

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 86,041 With 182 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran Hands Over 180 Illegal Immigrant, Being Arrested in Different Parts of Iran, to Pakistan At Balochistan Border in Chagai District, in the Country's Balochistan Province

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Zarif Condemns Slovenian Prime Minister's Unacceptable Act

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a phone talk with the EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on Sunday condemned the unacceptable move of the Slovenian prime minister in attending the MKO group's virtual conference.

Zarif raised the issue with Borrell because Slovenia is presently the rotating head of the European Union.

The Iranian Foreign Minister condemned the unacceptable remarks by the Slovenian Prime Minister at the virtual conference of the exiled Iranian terrorist group, the so-called Mojahedeen Khalq Organization (MKO) and urged the EU to take clear stands in that respect.

The EU foreign policy chief expressed regret about the Slovenian prime minister's move, ensuring Zarif that what had been said in that virtual conference had nothing to do with the official EU stands on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The EU officials stands are only adopted at the heads of states' level and expressed by the head of the union, or at the ministerial level and expressed by an EU special representative, so the Slovenian prime minister's comments are by no means expressed on behalf of the European Union, said Borrell.

In related news, the Slovenian ambassador to Tehran was summoned to the Iranian Foreign Ministry on Sunday to hear Iran's strong objection.

She was also requested to present the Slovenian government's explanation in that respect as soon as possible.

The Ambassador was also informed that the Islamic Republic of Iran will take appropriate reactions respectively.

Iranian, Egyptian Officials Reportedly Hold Meeting in Cairo

TEHRAN (MNA) - A Qatari newspaper reported on a meeting between a delegation of Iranian and Egyptian officials in Cairo last week, citing Egyptian-Iranian efforts to improve bilateral relations.

The Qatari newspaper 'The New Arab' published a special report on the recent consultations between Egypt and Iran aimed at improving relations between the two countries and gaining close views on some regional issues.

Cairo hosted an Iranian delegation last week as part of Egypt's new foreign policy toward all major powers and countries in the region, which seeks to avoid any proxy entry into other countries' crises and prioritize Egypt's interests, it said. The delegation met with high-ranking officials in the Egyptian intelligence service to discuss sensitive cases between the two countries, which have been the source of tension between the two sides, it added.

According to this source, the purpose of these consultations is to establish balanced relations and to establish clear and permanent channels of communication with the aim of mutual coordination on various issues related to the parties, in order to avoid any tension and conflict.

Raisi Calls for Accelerating General Vaccination to Boost Tourism



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President-elect Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi s called for accelerating the general vaccination of the population against the Covid-19 in Iran, adding that vaccination will result in a boom in tourism in the country.

President-elect Raisi made the comments in a meeting with the Minister of Tourism Al Akbar Mounesan on Monday.

During the meeting, Mounesan congratulated Ayatollah Raesi on his victory in the June 18 presidential elections in Iran and wished success to the president-elect and his future administration.

The minister also presented a report on the latest status of the plans and actions of the ministry during his tenure. The president-elect, for his part, expressed his appreciation to Mounesan for his congratulatory message and his report on the performance of the Tourism Ministry and noted that Iran has a lot of tourism attractions and natural beauties which could boost the tourism industry in the country.

He added that tourism can create jobs for a lot of people and stressed that "It is necessary to support people in this field more effectively."

Raisi further pointed to the rich Iranian cultural background and said that paying more attention to national culture and the tourism potentialities that exist in Iran will generate more income for the people in rural and urban areas.

The President-elect stressed that the acceleration of general vaccination against coronavirus could lay the ground for a boom in tourism activities.

Earlier yesterday, deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri said that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Iran hosted over 26,000 health tourists in the first quarter of the current year.

He said by the rise in the number of vaccination and containing the virus, the country can host more foreign tourists and it will boost the national earning.

Teymouri went on to say that Iran can launch vaccine tourism when its COVID-19 production reaches the mass production.

He added that the group tourist visa to Russia is not currently issued due to the spike in the number of COVID-infected in Russia.

Iran's Uranium Metal Plan Outcome of Maximum Pressure

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna says Iran's plan to enrich uranium metal is a direct outcome of the United States' maximum pressure campaign against the country.

"In a first occasion for non-nuclear countries, Iran began enriching uranium to 60%. And now it's about to start producing metal uranium enriched to 20%. I don't think anyone in the US is happy about that, but that's the direct consequence of the maximum pressure policy," Mikhail Ulyanov said in an interview with Russian newspaper Kommersant on Sunday.

Ulyanov expressed hope that the Americans can learn from their past mistakes, which brought results that were the opposite of what they expected.

The Russian diplomat was referring to the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the JCPOA, in May 2018, in pursuit of the maximum pressure policy against Iran. The withdrawal occurred under the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump, who was a vocal critic of the JCPOA, signed under his predecessor Barack Obama. In response, Iran used its rights under the 2015 agreement to retaliate by ramping up its nuclear activities in gradual steps, the latest of which was a plan to produce enriched uranium metal.

Following Trump's defeat in the 2020 presidential election, which saw Democrats return to the White House, the U.S. showed interest in returning to the JCPOA, leading to negotiations between the parties to the accord in Vienna with the aim of bringing Washington back into compliance.

However, three months after the beginning of the Vienna talks, the U.S. is still declining to remove all the sanctions that were imposed after the JCPOA went into effect in January 2016, and it has failed to provide assurances that it will not exit the deal again, while keeping the maximum pressure in place in the meantime.

According to Ulyanov, the first step towards the restoration of the nuclear agreement should be made by the U.S. as the party that created the current obstacles in the path of the full implementation of the JCPOA.

"I can lay out Russia's point of view: naturally, the first step is to be made by the Americans because it was them who started the whole thing when they withdrew from the deal and nearly wrecked it threatening the entire world with their extra-territorial sanctions," he said.

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FM Submits Quarterly Report On JCPOA to Majlis

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that the 22nd quarterly report of the Foreign Ministry on the JCPOA and the latest status of the ongoing negotiations in Vienna submitted to the Parliament today.

Saeed Khatibzadeh announced on Monday morning the submission of the 22nd quarterly report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), including the latest status of the current Vienna talks to the Iranian Parliament.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal or Iran deal, is reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015, between Iran and the P5+1 together with the European Union.

Pursuant to a note on a law entitled "Proportional and Reciprocal Action of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Implementation of the JCPOA" approved by the Iranian Parliament on October 13, 2015, it was determined that the Foreign Minister is obliged to report to the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Parliament every three months on the implementation of the agreement.

According to this note, the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission is also obliged to submit a report on the implementation of the JCPOA to the open session of the Parliament once every six months.

The Vienna talks to revive the JCPOA began in April and have been held six times so far. The sixth round of Vienna talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal ended on Sunday, 20 June.

Negotiations Only Solution to Afghan Crisis

KABUL (Dispatches) - While welcoming Iran's hosting of intra-Afghan talks, Head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation said that negotiations is the only and best solution to Afghan crisis.

Speaking in a meeting with members of the delegation of the Afghan government who had travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Abdullah Abdullah emphasized that negotiation is the only solution to get rid of the current deadlock in Afghanistan.

He seized this opportunity to thank the Afghan government's delegation for their unsparing efforts and report of Tehran talks as well as the warm hospitality of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

"We have repeatedly stressed that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem. We welcome the joint final statement of the two sides in Tehran talks," he stipulated.

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U.S. Logistical Convoys Hit in Several Locations in Iraq

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraqi resistance groups strike logistical convoys headed for the United States' occupation forces in a number of locations throughout the Arab country.

Reporting on Sunday, Iraqi news outlets said the attacks targeted the convoys in the city of Babylon in central Iraq, and the cities of Basra and al-Diwaniyah in the country's south. The first attack has so far not been claimed by any group or individual.

However, Saraya Awlia al-Dam, a subdivision of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi umbrella anti-terror force, has claimed the Basra strike.

It said it conducted the attack on the convoy as it was crossing a path known as Jarishan, which is under the control of so-called foreign security companies.

The attack is suspected to have been carried out using either anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) or an explosive device, known as explosively formed penetrator (EFP).

The attack in al-Diwaniya was claimed by another group, named as Ashab al-Kahf (Companions of the Cave).

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Iran, APA Endorse Agreement

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran, and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) endorsed an agreement at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and the Secretary-General of APA endorsed an agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the APA at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran.

The Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) was born in 2006 at the Seventh Session of the Association of Asian Parliamentary for Peace (AAP). In other words, the APA is a continuation of an organization that was established in 1999. The APA comprised, in 2007, 41 Member Parliaments and 17 observers.

President Inaugurates National Projects of Roads Ministry

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - National projects of Iranian Ministry of Roads and Urban Development were inaugurated on Monday in the presence of Iranian president.

During the 80th program of the inauguration of national projects in Iran, 51,230 housing units were put into operation by the order of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani via videoconferencing.

Underscoring the implementation of the administration's commitments in the housing sector, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that in this administration, a total of 375,232 run-down buildings had been revived.

"After employment and marriage, housing is an important issue. In this regard, the administration has the responsibility to provide housing facilities for the people," the president said.

