

**Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 87,161 With 195 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iranian Ambassador to Austria Abbas Baqerpour in a tweet on Saturday Revealed the Resumption Of Vienna-Tehran Flights as Austrian Airlines Resumed Its Direct Vienna-Tehran-Vienna Flights**

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**U.S. Move to Reject Prisoner Swap Deal With Tehran "Outrageous"**

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's foreign ministry has hit out at the U.S., saying its denial of a deal with Tehran to exchange prisoners is outrageous.

Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh made the comment after the spokesman for the US Department of State denied any such deal and accused Iran of an "outrageous" effort to deflect blame for the impasse in the Vienna talks on revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

"outrageous"=the U.S. denying simple fact that 'there IS an agreed deal on the matter of the detainees'. Even on how to announce it," Khatibzadeh said in a tweet.

"Humanitarian swap was agreed with U.S. & UK in Vienna-separate from JCPOA- on release of 10 prisoners on all sides. Iran is ready to proceed TODAY."

Iran's top negotiator in the Vienna talks broke the news on the deal on Saturday. Abbas Araqchi, the deputy foreign minister for political affairs, said in a tweet, that a humanitarian prisoner exchange with the US and the UK will take place on Sunday, if Washington and London meet their obligations under the swap deal. Araqchi said 10 prisoners were to be swapped overall.

However, Spokesman for the U.S. Department of State Ned Price claimed "there is no agreed deal yet".

"We had been engaged in indirect talks on the detainees in the context of the Vienna process, and the delay in restarting that process is not helping," Price added.

"While it would be more effective to make progress if we were meeting in Vienna, we are also prepared to continue with talks on detainees during this period." Araqchi had earlier warned that the deal on exchanging prisoners is not linked with the Vienna talks on the nuclear agreement. He also said the talks should await the new administration in Iran to take charge.

**Raisi Not to Continue JCPOA Talks In Vienna Format**

**IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK**

TEHRAN - A member of Iran's Parliament says the next Iranian administration will not abandon Vienna talks but will neither continue them in the same format.

"The next administration's policy is not abandoning JCPOA talks," Mojtaba Zonnour, a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said.

"The administration believes that JCPOA has had costs and benefits; the Islamic Republic has paid the costs and now it is time to use benefits," he added. **See Page 7**

**80% of COVID-19 Vaccine Imported From China**



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce says that a large part of Iran's coronavirus vaccine imports have come from China.

Speaking to ILNA, Chairman of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid-Reza Hariri said China has had faced no restrictions, so far, for sending COVID-19 vaccines to Iran.

"75 to 80 percent of the 11 million doses [of coronavirus vaccines] imported into the country have come from China," he said.

This is while other countries have delivered only a very small part of the 16-17 million doses of vaccines, including Covax doses, that Iran has forward purchased from them, he added.

He then touched upon some problems which exist in Tehran-Beijing trade transactions, saying it is difficult to buy some U.S.-licensed commodities from China.

He also said some enterprises prioritize their own interests.

"Naturally, some enterprises give priority to their own interests. Even when it comes to oil, China has officially announced that it will not accept the United States' unilateral oil and non-oil sanctions. But many Chinese enterprises are not working with us lest their corporate interests might be jeopardized," he said.

"There are other issues like sanctions on ports, which, all together, affect transactions between the two countries. If an Iranian ship docks at a port, the port and its operator will face U.S. sanctions," he said.

He said before the sanctions, oil accounted for major part of Iran's exports to China as Iran used to export 60,000 barrels per day of oil to this East Asian country and if today the country can sell the same amount of oil to China like pre-sanctions era, the country will earn \$14 to \$15b per year.

He also noted that unfortunately sanctions of ports have affected badly Iran-China trade exchanges and if Iranian vessel docks at any port, the port and its operator will be slapped with the U.S. sanctions. Hariri further said that the oil companies in China are commercial enterprises and they do not prefer political issues to the commercial ones.

**UNFPA Delivers 1,000 O2 Concentrators to Iran**

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) Regional Director on behalf of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), delivered 1,000 oxygen concentrators to the State Welfare Organization in Iran.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Tehran, Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) Regional Director, Bjorn Andersson, in a statement on the occasion of the delivery of 1,000 oxygen concentrators to the State Welfare Organization in Iran, said that "More than two years have passed since I last visited Iran in October 2018 to attend the Tehran HelpAge Regional Forum on Ageing. I took part in fruitful exchanges on the theme of families, communities and states in ageing societies, stressing on the life cycle approach and the feminization of ageing.

Since then, the country has made significant progress in advancing healthy and active ageing in the country, culminating so far in the approval of the National Document for Older Persons aimed at improving social support and health services, and promoting age-friendly environments, policies, and services.

At the same time, the world has been faced with an unprecedented crisis- the COVID-19 pandemic-with devastating consequences on the health and well-being of the entire population.

There is no doubt that older persons have been adversely affected.

Global data has shown that older persons living in long-term care facilities and rehabilitation centers in particular have been most vulnerable to infection and adverse outcomes from COVID-19.

To date, the Islamic Republic of Iran has reported over 3.3 million laboratory confirmed cases and over 85 thousand deaths. Out of these, approximately 63,000 older persons over 65 years have lost their lives to COVID-19. In addition, a total of nearly 13,000 of elderly are residing in approximately 300 long-term care facilities and are at continued risk of infection. Priority vaccination has been given to older persons in residential care centers.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA and partners have been successful at redirecting their efforts to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations. With the State Welfare Organization, UNFPA has forged a partnership with UNICEF and the EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), to protect the lives of over 13,800 older persons residing in care facilities by providing oxygen concentrators, and by promoting infection prevention and control through risk communication and community engagement.

The procurement of 1,000 oxygen concentrators is proof of the commitment and dedication of UNFPA and partners to leave no one behind during the pandemic, and support national efforts. Once again, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran with all its initiatives has demonstrated to be a leading example in addressing the needs of older people in the region. At this hour of need, UNFPA continues to stand by the people of Iran and in the nation's pursuit for sustainable development."

**ViewPoint**  
By: Hamid Reza Naghashian  
**Double-Standard The U.S. Style**

Whenever some incident happens in Iran or any independent country, Western media and especially in the U.S. ones begin to magnify it and show that there is no security in those countries and the Western media and officials also begin blame-game and accusing officials of the said-countries of violence and disregarding human rights but when some similar incident happens in their own lands, they try to justify it and defend the public rights.

Every time there is a street clash in Iran we see such reactions from the U.S. media in a way to show Iran is not a safe country or its people are unhappy with its system but they are not even ready to accept that the condition in their own country is even worse than Iran or any independent country which is not ready to give in to the U.S. hegemony.

On Saturday again the U.S. saw a crime which shocked the people but there was no response from the official. According to reports on Saturday, rampant shootings in major U.S. cities killed at least three people, including a 6-year-old girl who was shot in a fast-food restaurant in Washington, DC along with five adults that suffered injuries.

Washington's Metropolitan Police Department Executive Assistant Chief Ashan Benedict pleaded to the public on Saturday to help "bring these shooters to justice," after the late Friday shooting in a Southeast neighborhood of the city that wounded three men and two women.

"There is too much gun violence still perpetuated in this city, and too many children are being harmed — innocent children — by gunfire. So, please, help the police department, our detectives, bring those people to justice and bring some closure to the families," Benedict emphasized in a video posted to Twitter.

