

Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 86,391 With 184 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Disease Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Director of Returnable Systems In Iran's Space Research Center Vahhab Haqiqat Says Iran Is Building Communications Balloons And Airships systems Which Can Replace Traditional Methods

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Next Round of Vienna Talks Likely to Be Held In Mid-August

TEHRAN (MNA) – Western news sources claim that the seventh round of nuclear talks in Vienna to determine the status of implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will probably take place in mid-August.

Western sources claim that nuclear talks between world powers and Islamic Republic of Iran are unlikely to take place before the new Iranian president takes office next month.

The seventh round of Vienna talks is expected to take place in mid-August, Bloomberg News website quoted two officials close to the timing of the nuclear talks as saying.

Another European source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Bloomberg that Tehran was expected to be ready to resume talks only after the inauguration of Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi as the next president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is the latest estimate of start of seventh round of nuclear talks held in Vienna a few months ago to determine the status of implementation of the Iran's nuclear deal, JCPOA.

The Vienna talks over Iran's nuclear standoff began in April 2021 with the aim of bringing the United States back to JCPOA and persuading Iran to suspend its measures taken in line with reducing its JCPOA commitments.

Iran Able to Enrich Uranium Up to 90%



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani Yesterday said that the country is able to enrich uranium up to 90 percent if it desires. Making the remarks addressing the Cabinet meeting, he said “AEOI can enrich uranium by 20% and 60% and if one day our reactor needs it, it can produce 90-percent uranium.”

Noting that Iran has shown that it can resolve its major issues with the world via negotiation, Rouhani said after the withdrawal of the US from the JCPOA, Iran decided to test other solutions when holding talks did not work.

He added that by pulling out from the JCPOA, Trump sought to kill the deal and make Iran's economy collapse but none of his dreams came true.

The president said that the Westerners wanted to shut down Fordow nuclear site but today, AEOI can enrich uranium by 20% and 60% and if need, it can produce 90-percent uranium.

Rouhani also said that one of his administration's most important objectives was to safeguard the nation's rights which were achieved by the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

Rouhani was speaking in the wake of July 14, a date which coincides with the signing of the JCPOA in 2015. The date has been designated as the day of Constructive Dialog and Interaction in Iran's national calendar.

He said that some political factions believed that Iran's disagreements with the world powers and the IAEA on the nuclear issues weren't solvable through negotiation and they would be solved possibly only through the battlefield.

However, he elaborated, his administration managed to achieve an agreement through negotiation with world powers only within the first 100 days into the office and to stop U.S. and international sanctions against Iran and cancel all nuclear-related UN Security Council resolutions against the nation.

As a result of those efforts, Rouhani stressed, Iran's inflation rate fell below 10 for three consecutive years from 2015 to 2017 which was unprecedented in Iran's history.

The President also underlined that Iran's ability to resist sanctions pressure after the former US President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA was acquired thanks to those three years.

Trump ceased U.S. participation in the deal in early 2018 and resumed all sanctions lifted by the deal. He also imposed many other sanctions in a so-called 'maximum pressure campaign against Iran.

Rouhani said the Israeli regime, Saudi Arabia, extremist U.S. politicians and Iranian opposition made an alliance to deceive Trump by convincing him that Iran's political system and the economy would crash within 24 hours after killing the JCPOA.

But their calculations proved to be wrong and Trump had to wait for three years, ending up seeing all his anti-Iran policy fail.

President Rouhani also hinted that the current administration wouldn't continue talks for the possible return of the US to the JCPOA and thus removing all sanctions against Iran, leaving the task for the new administration of president-elect Seyed Ebrahim Raisi who assumes office on August 5.

Yemeni Army Pummels Saudi-Backed Mercenaries

SANAA (Dispatches) - The military operation by Yemeni armed forces and allied popular committees against Daesh and al-Qaeda mercenaries in Bayda, 130 miles southeast of Sana'a, has ended with the former reclaiming swaths of territory.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, the spokesperson for Yemeni armed forces, in a statement Tuesday said the operation dubbed 'Al-Nasr Al-Mubin' (clear victory) resulted in the liberation of areas in Az Zahir and As Sawma'ah districts of Bayda province that had been seized by the Saudi-backed mercenaries.

During the operation, which lasted 72 hours, the Yemeni armed forces killed and wounded hundreds of Daesh and al-Qaeda mercenaries, and seized a large cache of weapons and other equipment from their possession.

The military spokesman appreciated the people in Bayda Province for their cooperation and pledged to continue military operations "until the cessation of attacks, lifting of the siege, and liberation of all the besieged areas" in the war-ravaged country. "Yemen has always lived freely, with dignity and independence, and this victory belongs to Yemen and all the free people of the Arab and Islamic world," Saree noted in the statement.

He said the details about the operation will be published soon.

The media bureau of Yemen's Operations Command Center releases the video footage of Yemeni armed forces liberating a strategic district and several areas in the central province of al-Bayda.

The foreign mercenaries sponsored by the Saudi-led military coalition launched attacks on the central Bayda province last week, and overran many key areas.

Soon after, Yemeni armed forces and the popular committees announced Al-Nasr Al-Mubi military operation to reclaim the seized areas and to push back the marauding mercenaries.

After barely 72 hours, the areas were back in the control of the Yemeni armed forces.

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Iran to Build 10,000 MW Of Power Plants

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's outgoing government has given approval to install more than 10,000 megawatts of new power capacity by the industrial sector, an energy official says.

The country was hit by a series of power outages this month, which critics blamed much of it on the government's underperformance in establishing new power plants to keep up with runaway demand.

Heavy industries such as steel and cement bore much of the brunt after being told to cut power consumption to 10 percent of their normal operation, media reports said.

It prompted the Ministry of Mine, Trade and Industry and the industrial sector to put an official request with the Ministry of Energy for investment in thermal power plants, head of Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) Mohsen Tarzatabal said. "We received their official request four days ago and today, a permit was issued for the construction of these combined cycle power plants so that the industrial sector, which is the most energy-intensive part of the country, can build power plants for itself," he said.

Hence, the construction of 10,536 MW of power plants was entrusted to the industrial sector, Tarzatabal said, adding it will require 6 billion euros of investment and take three years to build them.

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Chinese, Russian Internet Giants Dodged Iran Because of Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's telecoms minister says two major internet companies from Russia and China cancelled plans to come to Iran in mid-2020s mainly over fears that the presence could have affected their interests in the United States.

Mohammad Javad Azari said in social media posts on Tuesday that Iran could have used China's Tencent and Russia's Yandex to break the monopoly of U.S. giants over internet services in the country.

However, Azari said the two companies cancelled their plans for Iran once they became aware of risks that might arise from their investment and business activity in the country as a result of U.S. sanctions.

The minister said Tencent had declared in an official message to Iran in 2014 that it could not accept Tehran's offer to expand its WeChat social media platform in the country.

Tencent had earlier indicated in talks with Iranian authorities that it might face problems launching its WeChat application in Iran because the company had been listed in the US stock market.

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Washington Gives Tehran Access to Frozen Funds In Japan, South Korea

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. State Department has reportedly informed Congress of its decision to waive sanctions on Iran's oil trade so that Tehran can pay off its debts to Japanese and Korean exporters from its frozen funds, without being able to transfer the funds to the country.

According to a notification sent to Congress by the State Department, the waiver, signed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, allows the "transfer of Iranian funds in restricted accounts to exporters in Japan and the Republic of Korea," the Washington Free Beacon reported.

The waiver said that allowing the funds to be used to "repay exporters in these jurisdictions will make those entities whole with respect to the goods and services they exported to Iran [and] address a recurring irritant in important bilateral relationships." It would also "decrease Iran's foreign reserves," the waiver added. The State Department stressed that the waiver "does not allow for the transfer of any funds to Iran," and will make whole Japanese and Korean companies that exported non-sanctioned goods and services before US sanctions were tightened by the previous administration.

Blinken signed the sanctions waiver to give Japan and Korea another 90-days to complete transactions with Iran, a State Department spokesperson said.

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Tehran, Moscow Stress Strengthening Bilateral Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) – Stating that 40 percent of trade volume exchanges between Iran and Russia is presently done via bilateral currencies, Iranian Ambassador to Russia said that two countries have poised to enhance their relations in all fields.

Islamic Republic of Iran signed a 20-year contract with the Russian Federation in 2001 and it was approved at Iranian Parliament, Kazem Jalali stated.

Presently, this contract inked between Iran and Russia was extended automatically for five years, Jalai emphasized.

He went on to say that this strategic contract inked between Iran and Russia has political, military and defense, and especially, economic aspects.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iranian envoy to Russian Federation pointed out that 40 percent of trade volume exchanges between the two countries is carried out bilateral currencies (rials and rubles), adding that effective steps have been taken in order to increase the volume.

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IRGC Thwarts Counter-Revolutionary Group's Plan to Enter Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hamzeh Seyed Al-Shohada base in Urmia, West Azarbaijan, announced in a statement that the IRGC forces thwarted the plan of the counter-revolutionary group that intended to enter the country from Oshnavieh.

The plan of a group of counter-revolutionary elements that intended to enter Iran from the Oshnavieh region on Monday evening failed due to the vigilance of IRGC forces, the statement read.