One of the important issues of the administration was the revival of the rundown buildings, in which a lot of effort was made and a total of 375,232 units have been revived. That is, in addition to 1 million and 360,000 units, over 375,000 have been provided to the people, according to Rouhani.

Referring to the opening of 51,230 housing units in different parts of the country in the 80th week of the inauguration of national projects, the President said, "Employment and housing are two very important things for life and I am very happy that in the twelfth government great efforts have been made in the field housing".

He also stressed, "The government has a very heavy responsibility for providing housing for the people, especially the younger ones".

Rouhani stated, "At the beginning of this government's term, we were faced with the commitment of the previous government in the field of 2 million and 200 thousand houses in the form of Mehr Housing Scheme, about one third of which was completed by the previous government with shortcomings in the service sector, and the work in this field was placed on the shoulders of this government, which was a



very difficult task, but with the efforts made by Mr Eslami, Minister of Roads and Urban Development, and the completion of residential units is almost completed".

The President said that one of the emphases of the 11th and 12th governments was the restoration of the old neighborhoods and urban regeneration and added, "In this regard, a lot of work has been done and 375,232 housing units have been restored in old neighborhoods".

The President described design and attention to architecture as the first step in the construction of residential units in new towns and cities and said, "Iran is a creative nation in terms of architecture and unique historical monuments".

Rouhani pointed out, "The government should provide suitable land in a suitable place and at a reasonable price to the people and builders and prevent the destruction of agricultural lands, gardens, pastures and jungles, so location and architecture are two important principles for housing construction".

The president added, "Financially, banks should provide the necessary loans, and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development should try to provide housing units to the youth and the people at a reasonable price".

Rouhani pointed out, "Residential units should be built by the people, and the duty of the government is to help provide suitable land to the people with proper design and architecture, and with loans".

The President stated, "In the 11th and 12th governments, a lot of efforts have been made in the field of rural units. Also, important measures have been taken to strengthen and complete the units that were destroyed in events such as floods and earthquakes".

MPs Table Motion to Restrict Talks With U.S.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A motion tabled by 35 Iranian lawmakers calls for a "ban on the Islamic Republic officials' negotiations with U.S. officials" without seeking the permission of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis).

The motion that has already been put on the agenda of the Majlis, suggested that those who negotiate with U.S. officials without parliamentary approval should be subjected to jail sentence for 5 to 10 years and dismissal from government service.

The new motion calls U.S. sanctions against Iran "shameful and irrational," and condemns the targeted assassination of IRGC Qods Force Commander Qasem Soleimani by the U.S. forces in January 2020. It also condemned the U.S. for having sanctioned Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi and other officials.

Meanwhile, condemning the U.S. for designating some Iranian military organizations as terrorist, the motion did not name the Revolutionary Guard, IRGC.

The strongly worded motion also cautiously exempts negotiations about matters relating to international pacts, agreements and treaties based on the Iranian Constitutional Law.

The details about how to carry out the requirements of the motion once it is approved by the parliament, shall be determined by the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Intelligence, the Iranian Judiciary and the IRGC Intelligence Organization, Fars news agency which is close to the IRGC reported.

Iran, UN Envoys Discuss Latest Developments in Iraq

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi met and held talks with Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Plasschaert.

During the meeting that was held in Baghdad, the two sides discussed the latest political, security and upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq.

Emphasizing the Tehran-Baghdad relations, the Iran envoy said that his country will support security, stability, as well as the upcoming Iraqi parliamentary elections.

The new administration of Iran also supports the strengthening and expansion of relations between Tehran and Baghdad, he added, noting that relations between Iran and Iraq will deepen and expand during Iran President-elect Hojjatolislam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi's term.

Yemeni Resistance to Continue Until Final Victory

YEMEN (IP) - Iran's ambassador to Sana'a tweeted that the Yemeni resistance would continue until the final victory, citing years of aggression by the Saudi-led coalition against Yemen.

Iranian Ambassador to Yemen Hassan Irlool reacted to Saudi Arabia's years-long aggression against the Yemenis with the hashtag "No to war against Yemen."

According to the tweet, "2,300 days have passed since the Saudi aggression against Yemeni children, women, people, and vital infrastructure of Yemen, and this aggression continues. The oppressed and heroic people of Yemen will continue the resistance until the final victory."

COVID Vaccine Distribution To Reach 10m by Friday

TEHRAN (IP) - According to Iran's Deputy Health Minister, so far, 6.4 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine had been shot, of which 2.1 million people had received both doses.

"Approximately 7.8 million vaccine doses had been distributed, and another 1 million amounts would be distributed on Monday," Alireza Raisi said.

"2 million doses will be distributed in the country by Friday, and considering the amount, the distributed vaccines in the country will reach about 10 million doses by then."

"It is expected that next week in the Iranian calendar (starting from July 17) about 4 million doses will be distributed," he added.

Raisi said: "Since last year, some health facilities for COVID have been deployed in Sistan and Baluchistan, as well as 800 hospital beds."

The Deputy Health Minister underlined that groups, IRGC, and Armed forces were working to combat the virus, adding that 250 medical specialists worked at the province's hospitals, so there would be no hospital bed shortages.

Emphasizing that there are no diagnostic kits or medical shortages in Sistan and Baluchistan, Raisi said: "Vaccination of over 50s has been started in Sistan and Baluchistan, and enough vaccine has been provided."

Leader Thanks Palestinians For Congratulatory Message



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The office of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has sent a letter to Palestinians living in refugee camps in Syria, conveying to them the Leader's gratitude for the congratulatory message they sent to Ayatollah Khamenei following Israel's defeat in its latest military aggression against Palestinian resistance groups in the besieged Gaza Strip.

In a letter to the Chairman of Iran-Palestine Friendship Society Mohammed al-Buhaisi, the deputy head of the Leader's Office for international relations, Mohsen Qomi, conveyed Ayatollah Khamenei's message of gratitude.

"Operation al-Quds Sword showed only a small portion of the accumulated power and might of the Resistance Front," the letter read.

In his letter, Qomi added that the heroic defense of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the al-Quds territory by the Palestinian people, which took place through solidarity and synergy among all Palestinians and admirable coordination of all resistance groups, showed that the "era of bullying and muscle-flexing by the occupying and racist Zionists is over."

The letter added that "the time has come for the usurpers of this sacred land to be defeated and for Palestine and the holy al-Quds to be liberated."

Tel Aviv launched a brutal bombing campaign against the Gaza Strip on May 10. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, 260 Palestinians were killed in the Israeli offensive, including 66 children and 40 women.

In response, Palestinian resistance movements, chief among them Hamas, launched the Operation al-Quds Sword and fired more than 4,000 rockets and missiles into the occupied territories, killing 12 Israelis.

Apparently caught off guard by the unprecedented barrage of rockets from Gaza, Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire on May 21, which Palestinian resistance movements accepted with Egyptian mediation.

Zarif Commemorates Srebrenica Massacre Victims

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister has marked the 26th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, saying the Islamic Republic of Iran is proud to have stood by the oppressed people of Bosnia and Herzegovina since their independence.

In a letter read out at the commemoration of the anniversary of the genocide on Sunday, Mohammad Javad Zarif paid tribute to those killed in the horrific crime and condoled with the government and people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the bereaved.

The events of July 1995 are one of the darkest chapters in the contemporary history of mankind, Zarif said, stressing that while the event should not be a source of hatred among different ethnicities, it should not be forgotten either.

He maintained that the Sunday event reminds the international community of the need for a commitment to justice, non-violence and a sense of responsibility in defending the oppressed.

It also urges the international community, particularly those claiming to uphold human rights, to adhere to genuine human values, the Iranian chief diplomat stated.

Thousands of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina gathered on Sunday to mark the 1995 execution of more than 8,000 Muslim Bosniaks, also known as the Srebrenica massacre, which is Europe's only acknowledged genocide since World War II.

They also held the reburial of 19 victims, including 16 men, two teenage boys and a woman, whose remains were found in mass graves and were recently identified through DNA analysis.

"As soon as I got up and had coffee, I came to visit the graves of my husband and his brother, to say a prayer," said Kadefa Rizvanovic, who lost 20 male relatives in the slaughter and still has not found the remains of all of them.

"My paternal and maternal uncles are also buried here. I said a prayer for them and for all the victims of Srebrenica," she added, according to the Associated Press.

Srebrenica's Muslim population fled the town, which had been declared a UN "safe haven" for civilians, and rushed to the UN compound where its peacekeepers were supposed to protect them.

Insecurity in Afghanistan Result of Foreigners' Presence

TEHRAN (MNA) - The deputy head of Iran's Police Brigadier General Ghasem Rezaei believes the current insecurity in Afghanistan is the result of the presence of colonial countries in the region.

"The U.S.-led colonial powers, with their illegitimate presence in the region, have created a terrible situation for the Afghan people," he said visiting the southeastern borders of the country.

"According to the reports we received, there is no concern about the security of the Iranian borders," he said.

"The result of the U.S. illegal presence in Afghanistan



has been nothing but destruction and insecurity," he reiterated.

