in January 2019.

A survey carried out by XP/Ipespe showed 52% of respondents said Bolsonaro's government is doing a "bad/terrible" job, up from 50% in June and the highest since January 2019.

That figure has risen steadily from 31% in October, as a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation almost quadrupling to more than 8% has forced the government to extend emergency cash transfers to millions of poor families.

Half of those polled by XP/Ipespe said they expect Bolsonaro to do a "bad/terrible" job for the remainder of his presidency, up from 47% in June and again a record high.

Ahead of next year's elections, former leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva strengthened his lead over Bolsonaro, the poll showed. Although neither of them have announced their candidacy, the 2022 election is widely expected to be a run-off between the two polarizing figures.

In a simulated first-round vote, Lula saw his share jump to 38% from 32% in the June poll. Bolsonaro's first-round support fell two percentage points to 26%. A second-round matchup showed Lula's support rose to 49% from 45% in the previous survey, while Bolsonaro's slipped to 35% from 36%.

The XP/Ipespe poll was based on 1,000 interviews, conducted from July 5-7, with a margin of error of 3.2 percentage points. Datafolha surveyed 2,074 people on July 7-8, and the poll has a margin of error of 2 percentage points.

Lithuania Toughens Belarus Border With Razor Wire to Bar Migrants

VILNIUS (Reuters) - Lithuania began building a 550-km (320-mile) razor wire barrier on its border with Belarus on Friday after accusing Belarusian authorities of flying in migrants from abroad to send illegally into the European Union.

The government said the military-style wire coil would cost 4.9 million euros (\$5.81 million) to put up and run along most of the frontier, which passes over sparsely populated areas and large stretches of forest and marsh.

At a later date the barrier will be reinforced with a two metre (6.5 ft) high border fence topped by razor wire, costing an additional 41 million euros, the interior ministry said.

Hundreds of migrants have crossed from Belarus in recent days, most of them Iraqi citizens, Lithuania has said.

Belarus in May decided to allow migrants to enter Lithuania in retaliation for sanctions imposed by the bloc after Minsk forced a Ryanair flight to land on its soil and arrested a dissident blogger who was on board.

"If someone thinks we will close our border with Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine and will become a holding site for those running from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Tunis and further down Africa - if someone thinks so, he is misguided, to say the least", Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko said on Tuesday.

Belarus is guarding the border now only as much as it is "profitable" to it, and as much as it can financially, the president said.

Lithuania responded on Wednesday by announcing it would put up the frontier barrier and deploy troops to prevent migrants crossing illegally into its territory.

In a related move, Lithuania's parliament will meet on Tuesday to urgently pass legislation streamlining asylum application reviews, including shortening their initial review to no more than 10 days, Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte said.

All people who crossed the border illegally would be kept locked up, the draft law says, meaning an end to occasional short trips outside detention that are currently permitted.

Just over 1,500 people crossed the frontier illegally from Belarus this year, with 900 of them coming over in the first nine days of July.

The first stretch of the new barrier, to be completed on Friday, will run 500 metres (1,640 feet) in length and measure 1.8 metres (six feet) in height, the army defense chief's spokeswoman Ruta Montville told Reuters.

Simonyte told the national broadcaster she did not expect the migrant flow from Belarus to subside on its own.

"As the Belarus regime is making money from these people for visa charges and, I think, gets other income from them as well - it would be difficult to expect any positive trend without additional means of impact", she said.



Pharmacies Go on Strike, Power Cuts in Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Pharmacies went on strike over medicine shortages and two major power stations ground to a halt for lack of fuel Friday in crisis-hit Lebanon, in the latest sign of economic collapse.

Politicians have for 11 months failed to form a government in Beirut that would instigate desperately needed economic reforms, and the local currency has plunged to a record low against the dollar on the black market.

Lebanon's foreign currency reserves are fast depleting and the cash-strapped state is struggling to afford subsidies on key imports including medicines and fuel, sparking fears of renewed social unrest.

Importers say hundreds of medicines are now out of stock, as the central bank owes suppliers abroad millions of dollars and they can no longer open new lines of credit. The association of pharmacy owners announced a "general open-ended strike across Lebanon" from Friday morning.

Ali Safa, a member of the association, said 80 percent of pharmacies stayed closed in Beirut and other big cities, and around half had done so in other areas.

An AFP photographer said most chemists had closed along the densely populated coastline north of Beirut, while another said many also remained shut in the capital's southern suburbs.

The financial crisis has caused poverty levels to rise and affect more than half the population, with state power cuts of up to 22 hours a day across the country.

On Friday, the state electricity company said the Zaharani and Deir Ammar power stations had gone offline as they were unable to access fuel shipments stuck off the coast because of pending payments.

Water facilities in the north and south warned that they were reducing distribution to the minimum because of power cuts and low fuel levels.

The local currency, the Lebanese pound, was selling for a record 19,500 pounds to the greenback on the black market, less than a tenth of its official rate.

As Lebanon faces what the World Bank says is probably one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s, even painkillers and infant milk formula are difficult to find at the chemist. The Lebanese have for months been harnessing social media to ask for help, including from friends and family abroad.