The counter-revolutionary elements, who found themselves surrounded by police forces, had to escape from the region, it added.

Iran to Keep Defending Palestine

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President-Elect Seyed Ebrahim Raisi reiterated Iran's support for the Palestinian nation until the liberation Jerusalem al-Quds from the Israeli occupation.

Raisi had telephone conversations with Ismail Haniyeh and Ziyad al-Nakhalah, leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the Palestinian resistance movements based in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon's al-Mayadeen TV channel reported on Tuesday.

"Rest assured that Iran will continue to defend Palestine and support its nation until the liberation of Jerusalem al-Quds," the president-elect told the resistance leaders.

Raisi also congratulated the Palestinians on their victory against the Israeli regime during the 11-day war on Gaza, stressing that the oppressed nation and the heroic resistance of Palestine once again shone in a decisive test as they forced Israel to retreat in their push towards liberating al-Quds al-Sharif.

Tel Aviv launched the bombing campaign against Gaza on May 10, after Palestinians retaliated against violent raids on worshippers at the al-Aqsa Mosque and the regime's



plans to force a number of Palestinian families out of their homes at Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem al-Quds.

Apparently caught off guard by unprecedented rocket barrages from Gaza as part of Operation al-Quds Sword, Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire on May 21, which Palestinian resistance groups accepted with Egyptian mediation.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, at least 260 Palestinians were killed in the Israeli offensive, including 66 children and 39 women, and 1948 others were wounded.

Haniyeh, for his part, congratulated Raeisi on his victory in Iran's presidential election and appreciated the Islamic Republic's support for the Palestine issue.

Similarly, Nakhalah wished success for Raeisi and thanked Iran for backing the Palestinian nation and its resistance movement.

Qalibaf Urges For Expansion of Ties Among Asian States



TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has told a meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) that Iran seeks enhanced cooperation among Asian countries.

A virtual meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs of Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) was held with the Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf addressing the event during which he urged for expansion of cooperation among Asian countries to enhance the Asian continent level in the international equations.

"Undoubtedly, the positive and constructive cooperation and interaction of the members of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) and the dialogue and agreement among the representatives at all levels will increase the achievements of APA as an important parliamentary institution, and as a result, would strengthen cooperation and move towards integration in the ancient continent of Asia," Qalibaf said in part of his message.

The Iranian speaker of parliament further hailed the cultural diversity in Asia while stressing the need for preserving the diversity by respecting the national cultural values and differences. "Certainly, different Asian nations have invested a lot to preserve this national and collective identity, which the members of parliament, who act as the voice of the people, are obliged to preserve and strengthen," he pointed out.

He further noted that the approach of the Iranian parliament is based on moderation and constructive interaction, and efforts to pay special attention to cooperation with the ancient Asian continent and to find practical solutions to develop economic cooperation.

Qalibaf said that "The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that by expanding interactions between Asian countries, it is possible ... to achieve the new Asia and enhance Asia to its real level in the global equations."

The ancient Asia continent will have a brighter future ahead through greater cooperation between the parliaments of Asian countries, the Iranian parliament speaker went on to conclude.

Tehran, Beijing Stress Enhancing Bilateral Cooperation

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran and People's Republic of China emphasized the need to expand and enhance bilateral cooperation in various arenas.

In this regard, Chinese Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran Chang Hua met and held talks with Iranian Parliament Speaker's Special Aide for the International Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran to discuss the issues of mutual interests.

During the meeting, Amir-Abdollahian pointed to the friendly and strategic ties between the two countries of Iran and China and stated that evermore expansion of communications and cooperation between Tehran and Beijing in various sectors has an effective role in securing interests among people of the two countries.

While expressing his satisfaction with the development



of bilateral relations between the two countries, he termed the recent virtual meeting held between parliament speakers of the two countries as well as agreements made as a turning point in parliamentary and official cooperation between Iran and China.

In this meeting, the latest situation of bilateral parliamentary relations was also reviewed and continuation of ever growing ties between Iran and China was emphasized.

Chinese envoy to Tehran, for his turn, stated that expansion of all-out ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran is supported and pursued by Chinese officials on the 50th anniversary of establishment of political and diplomatic relations between Islamic Republic of Iran and China.

During the meeting, Chang Hua stressed China's support for the Islamic Republic of Iran in international forums.

Tehran Intra-Afghan Meeting Was Great Success

TEHRAN (MNA) – Director-General of the Department of South Asian Affairs of the Iranian Foreign Ministry said that the Tehran Intra-Afghan meeting is a process that, if maintained, could solve Afghanistan's problems.

Stating that holding an intra-Afghan meeting in Tehran was not a sudden issue and has a long history, Rasoul Mousavi said, "In 2016, when Afghanistan's current foreign minister, Hanif Atmar, was the country's national security adviser, traveled to Tehran and asked Iran for help in negotiating with the Taliban."

"At that time, at the request of the Afghan side, Iran contacted the Taliban and they agreed to peace talks. Mr. Shamkhani then traveled to Kabul, where he held talks with Mr. Hamdullah Mohib, then Afghanistan's national security adviser, and conveyed the Taliban's message of readiness to hold talks. During that trip, the Afghan government was supposed to inform us of its decision to hold talks, but unfortunately, it was not followed up," he added.

Mousavi went on to say, "According to our information, the United States prevented the formation of these intra-Afghan talks; At that time, the Americans had a different view of the Afghan reality, and due to the strategic alliance with the Afghan government, they thought they were ruling over Afghanistan and did not allow the Afghan government to do anything that was against their interests."

Stating that the United States at the time considered peace talks between the Taliban and the government to be to its detriment, the Iranian diplomat said, "This was while Iran wanted to help both sides with these negotiations."

"Therefore, the idea of intra-Afghan talks is not a new idea and it is based on the will of the Afghan side; But unfortunately, the Americans prevented the formation of these negotiations in those years with their actions," he added.

Regarding the prospects of intra-Afghan talks in Tehran, despite the current situation in Afghanistan, he said, "Several trends have been raised about the situation in Afghanistan; The Americans are leading the Doha process, and the Moscow process is in the form of the P3+1. An initiative was supposed to be formed in Istanbul, but it did not materialize. The United Nations has another initiative in the form of 6+2 that does not have a clear destiny."

Iran to Take Part in Russian Navy Day Parade

TEHRAN (MNA) – Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced the participation of warships and frigates from several countries, including Iran, in this year's Russian Navy Day parade.

Russia marks NAVY Day with a military parade in St. Petersburg, according to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, speaking to reporters on Tuesday.

The minister said that as many as 54 warships are going to participate in the parade, adding that the warships will be from Russia and several other countries.

Shoigu added that this year's parade will be the largest of its kind in comparison to Navy Day parades in previous years.

The defense also noted this year's parade will be the fifth of its kind after the formation of the Russian Federation after the Soviet collapse in 1990 and also will mark the 325th anniversary of the founding of the Russian Navy.

He further pointed out that 54 warships, including frigates from Iran, India and Pakistan, will take part in the parade, with a total of 4,000 military personnel.

Day of the Russian Navy is a national holiday in the Russian Federation and a senior holiday in the Russian Armed Forces. The day honors the sailors in units of the Russian Navy and its specialized arms. It is celebrated annually, on the last Sunday of July, Wikipedia said on the event.

FM Spokesman Slams U.S. Interference in Cuba Protests

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh condemned the U.S. and some Western countries' interference in the recent protests in Cuba.

He called for the immediate stop of US meddling in Cuba's internal affairs.

He said the U.S. should also cease imposing unilateral sanctions against other countries, including Cuba.

Cuba has been facing extensive U.S. sanctions over sixty years which has caused complicated problems for the country and affected the economy and livelihoods of its people, especially at this time of COVID19 pandemic, the spokesman added. Khatibzadeh went on to note that at the present conditions where the United States is the main cause of many problems created for the Cuban people, it is trying to introduce itself as a supporter of the protesters in Cuba in clear breaching of international rules.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman further stressed that Iran in the framework of its fundamental stands any kind of intervention in the internal affairs of that country, and as a country that is itself faced with the illegal and unjust US sanction, expresses solidarity with the Cuban people and government, and asks for an immediate end to the unilateral US sanctions against Cuba.

Iranian Researchers Successful in Unveiling Different COVID-19 Vaccines

TEHRAN (IP) - The Vice President for Science and Technology of Iran underscored that the Iranian researchers had been successful in unveiling various vaccines.

Sorena Sattari, the Vice President for Science and Technology of Iran, said on Tuesday: "Several vaccines made by Iranian researchers that have been produced in homemade private research institutes will be unveiled by the end of the year 1400 (March 20, 2022)."

Sattari added: "One of the research institutes in Iran has also succeeded in producing influenza vaccine and will produce several other vaccines by the end of the year."

The Vice President of Science and Technology of Iran also said that the private sector investment in technology could lead to economic prosperity.

Tehran Hosting Islamic States on Health Tourism

TEHRAN (MNA) - The 5th edition of the International Health Congress of Islamic Countries started in Tehran on Tuesday, aiming to find new opportunities for cooperation and development of health tourism among Muslim nations.