"Today, the people of Afghanistan need to receive the humanitarian aid from other countries of the world, but the best help to them is to allow the formation of a popular government based on the will of the people and not to allow foreigners to interfere in the internal affairs of this country."

The Iranian official noted that the United States and its allies, by their illegitimate presence in the region for more than 40 years, have taken peace and comfort from the nations of the region.

Basij Ready to Contain Coronavirus, Accelerate Vaccination

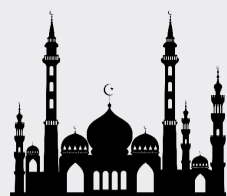
TEHRAN (IP) - The Head of Basij (Volunteer Forces) stated that Basij is fully ready to contain the COVID-19 and accelerate nationwide vaccination.

Speaking at the meeting with Medical Universities' presidents held at the Health Ministry, Brigadier-General Gholamreza Soleimani added that the Islamic Republic of Iran had achieved precious experiences during the 16 months since the coronavirus outbreak.

Referring to tough conditions and pressures Iranians have been facing, Brigadier-General Gholamreza Soleimani stressed that the officials must not consider the current condition normal, and all along with people's cooperation carry out non-stop efforts to cut the disease's chain.

"Martyr Soleimani Plan to contain the coronavirus has been carried out with success, hence Basij will fight against the pandemic with its all capacities, especially cyberspace," he said.

"With the cooperation of IRIB, cyberspace, others bodies, nationwide vaccination will be accelerated via public places, parks, mosques, and drive-through vaccination," he noted.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:42
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:16
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:59

171. They glory in the Grace and the bounty from Allah,
and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least).
172. Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded,
those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward;-
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (171 - 172)

Tehran, Budapest Call for Revival of Their Trade Volume

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Hungary have called for revival of the bilateral trade to at least \$200b which had been set in 2018 and it has currently declined due to the sanctions and pandemic.

Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mohammadreza Karbasi met with the Hungarian commercial attaché in Tehran on Monday to discuss ways of expanding trade ties between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides explored some of the potential areas for mutual cooperation and called for taking necessary measures for boosting the level of trade to the pre-sanction levels and even higher, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Speaking in the meeting, Karbasi noted that Iran-Hungary trade stood at \$200 million in 2018, however, the figure fell to \$35 million due to sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

"We must try to reach the volume of trade to the 2018 level and even more," the official stressed.

He pointed out that Hungarian agricultural products make up a large share (about 25 percent) of the country's exports, suggesting that the ICCIMA and the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the embassies of the two countries, should organize webinars and face-to-face talks between the two countries' traders in the field of agriculture to facilitate the trade in this area.

"Considering the export potentials of Iran and Hungary in the field of agriculture, it is possible to exchange a list of products and demanded goods in this field in order to expand collaborations in this sector," Karbasi said.

He further called on the Hungarian embassy and especially the country's commercial



attaché in Tehran to take the necessary measures for facilitating the trade between the two countries and to boost the level of economic exchanges to the pre-sanction levels.

The Hungarian official for his part expressed interest in holding business webinars between the two sides and it was decided to hold two online webinars in the fields of agricultural and medical equipment in the near future.

Holding specialized B2B video conferences in the fields of agriculture and medical equipment, considering a preferential trade agreement between the two countries, bartering of goods and services and paving the way for the expansion of trade cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) of the two countries, were among the suggestions that the two sides made for boosting the level of trade between the two countries.

He then pointed to the sanctions against Iran and the pandemic, expressing hope that problems and sanctions would be resolved because Hungarian businessmen are keen to cooperate with their Iranian counterparts.

The Hungarian diplomat also pointed to the history of good cooperation between the two states, adding that before the pandemic, Hungary hosted over 3,000 Iranian students who have chosen the Hungarian universities through scholarship.

He added that despite restrictions because of the sanctions, Hungarian Embassy in Tehran supports issuing visas for Iranian traders.

He expressed hope the trade level between Iran and Hungary would gradually grow and reach a figure that the two countries deserve it.

KSC Seeking Developing New Production Lines, Expansion of Value Chain

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Khouzestan Steel Company (KSC) says the strategy of the company for the current year is to develop its new production lines and also to expand value chain of steel.

Speaking at the annual general meeting of Khouzestan Steel Company, Mr. Amin Ebrahimi briefed the participants of the performance of the company in the last fiscal year and also revealed some of his plans for the current year.

Pointing to some important achievements of the company regarding the production in the past year, he said the company produced 3.780m tons of steel, 5.760m tons of pellet and 3.9m tons of sponge iron. He went on to say that the company's sales last year were 3.6m tons of main product in the domestic and overseas markets and it exported over 1.5 tons of products to different countries.

He noted that the outcome of cooperation between KSC with Oxin Steel Complex for export of the final product and steel sheet earned \$9.4m.

He also said the result of all efforts led to 234 percent growth of the net profit after reducing tax as well as to environmental achievements.

On the important operational plans and goals of the company for the current year, Ebrahimi said that implementing developmental projects and balancing the capacity of the steel-making projects, completing the required infrastructures for production of 5m tons of concentrate in the Sanabad Inclusive Development Industrial and Mining Company and completing the pellet-making project of this company are of the major plans of the company for the current year.

Ebrahimi also said that indigenizing the manufacture of parts and equipment to cut dependence on the overseas companies is of the other goals of the company, adding that improving the productivity of the workforce, reducing the incidents and improving the environmental indexes as well as efficient energy consumption are other plans of the company in the current year.



Iran, Armenia to Expand Economic Cooperation



ARAK (IP) - The Armenian ambassador to Tehran visited the industrial city of Arak, the center of Iran's Markazi province, to get acquainted with the industrial and economic capacities of this city with the aim of expanding economic cooperation between the two countries.

On Sunday, Artashes Toumanian visited 4 industrial units during a one-day visit to Arak and participated in a joint meeting of economic activists in Markazi province.

The Ambassador of Armenia in Tehran visited the various stages of production of milk and dairy products with mechanized machines in Pegah dairy (a dairy production Company) in Arak.

He also visited the Abyar Machine Pars Industrial Company (manufacturer and operator of pressurized irrigation systems) in Arak, getting acquainted with the capabilities of this Iranian company.

On the sidelines of the visit, Toumanian said that Armenia's cooperation with Iran was of great importance in various dimensions, especially economic, and that the Islamic Republic of Iran had a good situation among Armenia's neighboring countries.

He stated that Iranian traders export their goods to Armenia easily and that Iran and Armenia could export their goods to other countries by providing an efficient mechanism.

The Armenian ambassador to Tehran says that his country has long-standing political and economic relations with Iran, Mehr News reports.

He added Iran and Armenia have good potentials to expand their cooperation in various political and economic fields and the relationship between the two countries has increased in recent years.

Toumanian said that the main purpose of his trip to Markazi province was to deepen and develop the level of relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Iranian province. The ambassador said that Armenia's relations with Iran are politically, economically, and culturally important, adding that Iran has a special place among Armenia's neighbors.

Armenia's economy is on the rise and moving forward, and the country is ready to get connected with the Markazi province and hold various meetings with its official, the diplomat further noted in the meeting.

New FTZs Planned to Be Established by Next March

TEHRAN (MNA) - As announced by Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Hamidreza Mo'meni, some new free trade zones (FTZs) are planned to be set up in the country in the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022).

Saying that new FTZs will be set up based on the order of the president, the official said: "If we can settle the subject of the comprehensive plans of these zones, I think by the end of this year, the new free zones will be added to the existing ones."

Last week, 62 development projects worth 31.05 trillion rials (over \$739.2 million) were put into operation in Iran's free trade and special economic zones, in the 78th series of inauguration ceremonies since the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

As reported by the government portal, President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated the mentioned projects through video conferencing in various provinces including West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, Hormozgan, Gilan, and Sistan-Baluchestan.

Put into operation in Kish, Maku, Chabahar, Aras, and Anzali free trade, and special economic zones, the said projects are going to provide direct employment for about 2,388 people.

2 Towers Transmitting Iran Electricity to Iraq Exploded

TEHRAN (MNA) – News sources reported the explosion of two electricity transmission towers from Mersad to Diyala near Lake Hamrin.

No further details have been released on the new attack.

In recent days, the Iraqi electricity network has been the target of many terrorist attacks and operations. These terrorist attacks have intensified the electricity crisis in Iraq.

A few days ago, the spokesman for the Iraqi

Ministry of Electricity, Ahmed Musa, stated that the electricity transmission lines from Iran, especially in Diyala province, are the target of repeated sabotage attacks, adding that it was also attacked by saboteurs last Sunday.

According to the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, more than 70 electricity towers have been attacked so far, and in just 10 days, 15 towers totaling 400 million Iraqi dinars (nearly \$ 300,000) have been damaged.

Production of Aluminum Ingot Up by 30%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In the first three months of the current Iranian year Production of aluminum ingot in Iran increased 30 percent, compared to the previous year same time span.

According to data released by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the country's aluminum ingot output came on at 131,376 tons in the mentioned period of this year.

Also during the last Iranian year, the production of aluminum ingot in Iran increased 61 percent compared to the number for the earlier year, IMIDRO reported.

The country's aluminum ingot output amounted at 446,800 tons in the last year.