No arrests have been made in the case although police officers heard the gunshots and reported immediately to the scene.

In the western city of Portland two people were reported killed and at least six others were wounded in separate shooting incidents on Saturday as the city's mayor insisted that it was facing a "pandemic" of gun violence.

One person was killed and at least six others were wounded in a shooting overnight in downtown Portland, police say.

These are some samples for violence in a country which considers itself as the world safest place and big power. Suppose such incident happens in Iran. The U.S. media will start hype against Iranian officials and accuse them of violence or promoting violence in the country but when it comes to them, they keep quiet. **See Page 7**

**No Problem for Producing 100m Doses of Barekat Vaccines**

TEHRAN (IFP) - A leading member of the team in charge of the production of CovIran Barekat vaccine has answered questions, circulating on social media, on why authorities disposed of 2.1 million doses of the Iranian anti-COVID 19 shot.

The news on the discarded doses was announced by the director of public relations at the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO) Headquarters, a foundation in charge of the production of the vaccine a few days ago.

"In the vaccine manufacturing industry, after quality control tests are completed, batches which do not meet the required standards are removed from the production line and discarded. This happens in all vaccine production lines across the world and it took place even at Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson after their production of coronavirus vaccines," said Asghar Abdoli.

"Putting away vaccines, which fail to meet the necessary standards, is a positive point and demonstrates the transparency of the manufacturing plant [ 's operations], because it shows the health of the consumers of the shot, i.e. people, are the priority [for the producers]."

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# Red Crescent's 7th Vaccine shipment Enters Iran

TEHRAN (IP)- The head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society announced that the seventh shipment of the COVID vaccine of the Red Crescent arrived in Iran.

Karim Hemmati, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said: "Today, Sunday, the seventh consignment of vaccines prepared by the Red Crescent Society was delivered to the Ministry of Health of Iran at Imam Khomeini Airport for fast and nationwide distribution."

He added: "At this stage, 1,131,600 doses of vaccine were imported into the country; and with the arrival of this consignment, which has been transferred to Iran by nine flights, a total of 8,174,400 doses of vaccine have entered the country."

## Administration Gives Successor Realistic Prospect of Iran's Economy

**TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The outgoing president of Iran said his administration is offering a general outlook of the country's economy to its successor and will share experiences with the next administration's officials.**

Speaking at a Sunday meeting of the Economic Coordination Headquarters, President Hassan Rouhani said his administration has made arrangements for the transition of power with a national outlook and tries to realistically outline the country's macro-economic plans for the next administration.

Pointing to his cabinet's efforts to give transparent reports about its activities over the past 8 years, Rouhani said the people should be informed of the problems that the administration has dealt with and of the measures it has taken to nullify the sanctions and counter the economic war.

He said the outgoing administration will share its experiences in coping with the



sanctions, the economic war and the coronavirus outbreak with the next administration's authorities.

In comments in June, Rouhani said the next administration will have a much easier job in running the country, since his cabinet has handled the situation under an unprecedented economic war and while facing the problems in the import of medicine and foodstuff.

## Iran Needs a Dynamic Passive Defense System

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Iran's Passive Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali says that the country needs a dynamic passive defense system to cope with the emerging threats.

"As technology grows and develops, we face threats that are institutionalized in the nature of technology. We need to bring the enemy's domination in this regard to a stop," Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali said in a meeting with the head of the Deprived Organization (Mostazafan Foundation).

"Unfortunately, the legislative system of our country does not keep with the speed of technology and we are witnessing a downwardness in this regard," he added.

Jalali also said that making up for the weaknesses requires new and up-to-date strategies, adding that old methods are no longer responsive to new and complicated threats.

The chairman of the Passive Defense Organization went on to say that in the field of natural threats, such as floods, earthquakes, etc., the nature of threats is always fixed and does not change, but with regard to "intentional" threats, due to the existence of two components of technology and humans, which are both dynamic and fluid, the type of threats is changing drastically and requires that passive defense keep up with the new emerging threats.

Jalali further pointed out that the country's passive defense organization has designed passive defense-based approaches in 10 specialized fields and tries to minimize the enemy's domination.

## Cultural Spaces; Key to Healthier City, Creative Cultural Economy

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance said that the creation of any cultural space creates a healthier city and also plays a significant role in terms of cultural economy.

At the inauguration ceremony of the 'Palace of Art Garden', Abbas Salehi added that Iran has made great strides in national development over the past 100 years, and after the Islamic Revolution.

He stated that so far, the development of Iran's green space has an acceptable average, and there is 11 meters of green space for every Iranian.

Salehi pointed out that the city is the place where people live in the indigenous way, physically and mentally, highlighting that if culture is not used in these three cases, people's lives will be disrupted.

Emphasizing the efforts of various cultural groups to promote the culture of cities, he noted that in 2013, there were 317 cinemas in the country, which increased to 635 in 2019.

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance stated that one of the ideas that has been implemented in recent years, and see it in the 'Palace of Art Garden' complex, is that cities can create places for cultural and art events to enter and exit in a regional manner.

The specialized center of Iranian arts called 'Palace of Art Garden' inaugurated on Saturday in the presence of Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi, Tehran's mayor Pirouz Hanachi and other officials in Tehran.

## Majlis Efforts Have Reduced Blackouts



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker says with the follow-up measures of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the problems of blackouts in the country had been reduced to some extent.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in the open session of the parliament offered condolences to the people of Iran on the martyrdom anniversary of the fifth Shia Imam, Imam Mohammad Baqer.

"With the lawmakers addressing the people's problems, important measures were taken to solve their problems including frequent blackouts which had made trouble for people and many businesses had suffered huge losses," he noted.

Qalibaf highlighted that with the follow-up measures of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the problems of blackouts had been reduced to some extent.

"I emphasize that monitoring the continuation of these activities is the will of the people," he added.

Pointing to the vaccination against the coronavirus, the speaker said: "The outbreak of the fifth wave of COVID-19 in the south and southeast of Iran has created many difficulties for the people, which has increased the dire need for vaccination," stressed Qalibaf.

## Iran Standing by Yemeni Nation Until Establishment of Peace

TEHRAN (MNA) – "It is important that Iran stand by the Yemeni people until the establishment of peace in the country", Iran envoy to Sana'a told Yemeni prime minister.

Iran's Ambassador to Yemen, Hassan Irlou met and held talks with Abdulaziz bin Habtoor, the prime minister of Yemen's National Salvation Government in Sana'a.

The Yemeni prime minister once again felicitated the leadership, the government, and the people of Iran on holding a successful presidential election, adding that this has a great impact on the region, especially the Axis of Resistance.

He appreciated the stances of the Islamic Republic of Iran in supporting the Yemeni people and countering the brutal aggression against this country.

The Iranian envoy to Sana'a also praised the historical and fraternal relations between Yemen and Iran, stressing, "It is important that Iran stand by the Yemeni people until the establishment of peace in the country."

Iran and Yemen are major partners in the Resistance Front against the Zionist Regime, he said, adding that the Islamic ummah is proud of the endurance of the Yemeni nation against aggression and siege.

## U.S. Exit From Afghanistan a Great Victory for Muslim Nations

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Deputy Secretary-General of World Assembly of Islamic Awakening said that expulsion of U.S. forces from Afghanistan is a great victory for Muslim nations.