Being held at IRIB International Conference Center, the congress is organized by the Health Tourism Development Center of Islamic Countries (HTDC) and supported by ministries, federations, institutions, and organizations in health tourism as well as private and governmental health service providers, the official website of the event announced.

The three-day event has brought together seniors and experts from governmental and private sectors in the health tourism industry.

The congress is being held in five specialized panel discussions of medical tourism, sports tourism, natural, wellness, and food tourism, medical and laboratory equipment, and nutrition and healthy food.

The event started its official operations in 2015 with the aim of playing an effective role in developing economic relations and facilitating the networks between stakeholders in the health and health tourism industry.

The developing health tourism industry is one of the most important fields of Iran's travel sector, which is trying to prove its capabilities and capacities in attracting medical and health tourists to the country.

Many domestic experts believe that medical tourism in Iran is a win-win opportunity both for the country and foreign patients, as they are offered affordable yet quality treatment services and the country gains considerable foreign currency.

Iran's two most popular medical tourist cities are Tehran and Mashhad, but the coronavirus outbreak has significantly reduced the number of travelers.

Iran Exports \$49m Worth of Medicinal, Industrial Plants in Q1

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) official said Iran exported \$49 million of medicinal plants in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (starting from March 21).

Mahmoud Bazari said on Wednesday that in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, 29,000 tons of Medicinal plants (medicinal herbs), decorative or ornamental plants, and industrial plants were exported from Iran.

He added that 53% of which at a value of \$26 million is saffron.

Tea exports also amounted to 4,000 tons at a value of \$ 4 million, an increase of 728% for the same period last year, up 642% in weight. This senior official at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said that these products were exported to China, the UAE, Spain, Pakistan, Iraq and Germany. Iranian Saffron known as the "red gold", is a magical ingredient in Persian culture, from aromatic foods and colorful desserts to physical and spiritual medicine.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:41
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:18
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:00

175. It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries:
Be ye not afraid of them, but fear Me, if ye have Faith.
176. Let not those grieve thee who rush headlong into Unbelief: Not the least harm will they do to Allah.
Allah's plan is that He will give them no portion in the Hereafter, but a severe punishment.
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (175 - 176)

Tehran Can Use Tokyo's Experiences in Dealing With Urban Waste

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi on Tuesday in meeting with Japan Ambassador to Tehran Ikawa Kazutoshi said Tehran can take advantage of Japan's experiences in dealing with urban waste and renewal of dilapidated urban areas.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the unveiling ceremony of Reverse Vending Machines (RVM) which was held in Tehran Municipality Mayor's Office. RVM is, on the contrary to usual vending machines, you can get money from it when you put empty plastic bottles or cans into the machine. They are used all over the world in order to promote recycling. In Tehran, many people deal with the urban waste with their own hands. Considering this COVID-19 situation, "regular" urban waste may become "hazardous" waste, increasing risk of spreading the virus.

In the meeting, Hanachi said Tehran like any big city in the world is involved with challenges like traffic, air pollution and water issues, adding that over 240 years is passing since Tehran was chosen as the capital city of the country and it seems King Aqa Mohammad Qajar has correctly chosen the city as the capital.

He added that the municipality has currently some plans on agenda for resolving traffic problem, expansion of the public transportation and Tehran metro in less than recent decade has progressed 50 percent physically as seven metro lines have been launched and three more lines are in the pipeline.

He admitted that sanctions condition has made tough the condition for providing wagons but due to our experience in wagon manufacturing, the country has designed and implemented the national metro train, adding that the municipality has plans to minimize air pollution through using electric car in the public transportation fleet like taxis, bus and even private cars.

Hanachi then pointed to Japan's experience in the fields of urban waste and renovation of the old urban areas can be taken into consideration in Tehran Municipality, and expressed his willing for Japan's share of its experiences in these two fields with Iran.

He reiterated that the coronavirus pandemic has eased virtual meetings and expressed hope some measures are taken for communication of Japan's



municipality experts with their counterparts in Tehran.

He then briefed Japan envoy of the process of recycling the urban waste, adding that currently the amount of waste in Tehran has declined to 5700 tons from 7200 tons after taking measures since he took office in the municipality.

Hanachi said despite heavy traffic and air pollution, Tehran enjoys having protected its diverse historical and natural attractions.

Japan envoy, for his part, said that Tehran metro system has been expanded considerably and it is due to efforts of the municipality, adding that metro system in Japan has also progressed and if the sanctions saga was resolved, Japan could have exchanged its experiences and new technologies in this field.

He added that one of the main problems of Japan is its aging population which has forced the governments to spend more for the public welfare while Iran's population is young and for this reason Iran has not faced any problem yet but in the future it may face.

Mr. Iwakata then pointed to cooperation between Iran and Japan in the fields of managing natural disaster, air pollution and measuring the pollutants, providing medical equipment in Imam Hossein (AS) hospital, adding that his country is determined to continue the cooperation in different fields.

He then announced his country's readiness for sharing its experiences in dealing with the urban waste and renovation of the old and dilapidated urban areas.

Tehran, Tashkent Sign \$5m Agreement on Textile Exports

TEHRAN (MNA) – Uzbekistan and Iran sign a textile export deal at the value of five million dollars.

The Deputy Mayor of the Uzbek Qashqadaryo Region, leading a delegation is now in Iran to discuss the expansion of mutual economic ties.

The trip is organized by the Uzbek Embassy in Iran based on the understanding reached during the officials' visit to Qashqadaryo in January 2021.

The members of the Uzbek delegation met with the representatives of North Industrial Marine Coating Co. in Mazandaran province and got acquainted with the company's activities in the factory in the northern Iranian province.

As accorded between the two sides an Iranian delegation will pay a visit to Qashqadaryo in August 2021.

There are reportedly 272 companies operating in Uzbekistan using Iranian investment.

Trade volume between the two countries in the last eight months of 2020 stood at \$158 million.



Iranians Continue Buying Properties in Turkey

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - While Iranian housing purchases in Turkey dropped sharply in May, a new report by the Turkish Statistical Center shows that this peaked again in June, reaching the highest level this year.

Iranians bought 683 units of homes in the country in June, according to the report.

Iranians bought 3,700 housing in Turkey in the first half of 2021 and remain at the top of foreign home buyers in the country.

Iranians in Turkey had dropped to 231 units during May, half of the monthly purchase of housing from the second half of 2020.

Iranians bought about 7,200 housing units in Turkey last year, a third more than in 2019 and twice as many as in 2018.

Turkey sold about 21,000 housing units to foreigners during the first half of 2021, 44% more than in the same period last year.

After Iranians, who had a 15 percent share in the total purchase of housing by foreigners in Turkey and were top of the ranks, nationals of Iraq, Russia, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Germany, Yemen and Azerbaijan are next in the rankings.

Iran to Struggle With Electricity Problem for Two Years

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Experts say the failure to realize the growth plans for electricity generation and the widespread losses of electricity in the distribution network are among the main reasons for the recent power crisis in Iran.

A member of Iran's electricity industry syndicate said that the current unstable conditions in electricity supply and widespread blackouts are due to "a lack of proper planning in the energy category" and that "if there is action to increase electricity generation from today, we will have a power shortage problem for at least the next two years."

In an interview with the Young Journalists Club, Nusratollah Kazemi called for the preparation of an "energy planning plan with the participation of all stakeholders in the energy field of the country."

He said that "restrictions on the electricity supply of industries and their closures would significantly harm the national economy", and that this method is not consumption management, but consumption restrictions.

Mr. Kazemi has expressed concern about the conditions of electricity supply this winter.

Following repeated and prolonged power outages in various cities of Iran over the past few weeks, many citizens have posted videos on social media announcing the damage to businesses, disruption of administrative and traffic issues, and the deterioration of some patients.

Iran, Armenia Sign MoU on Joint Industrial Towns



TEHRAN (MNA) – The Small Industries and Industrial Towns Organization of Iran and the Investment Support Center of Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding in order to develop bilateral cooperation.

In a ceremony on Tuesday, the Small Industries and Industrial Towns Organization of Iran and the Investment Support Center of Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding in the presence of the Armenian Ambassador to Iran.

Small industries play an important role in the producing and distributing of wealth in the economy and there is a need for strengthening small and medium enterprises, said Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Ali Rasoulzadeh in this ceremony.

So far, more than 900 industrial towns have been put into operation in Iran that more than 10% of these units enjoy high-tech industries and science parks, Rasoulzadeh said in this ceremony.

In order to develop experiences, so far, 32 memorandums of cooperation have been signed between Iran and other countries, he added.

Rasoulzadeh expressed hope that the increase and continuation of cooperation between Iran and Armenia will lead to the creation of small industries and joint industrial towns.

The development of bilateral cooperation, providing appropriate trade solutions for all stakeholders, the promotion and improvement of the investment climate, and the creation of an operational framework to strengthen trade relations between the parties were among the goals of the mentioned MoU.

Cheap Loans to Startups Topped \$510m in Q1

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has announced that the credit offered to startup businesses in the form of cheap loans topped \$510 million in the quarter to late June 21.

A CBI statement on Tuesday said that banks had paid a total of 127.1 trillion rials to 558 companies that are solely focused on science and technology ventures in the first quarter of the current calendar year.