Iranian Photographer Wins FIAP's Gold Medal

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian photographer Ahmad Khatiri has been awarded the gold medal of the French International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP).

Khatiri received the medal for his black and white photo named "Girl Flies in Prayer", which depicts a little girl opening her arms like wings among a group of Muslims during congregational prayer.

Khatiri has participated in numerous photography competitions around the globe and won prizes in some of them.

In 2020, he was awarded an honorable mention at a contest organized by the Gruppo Operativo Fotografico Ascoli Piceno – GOFAP (Ascoli Piceno Photographic Operational Group) in Italy.

In 2009, he won the UAFB gold medal at the 7th edition of the Romania Bucovina Mileniul III International Salon of Photographic Art.

In 2017, he won the FIAP Gold Medal for his single photo "Prayer and Mourning for the Martyrdom of Their Fathers in War Zones" at the Through the Viewfinder, an international photo contest that was held in Kragujevac, Serbia.

The Fifth International Photo Salon Plovdiv in Bulgaria awarded him a PSA honorable mention for his photo "Balance" in 2018.

The 2nd Danube Digital Circuit in Belarus also gave him a FIAP Honorable Mention for a photo named "Flying Harmony" in 2018.

PGSOC, INEF Ink MoU to Cooperate on Environment



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) announced signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iranian National Environment Fund (INEF) to cooperate in the environmental issues and to reconstruct the eco-systems in the preserved region of Geno.

Mohammad Ali Dadvar termed PGOC as the national green refiner and representative of Iran in the international energy foundation due to producing gasoline with a standard above the Euro 5 standard. He added that since protection of environment is a public issue and paying attention to the environmental basics for achieving sustainable development is necessary, the MoU between the company with INEF was signed in line to resolve negative environmental impacts as well as to revive and reconstructing eco-systems in the preserved region of Geno.

Dadvar went on to say that according to the deal, financing and employing the protection forces, reinforcing the automotive fleet of environment as well as purchase of required machineries and motorcycles for monitoring the environment are of the commitments of PSGOC.

He expressed hope that due to cooperation between all bodies in safeguarding the environment, this move would be an effective step in line with protecting this divine blessing.

Pope Reappears After Surgery

ROME (Reuters) - Pope Francis, seeming in good overall condition, appeared in public on Sunday for the first time since undergoing intestinal surgery a week ago and made a plea for free universal healthcare.

The 84-year-old pope, who had part of his colon removed in the surgery, stepped out on the balcony of his suite on the 10th floor of Rome's Gemelli hospital to lead his weekly prayer before hundreds of cheering people below. He stood for about 10 minutes, reading from a prepared text but also adding many impromptu remarks.

He appeared to be slightly short of breath at times and his voice was occasionally raspy. He had part of one of his lungs removed when he was a young man in his native Argentina.



Australia Reports First 2021 Local COVID-19 Death

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - Australia reported its first locally contracted COVID-19 death of the year on Sunday and a 2021 record 77 new cases of the virus in the state of New South Wales, which is battling an outbreak of the highly infectious Delta variant.

State Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the numbers in and around the country's biggest city Sydney, already under a hard lockdown, are expected to rise. "I'll be shocked if it's less than 100 this time tomorrow, of additional new cases," Berejiklian told a televised briefing.

On Saturday there were 50 cases, the previous 2021 record high. The recent outbreak stands at 566 cases.



Leaders of China, North Korea Vow to Strengthen Ties



SEOUL (AFP) - Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have vowed to bring their relations to a "new stage" as the two countries mark the 60th anniversary of a friendship pact, Pyongyang's state media reported Sunday.

China is North Korea's longtime ally and economic benefactor, their relationship forged in the bloodshed of the Korean War, when Mao Zedong sent millions of "volunteers" to fight US-led United Nations forces to a standstill.

The two countries signed a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of an armed attack on July 11, 1961, with Mao describing the allies as close as "lips and teeth".

Relations have fluctuated over the years due to Pyongyang's growing nuclear ambitions, but with negotiations between North Korea and the US at a standstill, both sides have moved to strengthen their alliance.

"Despite the unprecedentedly complicated international situation in recent years the comradely trust and militant friendship between the DPRK and China get stronger day by day," Kim wrote in his message to Xi, referring to the North by its official name.

In the message carried by the KCNA news agency, Kim highlighted the role of the pact in "ensuring peace and stability in Asia and the rest of the world now that the hostile forces become more desperate in their challenge and obstructive moves".

Xi wrote he planned to bring "greater happiness" to the two countries and their people "by steadily leading the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries to a new stage," KCNA said.

It is a marked contrast to a few years ago, when relations were poor and Kim had yet to meet with Xi since succeeding his father in December 2011.

Kim paid his first visit to China in March 2018 and the two leaders have now met five times.

The exchange of messages is the latest sign of renewed ties between the neighbours, which analysts say is aimed at the United States amid gridlocked nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington and worsening US-Beijing tensions.

"It's a marriage of convenience," Park Won-gon, professor of North Korean Studies at Ewha Womans University, told AFP.

The two allies' relations have had discord since the end of the Korean War, he added, and they will "never really trust each other".

But they need each other to deal with Washington, Park added. "And the closer they get, the harder it will be to denuclearize North Korea."

Kabul Urges Europe to Halt Forced Deportations of Afghans

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan has urged European countries to halt forced deportations of Afghan migrants for the next three months, as security forces battle a wave of violence triggered by a dizzying Taliban offensive.

The United Nations said on Sunday the rising conflict is also causing "more suffering" across the violence-wracked country as it urged for continuous financial aid.

Afghanistan is facing a crisis as the insurgents snap up territory across the countryside, stretching government forces and leading to a fresh wave of internally displaced families, complicated by a renewed outbreak of Covid-19.

"The escalation of violence by the Taliban terrorist group in the country and the spread of the third wave of (Covid-19) have caused a great deal of economic and social unrest, creating concerns and challenges for the people," Afghanistan's refugees and repatriation ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

"The government's decision emphasizes that host countries should refrain from forcibly deporting Afghan refugees... for the next three months," the ministry said, adding that the return of Afghans from Europe was worrying.

There were almost 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan in 2018 -- the second-largest refugee population in the world, according to the United Nations refugee agency.

The vast majority are in neighboring Pakistan, followed by Iran, and Europe.

While more than 570 Afghan refugees voluntarily returned to the country between January and March this year, aided by the UN, just six came from outside Pakistan and Iran, according to data from the UN's refugee agency.

Afghans make up a sizeable share of EU asylum seekers, with 44,190 first-time applications last year, out of a total of 416,600, according to Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency.

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi last month said Europe should brace for a fresh inflow of migrants from Afghanistan after foreign forces leave the country.

This year, several EU countries agreed to offer asylum to Afghans who worked with foreign troops and are at risk of retaliatory attacks from the Taliban.

Afghanistan recorded more than 1,000 cases of Covid-19 on Sunday, the health ministry said.



Oman's Sultan Visits Saudi Arabia on First Overseas Trip

DUBAI (Reuters) - Oman's Sultan visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday on his first official overseas trip since assuming power last year, with talks expected to focus on the Yemen war and economic and investment cooperation as Muscat looks to shore up its finances.

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, whose country has joined United Nations-led efforts to secure a peace agreement in Yemen, arrived in the Red Sea city of NEOM for a two-day visit.

He was greeted by Saudi King Salman - in what Saudi-owned media said was the 85-year-old monarch's first face-to-face meeting since the coronavirus pandemic began - and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The sultan recently faced his biggest challenge with demonstrations against unemployment in the debt-burdened country, which is pursuing wide-ranging reforms and austerity measures.

During the visit Saudi Arabia and Oman signed a document to establish a joint coordination council to oversee several agreements.

Oman's foreign minister, Badr al-Busaidi, had told the Saudi-owned Asharq Alawsat newspaper on Saturday the opening of a delayed new road linking the two Persian Gulf states would facilitate logistics and other infrastructure projects. Since the oil price crash in 2014, Oman's debt to GDP ratio has leapt from about 15% in 2015 to 80% last year, while its plans to diversify revenue away from oil and to reduce spending on its bloated public sector have made slow progress.

Oman is among the weakest financially among the Persian Gulf oil producers but has long played the role of facilitator in efforts to resolve regional conflicts because of its neutral foreign policy.

The sultanate, which shares borders with Yemen, has intensified diplomatic efforts aimed at securing a ceasefire between Yemen's Houthi movement and the Saudi-led coalition that has been battling the group for more than six years.

Violence Spreads to South Africa's Economic Hub

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - Shops were looted overnight, a section of the M2 highway was closed and stick-wielding protesters marched through the streets of Johannesburg on Sunday, as sporadic acts of violence following the jailing of former South African President Jacob Zuma spread to the country's main economic hub.

The unrest had mainly been concentrated in Zuma's home province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), where he started serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of court on Wednesday night.

Zuma's sentencing and subsequent imprisonment have been seen as a test of the post-apartheid nation's ability to enforce the law fairly - even against powerful politicians - 27 years after the African National Congress (ANC) ousted the white minority rulers to usher in democracy.

But his incarceration has angered Zuma's supporters and exposed rifts within the ANC.