Speaking in a news conference on "Afghanistan, Sustainable Peace and Security" which was held on Sunday, Hossein Akbari said, "It is scheduled that a webinar conference entitled "Afghanistan, Sustainable Peace and Security" will be held in the Islamic Republic of Iran and it is predicted that more than 40 Afghan leaders and representatives of neighboring countries of Afghanistan including Pakistan, China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Islamic Republic of Iran will deliver lectures in this Conference."

The main topics of discussion of the Conference are focused on negotiations in the process of developments in Afghanistan which will be held at the venue of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) on Monday July 19 in the presence of dignitaries and personalities from different ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

"We hope that this Conference will help spread of peace in Afghanistan as Islamic Republic of Iran has always made its utmost effort, with its mediating role, to convince parties to negotiate instead of war," he emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the dire present situation in Afghanistan and stated that Afghanistan has now entered a new stage. In fact, the 20-year presence of the United States in Afghanistan and eventual expulsion from that country has created a power vacuum and power imbalance in Afghanistan that affects all developments and equations.

Turning to the inauguration of President-Elect of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, the Deputy Secretary-General of World Assembly of Islamic Awakening said that senior leaders of Afghanistan will take in the inauguration ceremony which will be held on August 5.

## President to Inaugurate Strategic Goreh-Jask Pipeline Project Soon

TEHRAN (IRNA) – The CEO of National Iranian Oil Company announced that pumping oil into strategic Goreh-Jask pipeline will start upon its completion by the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in near future.

Masoud Karbasian said on Sunday that the pipeline will bring oil from Goreh in Bushehr to Jask, making it strategically important as the country's second-largest crude oil export terminal.

The pipeline is laid from Goreh oil terminal in the southwestern Bushehr Province to Jask oil terminal along the Gulf of Oman.

He added that other operating units in Goreh-Jask pipeline project are in a steady situation to transfer oil to Jask terminal, and pumping oil into strategic Goreh-Jask pipeline is being done in a steady situation.

Referring to the importance of the project, Karbasian added that operations have begun to start injecting oil into the 1,000km Goreh-Jask pipeline, which will be inaugurated "in the near future."

Stating that the Goreh-Jask oil transfer project is currently the largest project in Iran's oil industry, Karbasian said: "Production of transmission valves, electric pumps, laying a thousand kilometers of pipeline along with the construction of storage tanks, terminals and the single point mooring (SPM) in Jask port using domestic capacities shows the national determination for completing this great and strategic project."

The Goreh-Jask oil transfer project is going to provide Iran with an alternative route for the country's crude oil exports that are currently carried out through the Strait of Hormuz.

## Single-Digit Jobless Rates for 20 out of 31 Provinces

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) show jobless rate in 20 out of 31 provinces in the country was single-digit in the quarter to June 21.

SCI figures covered in a Saturday report by the official IRNA news agency showed that the number of Iranian provinces with single-digit unemployment rates had increased by four compared to the similar quarter in 2020.

Lowest quarterly unemployment rate was reported in the province of Hamadan at 5.6%. The region of nearly two million people is a bustling hub of agriculture in western Iran.

The IRNA report added that the province of Tehran, where the capital city in located, had the second lowest jobless rate at 6.3%.

Hormozgan on the Persian Gulf coast and Kermanshah on the border with Iraq were the two provinces with the highest incidence of joblessness at 16.6% and 14.7%, respectively.

The nationwide unemployment rate stood at 8.8% in the quarter to late June this year, down 1% from the same quarter last year, said the report.

The figure meant that some 23.676 million people from Iran's active workforce had a job in the reference period.

Those employed in the labor force of above 15 years old increased to 37.7% over the same period, SCI figures showed.

Iran has seen its jobless rate decline in recent years despite economic problems facing the country because of both U.S. sanctions and the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Single-digit unemployment rates in many Iranian provinces come as the country has reported continued growth in manufacturing and agriculture activity since it came under U.S. sanctions in 2018.

## China Calls for Boosting Cooperation With New Iran Gov't

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chinese Foreign Minister told his Iranian counterpart that Beijing will continue to strengthen communication and cooperation with the new government led by Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi.

China is ready to work with Iran to continue to oppose unilateralism and bullying behaviors, said Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Saturday, CGTN reported.

He made the remarks during a phone call with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, saying that the two countries will work together to better safeguard the common interests of China, Iran, and other developing countries.

Noting the positive contributions Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and the Iranian government have made to the development of bilateral relations over the past eight years, Wang said that China will continue to strengthen communication and cooperation with the new government led by Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi.

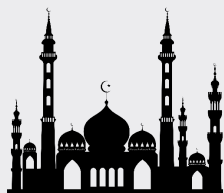
China thanks Iran for supporting China on issues concerning the country's core interests and will, as always, support Iran in safeguarding its state sovereignty and national dignity and choosing the path that suits their national conditions, Wang said.

For his part, Zarif thanked China for providing vaccine and anti-epidemic materials to Iran and supporting its fight against the epidemic, adding that Iran hopes to continue to strengthen cooperation with China in fighting the epidemic.

The Iranian side attaches great importance to Iran-China relations and believes that bilateral relations will be further deepened after the new Iranian government takes office, he added.

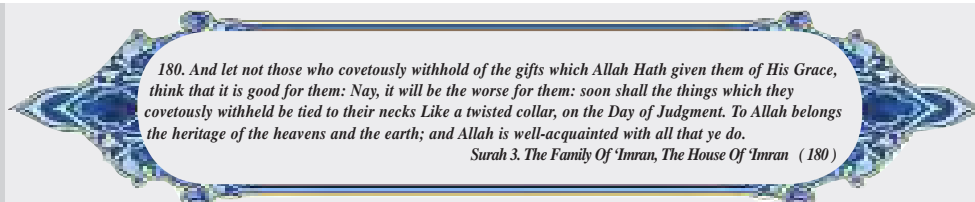
The two sides also exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:38
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:22
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:03



# Humanities Has High Position in Iran Education

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Minister of Science, Research and Technology said: "Humanities has a special position in the higher education of Iran because it is our most important spiritual, cultural and religious capital in this field."**

At the closing ceremony of the 12th Farabi International Award, Mansour Gholami thanked all the institutions and those who helped organize and promote the festival during these years, adding that according to the reports submitted during the 12th Farabi Award, a large number of prominent professors, researchers, universities and institutions of higher education, as well as reputable scientific associations have cooperated closely in various scientific and executive sectors.

The high-ranking official has stated that despite the coronavirus outbreak, which has slowed some activities in the country, over the past two years, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology while pursuing its duties, has seriously tried to comply with the protocols applied by the National Task Force for Combating Coronavirus.

Gholami highlighted: "Reputable events such as the Farabi International Award, in addition to identifying and appreciating top researchers, seek to provide a realistic picture



of the country's scientific products and pave the way for their qualitative growth."

He stressed that the results of such events require time, money, and most importantly, support.

The closing ceremony of the 12th Farabi International Award, dedicated to humanities and Islamic sciences research, was held on Sunday with a message from the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and the introduction and appreciation of 37 selected domestic and foreign researchers.

In the ceremony, the owners of 11 works in the adult section, and 8 works in the youth section, 7 selected in the international section, and also 11 selected figures in other sections were introduced and honored in the presence of scientific and national officials.

From the total number of works and people studied in the international section, 7 prominent experts and researchers from Germany, Afghanistan, Italy, Belgium, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Russia were selected as the selected section of Islamic studies and Iranology.