The statement said the figure shows an increase of 247.4% compared to the similar period in 2020.

Top three main lenders offering cheap loans to the startup businesses were Bank Melli, Bank Saderat and Bank Mellat, said the CBI, adding that the three banks had accounted for over 55% of the funds provided to the so-called knowledge-based enterprises.



Iran has invested heavily to support home-grown innovation and technology initiatives that could contribute to the economic growth in the country.

The support is part of a larger government plan to diversify the Iranian economy away from crude and reduce its vulnerability to foreign sanctions.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said last month that the number of startups active in science and technology initiatives had increased by over 100 times in seven years to more than 6,000 companies.

Experts believe support for knowledge-based companies has paid off as the firms have contributed to Iran's growing self-sufficiency in various fields of science and technology. They say science and technology startups have been a major help to Iran's efforts to reduce the impacts of US sanctions on the country's manufacturing sector.

Seven New Cities to Be Created

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran and CEO of New Towns Construction Company says seven new cities have been located in the country and have also obtained the approvals of the Supreme Council of Architecture and Urban Development, which we are planning to create these cities.

Habibullah Taherkhani told IRNA that 17 new government cities with a capacity of about four million people are being established on 40,000 hectares of government land, and that 800,000 people are inhabited in these cities and their population is expected to reach more than 2.5 million in the next five years.

Parand is currently the country's most populous new city, followed by Andisheh and Sadra, Pardis and Golbahar, he said.

Taherkhani said recently we launched two new cities between Chabahar and Konak and Ivanaki cities in Semnan province and 55 kilometers from Tehran. His reference to the project to build towns and cities is within the framework of the Mehr Housing Project, which over the past years has led to widespread protests and dissatisfaction with the poor quality of buildings and the lack of infrastructure. The project began during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

On the other hand, President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday during the operation of one of his government's latest projects that "the government has no duty to build housing, but the facilities are the responsibility of the government."



Millions of Tons of Imports Stuck at Iran's Ports

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – According to reports, 1.3 million metric tons of "essential goods" have arrived in Iranian waters but cannot be unloaded because importers have not been able to obtain hard currency from the government to pay foreign vendors in full.

Importers of essential goods receive each U.S. dollar from the government for 42,000 rials, while the value of the U.S. currency is around 240,000 rials on the open exchange market.

However, importers often must wait a long time to receive the cheap dollars. Due to US sanctions on Iran's

oil exports the government simply does not have enough dollars to distribute.

The Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) reported that besides the 1.3 million tons of goods on ships waiting near Iranian ports, another 5.5 million tons of essential imports are also backed up at ports, again mostly due to lack of foreign currency.

The issue of key imports being stranded on ships and at ports has been going on for months, with President Hassan Rouhani's government, the Central Bank of Iran and other officials holding frequent meetings and issuing proclamations about having solved the problem.

France to Hold 2022 Presidential Election Rounds on April 10 and 24

PARIS (Dispatches) - The first round of France's presidential election will be held on April 10 next year, with the second round scheduled on April 24, government spokesman Gabriel Attal said on Tuesday.

The elections had been the subject of talks between France's political parties and Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, whose ministry is responsible for preparing and organising the country's elections.

The other set of dates up for discussion for the two presidential election rounds were a first round on April 17, which falls on Easter Sunday in 2022, and a runoff on May 1, the Labour Day holiday in France.

President Emmanuel Macron was elected to a five-year mandate on May 7, 2017, and took office on May 14.



Bangladesh to Lift Lockdown for Festival

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh will lift its nationwide coronavirus lockdown for the country's second-biggest religious festival, the government said Tuesday, even as new infections soared to record levels.

The cabinet said all restrictions would be eased in the Muslim-majority country of 169 million people from Thursday ahead of the Eid al-Adha festival which will be celebrated from July 20 to 22 this year.

The removal of the curbs would "normalise economic activities" ahead of the celebrations, it added.

Tens of millions of people usually head back to their villages to mark Eid al-Adha with their families.



Worst Violence in Years Spreads in South Africa



JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - Crowds clashed with police and ransacked or set ablaze shopping malls in cities across South Africa on Tuesday, with dozens of people reported killed, as grievances unleashed by the jailing of ex-president Jacob Zuma boiled over into the worst violence in years.

Protests that followed Zuma's arrest last week have widened into looting and an outpouring of general anger over the hardship and inequality that persist 27 years after the end of apartheid.

Poverty has been exacerbated by severe social and economic restrictions aimed at blocking the spread of COVID-19.

Security officials said the government was working to halt the spread of the violence and looting, which has spread from Zuma's home in KwaZulu-Natal province to the country's biggest city Johannesburg and surrounding Gauteng province, and to the Indian Ocean port city of Durban.

Soldiers have been sent onto the streets to try to contain the unrest.

Zuma, 79, was sentenced last month for defying a constitutional court order to give evidence at an inquiry investigating high-level corruption during his nine years in office until 2018.

He also faces trial in a separate case on charges including corruption, fraud, racketeering and money laundering. He pleaded not guilty in court in May.

Zuma's foundation said there would be no peace in South Africa until the former president was released from jail.

"Peace and stability in South Africa is directly linked to the release of President Zuma with immediate effect," it said in a Tweet.

"The violence could have been avoided. It started with the decision of the constitutional court to detain president Zuma ... This is what gave anger to the people," a spokesman for the foundation told Reuters separately.

Troops moved into flashpoints on Tuesday as outnumbered police seemed helpless to stop the unrest, with columns of armored personnel carriers rolling down highways.

The bodies of 10 people were found on Monday evening after a stampede at a Soweto shopping mall, Gauteng premier David Makhura said.

Hundreds of looters raided warehouses and supermarkets in Durban, one of the busiest shipping terminals on the African continent and an import-export hub.

Outside a Durban warehouse of retailer Game, looters stuffed cars with electronic goods and clothes, a Reuters witness said. Inside, the floor was a mess of discarded packaging as the crowd emptied the shelves.

The rand, which had been one of the best performing emerging market currencies during the pandemic, dropped to a three-month low on Tuesday, and local and hard currency bonds suffered.

Taliban Warn Turkey Against Extending Troop Presence in Afghanistan

KABUL (Dispatches) - The Taliban on Tuesday warned Turkey against extending its troop presence in Afghanistan when US-led forces leave the country, insisting the decision was "reprehensible".

"The decision... is ill-advised, a violation of our sovereignty and territorial integrity and against our national interests," the group said in a statement, days after Ankara agreed with Washington to provide security for Kabul airport when foreign forces leave next month.

"We consider stay of foreign forces in our homeland by any country under whatever pretext as occupation," the Taliban said.

As foreign forces wind up their withdrawal -- due to be completed by August 31 -- the situation on the ground is changing rapidly. The insurgents have swept through much of northern Afghanistan in recent weeks, and the government now holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air.

On Tuesday, the head of a Taliban commission that oversees government forces who surrender to the insurgents urged the



Anger Mounts After 92 Die in Fire on Iraq COVID Ward

NASSIRIYA (Dispatches) - The death toll from a fire that tore through a coronavirus hospital in southern Iraq rose to 92, health officials said on Tuesday, as authorities faced accusations of negligence from grieving relatives and a doctor who works there.

More than 100 people were injured in the blaze on Monday night in Nassiriya, officials said. An investigation showed the fire began when sparks from faulty wiring spread to an oxygen tank that then exploded, police and civil defense authorities said. It was Iraq's second such tragedy in three months, and the country's president on Tuesday blamed corruption for both. A statement from the prime minister's office called for national mourning.

Rescue teams were using a heavy crane to remove the charred and melted remains of the part of the city's al-Hussain hospital where COVID-19 patients were being treated, as relatives gathered nearby.

A medic at the hospital, who declined to give his name and whose shift ended a few hours before the fire broke out, said the absence of basic safety measures meant it was an accident in the making. "The hospital lacks a fire sprinkler system or even a simple fire alarm," he told Reuters.

"We complained many times over the past three months that a tragedy could happen any moment from a cigarette stub but every time we get the same answer from health officials: 'we don't have enough money'."

While some bodies were collected for burial, with mourners weeping and praying over the coffins, the remains of more than 20 badly charred corpses required DNA tests to identify them. In April, a similar explosion at a Baghdad COVID-19 hospital killed at least 82 and injured 110.

The head of Iraq's semi-official Human Rights Commission said Monday's blast showed how ineffective safety measures still were in a health system crippled by war and sanctions. "To have such a tragic incident repeated few months later means that still no (sufficient) measures have been taken to prevent them," Ali Bayati said.

Japan Warns of Crisis Over Taiwan

TOKYO (Reuters) - Growing military tension around Taiwan as well as economic and technological rivalry between China and the United States raises the prospect of crisis in the region as the power balance shifts in China's favor, Japan said in its annual defence white paper.

China rejected Japan's conclusions about what it said was normal military activity, calling them irresponsible.

The Japanese defense review, which was approved by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government on Tuesday, points to China as Japan's main national security concern. "It is necessary that we pay close attention to the situation with a sense of crisis more than ever," the paper said in a new section on Taiwan.