Police said criminals were taking advantage of the anger to steal and cause damage. National intelligence body NatJOINTS warned that those inciting violence could face criminal charges.

NatJOINTS said in a statement that 62 people had

been arrested in KZN and Gauteng, the province where Johannesburg is located, since the violence began.

The Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) said there had been looting in the Alexandra township and Jeppestown suburb on Saturday night. The M2 was closed off after there were reports of shots being fired at passing vehicles.

A Reuters TV crew saw a column of protesters brandishing sticks, golf clubs and branches as they whistled and marched through Johannesburg's Central Business District, where liquor stores had been burgled and shop windows smashed.

The sale of alcohol is currently banned under lockdown restrictions designed to ease pressure on hospitals during a severe "third wave" of COVID-19 infections.

KZN police spokesman Jay Naicker said there had also been more looting in eThekweni, the municipality that includes Durban. "We saw a lot of criminals or opportunistic individuals trying to enrich themselves during this period," he said.

Zuma was given the jail term for defying an order from the constitutional court to give evidence at an inquiry that is investigating high-level corruption during his nine years in power until 2018.



Haiti Asks UN, U.S. To Send Troops After President's Assassination

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Dispatches)

- Haiti's interim government says it has requested that the United Nations and the United States send troops to help secure key infrastructure after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise plunged the country into turmoil.

A letter from the prime minister's office to the UN offices dated July 7 - the day Moise was shot dead at his home - said the aim was "to support the efforts of the national police aiming to reestablish security and public order in the whole territory". The 15-member UN Security Council would need to authorize a deployment of UN peacekeepers or police to Haiti.

"We definitely need assistance and we've asked our international partners for help," interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph told The Associated Press news agency in a phone interview late on Friday. "We believe our partners can assist the national police in resolving the situation."

The request comes as the interim government tries to stabilize the country and prepare the way for elections in the aftermath of Moise's assassination.

"We thought that the mercenaries could destroy some infrastructure to create chaos in the country," Mathias Pierre, Haiti's elections minister, told the AFP news agency.

But Washington has so far given no indication it will provide military assistance. For now, it only plans to send FBI officials to assist with the ongoing investigation into a crime that has pitched Haiti, a country already racked by gaping poverty and gang violence, into a destabilizing battle for power and constitutional standoff.

On Friday, a group of lawmakers declared loyalty and recognized Joseph Lambert, the head of Haiti's dismantled senate, as provisional president in a direct challenge to the interim government's authority. They also recognized Prime Minister Ariel Henry, whom Moise had selected to replace Joseph a day before he was killed but who had not yet taken office or formed a government.

Joseph, the interim prime minister, expressed dismay that others would try to take advantage of Moise's murder for political gain. "I'm not interested in a power struggle," said Joseph, who assumed leadership with the backing of police and the military. "There's only one way people can become president in Haiti. And that's through elections."



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S, J, balcony
green garden
Fully Furn

Parsian

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Zaferanieh (\$2200) 210sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
Velenjak (\$1600) 140sq.m, 2bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
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PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS

Bangladesh Receives \$300m World Bank Financing

DHAKA (Dispatches) - The government of Bangladesh and the World Bank signed a \$300 million financing agreement to help about 750,000 poor and extreme poor rural people across 20 districts come out of poverty and build resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic and any future shocks.

Through income-generating activities, livelihood and entrepreneurial support, as well as skills development for the poor and extreme poor

people, the Resilience, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Improvement (RELI) Project will help boost the rural economy in about 3,200 villages. Built on the success of the first and second Social Investment Program Projects and on the Nuton Jibon Livelihood Improvement Project, the RELI project will mobilize, develop, and strengthen community organizations, and finance their community plans provide cash transfers and loans for income-generating activities.



Multinationals Tax Shift Unlikely Until 2022

VENICE (Reuters) - U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Sunday said that a newly endorsed mechanism to allow more countries to tax large, highly profitable multinational companies may not be ready for consideration by lawmakers until spring 2022.

Yellen told a news conference after a G20 finance leaders meeting in Venice, Italy, that the OECD re-allocation of taxing rights was on a "slightly slower track" than a global corporate tax of at least 15% as part of a tax deal among 132 countries.

G20 finance ministers and central bank governors endorsed the deal over the weekend, but questions remain over the ability of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration to persuade a deeply divided Congress to ratify the changes.

Yellen's comments suggest a two-step process for implementing the OECD tax deal, with the global minimum tax moving first.

She said she hoped to include provisions to implement the so-called "Pillar 2" minimum tax into a budget "reconciliation" bill this year that Congress could approve with a simple majority, potentially without Republican support.

The "Pillar 1" portion of the agreement would end unilateral taxes on digital services in exchange for a new mechanism that would allow large profitable companies - including technology giants such as Google (GOOGL.O) and Facebook (FB.O) - to be taxed in part by countries where they sell products and services, rather than just those hosting their headquarters or intellectual property.

This will require a multilateral tax agreement that will take time to negotiate, a Treasury official said.

"Pillar 1 will be on a slightly slower track. We'll work with Congress," Yellen said, when asked whether a two-thirds majority would be needed in the U.S. Senate, which is normally the requirement for international treaties. "It may be in ready in the spring of 2022 and we'll try to determine at that point what's necessary for its implementation," Yellen said.

It was unclear how the 2022 timing would affect the withdrawal of unilateral digital services taxes. Yellen made clear that European Union countries had agreed to withdraw such taxes when asked how she viewed an expected European Commission proposal for a new digital levy to fund pandemic relief.

"It's really up to the European Commission and the members of the European Union to decide how to proceed, but those countries have agreed to avoid putting in place in the future and to dismantle taxes that are discriminatory against U.S. firms."

Yellen was to travel to Brussels later on Sunday to discuss the digital levy and a range of other issues with European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and the Eurogroup headed by Irish Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe.

Ireland is among the countries yet to sign up to the international tax deal, along with Hungary, Estonia, Kenya and Nigeria. The visit provides the opportunity to explain the benefits of inclusion in the agreement, Yellen said.

"In some cases there are specific technical issues that can be addressed and where possible we will discuss and try to bring them aboard," she added.

Yellen also hopes to have facilities in place by October to allow \$100 billion of the International Monetary Fund's \$650 billion currency reserves, known as Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), to be transferred or loaned to poorer countries.

Japan Gov't Ready to Deploy Economic Stimulus Flexibly

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan stands ready to pump more money into the economy to ease the pain of a prolonged pandemic, the top government spokesman said on Sunday, nodding to growing political calls for additional stimulus to prop up growth.

Less than two weeks before hosting the Olympics, Tokyo goes into its fourth COVID-19 state of emergency from Monday through Aug. 22, fuelling fears of extended pain for restaurants hit by shorter hours and a ban on alcohol consumption.

"First of all we must proceed with anti-infection measures and vaccination in cooperation with the citizens, and provide support for businesses and people in need," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said in a debate program on public broadcaster NHK.

"Then we want to flexibly take economic measures without hesitation," Kato said, without mentioning the size or timing of further stimulus measures.

Lawmakers from Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's Liberal Democratic Party have escalated calls for a new relief package, with party heavyweight Toshihiro Nikai saying an extra budget of around 30 trillion yen (\$270 billion) is needed.

The world's third-largest economy is expected to rebound from its annualized 3.9% contraction in the first quarter, but analysts expect the recovery to be gradual, with service sector consumption a particular weak spot.

Government spending is constrained by public debt at 2.5 times Japan's annual economic output - the heaviest debt burden in the industrial world, inflated by massive stimulus packages rolled out over the past year.

Suga, who must call a general election later this year, said on Thursday the government wants to focus on such areas as corporate financing, employment and restaurants, and wants to deliver as early as possible.

He said the government would respond flexibly as he was tackling the coronavirus hit to the economy with an economic package always in mind.



Syria Gov't Raises Bread, Diesel Prices As Crisis Deepens

DAMASCUS (AFP) - Steep bread and diesel price hikes went into force in government-held parts of war-torn Syria on Sunday, bringing more pain for civilians in a long-running economic crisis.

Damascus has repeatedly raised fuel prices in recent years to tackle a financial crunch sparked by the country's decade-long civil war and compounded by a spate of Western sanctions.

The price of diesel fuel nearly tripled and the price of bread doubled on Sunday, according to the official SANA news agency, only days after Damascus announced a 25 percent increase in the price of petrol.

"This was all expected and now we fear further increases in the price of... food and medicine," Damascus resident Wael Hammoud, 41, told AFP while he waited for more than thirty minutes to hail a cab to take him to work.

The price hikes coincided with a decree issued by President Bashar al-Assad on Sunday that increases public sector salaries by 50 percent and sets the minimum wage at 71,515 Syrian pounds per month (\$57 at the official rate), up from 47,000 pounds (\$37). In a second decree, Assad raised public sector and military pensions by 40 percent, according to SANA.

A price list published by the state news agency on Saturday night showed one liter of diesel fuel will now cost 500 pounds, up from the 180 pounds users in most sectors were paying previously.

Mustafa Haswiya, of the state-run Syrian Company for the Storage and Distribution of Petroleum Products, said 80 percent of Syria's hydrocarbon needs are purchased from abroad using foreign currency.