Elahieh Apt (\$2600)
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J, balcony
pkg, yard
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Fereshteh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

Jordan (\$1900)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apts (\$1800) 2bdrs, F.F (\$2300) 3bdrs, F.F (\$3000) 4bdrs, F.F
All with S/p, S, & J

Darrous Villa (\$3000)
800sq.m, 5bdrs, S/pool
green yard, & pkg lots

Velenjak (\$2200)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p

Elahieh bldg (\$6000)
4storey, 12bdrs, & pkgs

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Canada Adds 230,700 Jobs in June

OTTAWA (Reuters) - Canada added more jobs than expected in June, bringing employment within 1.8% of pre-pandemic levels, though all the gains were in part-time work, Statistics Canada data showed on Friday. The country added 230,700 jobs in June, beating analyst expectations of 195,000, as public health restrictions were eased in several regions of the country, Statscan said. The unemployment rate was 7.8%, just short of expectations of 7.7%.

"The headline was good but it was all part time, so that's a bit of a dent against the quality," said Derek Holt, vice president of Capital Market Economics at Scotiabank.



U.S. Set to Add More Chinese Companies to Blacklist

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Biden administration was set to add more than 10 Chinese companies to its economic blacklist over alleged human rights abuses and high-tech surveillance in Xinjiang, two sources told Reuters.

The U.S. Commerce Department action will follow its announcement last month adding five other companies and other Chinese entities to the blacklist over allegations of forced labor in the far western region of China.

The additions to Commerce Department's Entity List are part of the Biden administration's efforts to hold China accountable for human rights violations, the sources said.

China dismisses accusations of genocide and forced labor in Xinjiang and says its policies are necessary to stamp out separatists and religious extremists who plotted attacks and stirred up tension between mostly Muslim ethnic Uyghurs and Han, China's largest ethnic group.

"The Chinese side will take all necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies and rejects U.S. attempts to interfere in China's internal affairs," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Friday.

One of the sources for the economic blacklist additions said the Commerce Department plans to add 14 Chinese companies to the Entity List over reported abuses in Xinjiang.

The identity of the companies being added was not immediately known. Some companies from other countries will also be added to the department's blacklist.

The White House declined to comment, while the Commerce Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The latest action shows President Joe Biden aims to press China over what the administration says are worsening human rights abuses against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang.

Generally, entity-listed companies are required to apply for licenses from the Commerce Department and face tough scrutiny when they seek permission to receive items from U.S. suppliers.

Last month, the Commerce Department said it was adding the five Chinese entities "for accepting or utilizing forced labor in the implementation of the People's Republic of China's campaign of repression against Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."

The department said the action in June targeted the ability of the five entities, including Chinese-based solar panel material firm Hoshine Silicon Industry, "to access commodities, software, and technology ... and is part of a U.S. Government-wide effort to take strong action against China's ongoing campaign of repression against Muslim minority groups" in Xinjiang.

This is not the first time the U.S. government has targeted Chinese firms linked to allegations of high-tech surveillance activity in Xinjiang.

In 2019, the Trump administration added some of China's top artificial intelligence startups to its economic blacklist over its treatment of Muslim minorities.

The Commerce Department under Trump targeted 20 Chinese public security bureaus and eight companies including video surveillance firm Hikvision, as well as leaders in facial recognition technology SenseTime Group Ltd and Megvii Technology Ltd.

The Commerce Department said in 2019 the entities were implicated in "high-technology surveillance against Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other members of Muslim minority groups."

IMF Help in Oman Unlikely to Result in Aid Package

MUSCAT (Dispatches) - Oman has been seeking ways to tame its budget shortfall and diversify the economy as crude reserves dwindle.

The International Monetary Fund's technical assistance for Oman doesn't come with conditions and isn't going to lead to any financial assistance, its mission chief to the Persian Gulf country said.

"The medium-term fiscal plan is not a plan with the IMF, it is the authorities' own plan," Daniel Kanda told Bloomberg in an interview. "It was pretty much completed by the time we got into the picture, it's not something that was jointly developed."

Struggling with the aftermath of lower oil prices and Covid-19, Oman has been seeking ways to tame its budget shortfall and diversify the economy as crude reserves dwindle. As part of an ambitious economic overhaul, it has cut public spending, slashed government jobs and implemented a value-added tax. It also plans to introduce an income tax - unheard of in the oil-exporting Gulf region - which Kanda said would be implemented in the second half of 2022. The IMF said this week that the sultanate had also asked for technical assistance to develop a program that would help it eliminate its budget deficit over the medium-term by diversifying the economy and reducing the government's reliance on hydrocarbons. The plan is aimed at reducing Oman's reliance on international borrowing.

The government has sped up privatisation of government-owned assets to help reduce its expenditures and budget gap. It's reportedly looking at options for state energy company OQ SAOC, including a potential initial public offering.

Last year, Oman transferred the government's oil and gas expenditures to Energy Development Oman, a newly established firm entitled to raise financing independently of the Energy Ministry.

That move, along with this year's rebound in crude oil prices, are behind the government's rapid fiscal turnaround; Oman's budget deficit ballooned to over 19 percent of economic output last year as a double whammy of pandemic closures and low oil prices hit finances but is expected to narrow to 2.4 percent of gross domestic product this year.