# Iran National Basketball Team Seen Off to Tokyo

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The ceremony of unveiling Iran National Basketball Team's kit was held, accompanied with seeing-off ceremony of the team to 2020Tokyo Games at Azadi Stadium's basketball hall.



In the ceremony first, Iran's national women three-man basketball team was honored and the platters and technical staff of the team were awarded some gifts by Daria Hamrah, the sponsor of Iran Basketball Federation. Then a video clip was played at the hall where in the people by putting their autographs on the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran and wished success for Iran's national basketball.

After speeches of the president of the basketball federation, national team's coach and holding a press conference, the captain of Iran's national basketball team Samad Nikkhab Bahrami who is also the flag-bearer of Iran's Olympic delegation in Tokyo Games was delivered the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

At the end of the ceremony, players and technical staff of the team put their autographs on a national team shirt and Daria Hamrah honored the departing team members with gifts.

# Iran Tops World Record In Handicrafts



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's deputy minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a claimant, reference, and credible country among all countries in the handicrafts and traditional arts.

Pouya Mahmouidian added that Iran has more than 295 fields active in the handicrafts, 14 cities and villages with global registration in the handicrafts in the World Council of Handicrafts.

Referring to the art collection called 'Palace of Art Garden', she stated that the creation of this collection aims to prevent the obsolescence of handicrafts and traditional arts.

Mahmouidian highlighted: "By creating this collection, we will present handicrafts and traditional arts through dialogue, culture and informing the youth in the country, and in case of the eradication of the coronavirus, we will provide them to foreign tourists."

Tehran's mayor Pirouz Hanachi also said that with proper knowledge and education, unique Iranian architecture can be continued.

He stated: "Just as the architecture of the predecessors has been influenced by its era and the period before it, the architecture of the Islamic period has also been influenced by the period before it and its era, with the difference that in the Islamic era architecture has become more complete."

Following the ceremony, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi, Tehran's Mayor Pirouz Hanachi, and Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicraft Pouya Mahmouidian visited the handicrafts of the country's artists.

# Steel Ingot Production Volume Hits 6.2m Tons in Q1

TEHRAN (MNA) - Studies of performance of large companies in mining and mineral sector in the first three months of the current year (from March 21 to June 21) indicates that about 6.2 million tons of steel ingot was produced in the country.

Another statistic showed that 3.9 million tons of steel products were produced in the country from March 21 to June 21.

Accordingly, 6,183,726 tons of steel ingot was produced by major steel production companies in the first three months of the current year (from March 21 to June 21), showing a nine percent growth as compared to the same period last year.

Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSCO)

managed to produce 2,685,410 tons of steel ingot in the first three months of the current year, accounting for 43 percent total steel ingot production share in the country.

According to the report, major steel production companies produced 3,895,167 tons of steel products in the first three months of the current year, showing a three percent (3%) hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Last week, World Steel Association (WSA) introduced the Islamic Republic of Iran among the world's top 10 steel production countries with producing 29 million tons of crude steel, and also second largest sponge iron production company in 2020.

# Iranian Rice Importers Urge Lifting of Seasonal Ban

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's customs office IRICA has called on the government to dismantle a seasonal ban on imports of rice, a demand echoed by rice importers amid low supplies of the staple in the country which could cause a sharp increase in prices over the summer.

IRICA deputy chief Mehrdad Arvanaghi said in a letter addressed to Iran's market regulator authorities that rice imports into Iran had declined by nearly 70 percent year on year in three months and a half passed since the start of the current calendar year in late March. The letter said that total rice imports into Iran over the period had reached 86,367 metric tons worth \$78.14 million, down from 277,691 tons worth 249.7 million imported between late March and early July 2020.

Arvanaghi said Iranian government authorities will need to reconsider a four-month ban on imports of rice that started June 22, warning that the domestic harvest this summer would suffer as a result of the current drought. The official said that existing rice supplies in IRICA storage houses were only around 52,000 tons.

Iran's rice imports have declined significantly over the past year as the government no longer considers the staple in its list of state-subsidized food and medicine. Iran imported more than 850,000 tons of rice, mostly from India, in the calendar year to late March 2020, according to Masih Keshavarz, who chairs the Iranian Rice Importers Association.

Keshavarz told the state TV's news service on Saturday that Iran's ministry of agriculture (MAJ) should move to dismantle the seasonal ban to prevent a sharp rise in rice prices over the summer.

# Iran's Technology Ecosystem, Biggest Event

TEHRAN (IP)- Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology said that in the last few years, something big has happened in the country, such as the technology ecosystem or the innovation ecosystem.

Noting that Iran has achieved very successful models in the commercialization and technology discussions, Sorena Sattari added that the innovation and technology ecosystem begins with universities, centers for promoting new ideas and science and technology parks.

Sattari highlighted: "To solve people's problems in society, we need a product that is the result of private sector's investment which is, a sector that has always been neglected."

He noted: "Unless the private sector invests in research, the product will be realized."

The Vice President for Science and Technology of Iran stressed that all the efforts of this ecosystem are to invest private sector's money in the research; therefore, the result of these researches was to produce more than 7,000 knowledge-based and creative companies specifically for the field of humanities.

Sattari noted: "Since last year, we have started discussing creative houses and more than 30 creative houses are being set up, and these houses are considered as the space for young people, especially humanities graduates will be able to produce a product and make it available to everyone."

# Isfahanis to Overcome This Year's Water Tension Through Their Expertise and Skills

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN- The CEO of National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company (NWPEC) in a phone conversation with the Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan)'s water tension headquarters emphasized continuation of fair distribution of services by this company in the province.

Hamid Reza Janbaz said that this year comparing to the past 50 years water resources are very limited and added provision of sustainable drinking water in some areas is very difficult but the national water and wastewater industry is sure that citizens of Isfahan can overcome the problems of water shortage.

Referring to the skill and expertise of human resources at ABFA of Isfahan, he said Isfahan is leader in many fields of water and wastewater industry of the country and it helps Isfahanis to pass this era of water tension. Janbaz noted that in recent years, ABFA of Isfahan could provide sustainable drinking water by creating required infrastructures like telemetry and smart monitoring network in the exploitation sector.

Pointing to the rise in the temperature in the last days of current and next months,

he said that although the second water supply system in Isfahan has not been exploited, it is expected economic activists of water and wastewater industry in Isfahan to provide sustainable drinking water for the public by employing their skill and expertise.

Then the CEO of ABFA of Isfahan Mr. Hashem Amini said the company has tried to prepare the ground for providing the people in the towns and villages with drinking waters despite the rise of temperature to 42 Centigrade. He went on to say that keeping peace among the people of the province is the priority of the Company, adding that the company will utilize all its efforts to use all capacities of committed and skillful human resources to overcome this crisis and people to less challenge in water shortage.

Amini then expressed hope with the public cooperation in managing their water consumption efficiently and round-the-clock efforts of the activists in this industry in Isfahan, the province would face the least tension regarding the water crisis.





## Pilgrims in Mecca for Second Hajj of Covid-19 Pandemic

MECCA (Dispatches) - Up to 60,000 Muslims residing in Saudi Arabia are allowed to take part in this year's hajj, evoking the envy and awe of millions of international pilgrims who have been barred for the second year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Through an online vetting system, they were chosen from more than 558,000 applicants -- all citizens or residents of the kingdom.

The annual ritual is a central pillar of Islam and a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime.