"It was necessary to raise prices in order to reduce the import bill," SANA quoted him as saying.

The price of subsidized bread doubled to 200 Syrian pounds. The state-run Syrian Foundation for Bakeries said that the rising price of diesel fuel contributed to the increase, according to SANA.

Diesel fuel in Syria is used to power vehicles and private generators that run for up to 20 hours per day in some areas to supplement an ailing power grid hampered by fuel shortages.

The pro-government Al-Watan daily on Sunday said the diesel fuel hike will lead to "an increase in the price of transportation within and across provinces" by more than 26 percent. The agriculture and industrial sectors will also see production costs rise, it noted.

The cost of heating homes will also climb by 178 percent, according to Al-Watan.

An economist in Damascus who spoke on the condition of anonymity said that the government will continue to raise prices as the crisis deepens.

"As long as there is no money entering the treasury, the price increases will continue," he said.



China to Retaliate After U.S. Blacklists Companies

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has said it will take "necessary measures" to respond to the blacklisting of Chinese companies by the United States over their alleged role in abuses of Uighur people and other Muslim ethnic minorities.

The Commerce Ministry said the U.S. move constituted an "unreasonable suppression of Chinese enterprises and a serious breach of international economic and trade rules".

China will "take necessary measures to firmly safeguard Chinese companies' legitimate rights and interests", the ministry said in a statement on Sunday.

No details were given, but China has denied allegations of arbitrary detention and forced labour in the far western region of Xinjiang and increasingly responded to sanctions against companies and officials with its own bans on visas and financial links.

The U.S. Commerce Department said in a statement on Friday that the electronics and technology firms and other businesses helped enable "Beijing's campaign of repression, mass detention and high-technology surveillance" against Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

The penalties prohibit Americans from selling equipment or other goods to the firms. The U.S. has stepped up financial and trade penalties over China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, along with its crackdown on democracy in the semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong.

The Chinese government since 2017 has detained a million or more people in Xinjiang. Critics accuse China of operating forced labor camps and carrying out torture and coerced sterilization as it allegedly seeks to assimilate Muslim ethnic minority groups.

The U.S. Commerce Department said 14 companies were added to its Entity List over their dealings in Xinjiang, and another five for aiding China's armed forces.

"The Department of Commerce remains firmly committed to taking strong, decisive action to target entities that are enabling human rights abuses in Xinjiang or that use U.S. technology to fuel China's destabilizing military modernization efforts," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a statement posted on the department's website.

Brazil Plans to Be 5th-Largest Crude Exporter by 2030

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil's expected oil output surge this decade will make it the world's fifth-largest crude exporter in 2030, Brazilian Mines and Energy Minister Bento Albuquerque said in an interview with The Rio Times.

"In 2030, when we reach a production of 5.3

million barrels of oil per day, Brazil will become the fifth largest exporter in the world," Albuquerque said, adding that Brazil's crude and liquids production is set to jump from 3.3 million barrels per day (bpd) now.

Currently, Brazil is out of the top ten of the world's largest crude oil exporters, a ranking where Saudi Arabia is firmly in the lead.

Brazil's prolific pre-salt offshore oilfields have been ramping up production in recent years and are the main driver of rising oil production. Moreover, Brazil is one of the countries not part of the OPEC+ alliance that are expected to continue to contribute to non-OPEC supply this year and in the coming years, according to estimates from OPEC itself.

The main drivers for 2021 supply growth are anticipated to be Canada, Brazil, China, and Norway, OPEC said in its latest Monthly Oil Market Report (MOMR) in June.

Brazil's crude oil production in April 2021 rose by 128,000 bpd from March to average 2.97 million bpd. Based on preliminary production data, and fewer outages due to lower maintenance and other unplanned outages, May crude production indicates further month over month growth of more than 50,000 bpd, OPEC has estimated.

In 2020, Brazilian crude oil production rose by 5.7 percent to average 2.9 million bpd, according to data from industry regulator ANP published last month. The pre-salt basin with 2 million bpd output led the rise in supply. Thanks to the higher crude oil production, Brazil's exports hit a record level of 1.4 million bpd in 2020, up by 16.9 percent year over year, ANP said.

Indian Tea Exports Likely To Fall Nearly 15% in 2021



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian exports have suffered in the last two-three years due to very low prices of Kenyan and Sri Lankan tea. Kenyan tea auction price average is below 2 US dollars per kg, which is much lesser than our auction average, Dinesh Bihani, secretary, Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association (GTABA), said.

Exports to Pakistan, a major market for Indian tea, have also stopped since the last three years following escalation of tension between the two countries, the industry source added.

The tea industry is bracing for a decline in exports to the tune of 30-40 million kg this year as compared to 2020, due to the availability of low-cost varieties in the global market and amid trade restrictions in countries that have traditionally been strong importers, industry sources said. The coronavirus-induced economic downturn in much of the world is also a factor for falling shipments, they said.

For the period between January to March this year, exports fell by 13.23 per cent as against the corresponding period a year ago, and by 29.03 per cent compared to 2019, as per Tea Board India data.

Altogether, 45.86 million kg tea was exported from India between January to March in 2021. The figure was 52.85 million kg in 2020 and 64.62 million kg in 2019. The dip in the share of shipments from North India has been more compared to South India since the last three years.

While the tea export share of South India fell by 5.41 per cent in 2021 between January and March compared to the same period in 2020, the decline was 25.85 per cent compared to 2019.

In case of exports from North India, the figure for the three-month period was lower by 17.83 per cent as against 2020 and 31.04 per cent compared to 2019.

"Indian exports have suffered in the last two-three years due to very low prices of Kenyan and Sri Lankan tea.

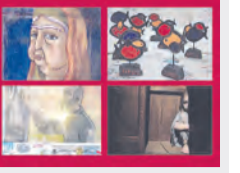
"Kenyan tea auction price average is below 2 US dollars per kg, which is much lesser than our auction average," Dinesh Bihani, secretary, Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association (GTABA), said.

Iranian Short Films, Animations Shine in Global Festivals

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Two short films and two animations by Iranian directors received awards in their latest global debut, as many other Iranian productions attend several international festivals.

Sky Sun, Tile Sun directed by Ziba Arzhang won the Best Animation Film Award in the 10th edition of TracceCinematografiche Film Festival held on July 13-18 in Rom.

The animation which contains no dialog depicts the life of the people who live on a tiled wall and become involved in an unwanted war. They have lost their sun and their life has gone dark.



Virus Variants Threaten Global Recovery, G20 warns

VENICE (Reuters) - An upsurge in new coronavirus variants and poor access to vaccines in developing countries threaten the global economic recovery, finance ministers of the world's 20 largest economies warned.

The G20 gathering in the Italian city of Venice was the ministers' first face-to-face meeting since the start of the pandemic. Decisions include the endorsement of new rules aimed at stopping multinationals shifting profits to low-tax havens.

That paves the way for G20 leaders to finalize a new global minimum corporate tax rate of 15% at a Rome summit in October, a move that could recoup hundreds of billions of dollars for public treasuries straining under the COVID-19 crisis.

A final communique said the global economic outlook had improved since G20 talks in April thanks to the rollout of vaccines and economic support packages, but acknowledged its fragility in the face of variants like the fast-spreading Delta.

"The recovery is characterized by great divergences across and within countries and remains exposed to downside risks, in particular the spread of new variants of the COVID-19 virus and different paces of vaccination," it read. While G20 nations promised to use all policy tools to combat COVID-19, the Italian hosts of the meeting said there was also agreement to avoid imposing new restrictions on people.

"We all agree we should avoid introducing again any restriction on the movement of citizens and the way of life of people," said Italian Economy Minister Daniele Franco, whose country holds the rotating G20 presidency through to December.

The communique, while stressing support for "equitable global sharing" of vaccines, did not propose concrete measures, merely acknowledging a recommendation for \$50 billion in new vaccine financing by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization and World Trade Organization.

Differences in vaccination levels between the world's rich and poor remain vast. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has called the divergence a "moral outrage" that also undermines wider efforts to tame the spread of the virus.

While some of the wealthiest countries have now given over two-thirds of their citizens at least one shot of vaccine, that figure falls to well below 5% for many African nations.

Brandon Locke, of the public health non-profit group ONE Campaign, decried what he described as the G20's inaction, calling it "a lose-lose situation for everyone."

"Not only will it cost lives in poorer countries, it increases the risk of new variants that will wreak havoc in richer ones," he said.



Italy said it the G20 would return to the issue of vaccine funding for poor countries ahead of a Rome summit in October and that new variants was an area that needed to be looked at. It did not give further details.

"We must agree on a process for everyone on the planet to be able to access vaccines. If we don't, the IMF predicts that the global economy will lose \$9 trillion," religious development organization Jubilee USA Network said.

It was referring to an IMF forecast that international cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines could speed world economic recovery and add \$9 trillion to global income by 2025.

A Reuters tally of new COVID-19 infections shows them rising in 69 countries, with the daily rate pointing upwards since late-June and now hitting 478,000. <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/>

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the world was facing "a worsening two-track recovery" partly driven by the differences in vaccine availability.