Oman is expected to move into surplus next year, depending on the course of oil prices, according to Kanda. The economy is projected grow 2.5 percent this year, an upward revision from the 1.8 percent previously forecast, while non-oil growth, which the fund wants to help Oman accelerate, is set to reach 4 percent in 2026.



UK's Economic Rebound Slowed in May

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's post-lockdown economic rebound slowed sharply in May despite a relaxation of social-distancing rules, according to official data which also showed a hit to carmakers from the global shortage of microchips.

Gross domestic product expanded by a monthly 0.8%, much faster than its typical pre-pandemic pace but down from April's 2.0% surge. It was also a lot weaker than the median forecast of 1.5% in a Reuters poll of economists.

"Of course, the pace of the recovery was always going to slow as the economy climbed back towards its pre-crisis level. But we hadn't expected it to slow so much so soon," Paul Dales, an economist with Capital Economics, said.

Britain suffered one of the biggest hits from the pandemic among advanced economies last year and GDP in May was 3.1% below its level in February 2020 just before the pandemic struck.

The Bank of England expects Britain's economy to grow by 7.25% this year, the fastest since 1941. Last year output plunged by almost 10%, the biggest drop in more than 300 years.

April saw the easing of restrictions for many retailers, hairdressers, and pubs and restaurants that could serve customers outside. In May, hospitality firms were allowed to resume indoor service.

Britain's dominant services sector grew by a weaker-than-expected 0.9% in May from April as a huge 37.1% monthly jump for accommodation and food services failed to offset slower increases elsewhere in the sector.

Supermarket sales fell as more people ate out, and education output dropped due to a decline in school attendance. Reduced COVID-19 testing also weighed on GDP.

Industrial output grew by 0.8% but manufacturing shrank narrowly. The chip shortage affecting carmakers led to the biggest fall in their output since April 2020.

Data published earlier this week showed Germany's industrial output fell in May as semiconductor bottlenecks also contributed to a recovery slowdown in Europe's largest economy.

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey, taking part in discussions with his Group of 20 peers, said the world needed "robust openness to prevent the breakup of supply chains, which we are seeing threats to" in data from Britain and beyond. "I think the G20 is in the front line here in reinforcing the importance of openness in a multilateral context," he said.

Output in Britain's construction industry contracted by 0.8% from April, hit by the fourth-rainiest May since 1862. Dales at Capital Economics said the fall could also reflect shortages of materials and labour.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to lift most of the remaining restrictions from a third lockdown on July 19.

Rory MacQueen, an economist at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, a think-tank, said the decision could yet backfire.

"It remains to be seen whether the lifting of further restrictions in July contributes to a continuation of strong growth in the third quarter or - if cases of COVID-19 continue to rise - increased caution among consumers and even another national lockdown," he said.

Japan June Core Machinery Orders Seen up Again

TOKYO (Reuters) - Capital expenditure growth in Japan sped up in May, a Reuters poll of 18 economists showed, a glimmer of hope that solid exports may help boost private-sector investment for a post-pandemic growth.

Cabinet Office data due at 8:50 a.m. Monday (2350 GMT Sunday) will likely show core machinery orders, a highly volatile data series regarded as a leading indicator of capital spending in the coming six to nine months, grew 2.6% in May.

It would mark a third straight month of increase, accelerating from the previous month's 0.6% gain.

Compared with a year earlier, core orders, which exclude those of ships and electricity utilities, likely grew 6.3% in May, following a 6.5% growth in the previous month.

"Restrictions on people's movement have eased in those countries that have proceeded with vaccinations, raising the prospects for economic recovery," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute.

"That has helped boost shipments of capital goods and information-related items" underpinning Japanese exports and business investment, he added. Separate data by the Bank of Japan, due at 8:50 a.m. Monday (2350 GMT Sunday) will probably show Japan's wholesale prices rose 4.7% year-on-year in June, slowing from the prior month's fastest annual pace in 13 years.

That would ease some concerns about higher commodity costs squeezing profits at firms struggling to pass on rising costs to customers. The corporate goods price index (CGPI), which measures the prices companies charge each other for their goods, rose 0.6% month-on-month in June, slowing from the prior month's 0.7% increase.

With global inflationary pressures are pinching firms already hit by the coronavirus pandemic, the uptick in wholesale inflation is unlikely to prod the BOJ into withdrawing its massive stimulus any time soon.

Food Price Hikes Help Fuel 40% Jump in Global Hunger

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Acute food insecurity has soared 40% this year as recent food price hikes have exacerbated existing

pressures from conflict, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) says.

Defined as any lack of food that threatens lives, livelihoods or both, acute food insecurity is impacting, or is at high risk of impacting, a record 270 million people this year, the UN agency said.

"High food prices are hunger's new best friend," said WFP Chief Economist Arif Husain.

"We already have conflict, climate and COVID-19 working together. Now food prices have joined the deadly trio," he added.

The WFP said average wheat flour prices in Lebanon have risen 219% year-on-year amid accelerating economic turmoil, while cooking oil prices have soared 440% versus a year ago in war-devastated Syria.