## Biden to Host Iraq's PM At White House

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Joe Biden will host Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi at the White House on July 26, the White House said.

The visit will highlight the strategic partnership between the two countries and advance bilateral cooperation under a 2008 agreement that governed the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

Psaki listed areas of shared interest such as energy and health and said Biden looked forward to strengthening cooperation with Iraq on "security issues to include joint efforts to ensure the enduring defeat" of the Islamic State militant group.



## French Protests Call for Freedom Amid Gov't Vaccine Push



PARIS (Reuters) - Thousands marched across France on Saturday to protest against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to force vaccination of health workers and require a COVID-19 free certificate to enter places such as bars, restaurants and cinemas.

Macron this week announced sweeping measures to fight a rapid surge in coronavirus infections, which protesters say infringe the freedom of choice of those who do not want the vaccination.

The measures had already prompted demonstrations earlier this week, forcing police to use tear gas to disperse protesters.

"Everyone is sovereign in his own body. In no way does a president of the Republic have the right to decide on my individual health," said one protester in Paris who identified herself as Chrystelle.

Marches, which also took place in France's largest cities such as Marseille, Lyon and Lille as well as many smaller centers, also included "yellow vest" protesters seeking to revive the anti-government movement curbed by coronavirus lockdowns.

Visiting a centre in Anglet in southwestern France, Prime Minister Jean Castex said vaccination, which is not mandatory for the general public for now, is the only way to fight the virus.

"I hear the reluctance that arises but I think that we must at all costs convince all our fellow citizens to be vaccinated, it is the best way to cope to this health crisis," Castex said.

Despite the strength of the protests, an Ipsos-Sopra Steria poll released on Friday found more than 60% of French people agree with mandatory vaccination for health workers, as well as a requirement for a health pass in some public places.

Fast-spreading variants of the virus risk undermining economic recovery if allowed to spiral out of control, forcing some governments to rethink their COVID-19 strategies just as citizens start their summer holidays.

Earlier on Saturday Castex's office said France would reinforce restrictions on unvaccinated travellers from a series of countries to counter a rebound in COVID-19 infections, while opening its doors to those who have received all their shots.

"The Delta variant is here, we must not hide the truth, it is more contagious than the previous ones. We must adapt and face it", Castex told reporters in southwestern France, referring to the variant first identified in India.

After falling from more than 42,000 per day in mid-April to less than 2,000 per day in late June, the average number of new infections in France has rebounded to reach nearly 11,000 per day.

Some 55.1% of the French had had a single dose of a vaccine as of Friday and 44.2% were fully inoculated - not enough to stop the virus's spread.

## Cuban President Denounces Unrest as a "Lie"

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel on Saturday denounced what he said was a false narrative over unrest on the Caribbean island, speaking during a rally alongside ex-president Raul Castro and before thousands of supporters in Havana.

"What the world is seeing of Cuba is a lie," Diaz-Canel said.

He decried what he said was the dissemination of "false images" on social networks that "encourage and glorify the outrage and destruction of property."

Diaz-Canel's comments come days after historic demonstrations against the communist government.

On July 11 and 12, thousands of Cubans took to the streets in 40 cities around the island shouting "Freedom," "Down with the dictatorship," and "We're hungry."

One person has died and more than 100 have been arrested, including independent journalists and opposition activists, since the protests broke out over the worst economic crisis in decades.



## Border Crossing Between Pakistan and Afghanistan Reopens

CHAMAN (AFP) - A key crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan partially reopened on Saturday, days after the Taliban took control of the Afghan border town in a rapid offensive across the country.

Pakistan shut off the border when the militants captured Spin Boldak from Afghan government forces on Wednesday, leaving thousands of people stranded on either side and trade at a standstill. A Pakistani border official, who did not want to be named, told AFP that people were being allowed to enter Pakistan in small groups, while hundreds were heading into Afghanistan.

An AFP journalist witnessed people crossing in both directions.

"We have decided to let them cross over to Pakistan... after checking their travel documents, enabling them to join their families on Eid (al-Adha)," the border official said, referring to the Muslim holiday which will be celebrated next week.

Pakistani Noor Ali, who had been visiting Kabul, said it took him two attempts to reach Spin Boldak in recent days because of fighting in Kandahar province, on the border. "I was scared, but the Taliban did not create any problems, they checked my documents and allowed me to go through," he told AFP after arriving in the nearby city of Quetta.

The Taliban's seizure of the border town follows weeks of intensifying clashes across Afghanistan, with the insurgents capitalizing on the last stages of the US troop withdrawal to launch a series of lightning offensives, overrunning districts at a staggering rate.

The group have also taken other vital border crossings with neighboring countries in the north and west.

An Afghan returning to work in the northern Pakistani city of Peshawar said he passed government soldiers and Taliban fighters on his journey through Kandahar province to the Spin Boldak crossing.

"I saw tanks and guns on my way and I was stopped yesterday by Afghan soldiers who warned me about the security problems in Spin Boldak," Abdul Latif told AFP after getting to Quetta.

## Death Toll in Rises to 168 in Germany, Belgium Floods

ERFTSTADT (Reuters) - The death toll in devastating flooding in western Germany and Belgium rose to at least 168 on Saturday after burst rivers and flash floods this week collapsed houses and ripped up roads and power lines.

Some 141 people died in the flooding in Germany's worst natural disaster in more than half a century. That included about 98 in the Ahrweiler district south of Cologne, according to police.

Hundreds of people were still missing or unreachable as several areas were inaccessible due to high water levels while communication in some places was still down.

Residents and business owners struggled to pick up the pieces in battered towns.

"Everything is completely destroyed. You don't recognise the scenery," said Michael Lang, owner of a wine shop in the town of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler in Ahrweiler, fighting back tears.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Erftstadt in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the disaster killed at least 43 people.

"We mourn with those that have lost friends, acquaintances, family members," he said. "Their fate is ripping our hearts apart." Around 700 residents were evacuated late on Friday after a dam broke in the town of Wassenberg near Cologne, authorities said.

But Wassenberg mayor Marcel Maurer said water levels had been stabilising since the night. "It's too early to give the all-clear but we are cautiously optimistic," he said.

The Steinbachtal dam in western Germany, however, remained at risk of breaching, authorities said after some 4,500 people were evacuated from homes downstream.

Steinmeier said it would take weeks before the full damage, expected to require several billions of euros in reconstruction funds, could be assessed.

Armin Laschet, state premier of North Rhine-Westphalia and the ruling CDU party's candidate in September's general election, said he would speak to Finance Minister Olaf Scholz in the coming days about financial support.

Chancellor Angela Merkel was expected to travel on Sunday to Rhineland Palatinate, the state that is home to the devastated village of Schuld.

In Belgium, the death toll rose to 27, according to the national crisis centre, which is coordinating the relief operation there.

It added that 103 people were "missing or unreachable". Some were likely unreachable because they could not recharge mobile phones or were in hospital without identity papers, the centre said.



## 75 Children Killed, 1,000 Detained Since Myanmar Coup

YANGON (Dispatches) - Dozens of children have been killed and hundreds arbitrarily detained in Myanmar since a coup more than five months ago, UN rights experts said, as the political turmoil in the country continues amid a health emergency brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN child rights committee reported on Friday that it had received "credible information" that 75 children had been killed and approximately 1,000 arrested in Myanmar since February 1.

"Children in Myanmar are under siege and facing catastrophic loss of life because of the military coup," committee chair Mikiko Otani said in a statement.