The biggest policy initiative at the talks was a well-flagged agreement on the global corporate tax rate, capping eight years of wrangling on the issue.

Setting a floor of 15% is intended to stop multinationals shopping around for the lowest tax rate. It would also change the way that companies like Amazon and Google are taxed, basing it partly on where they sell products and services, rather than on the location of their headquarters.

Negotiations Only...

FROM PAGE 1

Abdullah also said, "We call on Taliban to use the opportunity to prove its commitments to negotiating and resolving major national issues before it is too late."

Yunus Qanuni, the Head of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for his part, thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for its hosting and hospitality.

It should be noted that in this round of talks, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is being chaired by Yunus Qanuni, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and the Taliban delegation is being led by Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, the deputy head of the Taliban's political office.

U.S. Logistical...

FROM PAGE 1

Either the convoys or the Iraqi bases hosting the US forces come under regular attack across Iraq.

Iraq's resistance groups have vowed not to lay down their arms or cease their struggle until expulsion of all the American troops.

All forms of U.S.-led military presence was ruled illegal by the Iraqi parliament early last year after a U.S. drone strike martyred senior Iranian and Iraqi anti-terror commanders, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the PMU's former second-in-command.

Both the commanders played an indispensable role in the defeat of the foreign-backed Takfiri terrorist group of Daesh. The US has been using Daesh as an excuse to prolong its presence in Iraq.

Iran's Uranium...

FROM PAGE 1

Ulyanov, who leads the Russian delegation to the Vienna talks, said more than 90% of the work to restore the JCPOA is done, but there are politically sensitive matters in the remaining 10%.

He said although the participants have not agreed to a plan, the outlines of the potential agreement are "quite clear and everyone sees its conceptual frames. Everyone accepts them but details - who and what should do and when - are yet to be specified within these outlines."

The Russian envoy also said the next round of the talks, which were paused on June 20, is not likely to happen earlier than ten days, but voiced hope that the talks will resume as soon as possible.

"It is quite explainable: a new president has recently been elected in Iran, a new team is being formed and they need time to decide on their position. It is a hot-button matter for Iranian society and the establishment. Heated debates go on. So, no wonder," he added.

Dubai Does It Again: Now World's Deepest Pool



DUBAI (Dispatches) - The city of superlatives with the world's tallest tower among its many records, Dubai now has the deepest swimming pool on the planet complete with a "sunken city" for divers to explore.

Deep Dive Dubai, which opened Wednesday but initially by invitation only, prides itself as "the only diving facility in the world" where you can go down 60 metres (almost 200 feet), 15 metres deeper than any other pool, as confirmed to AFP by Guinness World Records.

It contains 14.6 million litres (3.8 million gallons) of fresh water, a volume equivalent to six Olympic-size swimming pools. Guided down by lights and ambient music, divers can play table football and other games at the bottom as well as explore an "abandoned sunken city" or just soak up the vegetation on the way.

The pool is equipped with more than 50 cameras, for entertainment and safety purposes.

A one-hour dive costs between \$135 and \$410, with Deep Dive vowing that it will open to the general public soon.

The oyster-shaped structure pays tribute to the pearl-diving tradition of the United Arab Emirates, of which Dubai is a member, explained Deep Dive Dubai's director Jarrod Jablonski, an expat from Florida in the United States.

Dubai, which from October hosts the delayed Expo 2020, reopened to tourists in July of last year and has organised one of the world's fastest vaccination campaigns against Covid-19.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan All Set to Sign TTA

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan and Uzbekistan are all set to sign Transit Trade Agreement (TTA) in Tashkent, allowing each other to use their respective facilities for transshipment of their goods.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is also In-charge Minister for Commerce, will witness the signing ceremony. The TTA will allow passage of goods, vehicles and drivers, in Uzbekistan and its border points with other Central Asian Republics (CARs) including rail and road. Pakistan will grant similar facilities except for India. Uzbeks can use our sea ports. The TTA will be governed under the Convention of Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers).

On April 30, 2021, the first shipment on the TIR left for Uzbekistan via Torkham border custom station.

Uzbekistan already has a Transit Trade Agreement with Afghanistan whereas Pakistan has its own agreement with Afghanistan, which implies after the agreement there will be smooth flow of goods, the sources continued.

Both countries have almost finalized Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) but Tashkent is not ready to sign it for the time being, citing reasons for the delay.

On April 14, 2021, President Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Imran Khan held their first Virtual Summit. President of Uzbekistan extended his invitation to Prime Minister Imran Khan, to attend the high-level International Conference on regional connectivity to be held in July 2021. The two leaders agreed that cooperation in trade and economic sphere



was a key priority to consolidate partnership between the two countries. They also recognized the enormous economic potential for a mutually beneficial relationship.

They agreed to enhance volume of bilateral trade through adopting joint measures by diversification of trade, increasing business-to-business contacts, exchange of trade delegations and extending visa facilitation.

The two leaders underscored the importance of regional integration and connectivity as cornerstone of economic development and progress. They welcomed exchange of high-level visits in the fields of trade, railway and aviation in this regard.

The importance of convening the Uzbekistan-Pakistan business week and business conference in Tashkent in July, 2021 was also discussed. Official sources told business Recorder that over eight dozen businessmen will also attend the conference and have B2B meetings with the trading counterparts.

According to study conducted by Pakistan Business Council (PBC) there are several alternatives for shipping consignments from Pakistan to Tashkent, including the lowest cost shipping alternative, shipping alternative with cost advantage, shipping alternative with transit time advantage and environmentally friendly shipping alternative.

The lowest cost shipping alternative from Lahore to Tashkent gives a freight rate index of 4,406, a transit time estimate of 3.7 days and a carbon dioxide emission index of 2,334 while the lowest cost shipping alternative from Karachi to Tashkent gives a freight rate index of 6,615, a transit time estimate of 5.2 days and a carbon dioxide emission index of 3,640. The shipping alternative with cost advantage from Karachi to Tashkent gives a freight rate index of 9,214, a transit time estimate of 38.3 days and a carbon dioxide emission index of 3,422. The shipment moves from Muhammad Bin Qasim port (Karachi) to Singapore port, from Singapore port to Tianjin Xingang port, from Tianjin Xingang port to Tianjin rail yard, from Tianjin rail yard to Chinkent rail yard finally reaching Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The geographical distance between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is roughly 1,295 kilometers. However, the distance between Karachi and Tashkent is roughly 2,950 kilometers while the distance between Lahore and Tashkent is roughly 1,917 kilometers.

UN Food Systems Summit Releases Potential Solutions for Local, Regional and Global Action

TEHRAN (UNIC) - The UN Food Systems Summit has revealed the 15 action areas with more than 50 solution clusters that will serve as a key element to underpin discussions at the Pre-Summit gathering in Rome, Italy from July 26-28.

Each action area, developed by more than 500 members of the Summit's five Action Tracks, represents a cluster of game-changing propositions that aim to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by transforming entire food systems. The solutions, published on the online Summit Community, are an extensive menu of possible actions expected to support Member States as they work through national pathways for food systems transformation. They will also help inspire new coalitions and commitments from governments and their partners in all constituencies to support delivery of these pathways around the world, many of which will be formalized and announced at the UN Food Systems Summit in September in New York. The solutions were refined from more than 2,000 ideas proposed during 18 months of dialogues, surveys and open fora with Indigenous Peoples, youth, producers, researchers, NGOs and governments, and represent key areas to address some of the world's most pressing issues, from hunger and poverty to climate change.

Among the game-changing solutions are initiatives to reimagine school meals programs as well as proposals to include the cost of a healthy diet when calculating poverty lines. A Global Food Safety Indicator to monitor and reduce foodborne illness will also be considered along with a Responsible Meat initiative to incorporate environmental performance, working conditions and animal welfare into production and consumption.

Initial ideas for new partnerships include an Indigenous Peoples Food Systems Trust, a Coalition for African Youth in Agriculture, and a Food and Land Net Zero Country Alliance, in which countries would commit to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from food and land use by 2050. Other solutions include the development of deforestation-free supply chains, and subsidies redirected towards sustainable production and consumption.



Kuss Wins Tour De France Stage 15

ANDORRA (Reuters) - American Sepp Kuss claimed his maiden victory on the Tour de France with a solo ride in the 15th stage as defending champion Tadej Pogacar was barely bothered in the 191.3-km mountain trek from Ceret to Andorra on Sunday.

The Jumbo-Visma rider prevailed from the day's breakaway thanks to a sharp attack in the last climb before holding off Alejandro Valverde in the descent to the finish with the Spanish veteran taking second place 23 seconds behind.

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Matsuyama Withdraws From British Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Masters Champion Hideki Matsuyama has withdrawn from The Open at Royal St George's after his recent COVID-19 diagnosis and inability to practice properly in time for the year's final major, the Japanese golfer said on Sunday.

Matsuyama has been self-isolating since testing positive during the Rocket Mortgage Classic in Detroit on July 2. He is currently asymptomatic but subsequent PCR tests have continued to show positive results.