On internationally traded markets, world food prices were up 33.9% year-on-year in June, according to the UN food agency's price index, which measures a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar.

However, they did fall in June versus May, the first such decrease in 12 months.

After declining for several decades, world hunger has been on the rise since 2016.

The WFP, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year, says around 690 million people or 9 percent of the world's population go to bed hungry each night.

It is targeting 139 million people for assistance this year, the biggest operation in its history.

Nordic Economic Recovery on Track



COPENHAGEN (Reuters) - Post-pandemic reopenings are boosting the economic recovery of Nordic economies as consumers prepare to splurge using savings that have risen to record highs during the COVID-19 outbreak, a Reuters poll of economists suggested.

Sweden and Norway are each set for expansion of 3.5% or more in 2021 and 2022, according to the July 5-8 survey, as the gradual return to normal life is increasing in tandem with more people getting vaccinated.

"There are of course still risks related to COVID-19, but with vaccinations progressing, we expect the recovery to continue and to have the economies back to their potential output and pre-crisis unemployment in 2022," Danske Bank said in a note.

Sweden's gross domestic product was expected to grow 3.6% this year and 3.5% next year, above the 3.3% and 3.4% economists forecast in April, the poll showed.

"Households are optimistic about their own economy, households' financial wealth is through the roof, the housing market is hot and restrictions are eased," Nordea wrote in a note.

"Coupled with strong global demand, our GDP forecast at 4.5% for FY 2021 is still in play," it said.

Norway's GDP was seen expanding 3.5% this year and next, below the previous forecast for 2021 of 3.7% growth but above the 3.1% previously forecast for next year.

Confidence was further boosted on Wednesday with Norwegian monthly core GDP estimated at 1.8% in May, beating expectations in a Reuters poll for 0.9%.

"The larger-than-expected rise in mainland Norwegian GDP in May indicates that the economy is back in business following the lifting of restrictions, and it is likely to have regained its pre-virus level in June," Capital Economics said in a note.

"We clearly underestimated Norwegian consumers' desire to splash the cash, particularly on clothing and footwear, and the 4.9% month-on-month surge in total spending was the fastest since June 2020," it added.

Iranian Short Film “The Kids” at Fresco Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian short film “The Kids” by Amir Daryani is to take part in Fresco International Festival of Modern Art and Spiritual Films. “The Kids” is the story of a sister and brother who decide to separate due to the conditions of their home and their own behavioral disorders. The 8th edition of Fresco is to be held in Armenia from August 20 to 21, 2021.

Fresco festival is an annual event which is a great opportunity for the reassessment of the spiritual and cultural heritage; for cultural dialogue with people of other countries; for self-knowledge and raising the national consciousness in this context. The realization of the festival’s idea may become one of the visiting cards of Armenia.



The G20 Faces Three Big Tests

By United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve heard a lot about global solidarity. Unfortunately, words by themselves will not end the pandemic – or curb the impact of the climate crisis. Now is the moment to show what solidarity means in practice. As G20 Finance Ministers meet in Venice, they face three crucial solidarity tests: on vaccines, on extending an economic lifeline to the developing world, and on climate.

First, vaccines. A global vaccination gap threatens us all. While COVID-19 circulates among unvaccinated people, it continues to mutate into variants that could be more transmissible, more deadly, or both. We are in a race between vaccines and variants; if the variants win, the pandemic could kill millions more people and delay a global recovery for years.

But while 70 percent of people in some developed countries are vaccinated, that figure stands at less than 1 per cent for low-income countries. Solidarity means delivering on access to vaccines for everyone – fast.

Pledges of doses and funds are welcome. But let’s get real. We need not one billion, but at least eleven billion doses to vaccinate 70 percent of the world and end this pandemic. Donations and good intentions will not get us there. This calls for the greatest global public health effort in history.

The G20, backed by major producing countries and international financial institutions, must put in place a global vaccination plan to reach everybody, everywhere, sooner rather than later.

The second test of solidarity is extending an economic lifeline to countries teetering on the verge of debt default.

Rich countries have poured the equivalent of 28 percent of their GDP into weathering the COVID-19 crisis. In middle-income countries, this figure drops to 6.5 percent; in least developed countries, to less than 2 percent.

Many developing countries now face crippling debt service costs, at a time when their domestic budgets are stretched and their ability to raise taxes is reduced.

The pandemic is set to increase the number of extremely poor people by some 120 million around the world; more than three-quarters of these ‘new poor’ are in middle-income countries. These countries need a helping hand to avoid financial catastrophe, and to invest in a strong recovery.

The International Monetary Fund has stepped in to allocate \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights – the best way to increase the funds available to cash-strapped economies. Richer countries should channel their unused shares of these funds to low and middle-income countries. That is a meaningful measure of solidarity.

I welcome steps the G20 has already taken, including the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and Common Framework for Debt Treatment. But they are not sufficient.



Debt relief must be extended to all middle-income countries that need it. And private lenders must also be brought into the equation.

The third test of solidarity concerns climate change. Most major economies have pledged to cut their emissions to net zero by mid-century, in line with the 1.5 degree target of the Paris Agreement. If COP26 in Glasgow is to be a turning point, we need the same promise from all G20 countries, and from the developing world.