Myanmar's residents have taken part in mass protests but have been met with a brutal military response since the coup which deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Children are exposed to indiscriminate violence, random shootings and arbitrary arrests every day," Otani said.

"They have guns pointed at them and see the same happen to their parents and siblings."

The committee is made up of 18 independent experts who are tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Myanmar signed onto in 1991.

The experts said they "strongly condemned the killing of children by the junta and police", pointing out that "some victims were killed in their own homes".

They included a six-year-old girl in the city of Mandalay, shot in the stomach by police, the statement said.

The experts also slammed the widespread arbitrary detention of children in police stations, prisons and military detention centres.

They pointed to the military authorities reported practice of taking children hostage when they are unable to arrest their parents, including a five-year-old girl in Mandalay region whose father helped organise anti-military protests.





**Shanon**  
(adviser)

**Parsian**

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## Xiaomi Grabs Number Two Spot in Surging Smartphone Market

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese electronics firm Xiaomi has overtaken Apple as the number two global smartphone maker in a sizzling market with consumers emerging from lockdowns, a new survey showed. The Canalsy survey of second-quarter sales released last week showed worldwide smartphone sales up 12 percent, with South Korea's Samsung holding its top position with a 19 percent market share. Xiaomi meanwhile surged to the number two position for the first time ever with a 17 percent share as sales jumped 83 percent, according to Canalsy. Apple dropped to the number three position with iPhone sales up just one percent, after getting a lift from last year's new models.



## Biden Battles Russian Hacking Groups With Restrictions on IT Firms

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States took a new stab at Russia's cybersecurity industry, restricting trade with four information technology firms and two other entities over "aggressive and harmful" activities - including digital espionage - that Washington blames on the Russian government. A Commerce Department posting said the six entities were sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department in April, which targeted companies in the technology sector that support Russian intelligence services.

Their addition to the Commerce Department's blacklist means U.S. companies cannot sell to them without licenses, which are seldom granted. The announcement follows April's sanctions, which were aimed at punishing Moscow for hacking, interfering in last year's U.S. election, poisoning Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and other alleged malign actions - allegations the Kremlin denies. They come as the United States is responding to a drumbeat of digital intrusions blamed on Russian government-backed spies and a spate of increasingly disruptive ransomware outbreaks blamed on Russian cybercriminals.

The entities added to the blacklist are Aktsionerhoe Obshchestvo AST; Aktsionerhoe Obshchestvo Pasit; Aktsionerhoe Obshchestvo Pozitiv Teknologizh, also known as JSC Positive Technologies; Federal State Autonomous Institution Military Innovative Technopolis Era; Federal State Autonomous Scientific Establishment Scientific Research Institute Specialized Security Computing Devices and Automation (SVA); and Obshchestvo S Ogranichennoi Otvetstvennostyu Neobit.

Era is a research center and technology park operated by the Russian Ministry of Defense; Pasit is an IT company that did research and development in support of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service's malicious cyber operations; SVA is a Russian state-owned institution that also supported malicious cyber operations; and Russia-based IT security firms Neobit, AST and Positive Technologies have clients that include the Russian government, according to the United States.

Positive Technologies said the Commerce Department's announcement had no new information and that the company engaged in the "ethical exchange of information with the professional information security community" and had never been involved with an attack on U.S. infrastructure.

The other entities either did not immediately respond to requests for comment or could not be reached. The restrictions against the Russian technology industry have been in the works for months. The same day that the Treasury sanctions were announced, then-Assistant Attorney General John Demers told reporters that officials were in the process of evaluating dozens of Russian companies for possible referral to the Commerce Department.

Demers said investigators would be looking at "a known connection between a particular company and the Russian intelligence services" as they evaluated whether a company was a risk. Non-Russian companies that had back office operations in Russia would also be examined, he said. The United States adds entities to the Commerce Department's trade blacklist that it says pose a risk to U.S. national security or foreign policy interests.

## Sri Lanka Is the Highest Risk of Foreign Debt Default in Asia

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bloomberg reported last week that Sri Lanka was the highest default risk in the Asia-Pacific, overtaking Papua New Guinea, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The news agency's "debt default probability" scale now rates Sri Lanka at almost 28 percent, up from 13 percent six months ago. Under Bloomberg's model any country rated over 1.5 percent is deemed to be at "a high risk of failure to pay."

The news agency said that Sri Lanka's "first test comes on July 27," when it must repay a \$US1 billion bond to investors. "[S]peculation is growing," it continued, "that it may need to turn to the International Monetary Fund [IMF] for additional finances after securing assistance from countries including China." Attempting to downplay the deepening crisis, Sri Lanka's Minister for Finance and Capital Markets Ajit Nivard Cabraal insisted that loans would be repaid on time. He cited government controls on foreign exchange and short-term swap agreements with China, India and Bangladesh.

In March, the Rajapakse government obtained a \$1.5 billion currency swap line from Beijing. The Sri Lanka Central Bank is also expecting a \$250 million swap facility from Bangladesh and \$400 million from the Reserve Bank of India. The Central Bank's arrangements, however, are a desperate attempt to postpone any default on foreign debts.

Pointing to Colombo's ongoing debt crisis, Fitch Ratings has revealed that the government will have to find \$29 billion between now and 2026 to service debt repayments. Sri Lanka is reeling under the impact of an economic crisis exacerbated by the global pandemic, with export income and remittances falling drastically and tourism having all but collapsed. The Central Bank this year has made about \$1 billion in debt repayments. As a result, the country's foreign currency reserves dropped to \$4 billion by the end of June, sufficient for only 2.7 months of imports.



The Rajapakse government has already curtailed a host of imports, including essential food items, automobiles, fertilizers and pesticides and last month increased fuel prices, pushing up the cost of transport and many essential items.

Earlier this month the Central Bank, in a bid to save foreign exchange, planned to curb imports of electronic goods, such as televisions, refrigerators, washing machines and mobile phones. The measure was abandoned, after news of the plan was leaked to the media.

The Central Bank printed around 650 billion rupees in 2020, a program it has intensified this year with 230 billion printed last month alone. The attempt to overcome falling government revenue has only succeeded in increasing the already-high rate of inflation.

## Central, South Asia Can Benefit From Opportunities If the Region Is at Peace

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' comments came as clashes between the Afghan government forces and the Taliban intensified since U.S. troops began to withdraw from the country.

The countries of Central and South Asia can only fully benefit from potential opportunities if the region at large is at peace, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said, underlining that the promise of connectivity itself should become a "counterbalance" to the threat of further deterioration in war-torn Afghanistan.

"Connectivity is central to trade, economic growth and sustainable development. But connectivity is not just about economics. It drives regional cooperation and encourages friendly relations among neighbours, near and far," Mr. Guterres said in a video message to the high-level International Conference on Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent.

"Enhanced connectivity that is environmentally sustainable and based on the rule of law can contribute to building long-term peace, stability and prosperity in Central and South Asia. This is crucial now more than ever," he said.

He said the countries of Central and South Asia can only fully benefit from potential opportunities if the region at large is at peace. "This places an even higher premium on the importance of active and collective engagement in support of Afghanistan's peace and security."

Mr. Guterres called on the nations to work together to "ensure that the potential dividends of peace are well understood by all so that the promise of connectivity itself becomes a counterbalance to the threat of further deterioration in Afghanistan."