Italy Defeat England On Penalties to Euro 2020

LONDON (Dispatches) - Italy wrecked England's Euro 2020 party at Wembley on Sunday, winning a tense final on penalties to plunge the host nation into despair and prolong their 55-year wait for a second major title.

Roberto Mancini's men recovered from the shock of conceding the quickest goal ever in a European Championship final to equalise and held their nerve to claim a 3-2 shootout victory after a 1-1 draw following extra-time.

It is the second time Italy have been crowned European champions and comes after the embarrassment of failing even to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Three players fluffed penalties for England, extending their poor record in shoot-outs and leaving the hosts waiting for another major trophy after the 1966 World Cup.

"We did well," Mancini told RAI Sport. "We conceded a goal straight away and struggled, but then we dominated the game."

"The lads were wonderful, I don't know what more to say. It's important for all the people and all the fans. I hope they're celebrating (in Italy)."

Italians spilled on to the streets from Milan to Palermo to celebrate their side's triumph, pushing aside thoughts of the coronavirus pandemic which has gripped the nation.

Earlier, a partisan crowd of more than 67,000 mostly England fans at Wembley was whipped into a state of fever pitch by rousing renditions of "Three Lions" and "Sweet Caroline" before kick-off.

Gareth Southgate's team raced out of the blocks and were ahead in just the second minute when defender Luke Shaw finished coolly at the back post after an inviting cross from Kieran Trippier. Italy grew stronger as the match went on and equalized with 23 minutes remaining when Leonardo Bonucci scrambled the ball into the net from close range.

With four minutes remaining of normal time a pitch invader stopped the action and stewards struggled to catch him, adding to a sense of chaos at the stadium after ticketless fans earlier forced their way in.

Normal time finished goalless despite a flurry of substitutions and the sides were still locked at 1-1 after extra time.

England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford saved spot-kicks from Andrea Belotti and Jorginho but Marcus Rashford hit the post and Gianluigi Donnarumma kept out Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, sparking scenes



of delirium from the players and the small pocket of Italian fans.

The atmosphere around Wembley was frenzied in the build-up to the match, which kicked off at 1900 GMT, with supporters draped in England colours downing pints of beer and chanting anthems.

Footage posted on social media showed hundreds of supporters battling to get past lines of stewards and police, with some able to force their way through security cordons and others scaling walls.

Another video appeared to show violent clashes between fans inside Wembley itself. Meanwhile England's Football Association condemned racist social media attacks targeting soccer players following Sunday's loss to Italy in the Euro 2020 final.

Italy defeated England on penalty kicks, 3-2 after the game remained tied, 1-1 through extra time. England's Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, who are Black, missed penalty kicks and were almost immediately subjected to racist abuse on social media following the game, including monkey emojis, slurs and taunts to "get out my country."

The FA — English soccer's governing body — released a statement Sunday evening castigating the social media abuse.

"The FA strongly condemns all forms of discrimination and is appalled by the online racism that has been aimed at some of our England players on social media," the statement reads. "We could not be clearer that anyone behind such disgusting behavior is not welcome in following the team."

"We will do all we can to support the players affected while urging the toughest punishments possible for anyone responsible."

Messi Played Copa America Final With Injury

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni paid tribute to Lionel Messi on Saturday, praising his team captain and revealing he played in the Copa America win over Brazil with an injury.

"If you knew the way that he played in the Copa America you'd love him even more," Scaloni told reporters after Argentina's 1-0 win at the Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

"You can never do without a player like him, even when he is not fully fit like in this game and the previous one."

Scaloni did not say what the injury was but he showered Messi with praise on a night Argentines took to the streets in huge numbers to celebrate their first international title in 28 years and Messi's first victory with the national side.

Messi, winner of the FIFA Player of the Year award a record six times, has won every club and individual honour with Barcelona but he had lost all four of his previous finals with Argentina.

The 34-year old had shown his frustration with the defeats, retiring after losing the 2016 Copa America to Chile only to return to the international fold a few weeks later.

"In the end he did not throw in the towel and he succeeded," Scaloni said.

"We are talking about the best footballer of all time and everyone knew how important it was for him to win a title with the national team."

Hsieh Takes Third Wimbledon Doubles Title

LONDON (Reuters) - Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei claimed her third Wimbledon doubles title with a third different partner as she and Elise Mertens hung on to claim victory in a marathon final against Russian duo Veronika Kudermetova and Elena Vesnina.

The Taiwanese-Belgian duo saved match points on the way to claiming a 3-6 7-5 9-7 win on Centre Court. It was the second successive Wimbledon doubles crown for Hsieh who joined forces with recently-retired Barbora Strycova to win the title in 2019. She also won the title in 2013 with Peng Shuai.

This time it was Mertens, the newly-installed No.1 ranked women's doubles player, who she teamed up with to great effect.

Unseeded Kudermetova and Vesnina had two match points at 5-4 in the second set, the second one producing an incredible rally that Hsieh eventually won with a volley.

As the third set went on and on, the 35-year-old Hsieh then finished off a gripping contest with a backhand winner.

"That felt like seven hours," Mertens said of the two-and-a-half hour battle on a packed Centre Court.

"There were nerves but we managed it well in the end. "We are very happy that we could close it out."

French Olympic Medal Hope Twists Ankle in Tokyo Run-In

PARIS (AFP) - French pole vaulter Renaud Lavillenie suffered a potential blow less than two weeks from the Tokyo Olympics when he twisted his ankle warming up for a competition in northern France on Sunday.

The 2012 Olympic champion, one of the main medal hopes of France's track and field team, landed awkwardly on the mat and immediately pulled out of the Sotteville-Les-Rouen meet.

Medical scans showed a twisted left ankle, with his training group saying his participation in the July 23-August 8 Tokyo Games, with pole vault qualifying scheduled for July 31, was not in doubt.

"Clearly not the ideal scenario for my last competition before the Olympic Games," tweeted Lavillenie, 34.

Lyon in Talks to Sign Onana From Ajax



But the 25-year-old looks set to reunite with former Ajax coach Peter Bosz instead, with Dutch news outlet NOS reporting his agent confirmed a personal agreement

PARIS (Dispatches) - Lyon are in talks to sign Andre Onana from Ajax, the goalkeeper's agent has confirmed.

The Cameroon international has been linked to a move this summer, with Arsenal and Inter reported to be eager to sign him.

But the 25-year-old looks set to reunite with former Ajax coach Peter Bosz instead, with Dutch news outlet NOS reporting his agent confirmed a personal agreement

has been reached with the French club.

Onana's agent Albert Botines has said that Ajax and Lyon are in negotiations over a deal ahead of the new season.

He told Voetbal Primeur: "Yes, they are interested. The clubs are in talks."

L'Equipe claims that the former Barcelona player will sign a five-year contract with the Ligue 1 side. The French outlet says Ajax are demanding around €10 million (£9m/\$12m) for Onana, though Lyon are hoping to talk them down to a deal worth €6m (£5m/\$7m) plus bonuses.

Djokovic Wins Record-Equaling 20th Grand Slam

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic won a record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title and sixth Wimbledon on Sunday with a four-set victory over battling Matteo Berrettini of Italy.

The world number one triumphed 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to move level on 20 majors with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

His win also put him three-quarters of the way to the first calendar Grand Slam of all four majors since 1969. A sixth victory at the All England Club for Djokovic, who was playing in his 30th final at the Slams, added to his nine Australian Opens, two Roland Garros titles as well as three at the U.S. Open.

Should he win a fourth title in New York in September, he will become just the third man in history after Don Budge (1938) and Rod Laver (1962 and 1969) to complete the calendar Grand Slam. "It was more than a battle. He is a true Italian hammer I felt it on my skin," said Djokovic of Berrettini.

"It means none of us three will stop. Roger and Rafa are legends they are the reason I am where I am today." Federer -- who bowed out in the quarter-finals while Nadal did not play -- tweeted his congratulations.

"Congrats Novak on your 20th major," he said.

"I'm proud to have the opportunity to play in a special era of tennis champions. Wonderful performance, well done!"



Mektic, Pavic First All-Croatian Pair to Triumph at Wimbledon

LONDON (Reuters) - Top seeds Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic became the first all-Croatian pair to capture a Grand Slam men's doubles title when they outclassed Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos 6-4 7-6(5) 2-6 7-5 at Wimbledon.

On their second championship point, Mektic and Pavic made three unsuccessful attempts to smash the ball away for a winner before a running forehand long from the Spanish-Argentine duo handed the Croatians victory on a floodlit Centre Court.

Twenty years after Goran Ivanisevic hoisted the Challenge Cup at the All England Club after winning the men's title in a rain-delayed Monday final, his compatriots claimed the doubles trophy at the grasscourt major.

"That ball falling long in the last point was the best feeling of my life," Mektic, who was contesting his first major final with Pavic, said with a laugh.

"The last three matches we played were the best of my life."

An emotional Pavic, with his voice quivering, added: "This is something special."

"We all grew up with Goran, it's been 20 years now since he won that Monday final, and this is the first time since Croatia is winning another trophy here. I know it's doubles but still it's Wimbledon. I am super happy."

It was a third men's doubles title for Pavic, who had previously triumphed at 2018 Australian Open and 2020 U.S. Open with different partners.