But developing countries need reassurance that their ambition will be met with financial and technical support, including \$100 billion in annual climate finance that was promised to them by developed countries over a decade ago. This is entirely reasonable. From the Caribbean to the Pacific, developing economies have been landed with enormous infrastructure bills because of a century of greenhouse gas emissions they had no part in.

Solidarity begins with delivering on the \$100 billion. It should extend to allocating 50 percent of all climate finance to adaptation, including resilient housing, elevated roads and efficient early warning systems that can withstand storms, droughts and other extreme weather events.

All countries have suffered during the pandemic. But nationalist approaches to global public goods like vaccines, sustainability and climate action are a road to ruin.

Instead, the G20 can set us on the road to recovery. The next six months will show whether global solidarity extends beyond words to meaningful action. By meeting these three critical tests with political will and principled leadership, G20 leaders can end the pandemic, strengthen the foundations of the global economy, and prevent climate catastrophe.

Turkey’s Economy to Grow 5.5% in 2021



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey’s economy will grow 5.5% annually this year, more than previously thought and close to a government forecast, according to a quarterly Reuters poll that also saw a tougher battle against double-digit inflation in coming years.

Consumer price inflation will end the year at 15.5% and remain above 10% into 2024, according to the median of more than two dozen respondents. The central bank was expected to maintain tighter policy than expected in the previous poll.

The \$720-billion economy grew 1.8% last year, one of only a few globally to avoid a contraction amid pandemic fallout. It rebounded strongly, by 7.0%, in the first quarter.

The median forecast of 35 economists, polled July 5-8, was for growth of 5.5% in 2021 and 3.5% in 2022, after the economy was expected to have surged 18.4% in the second quarter due to a so-called base effect from last year’s slump.

In the previous poll three months ago, 2021 annual growth was seen at 4.8% based on the median.

“Domestic demand will likely rebound in Q3 as the pandemic-related restrictions are eased,” Berna Bayazitoglu, analyst at Credit Suisse, said in a note.

Exports will be boosted by “recovery among Turkey’s trading partners and the country’s delayed, albeit successful, vaccination program that will to some extent underpin a pickup in tourism revenues,” she said.

Turkey eased most coronavirus restrictions on July 1 and its vaccination program has accelerated as it aims to attract tourism revenue.

Kyrgyzstan Moves to Nationalize Gold Mine Run by Canadian Company

BISHKEK (Dispatches) -

In the early 1990s, it was hoped that a large gold mine in eastern Kyrgyzstan, near the Chinese border, would lift the newly independent country’s economy out of the shatters of Soviet central planning.

But 30 years into its operation, Kumtor has for many come to symbolise some of the developing world’s greatest ills: corruption, environmental degradation and neocolonial greed.

In May, it became clear that dark clouds had gathered over Centerra Gold Inc, a Canadian-registered company operating the high-altitude mine, 26 percent of which belongs to the Kyrgyz state.

First, a court ruled that the mine had committed environmental violations by dumping mining waste on glaciers, a move that caused their gradual erosion and cost the state \$3bn.

Soon after, the parliament backed a proposal of the special commission on Kumtor to introduce state management at the mine for three months.

On May 14, President Sadyr Japarov approved the plan, which effectively brought the mine back into the state’s hands.

Later, a number of high-profile politicians accused of financial crimes related to Kumtor were arrested.

In response, Centerra Gold initiated binding arbitration proceedings against the government for what they viewed as a violation of mutual agreements.

Its Kyrgyz units – Kumtor Gold Co and Kumtor Operating Co – applied for bankruptcy in a US court and the company says it will seek compensation from the government.

“In 1994, after the Kyrgyz people gained



independence and with your help, we began building the Kumtor Gold Mine with an initial life of 18 years. To this day, what we created together is something special that engineers from all over the world come to study,” Scott Perry, Centerra’s president and CEO, wrote in a statement.

“The seizure of the mine is based on false information and groundless allegations that undermine everything we have built together. We fear that the government’s unjustified action will put thousands of well-paying jobs and the businesses of hundreds of Kyrgyz suppliers at risk.”

Pressure grew on Centerra after January’s presidential elections, which saw Japarov sweep to victory after a campaign promising national revival.

He had been designated to rule the country as interim president and prime minister following an uprising last October against political corruption and a disputed parliamentary election, the third upheaval since the country’s independence.

And it was gold that brought him to power.

Months before winning a landslide, he was freed from prison where he was serving an 11-and-a-half-year sentence for kidnapping a local official during one of his protests against Kumtor.

Since 2013, he has been the main figure in the movement against foreign corporations he accuses of exploiting Kyrgyzstan’s scarce resources.

A general view shows the Kumtor open pit gold mine at an altitude of about 4,000 metres (13,123 feet) above sea level in the Tien Shan mountains, Kyrgyzstan [File: Vladimir Pirogov/Reuters]

He believed that the country’s elite were benefitting at the expense of the people and the environment.

Many locals shared his view.

“Over 30 years of mining based economic model, the extraction of natural resources became perceived by the populations as another source of elite enrichment,” Asel Doolotkeldieva, a researcher in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek focused on the politics of resource extraction, told Al Jazeera.