He stressed that the conference is an important step in that direction and the UN stands ready to support "your efforts to strengthen interconnectedness in the region for the benefit of all." His comments came as clashes between the Afghan government forces and the Taliban intensified since U.S. troops began to withdraw from the country, ending nearly two decades of its military presence in the war-ravaged country.

The Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamist militia, was evicted from power by the U.S.-led forces in 2001 after the 9/11 terror attacks. The Taliban recently claimed their fighters had retaken 85% of territory in Afghanistan — a figure disputed by the government in Kabul.

## Finland Needs to Accept More Foreign Workers

HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Finland's Finance Minister Annika Saarikko (Cen) said that while the government has identified increasing work-based immigration as one of its key employment-boosting measures, some politicians are still debating the necessity of foreign workers.

Speaking to Yle, Saarikko said that expanding Finland's foreign workforce would help improve employment and shore up the economy.

"This won't hurt Finns' employment prospects. We need foreigners and Finns," she said.

Demographic challenges in Finland mean there are fewer working age people to support the elderly and more nurses by the end of this decade to care for the older population. help care for them. The country's social and healthcare sectors have estimated that they will need 30,000 Saarikko said that in addition to highly skilled experts, Finland also needs to attract blue-collar workers.

"The fact is that agriculture, manufacturing, social and healthcare services—or even mass transit in the capital region—would not function without foreign workers," she added. While Finnish politicians have talked about boosting employment-based migration for years, there has been little change in the number of foreigners moving to Finland for work.

Foreigners wanting to work in Finland may struggle to get a work-based residence permit, and companies in Finland have repeatedly criticized the lengthy permit waits foreign recruits face. While Saarikko conceded that bureaucracy was slowing down the influx of foreign labor, she called for a general attitude change in Finnish society, as studies have shown that job applicants with foreign names face discrimination in their job searches.

Politicians are meanwhile not always in agreement on the need for foreign labor. Leader of the opposition Finns Party, Jussi Halla-aho, has called for limiting work-based immigration, arguing that foreign workers weaken the labour market by accepting poorer conditions and pay than Finns.

## Italy's Euro 2020 Win May Add 12b Euros to 2021 GDP

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy's victory in the UEFA Euro 2020 football championship final on Sunday is likely to add 0.7 percent to the country's projected gross domestic product (GDP) growth this year, local economists have said.

This will certainly be welcome news for an

economy struggling to emerge from a slowdown brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Italy's dramatic 3-2 penalty shootout win over England earned the Italian side their first European title since 1968 and their first world title since their 2006 World Cup triumph.

According to studies, the feat is also sparking new rounds of domestic spending and attracting investments from abroad as it has helped boost consumer confidence and improved the image of Italy and Italian products abroad. This boost may be temporary, analysts said, but is still significant.

All in all, the Italian national football team's Euro 2020 victory is projected to "result in an extra 12 billion euros (US dollars 14.2 billion), or around an extra 0.7 percent growth in gross domestic product," Simona Caricasulo, an economist specialises in sports-related topics at Rome's LUISS University, said on Thursday. She said the impacts would be felt almost exclusively this year.

Coldiretti, Italy's main agricultural union, predicted separately that the country's exports would increase by ten percent as a result of the Euro 2020 victory, which the organisation said would cast Italy's products in a new, positive light in foreign markets. This increase is comparable to that registered after Italy's World Cup victory 15 years ago, Coldiretti said.

This is much-needed good news for Italy, which saw its economy contract 8.9 percent last year amid the lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Italy's economy was already projected by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) to rebound by 4.7 percent this year. The projected bump from the Euro 2020 victory, if it proves accurate, would come on top of that.

ISTAT is scheduled to release its updated estimate for this year's economic growth in early August.

## Pakistan Approves Hike In Flour, Sugar, Ghee Prices



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - After petrol, now the price of food items including sugar, wheat flour has been increased in Pakistan, amid its worsening economic situation.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet on Friday approved an increase in rates of sugar, wheat flour and ghee (butter) at the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) of Pakistan, reported The News International.

The price of sugar was jacked up from Rs 68 per kg to Rs 85 per kg, ghee (butter) from Rs 170 to Rs 260 per kg and wheat flour from Rs 850 per bag to Rs 950 per bag at the USC owing to the increasing gap between the subsidised prices offered by the Utility Stores Corporation and the prevailing market prices.

The committee approved revision in the prices of three essential commodities to rationalise provision of subsidies by the USC.

The News International further reported that the minister for finance and revenue Shaukat Tarin chaired the committee meeting. The committee also approved the import of 200,000 ton sugar, subsidy on DAP fertiliser for cotton and rice crops and procurement of 200,000 cotton bales by the Trading Corporation of Pakistan.

On Thursday, the Imran Khan-led Pakistan government has increased the petrol price by Rs 5.40 per litre and the high-speed diesel (HSD) by Rs 2.54 per litre.

Dawn reported that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has increased the prices. As of now, the new price for petrol will be Rs 118.09 per litre, diesel will be Rs 116.5 per litre in the country.

Meanwhile, the prices of kerosene and light-diesel oil (LDO) were increased by Rs 1.39 and Rs 1.27, respectively. The new price of kerosene will be Rs 87.14 and that of LDO will be Rs 84.67.

The announcement was made by Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Political Affairs (SAPM) Shahbaz Gill. He said that the premier had decided to give the public "huge relief" by not raising prices based on the recommendations of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra).

According to the World Bank (WB) estimate, poverty in Pakistan has increased from 4.4 per cent to 5.4 per cent in 2020, as over two million people have fallen below the poverty line.



## Iran to Develop Transit Routes With Azerbaijan

BAKU (Dispatches) - Iran intends to develop transit routes with Azerbaijan by rail and the Caspian Sea, Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said.

The minister emphasized that one of the advantages of the relations between Azerbaijan and Iran is the transit

routes of the two countries.

In his words, a number of steps are being taken to develop these transit routes.

"With the development of transit routes, trade between the two countries is expected to increase by 2-3 times. There are great prospects for trade," he said.



## "Titane" Wins Palme d'Or as Spike Lee slips up

PARIS (Dispatches) - OShock-fest "Titane" took home the top prize Palme d'Or at Cannes on Saturday, revealed early at the closing ceremony in an embarrassing slip-up by jury president Spike Lee.

French director Julie Ducourmau is only the second woman to take home the prize for the movie, one of the wildest, sexiest and most violent films ever shown at the Cannes film festival.

It tells the story of a young woman who has sex with cars, kills without a care, and pretends to be a boy despite being pregnant by a vintage Cadillac.

Lee, the first black man to lead the jury, read out the winner at the very start of the prize section, rather than introducing the first award of the night for best actor.

After an awkward pause and regrouping, the best actor award was given to US actor Caleb Landry Jones for his chilling performance in "Nitram" about Australia's worst mass shooting in 1996.

Making a film about the Port Arthur massacre, in which 35 people died, triggered harsh criticism of director Justin Kurzel in Australia.

But critics were won over at the Cannes premiere, with Variety calling it a "devastating study of atrocity" that shows "quiet respect for the victims' dignity".

It was a huge night, too, for the previously unknown Norwegian actress Renate Reinsve, who was rocketed to stardom by her role in "Worst Person in the World".

Her role as a twenty-something searching for her identity and pinballing through relationships was a sensation, and caught the 33-year-old totally unprepared.

"No one has seen me in anything," she told AFP after the premiere. "The other day I woke up and I poked. And today I woke up and I cried."