"In particular, competition in technological fields is likely to become even more intense," it said about U.S.-China rivalry.

China's recent increase in military activity around Taiwan has Japan worried since the island lies close to the Okinawa chain at the western end of the Japanese archipelago. Taiwan's Foreign Ministry expressed thanks to Japan for attaching such importance to security in the Taiwan Strait.

But there was an angry reaction in Beijing which said Japan has "for some time now" been making

baseless accusations about China's normal defense buildup and military activities.

"This is very wrong and irresponsible. China expresses strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to this," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian.

Chinese President Xi Jinping this month pledged to complete the "reunification" with Taiwan and in June criticised the United States as a "risk creator" after it sent a warship through the Taiwan Straits separating the island from the mainland.

Japan's deputy prime minister and finance minister, Taro Aso, this month in a speech reported by Japanese media said Japan should join forces with the United States to defend Taiwan from any invasion. Aso later said any contingency over Taiwan should be resolved through dialogue when asked about the remarks, which drew a rebuke from Beijing.

As the military rivalry between the United States and China deepens, their economic competition is fuelling a race to take the lead in technologies such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

The technological rivalry poses a challenge for Japan because its economy relies as much on business ties with China as it does with the United States.



Merkel Says COVID Curbs to Stay Until More Germans Get Shots

BERLIN (Reuters) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned on Tuesday that more people needed to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before restrictions could be lifted,

following news that England will scrap nearly all curbs from next week.

England will lift on July 19 the legal requirement to wear masks and for people to socially distance, in what one German official called "a highly risky experiment".

Germany reported 646 new cases of coronavirus on Tuesday, up from 440 a week ago, with an uptick in the number of cases per 100,000 people over

seven days to 6.4 from 4.9.

"The central question is how many people will seek a vaccination," Merkel told a news conference. "The more people are vaccinated, the more free we will all be again," she said.

A move by France to make vaccinations compulsory for all healthcare workers spurred debate in Germany over whether people in some professions should be forced to get a shot, but Merkel said on Tuesday that would not happen.

"There will be no compulsory vaccination," she said, adding that forcing people to get the shot could undermine public trust in the vaccination campaign.

Merkel said that the government would seek to avoid another lockdown of the economy in the autumn but said it was important to maintain social distancing and other measures to prevent infections from spreading, even as more people are vaccinated.

Her comments echoed Alena Buyx, the head of the German Ethics Council, who said earlier on Tuesday that restrictions should not be eased as long as not even half the population is fully vaccinated.

Buyx told broadcaster ZDF that England's move to lift nearly all remaining coronavirus restrictions was a "highly risky experiment".

The United Kingdom is ahead of most other countries with its vaccination campaign, having now administered two shots to about two thirds of its adult population. Germany has fully vaccinated 43% of its total population.





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Fully Furn

Parsian

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Boeing Cuts 787 Production

SEATTLE (Reuters) - Boeing Co said on Tuesday it would cut its 787 production rate as it works through a new production-related structural defect in its troubled twin-aisle airliner program.

The company now forecasts delivering fewer than half of the lingering 100 or so 787s in its inventory this year - instead of the "vast majority" it had expected - as it continues forensic inspections and costly repairs to address quality flaws in the aircraft.

Boeing did not disclose a new production rate for the 787 program, but said it would shift temporarily below the current rate of five jets per month.



Shipping Industry Seeks to Combat Dark Oil Transfers at Sea

LONDON (Reuters) - Top oil shipping companies say they have tightened operational guidelines and deployed technology to prevent accidental breaches of sanctions, as the countries hit by ever tougher restrictions fight back with elaborate strategies to dodge them.

Washington has ramped up shipping-related sanctions over the last two years to make it harder for countries, such as Iran and Venezuela, to export the oil that provides their main source of revenue. In response, Iran and Venezuela have developed sophisticated methods to bypass sanctions, which are also imposed to a lesser extent by the European Union.

As a result, it is harder for shipping firms to avoid facilitating blacklisted exports unwittingly, potentially laying them open to being cut off from the U.S. financial system or even having assets seized. One way to evade sanctions is to hide behind the practice of transferring oil from one ship to another at sea, known as a ship-to-ship (STS) transfer.

STS transfers are legitimately used to avoid the need for vessels enter a port area and incur port fees or when vessels are too big to enter a terminal. Sanctions dodgers can use STS to falsely document the origin of the oil as a country near to where the transfer takes place rather than its true origin.

As both Iran and Venezuela have boosted exports, cargo trackers have detected an increased number of STS transfers in open waters over the last year. They take place off Malaysia's coast, at locations off Africa and also in the Caribbean, shipping and trading companies say.

Maersk Tankers, which commercially manages the world's largest fleet of more than 220 product tankers, said the company was contending with the falsification of documentation, making legitimate use of STS transfers harder.

It has deployed new technology to screen vessel movements and ownership structures to detect any suspicious activity that it can investigate further as bigger players are particularly vulnerable. "Shipowners are navigating an increasingly complex environment. A part of this complexity arises from new and advanced practices to evade sanctions," Maersk Tankers' chief commercial officer Eva Birgitte Bisgaard told Reuters.

"Bigger players conduct a larger number of voyages, exposing them to more and a greater variety of fraudulent behavior," she said.

In separate incidents in December and January, two vessels managed by Maersk Tankers almost took on cargoes of Iranian oil whose origin was concealed.

The STS operations were halted before the cargoes were transferred after Maersk Tankers was alerted by U.S. pressure group United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI). UANI, which monitors Iran-related tanker traffic through ship and satellite tracking, said it was aware of multiple illicit oil transfers that affected shipping companies conducting regular trade.

"Most often, by the time the STS gets to a large company, such as Maersk Tankers, the vessels have engaged in numerous STS in an attempt to mask the origin of the cargo," Claire Jungman of UANI said.

Other major companies are separately trying to unmask the illicit activity. U.S. agribusiness group Cargill, one of the world's largest charterers of ships, said it had increased scrutiny of every party it trades with, including ownership structures.

U.S. Consumer Prices Post Largest Gain in 13 Years

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. consumer prices increased by the most in 13 years in June amid supply constraints and a continued rebound in the costs of travel-related services from pandemic-depressed levels as the economic recovery gathered momentum.

With used cars and trucks accounting for more than one-third of the surge in prices reported by the Labor Department on Tuesday, economists continued to believe that higher inflation was transitory. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has repeatedly stated similar views, noting that he expected supply chains to normalize and adapt.

"June's CPI numbers looked scary, but once again, we see that it was mainly temporary price increases that pumped up the figures," said Robert Frick, corporate economist with Navy Federal Credit Union in Vienna, Virginia. "Overall, this report is consistent with inflation cooling off later this year."

The consumer price index increased 0.9% last month, the largest gain since June 2008, after advancing 0.6% in May. Used cars and trucks prices accelerated 10.5%. That was the biggest increase since January 1953 when the government started tracking the series. A global semiconductor shortage has undercut motor vehicle production. Used cars and trucks have been the major driver of inflation in recent months. But prices are rising across the economy. COVID-19 vaccinations, low interest rates and nearly \$6 trillion in government relief since the pandemic started in the United States in March 2020 are fueling demand, straining the supply chain and raising prices across the economy.

Consumers also paid more for food, gasoline, rents and apparel last month. In the 12 months through June, the CPI jumped 5.4%. That was the largest gain since August 2008 and followed a 5.0% increase in May. Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI accelerated 0.9% after increasing 0.7% in May. The so-called core CPI surged 4.5% on a year-on-year basis, the largest increase since November 1991, after rising 3.8% in May.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the overall CPI would climb 0.5% and the core CPI would rise 0.4%. U.S. stocks opened lower. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices fell. "Inflation is rising, but things are well behaved and have not changed materially," said Jamie Cox, managing partner at Harris Financial Group in Richmond, Virginia.

Annual inflation rates have been boosted by the dropping of last spring's weak readings from the CPI calculation. June was likely the peak in these so-called base effects.

With nearly 160 million Americans immunized, demand for airline travel and hotel and motel accommodation is picking up, also fanning price pressures. Prices for travel-related services rose solidly last month.



Germany Hikes 2030 Power Consumption Forecast by at Least 9%

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany lifted its forecast for electricity consumption in 2030 by at least 9.3% on Tuesday, due to the roll-out of electric vehicles, tougher climate targets and the phasing out of oil or gas as a fuel.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said demand for electricity will be between 645 and 665 billion kilowatt hours in 2030, up from the 590 billion kilowatt hours predicted in early 2020.

Altmaier said that the higher electricity consumption would be triggered by a faster adoption of electric vehicles, with 14 million cars now expected on the road by 2030 up from a previous forecast of 10 million. In addition, about 6 million heat pumps would be installed in buildings, which would also need more electricity. Utilities have been asking for realistic targets on which to base their planning, arguing earlier official forecasts were too low as they were premised on expectations for more energy efficiency.

The German Association of the Energy Industry (BDEW) assumes consumption of 700 billion kilowatt hours in 2030. The new government forecast comes ahead of a more detailed analysis due in autumn.