“They believe that investors, together with the elite, seek to enrich themselves, plunge the resources and go away as soon as the resources are emptied.

“The extractive industry provides only 3 percent of jobs nationwide. The mines are being exploited, the resources are being emptied, the government is getting richer but local communities, despite some development and charity projects, do not see a direct impact on their lives.”

Saudi-UAE Still at Impasse as Russia Steps in to Rescue OPEC+ Deal

LONDON (Reuters) - Russia is leading efforts to close divisions between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to help strike a deal to raise oil output in coming months, three OPEC+ sources said, with OPEC and its allies yet to set a date for their next oil policy meeting.

Disagreement between the two Persian Gulf OPEC allies was publicly exposed last week, with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi at odds over a proposed deal that would have brought more oil to the market -- potentially cooling a rally that has seen prices hit 2-1/2 year highs. The rare spat forced the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Russia and other producers, a group known as OPEC+, to abandon talks on boosting production after days of negotiations.

The producers have said they will decide on a date for a new meeting in due course, giving no signal whether any compromise might be possible in the coming days. Moscow, which has been pushing to raise output, is now working behind the scenes to bring both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi back to the table to find a path to agreement, the three sources said. Russia has strong political and economic relations with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Tehran, Havana...

FROM PAGE 1

‘Intensive weekly scientific discussions between managers and scientists from the two institutes related to clinical trials, the transfer process, and production optimization have continued this year,’ the Iranian and Cuban vaccine producers said adding that the cooperation includes the joint production of the vaccine in Iran following a phase III clinical trial in this country.

‘The cooperation of these two prestigious Cuban-Iranian institutions will have a positive impact on the health of the population of both countries,’ they reiterated.

Earlier, Iran-Cuba joint COVID-19 vaccine project manager Ehsan Mostafavi said that the vaccine which is known as Pasteurcovac in Iran and Soberana-2 in Cuba has proved 62 percent effective based on results from the second-dose injections in the third phase of the clinical test which was done in Cuba.

Dr. Mostafavi stressed that none of the existing vaccines are 100 percent effective, as some of the people receiving them are infected again and some rare cases of severe infection and death are reported.

Global regulators have announced over 50 percent effectiveness as acceptable and the effectiveness of a vaccine depends on different factors, including its design and production and the types of viruses in circulation.

U.S. Illegal...

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He noted that this slogan is the back-bone and the “DNA” of development, without its realization, any effort or plan to promote development in developing countries is more like a bitter joke.

‘Iranian diplomat called for immediate and effective action by the international community to end illegal and illegitimate sanctions against developing countries.

The right to development, as an inalienable human right, will not be achievable while multilateralism is under increasing pressure and the unilateral measures taken by a small number of countries endangers the foundations of international cooperation,” he reiterated.

‘In order for the ideal of “no one should left behind” to be realized, the international community needs to take integrated, coherent, constructive and effective steps to end any unilateral coercive measures, including illegitimate sanctions,’ Hajilari said.

‘This will not happen unless immediate and united measures taken both against these illegal measures as well as against countries that impose such illegitimate actions on others,’ he added.

The High-Level Political forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is held annually at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to address the challenges faced by developing countries on their way towards achieving sustainable development.

Pakistan...

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It is worth mentioning that the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was led by former Foreign Minister Younis Qanuni and the head of the Taliban delegation was Abbas Stanikzai, the deputy head of the group’s office. Meanwhile Pakistan’s Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs in a meeting today reviewed the ongoing developments in Afghanistan while terming intra-Afghan dialogue in Tehran as important and praised the role of Islamic Republic of Iran in promoting peace and stability in the country.

Ex-Israeli Army...

FROM PAGE 1

Israel has carried out “substantial operations to frustrate and prevent [Iranian achievements] ... and these need to continue,” Eisenkot said.

Over the past years, Tel Aviv has been behind acts of sabotage against Iran’s nuclear program and the assassination of Iranian scientists.

Eisenkot stressed that Israel’s strategy towards Palestine, especially the besieged Gaza Strip, is not clear.

“The question is being asked, What is Israel’s strategy in the Palestinian arena? Are we going to have indirect talks [toward a long-term ceasefire], or do we see them [the Hamas resistance group] as a brutal enemy that needs to be toppled?” he said.

Part of the problem is the strategy “is not clear enough in the general Palestinian arena or with Gaza specifically,” which ends up leaving the Israeli army, the Shin Bet spy agency and others to pick up the pieces when conflict reignites.

Tel Aviv launched the bombing campaign against Gaza on May 10, after Palestinians retaliated against violent raids on worshipers at the al-Aqsa Mosque and the regime’s plans to force a number of Palestinian families out of their homes at Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem al-Quds.

Korea's Jae-sung Lee Joins Bundesliga Side Mainz

BERLIN (Dispatches) - South Korean attacking midfielder Jae-sung Lee has signed for Bundesliga side Mainz on a free transfer after narrowly missing promotion last season with ex-club Holstein Kiel.

The 28-year-old banged in 23 goals in 104 games over four years with second-tier side Kiel, who lost a two-legged play-off against Cologne last May to miss out on promotion to Germany's top flight. Nevertheless, Lee, who has played 53 times for South Korea, will play Bundesliga football next season having signed a three-year contract after "good" conversations with Mainz's Danish head coach Bo Svensson.

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Pippen Jr. Returning To Vandy

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Vanderbilt guard Scotty Pippen Jr. has decided to return for his junior season after exploring his options for the upcoming 2021 NBA Draft.

Pippen announced his decision late Wednesday night on social media under the heading, "Nashville, I'm back."

"After testing the waters of the NBA Draft process, I have decided to return to Vanderbilt for my junior season. Run it back," Pippen wrote on Twitter.

Djokovic to Play Berrettini For Wimbledon Title

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic reached his 30th Grand Slam final on Friday with a straight sets win over Canada's Denis Shapovalov to move one victory away from a sixth Wimbledon title and record-equaling 20th major.

The world number one triumphed 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 7-5 in a tense semi-final in which he crucially saved 10 of 11 break points.

Shapovalov was so distraught that he left Centre Court in tears.

In his seventh Wimbledon final, Djokovic will face Matteo Berrettini after the world number nine became the first Italian to reach a Wimbledon singles final by beating Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4.

"I don't think the scoreline says enough about the performance or the match. He (Shapovalov) was serving for the first set and was probably the better player," said Djokovic.

Victory on Sunday will not only take Djokovic level with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on 20 Slam wins.

He will also just need the US Open to become only the third man in history, and first since 1969, to complete the calendar Grand Slam.

"I am trying to make the maximum of my own abilities each match and see what happens," said 34-year-old Djokovic.

"At this stage of my career, Grand Slams are everything and I have been very privileged to make history in the sport I truly love."

Shapovalov showed no signs of nerves despite appearing in his first Slam semi-final and having come into the match with a 0-6 losing record against the world number one.

He broke for 2-1 but Djokovic, in his 10th Wimbledon semi-final and 41st at the majors, was back on terms in the 10th game before taking the tiebreak when the Canadian double-faulted.

Shapovalov then failed to take five break points in the second set and Djokovic pounced.

He broke for 6-5 on another double fault and pocketed the set before the Canadian took out his frustration on the chair umpire describing the official as "a joke". Djokovic showed his trademark steely defence to fend off four more break points in the second game of the third set.



Again, he made the Canadian left-hander pay by breaking for 6-5 and serving out the match in the next game. "Novak's an incredible guy. I don't think he's praised enough. He came up to me in the locker room, he just said a couple words. For me, it means a lot. He really doesn't have to," revealed Shapovalov.

On Sunday, Berrettini will attempt to become Italy's first men's Grand Slam champion since Adriano Panatta at the 1976 French Open. "I think I never dreamed about this because it was too much for a dream," said Berrettini. "I am trying to be the best at everything but after the third set I was feeling I deserved to win it but lost it."

"I said 'it doesn't matter', I was feeling the stronger player and that's what I said to myself and eventually it paid off." Should he win the final, Berrettini may be able to celebrate a national double with Italy facing England in the Euro 2020 final in London later that day.

The 25-year-old then raced through the second set in just 23 minutes, a Hurkacz double fault and a wrong-footing forehand allowing Berrettini to seal a 10th successive game.

That became 11 games in a row at the start of the third set before 18th-ranked Hurkacz, bidding to be the first Polish man to make a Slam final, stopped the rot.

Kyrgios Confirms Olympic Tennis Withdrawal



LONDON (Dispatches) - Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios confirmed his withdrawal from the Tokyo Olympics Friday, saying a ban on spectators attending the Games was a major factor in his decision to quit.

Kyrgios had already cast doubt on his participation when he pulled out of Wimbledon injured last week, despite being named in Australia's 11-strong tennis team.

After previously complaining about quarantine restrictions at the Games, the 26-year-old said he did not want to take part if fans were not present.

"The thought of playing in front of empty stadiums just doesn't sit right with me. It never has," he posted on social media.

"I wouldn't want to take the opportunity away from a healthy Aussie athlete ready to represent the country."

Japanese officials announced the ban on spectators because Tokyo is under a state of emergency throughout the Games, as the capital attempts to contain a surge of infections.

Kyrgios, a showman who revels in his reputation for drawing energy from the crowd, said quitting the Olympics was a step he had not taken lightly.

Mourinho Says Roma A Work in Progress

ROME (Dispatches) - Jose Mourinho relaunched into life with new club Roma, saying his latest challenge is very much a work in progress but vowing that trophies will follow in due course.

The 58-year-old Portuguese arrives back in Serie A 11 years after leading Inter Milan to an unprecedented treble of the Champions League, the Serie A title and the Italian Cup.

But he also has a point to prove after an underwhelming season and a half ended in the sack at Tottenham last April and a difficult two-and-a-half seasons with Manchester United also culminated in dismissal.

"You talk of the title and we talk of time, a project, work. Titles are words, easy promises. Titles will come," Mourinho insisted following his official presentation as he held court at a press conference before some 70 Italian and foreign journalists.

"But the club does not want isolated success. It wants to get somewhere and stay there," he insisted, saying Roma do not seek "success today and problems tomorrow, but to achieve something sustainable over time".