Altmaier also raised Germany's 2030 hydrogen production forecast to 19 billion kWh from a previous estimate of 14 billion. Local utility association VKU said it was necessary to revamp and expand power and gas transmission networks for the transport of more renewable power and hydrogen.

"Only in that way will we be able to absorb renewable energies from across the country and reliably deliver them to the customer," it said. Operators of distribution grids and gas pipelines needed more incentives for investments. Electric charging facilities were not yet profitable to operate.

Russia Heading for 2021 Budget Surplus

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia is on course to run a budget surplus this year, analysts say, a turnaround after strong half-year data, with high oil prices giving room to cover spending promises from President Vladimir Putin ahead of parliamentary elections.

Last month, Putin promised to spend on infrastructure, education and health, seeking to give the ruling United Russia party a boost. The pledges added to social support measures announced in

April that will cost the budget around 400 billion roubles (\$5.40 billion) over two years.

Russia had a budget surplus of 626 billion roubles from January to June, the finance ministry said on Monday, with tax increases, the economic recovery and high prices for oil, Russia's major export, all behind the boost in revenues.

"Such positive data is largely due to the Russian economy's earlier than expected recovery and also high prices for oil," said Bank St Petersburg analysts.

Unless significant anti-COVID-19 curbs are implemented, something Putin and other senior officials have repeatedly said they want to avoid, the budget will end the year in surplus, they added.

The finance ministry's 2021 plan was for a budget deficit of almost 2.8 trillion roubles, around 2.4% of gross domestic product this year. Finance Minister Anton Siluanov last month said the deficit would likely stand at 1% of GDP.

Increased tax revenue has also helped. Russia is planning to hit metals firms with \$2.3 billion in export taxes between August and December, one of a handful of tax increases since the coronavirus pandemic pushed Russia's economy to a 3% decline last year.

"Clearly the tax burden has increased and will increase further," said Sofya Donets, Russia and CIS economist at Renaissance Capital.

Renaissance Capital sees a budget surplus of 3% of GDP if oil prices remain near current levels of \$75 a barrel. UralSib analysts forecast a surplus of 1.37 trillion roubles, or around 1.1% of GDP.

"Additional spending promised by... Putin... will increase budget spending in the second half of 2021. But we think that there will be a budget surplus at the end of the year if oil prices remain high," Sberbank CIB said in a note.

IEA Says Refining Throughput Set to Rise in July, August

LONDON (Reuters) - Global refining runs are expected to continue rising in July and August due to increasing vaccination rates and easing social distancing measures around the world, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday.

The Paris-based agency, however, expected the trend will lose momentum in winter due to seasonal maintenance of refineries.

Refiners around the world significantly reduced their operations in 2020 as they faced an unprecedented fall in fuel demand brought about by the coronavirus pandemic and mobility restrictions. The lockdowns at their peak destroyed over 20% of global oil demand.

The refining runs have been rising since February as widespread vaccination programs started in several countries and restrictions were eased. After stagnating in May, global refining throughput increased by 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in June, IEA said in its monthly report.

That was the largest monthly increase since July 2020, which supported crude oil prices. Increased product supply and higher crude oil prices negatively affected product cracks and refinery margins in June.

Runs are expected to increase by another 2.7 million bpd over July and August from June levels but will start declining in September and October as refinery maintenance season begins.

The gap between the global refineries throughput in the fourth quarter of the year and its peak in 2018 will be around 2.6 million bpd. The global throughput is not expected to reach 2018 levels by the end of next year, according to IEA.

"The main deficit will be on account of Europe and North America, while the Middle East, some parts of Asia, and Latin America are on track to surpass 2018 levels in 2022," IEA said.

The activity of European refiners is not expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels any time soon, IEA said. As a result, annual average throughput rates of Chinese refiners are expected

to exceed the European rivals by 3 million bpd in 2022. Chinese refiners reached parity with European refineries in 2019 in terms of throughput.

IEA said stalled talks by top oil producers over releasing more supply could deteriorate into a price war just as COVID-19 vaccines are sending demand for oil surging.

China's Economic Growth To More Than Halve in Q2



BEIJING (Reuters) - China's economic growth likely slowed in the second quarter, as higher raw material costs hurt factories and new COVID-19 outbreaks weighed on consumer spending, a Reuters poll showed, suggesting policymakers may do more to support growth.

Gross domestic product (GDP) likely increased 8.1% year-on-year in the April-June quarter, according to the median forecasts of 51 economists polled by Reuters.

That would mark a significant slowdown from a record 18.3% expansion in the January-March period, when the year-on-year growth rate was heavily skewed by the COVID-induced slump in the first quarter of 2020.

The world's second-largest economy has been recovering since the second quarter of last year, buoyed by solid overseas demand for its exports, but growth is losing steam as manufacturing activity slows on higher raw material costs and supply shortages, while small COVID-19 outbreaks have also kept a lid on consumer demand.

"We maintain our view that downward pressure on growth will likely increase in H2," said Nomura analysts in a note, expecting pent-up demand to subside and exports growth to weaken as developed economies reopen. They also cautioned that surging raw materials prices will suppress consumption.

The People's Bank of China's decision on Friday to cut the amount of cash banks must hold as reserves, even as the central bank has sought to normalize policy to contain financial risks, has fuelled concerns about an economic slowdown. But data on Tuesday showing China's exports grew at a much faster pace than expected in June provided some respite.

Barclays analysts estimated that the two-year average growth rate for the first half of this year would be 5.0-5.5%, well below pre-COVID-19 levels of 6.0-6.5% in 2019.

China's statistical bureau has said the two-year average growth rate in the first quarter was 5.0%. On a quarterly basis, growth is forecast to pick up to 1.2% in April-June from 0.6% in the first quarter, the poll showed.

Economists in the poll expected the economy to expand 8.6% this year, the highest annual growth in a decade, after a 2.3% expansion in pandemic-hit 2020. The latest poll result was unchanged from April's forecast.

China has set an annual economic growth target at above 6% this year, below analysts' expectations, giving policymakers more room to cope with uncertainties. Growth is then expected to moderate to 5.5% in 2022, according to the poll.

Bandar Anzali Non-Oil Exports Up 75%

RASHT (IRNA) - Based on the Ports and Maritime Organization of Gilan Province report exports from Anzali port experienced 75% growth in weight during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

Head of Gilan Ports and Maritime Organization Hamid Reza Abaie said non-oil products consisted of crops, steel, wood,

glass, concentrate and construction materials.

He added the loading cargo had 73% growth.

Anzali Free Trade Zone is the only free zone in the southern part of the Caspian Sea and the economic hub of Iran with an area of 9400 hectares of land and a 40 km shoreline. It is located in Gilan province in the north of the country.



Central Asian Economies Expected to Recover By 3.7% in 2021

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - The World Bank projected the recovery of economic growth in Central Asia at 3.7 percent in 2021 and 4.3 percent in 2022, reported the press service of the organization on June 8.

The original prediction for Central Asian economic growth by the World Bank in 2020 was 3.1 percent.

The strongest economic growth is predicted for Uzbekistan with a 4.8-percent increase and Tajikistan with a 5.3-percent increase. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are expected to experience growth by 3.2 percent and 3.8 percent respectively.

The revival of the Central Asian economies is supported by a modest rise in commodity prices, relaxation of production cuts among major oil producers, and increased foreign direct investment.

In 2020, the gross inflow of foreign direct investment to Central Asian countries reportedly amounted to \$20.7 billion, which constituted a significant downward trend compared to the pre-coronavirus period in 2019 when foreign direct investment amounted to \$32.2 billion.

According to the World Bank's Doing Business Index, Kazakhstan continues to have a lead as one of the most business-friendly economies in Central Asia.

Out of all countries in the region, Uzbekistan has shown the most dramatic reforms for the attraction of foreign direct investment, including the strengthening of protection for minority investors, clarification of ownership structures, simplification of tax payments and bolstering of corporate transparency.

The countries of Central Asia tend to attract foreign investment due to such factors as the richness of natural resources, the novelty of the markets, macroeconomic stability, large domestic markets, cheaper labor, the high growth potential of economic sectors and the general improvement of the business environment in the past years.

An upward trend in Central Asian economic recovery and intraregional



competition positively affects the investment climate and the region's reputation on the global market.

Nonetheless, the World Bank emphasized that the economies of Central Asia remain vulnerable to the fallout from the pandemic that could affect businesses and restrain employment.

Turkey's May Industrial Output Leaps 40.7%



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's industrial output grew faster than expected on an annual basis to register a double-digit rise in May, official data showed Tuesday, driven mainly due to a sharp slowdown in the same month last year caused by the initial lockdown measures.

The calendar-adjusted industrial production index grew 40.7% in May, largely due to the so-called base effect, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data. Month-on-month output was up 1.3%.

The index grew by 16.6% in March and 66% in April, according to the data.

Many Turkish factories halted operations last March, soon after the first COVID-19 infection was recorded.

Output had dropped 31.4% in April and 19.9% in May before recovery began in June.

Turkey had imposed new virus-related lockdowns after a strong economic rebound in the second half of 2020, but the measures did not affect production.

An Anadolu Agency (AA) survey last week expected a 38.2% year-on-year increase.