Roma have pinned their faith on Mourinho as a man whose experience of the continental game -- but not least, of Serie A itself -- can return the 'Giallorossi' to distant former glories after they could only place a modest seventh last season.

Their last major honour was an Italian Cup in 2008 and they have lifted the Scudetto or league crown only twice in the post-war era -- in 1983 and 2001, the latter triumph under Fabio Capello.

That patchy record, Mourinho declared, means his goal is to "construct" a club in a "durable" fashion rather than come in promising to deliver instant success and he stressed he was "not here on vacation" but ready to work.

"The word 'time' sometimes doesn't exist in football but here it does exist and it is a fundamental word," insisted the man who took unfancied Porto to a shock European Cup triumph in 2004 before going on to win three Premier League titles with Chelsea across two spells which bookended a highly successful two years at Inter and a mixed three seasons at Real Madrid.

Ceferin Not to Support Pan-Continental Euros Again



NYON (Reuters) - UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin says he will not support the idea of a pan-continental European Championship again as it is unfair to the teams as well as travelling fans to fly thousands of kilometres between matches.

Euro 2020 has been held across 11 cities, with London hosting the two semi-finals and Sunday's final between England and Italy.

Yet some teams and their fans were forced to fly to the far reaches of the continent, such as Baku in Azerbaijan, which represented a logistical nightmare.

"If you ask me, I would not support it anymore. I think it's too challenging, it's in a way not correct that some teams have to travel more than 10,000 kilometres and the others 1,000 for example," Ceferin told BBC Sport.

"It's not fair to the fans. Some fans had to be in Rome and in a couple of days they had to be in Baku -- a 4-1/2 hour flight."

"So it's a difficult one, it's an interesting idea but hard to implement. I don't think we will do it again."

Wales played twice in Baku before flying to Rome for their final group game and Amsterdam for the last-16, and defender Chris Gunter criticized UEFA for the format after their exit, describing the tournament as a "joke set-up" on Instagram.

"Every nation had fans wherever they went, (Wales did not) apart from the 350 who broke government rules and bank accounts to be there, you and us deserved more from this joke set up of a tournament," he said after their last-16 exit to Denmark.

Germany were chosen to host Euro 2024 after beating Turkey in the bidding process, with matches to be held in 10 cities. The last time the country hosted a major tournament was the 2006 World Cup.

Suns Take 2-0 Finals Lead Over Bucks



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Phoenix Suns took a 2-0 lead in the NBA Finals by beating Milwaukee 118-108 on Thursday, overcoming a 42-point effort from the Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo.

Devin Booker led the way for Phoenix with 31 points, Mikal Bridges tallied 27 and Chris Paul contributed 23, while Deandre Ayton grabbed 11 rebounds, to leave the Suns two wins away from their first championship.

"We have a 'we score' mentality," Suns coach Monty Williams said of the team's balanced attack and unselfish play.

"So when DA and Mikal give it up, it's like they scored. That's how we view it."

Antetokounmpo was outstanding throughout, dominating in the paint and on the glass, but received little help from his supporting cast as the team shot a miserable nine-of-31 from three-point range.

Milwaukee started strong, with Antetokounmpo looking determined to avenge their convincing Game One defeat, but the Suns offence caught fire in the second quarter, outscoring the Bucks 30-16 to take a 56-45 lead into halftime.

Antetokounmpo continued to fight in the second half, at one point reeling off 13 straight points before the Bucks cut the deficit to five points in the fourth quarter on an alley-opp to Brook Lopez.

But the Suns, who connected on 20 three-pointers, pushed the tempo and played stout defence to deliver the win before a rocking crowd at Phoenix Suns Arena.

Not everything went the Suns way though.

For the second straight game they lost a valuable role player when Torrey Craig suffered a right knee injury after colliding with a driving Antetokounmpo in the final minute of the third quarter.

The Suns lost backup forward Dario Saric in Game One when he tore his right anterior cruciate ligament.

Palestine Football Criticizes Planned Barcelona Game in Jerusalem



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian Football Association (PFA) has criticized a planned exhibition match in Jerusalem involving Spanish side Barcelona.

In a letter to the world governing body FIFA, PFA chairman Jibril Rajoub said Jerusalem has been declared a divided city in a United Nations resolution and that Barcelona's planned opponents Beitar Jerusalem are a racist club.

"Although we do not have the right to tell any club how to organise its friendly matches, we have the right to object to the choice of Jerusalem as the venue for the proposed match," Rajoub said in the letter, which was also addressed to football's European and Asian governing bodies, UEFA and AFC.

"According to international law, Jerusalem is a divided city and its eastern part is considered occupied Palestinian land, which gives the Palestinian Football Association jurisdiction over any football activities that take place in this part," he continued.

Rajoub went on to say that the accompanying events for the planned match include activities scheduled to take place within the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem, which "constitute a violation of our rights".

The match on August 4 is planned in the Malha district, the site of a Palestinian village that was ethnically cleansed by Zionist paramilitaries in the run-up to the establishment of Israel in 1948.

The club, which is former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's favourite, has gained notoriety for the racism of its fans and their "deaths to Arabs" chants.

The club's ultras, known as La Familia, pride themselves on never having a Palestinian or Arab player on its roster.