The improvement with the base effect was mainly backed by the sub-index of the manufacturing sector, the data showed.

The manufacturing index soared 42.8% year-on-year in the month, while the mining and quarrying index shot up 33.4%.

The electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply index also climbed 20.9% during the same period.

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

It rebounded strongly, by 7%, in the first quarter of this year and the government sees it expanding around 20% in the second.

The government forecasts 5.8% growth this year, while President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said it could be even higher.

The final stage in the nation's gradual normalization process began this month, with curfews and lockdowns lifted, as well as all venues and businesses opening without restrictions.

Prospects for a strong performance in the second half of the year have been revived by a sharp fall in daily coronavirus cases as well as an acceleration in vaccinations.

Analysts have said the domestic demand would likely further rebound in the third quarter amid the easing of the pandemic-related restrictions.

Exports are also expected to be boosted by recovery among Turkey's trading partners.

Malaysia's Economy on Track for Recovery

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's economy is now on the path to recovery and is projected to chart better growth this year, says Senior Minister cum International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali.

He said the brighter economic prospect is attributable to rising global demand, increased public and private sector spending, as well as continued policy support.

"This (brighter prospect) will also be reflected in the recovery in labor market conditions and higher production in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the electrical and electronics (E&E), and the oil and gas facilities," he said in a keynote address at the Malaysian Economic Summit 2021 webinar.

His speech was read by MITI Deputy Minister Datuk Lim Ban Hong.

Mohamed Azmin believes that due to Malaysia's open economy, enhancement of productivity and economic growth would be further underpinned by an improvement in the global technology upcycle, as well as policy support from various fiscal and monetary measures, including the additional economic stimulus packages.

"This positive outlook is reinforced by the World Bank's most recent forecast, where it projected the Malaysian economy to grow by 4.5 per cent in 2021, albeit revised down from our own more robust Bank Negara Malaysia's projections," he said.

According to the minister, Malaysia's economic fundamentals remained resilient even during these difficult times, underpinned by the country's broad-based economic structure which lent strength to its competitiveness.

He noted that last year, Malaysia ranked 12th in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking, 27th in the IMD World Competitiveness ranking and was the fourth out of 17 economies as a manufacturing hub.



"This is significant because our services and manufacturing sectors account for 58 per cent and 23 per cent of the economy, respectively, while the commodity sector accounts for 14 per cent, which reflects the increasing sophistication, depth and complexity of the Malaysian economy," said Mohamed Azmin.

Moving forward, the minister said Malaysia has formulated five National Investment Aspirations to serve as a framework in reinvigorating the national investment landscape as well as enhancing long-term national competitiveness.

In this regard, he said Malaysia aims to increase economic complexity by ensuring that the country's economy is increasingly built on skills-based industries, with significant production capabilities to create high-value products and services.

"We seek to create higher-value job opportunities for Malaysians to ensure that our people are equipped with sufficient skills required for the future.

"We also intend to extend our domestic linkages through integration with the regional economy, and empower more local businesses to better participate in the global value chain," he said.

Mohamed Azmin said Malaysia wants investments that are interested to expand across the ASEAN region, and aims to develop new and existing clusters that play a fundamental role in driving economic spill-overs which are the key to delivering holistic ecosystem benefits.

"Finally, we aspire to improve inclusivity by championing equitable growth for the nation, ensuring equal opportunities and adequate safeguards for the people.

"This aspiration seeks to unlock Malaysia's full potential, fundamentally lowering barriers to access as well as better integrating the economy," he said.

BOJ to Offer Cautiously Upbeat View on Economy

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Bank of Japan will offer a cautiously optimistic view of the economy in fresh quarterly projections due on Friday, as renewed state of emergency curbs to combat the COVID-19 pandemic hurt consumption and keep growth heavily reliant on overseas demand.

The central bank will also unveil details of a new scheme to boost funding for activities aimed at battling climate change, putting it in line with its global counterparts stepping up efforts to deal with the economic fallout from climate risks.

At the two-day policy meeting ending on Friday, the BOJ is set to maintain its yield curve control (YCC) targets at -0.1per cent for short-term interest rates and 0per cent for 10-year bond yields. In new quarterly projections also due on Friday, the board is seen slashing its economic growth forecast for the fiscal year ending in March 2022 from the current 4.0per cent estimate made three months ago, some sources have previously told Reuters.

Tehran, Moscow...

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Tuning to a letter penned by Leader of the Islamic Revolution to Russian President Vladimir Putin a couple of months ago, Jalali stated that the letter was of paramount importance in line with expansion of evermore relations between the two countries.

On the expansion of cultural ties between Iran and Russia, Iranian envoy said that the two countries enjoy high potentials to expand and broaden cultural ties more than before.

Chinese, Russian Internet...

FROM PAGE 1

Azari also revealed in his Tuesday posts that an unexpected announcement by Russia's Yandex in November 2015 which showed the company had no plans to set up offices in Iran was also due to fears from U.S. sanctions.

He said Yandex made the announcement just a day after then Iranian and Russian telecoms ministers had signed an agreement in Tehran to allow Yandex to start its operations in the country.

"It was apparently because Yandex' finances was also tied to the US capital market just as it was the case for Tencent," said Azari.

Iran was relieved of a previous round of US and international sanctions in January 2016 months after it reached a deal with international powers on its nuclear program.

However, the country came under a fresh round of economic pressure in 2018 when the US government pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal and imposed its so-called secondary sanctions on Tehran.

Iran to Build 10,000 MW...

FROM PAGE 1

According to Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Iran produces 60,000 MW of electricity - 50,000 MW thermal and 10,000 MW hydro – "provided that all dams are full and all thermal power plants operating".

However, premature heat resulting in the warming of five degrees Celsius in the first month of spring combined with drought led to a sharp drop in output from hydropower plants.

The searing hot and dry summer has seen the mercury reaching highs of more than 50 degrees Celcius in the major city of Ahvaz in southern Iran and consumers cranking up air conditioners.

Moreover, the craze for cryptocurrency mining has put increasing strain on electrical grids. According to Ardakanian, about 320 MW has been allocated to licensed crypto mining, but estimates put the use of electricity by illegal energy-guzzling machines north of 2,000 MW.

Iran has stepped up crackdown on the illegal mining of cryptocurrencies. Last month, Tehran's police chief said 7,000 computer miners had been seized in an abandoned factory in the west of the capital, in one of the largest hauls.

Cheap state-subsidized power has attracted miners from China and elsewhere to Iran. In crypto mining, powerful computers compete with each other to solve complex mathematical problems. The first miner to solve the problem is rewarded in bitcoin and the transaction is added to the blockchain or digital ledger.

The intensity of electricity consumption began to grow in the last days of June, hitting an all-time record of 66,000 MW, which caused large blackouts across the country.

Washington Gives Tehran...

FROM PAGE 1

"The secretary of state previously signed a waiver to allow funds held in restricted Iranian accounts in Japan and Korea to be used to pay back Japanese and Korean companies that exported non-sanctioned items to Iran," the spokesperson said.

"These repayment transactions can sometimes be time-consuming, and the secretary extended the waivers for another 90 days."

The waiver comes during an almost one-month pause in the talks in Vienna to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which the former US administration of Donald Trump ditched in 2018 and reimposed sanctions mainly targeting Iran's oil sector.

The restoration of the deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is expected to be faced with strong opposition by the Republicans in Congress, who mostly backed Trump's withdrawal from the deal and his so-called maximum pressure campaign against Iran.

Meanwhile, Bloomberg has quoted a source as saying that the seventh round of the talks in the Austrian capital is expected to begin after Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi is sworn in as president early next month.

Iran has already announced that the country's stance on the JCPOA "will not alter with a change of administration."

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price has said American diplomats are prepared to go back to Vienna to continue the talks, but insisted, on several occasions, that questions about when the seventh round would begin have to be "addressed to Tehran."

"As we've made clear, we are prepared to continue engaging in the context of these indirect negotiations with Iran. We're prepared to return to a seventh round of talks," Price said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

Lowry Grouped With Rahm in Open First Round

SANDWICH (Reuters) - Defending British Open champion Shane Lowry has been grouped with former winner Louis Oosthuizen and Spain's recent U.S. Open champion Jon Rahm for the start of the year's fourth major at Sandwich on Thursday. The first ball of the 149th championship, taking place a year late after last year's cancellation because of COVID-19, will be struck by England's Richard Bland. "Truly an honour, something I'll remember for the rest of my life," Bland, who won his first European Tour event on his 478th start in May, said after the first-round tee times were released.

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Ukraine Gymnast Verniaiev to Miss Tokyo

KYIV (Reuters) - Ukrainian gymnast Oleg Verniaiev said on Tuesday he will miss the Tokyo Olympics due to a failed doping test. The 2016 Olympics parallel bars champion and all-around silver medallist said on social media that he had tested positive for meldonium, which would disqualify him for four years. He denied any wrongdoing and said he would appeal the ban to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Rashford Mural in Manchester Vandalized Amid Racist Abuse

LONDON (Dispatches) - A mural honoring England men's national soccer team player Marcus Rashford was vandalized on Sunday night while he and two teammates were subjected to racist abuse on social media following England's loss in the Euro 2020 final. Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, all of whom are Black, missed penalty kicks for England and were immediately met with racist abuse that included monkey emojis, slurs and taunts to leave the country. England lost to Italy on penalty, 3-2, when the sides were knotted at 1 through extra time.

Greater Manchester Police said they are investigating after receiving reports of "racially aggravated damage" overnight, per the BBC.

"Hate crime in any form is completely unacceptable and not welcome here in our city," police chief superintendent Paul Savill told the BBC.

The mural of Rashford is on the side of a building in Withington, Manchester, at a site called Withington Walls, a community street art project co-founded by Ed Wellard. It was painted by street artist Akse, who based it off a photograph by Daniel Cheetham, and was commissioned for the star's work in tackling childhood food poverty.

Wellard woke up Monday morning to news that the mural had been defaced. Via the BBC: "I've come out to fix what I could immediately and cover up what I couldn't and hopefully we will get the artist out to come and fix it," he said.

"We dared to dream yesterday and our hopes were dashed but to wake up to this is more depressing. Racism seems to be more and more prevalent."

The art is profile of his head and shoulders in the middle of the type, "Take pride in knowing that your struggle will play the biggest role in your purpose." It's a quote by Rashford's mother.

Wellard used black coverings to tape over the jawline, neck and upper chest area where people defaced the profile, per the BBC.

Those coverings have since been taken over by positive messages written on paper, many of which are in the shapes of red hearts. Some are simple, such as "role model," "wonderful human" and "strong and admired."



Others display messages of inspiration, like "You stepped up. You always step up. Hero!" Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham addressed the act at a press briefing and in a tweet emphasizing it on Monday.

"This was a despicable, shameful act that will be utterly condemned by 99.9% of people in Greater Manchester," he wrote in the tweet.

"We could not be more proud of Marcus Rashford and his role in taking our country to its first major final in 55 years." Rashford took to Twitter late Monday to apologize for the missed kick and thank everyone for the positive messages he received on Monday.

"I don't even know where to start and I don't even know how to put into words how I'm feeling at this exact time. I've had a difficult season, I think that's been clear for everyone to see and I probably went into that final with a lack of confidence. I've always backed myself for a penalty but something didn't feel quite right."

In a follow-up Tweet he shared handwritten messages from children urging him not to be sad and telling him how much of a role model he is for them.

The FA, English soccer's governing body, released a statement condemning the abuse on Sunday night. "We could not be cleared that anyone behind such disgusting behaviour is not welcome in following the team," the FA wrote in part.

It also called out social media companies and urged them to take responsibility.

Pliskova Soars To Fifth in WTA Finals Race

LONDON (Dispatches) - Karolina Pliskova's run to the Wimbledon final has lifted the Czech 15 spots to number five on the leaderboard for the season-ending WTA Finals, the WTA Tour said.

The 29-year-old former world No.1, who was 20th in the 'Race to Shenzhen' before the grasscourt Grand Slam, collected 1,300 points and was the biggest mover of the week.

Australian world number one Ash Barty, who beat Pliskova on the All England Club's Centre Court on Saturday to claim her second Grand Slam, cemented her spot at the top of the ladder with a lead of 1,853 points over Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus.

The season-ending WTA Finals, contested by the world's top eight singles players and eight doubles teams, was cancelled last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its fate for 2021 is still unclear.

The Asian swing of tournaments has been wiped from the WTA calendar for a second successive year due to the pandemic, with the governing body saying discussions about the Finals were ongoing.

The annual showpiece had a prize purse of \$14 million in 2019 when it was played in Shenzhen for the first time after ending a five-year run in Singapore.



Olympic Champion DeGale Has Gold Medal Stolen

LONDON (Dispatches) - 2008 Beijing Olympics middleweight boxing champion James DeGale has appealed for help after his gold medal and MBE were stolen from his parents' house.

The Briton, who is also a two-time IBF super-middleweight champion, said the break-in happened on Sunday during England's Euro 2020 final defeat by Italy.

DeGale posted security footage on Instagram of someone walking alongside the house and covering the camera, and said two of his "prize possessions" had been taken.

"They are worthless to anyone other than me and they are two achievements that I prize from my boxing career," he said. "I am gutted and need my medals back."

DeGale, 35, retired from boxing in February 2019.

Canada to Send Largest Olympic Team in 37 Years to Tokyo

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Canada will send a team of 371 athletes to the Tokyo Olympics that, despite COVID-19 challenges and concerns, will be the country's largest Olympic contingent since the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Games.

The Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) said on Tuesday that 225 members of the team will be athletes that identify as women and 146 who identify as men.

Delayed a year by COVID-19 just qualifying for the Tokyo Games proved an immense challenge for many Canadian athletes with global sport brought to standstill by the pandemic, wiping out opportunities to earn Olympic spots.

"Even before Canada's incredible athletes get to their first competitions in Tokyo, I am extraordinarily impressed by their results," said Canada Chef de Mission Marnie McBean in a statement.

"Despite the pandemic, through their creativity and perseverance, they have become the largest Canadian Olympic Team in three decades. "In far less than ideal conditions, they have found a way to be faster and stronger than ever and I have no doubt that they are ready to reveal something special at Tokyo 2020."



Hamilton Wants More Diversity in F1

LONDON (Dispatches) - Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton says he wants to be remembered for "helping people and changing the industry and the viewpoints" after the publication of his report into improving diversity in motorsport.

Britain's seven-time world champion was spurred into action after noticing the lack of diversity in an end-of-season photograph in 2019 and subsequently set up the Hamilton Commission.

Hamilton, 36, has taken the knee before every race since the beginning of last season and has persuaded his Mercedes team to paint its cars black to highlight discrimination.

The commission's report, Accelerating Change: Improving Representation of Black People in UK Motorsport, asks for a diversity and inclusion charter to be implemented by F1 teams and other motorsport organizations.

Expanding the apprenticeship provision to include higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships as an alternate pathway into the sector are among the other suggestions to attempt to draw in under-represented groups to F1.

Paid work placement and work experience schemes, as well as supporting the creation of scholarship programmes to enable black graduates from degrees to progress into specialist motorsport roles have also been proposed.

Hamilton, the only black driver in Formula One, told the BBC he hoped the findings would be "part of my legacy".

"I would like to be remembered for much more than winning championships, which is an amazing thing on its own, but for actually helping people and changing the industry and the viewpoints," he said. "We are all the same. We all bleed the same. There is no reason why it shouldn't be as diverse as the world around us."

"All it takes is the shift of the needle and then in the long distance that can be a whole continent's size. It could be huge."

Hamilton said the commission, which included experts in motorsport, education and engineering, had found that obstacles for black people ran deeper than issues in gaining access to the sport.

"We realize it's not just the motorsport industry that needs to change," said Hamilton. "We found there are still systemic issues facing young black people at all levels of the education system."

Defending champion Hamilton, preparing for this weekend's British Grand Prix, trails leader Max Verstappen by 32 points after nine rounds of the 2021 championship.

South Korea Draw 2-2 With Argentina

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The South Korean Olympic football squad drew 2-2 against Argentina on Tuesday after they netted an injury-time equalizer in a friendly match in front of empty seats.

The match held in Yongin, south of Seoul, was one of two tune-up matches this week ahead of the Tokyo Olympics set to begin next week.

It was played without spectators under tightened coronavirus restrictions as a recent surge in infections grips the greater Seoul area. Argentina went ahead early when Alexis Mac Allister scored from just outside the box in the 12th minute to give his side a 1-0 lead.

But South Korea caught up in the 35th minute with midfielder Lee Dong-gyeong's long-range strike hitting the back of the Argentine net.

The visiting team took the lead again 12 minutes into the second half when Carlos Valenzuela made a curling shot into the far corner after receiving a cross.

The home team then generated a last-minute turnaround when winger Um Won-sang delivered an equaliser in the 92nd minute. South Korea will play France on Friday in the last preparation match before heading to Japan, where they will start their quest for a second Olympic medal against New Zealand on July 22.

The South Korean team won bronze at London 2012.

Romania and Honduras are also in Group B while Argentina will face Egypt, Spain and Australia in Group C. The top two teams from each of the four groups will advance to the quarter-finals.



UEFA Investigating Wembley Clashes

LONDON (Dispatches) - UEFA have opened disciplinary proceedings and charged England's Football Association (FA) for disturbances during Sunday's Euro 2020 final against Italy at Wembley, Europe's soccer governing body said on Tuesday.

UEFA also said it was conducting a separate investigation into the "events involving supporters which occurred inside and around the stadium".

The final, which Italy won in a penalty shootout, was marred by clashes between fans and officials in and around the stadium. British police made 49 arrests and said 19 of its officers were injured.

The charges against the FA include: invasion of the field of play by its supporters, throwing of objects by its supporters, disturbance caused by its supporters during the national anthem and lighting of a firework.

"The case will be dealt with by the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body (CEDB) in due course," UEFA said.

Last week the FA were fined 30,000 euros (\$35,460) after a laser pointer was shone at Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel during what proved to be the deciding moment of their Euro 2020 semi-final.

The FA were also charged following a disturbance during the national anthems and for the setting off of fireworks during the semi-final.