The ceremony then moved awkwardly on to the third-place jury prize, which was shared by "Ahed's Knee" from Israel's Nadav Lapid and "Memoria" by Thailand's former Palme winner Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

The race had been wide open this year, with critics pointing towards many possible successors to "Parasite", the South Korean hit which took home the last Palme in 2019 before making history by triumphing at the Oscars.

Last year's festival was cancelled because of the pandemic.

"I promised the guys on the jury that I won't be a dictator, that I'll be democratic... but only up to a point!" Lee told reporters early in the festival, as they began mulling the 24 films in competition.

"If the jury is split four against four, it's me that decides," he said.

There were doubts early in the festival about the Covid logistics, with some festival-goers grossed out by the spit tests required every 48 hours, and criticism on social media over unmasked attendees in the cinemas at early premieres.

Restrictions were tightened, partying scaled back, and even though the stars couldn't quite keep themselves from hugs and kisses on the red carpet, the festival appeared to pass without a major outbreak.

Meanwhile the Grand Prix was shared between Iran's two-time Oscar winner Asghar



Farhadi for "A Hero" and Finland's Juho Kuosmanen for "Compartment No.6".

But there was still plenty of star power.

Tilda Swinton was ubiquitous on the red carpet this year, appearing in five films of the official selection.

She was clear, however, that her proudest moment was receiving the Palm Dog award on behalf of her three spaniels, who appeared with her in "The Souvenir Part 2".

"Honestly, this is the prize to get," she said at Friday's canine ceremony, as she tied the red collar prize around her neck.

Here is a list of the main winners:

\*Palme d'Or: Julia Ducourmau for "Titane" (France)

\*Grand Prix: Shared by Asghar Farhadi for "A Hero" (Iran) and Juho Kuosmanen for "Compartment No.6" (Finland)

\*Best director: Leos Carax "Annette" (France)

\*Best actress: Renate Reinsve for "Worst Person in the World" (Norway)

\*Best actor: Caleb Landry Jones for "Nitram" (U.S.)

\*Best screenplay: Hamaguchi Ryusuke and Takamasa Oe for "Drive My Car" (Japan)

Jury prize: Shared by Nadav Lapid for "Ahed's Knee" (Israel) and Apichatpong Weerasethakul for "Memoria" (Thailand)

Best first film: Antoneta Kusijanovic for "Murina" (Croatia)

Best short film: Hong Kong's "All The Crows In The World" Tang Yi

### Double-Standard...

FROM PAGE 1

The incidents of gun violence have seen an alarming surge in the U.S. in recent years, reigniting the debate over gun control laws and misuse of lethal weapons.

The fatal shootings are the latest in an epidemic of gun violence across Portland.

According to local press reports, there have been nearly 570 shooting incidents in the city so far this year, more than twice the number recorded during the same time in 2020.

Portland has also had more than 50 homicides so far in 2021, including two fatal shootings by police.

News outlets across the U.S. also reported multiple other shooting incidents in other cities throughout the country on Friday night and Saturday, highlighting the persisting epidemic of gun violence in the United States amid reports of surging purchases of all sorts of guns and ammunitions.

So with such a record of shooting and violence, the U.S. cannot be able prescribe any solution for the peace and security inside other countries like what it prescribes for Afghanistan.

The U.S. administration and system is backed by arms producers and dealers and it will definitely not take any action to ban carrying guns in the country or sales of arms to other countries because this is these companies which inject money into the veins of the U.S. system no matter how many people are killed in the U.S. or any country.

For the Americans, the sales of gun and weapons is important and the lives of people are not regarded and the slogan of self-defense, human rights and citizen right are all just for deceiving the public opinion and indeed those slogans have no value and room in the U.S.

There is a proverb which says "You reap what you sow" and the U.S. by creating insecurity and violence in other countries see its consequences in its own land and this violence may bring this state down to its knees sooner or later.



### Raisi...

FROM PAGE 1

"Raisi's administration will not continue talks in Vienna format. Vienna format is a worse repetition of JCPOA and is jumping out of the frying pan into the fire."

Iran and the remaining JCPOA signatories have held six rounds of talks to revive the deal in Vienna. Former US President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the deal in 2018 and re-imposed harsh unilateral sanctions against Iran in what has been described by Iranian officials as 'economic war' and 'economic terrorism'.

"Rouhani's administration is indebted to people because they failed to realize JCPOA benefits and the Western sides should pay their debt to Iran," said Zonnour.

"Biden is not willing to return to the JCPOA and he does not even believe the expired content of JCPOA. He is trying to keep 517 sanctions in place and implement the snapback mechanism and under these circumstances, the condition of sanctions will become harder," he added.

Meanwhile, Iran's lead negotiator in Vienna talks Abbas Araqchi tweeted on Saturday that the next round of talks should await for power transition in Iran.

"We're in a transition period as a democratic transfer of power is underway in our capital", the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for the Political Affairs said, adding, "Vienna talks must thus obviously await our new administration. This is what every democracy demands."

## Sweden Faces "Very Serious" Economic Impacts



STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - The closure of Sweden's biggest cement factory on environmental grounds could cause up to 400,000 job losses and wipe out the country's GDP growth, according to an alliance of construction bodies. Work could grind to a halt on three-quarters of all house-building projects and the construction sector could lose more than 20 billion Swedish Kroner (SEK) per month.

Work on infrastructure projects including Foster + Partners' Slussen masterplan in Stockholm could also be impacted.

The warning came from Byggföretagen, a body that represents construction firms in Sweden.

"Sweden is facing an extensive construction halt," it said. "By November, three out of four new homes will not be able to start construction. Several major infrastructure projects are stopped or delayed. Between 200,000 and 400,000 jobs are threatened."

Byggföretagen based its figures on an impact assessment prepared in the wake of a decision by Sweden's Supreme Land and Environmental Court last week to reject a new license for the Cementa cement plant at Slite in Gotland.

"The construction industry's share of GDP is about 11 per cent," Byggföretagen said. "The industry contributes almost SEK 40 billion in tax revenue to health care, schools and care. The construction halt thus risks displacing the entire GDP growth in 2022."

The plant, which is the second-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the country and responsible for three per cent of all Sweden's CO2 emissions, will no longer be able to mine limestone as a result of the ruling.

The license was refused due to concerns over the plant's environmental impact assessment, particularly in relation to the impact on groundwater. Greenpeace has also accused the plant of using its kilns to incinerate toxic waste without a permit.

The court was concerned about high levels of chloride pollution in groundwater samples taken near the site, according to Swedish news organisation Dagens PS.

"The fact that environmental problems at one cement factory can send the whole construction industry of a country into a panic puts a light on both the climate crisis and critical supply chain and infrastructure problems in Sweden," Dagens PS journalist Daniel Jacobs told Dezeen.

## Brazil's Economy in Jobless Recovery After Inflation Surge

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Brazil's economy will continue experiencing a so-called "jobless recovery" after this year's inflation surge, while prospects for growth in Mexico look brighter despite concerns about a potentially stricter monetary policy in the United States, a Reuters poll showed.



On the surface, Brazil's macro outlook is improving as consumers shrug off the COVID-19 pandemic, companies enjoy a revival of M&A deals and the agricultural sector thrives on strong global demand.

Recent upgrades in gross domestic product forecasts are at odds with a series of problems, though. Soaring inflation, currently the main issue, is likely to be followed by persistently high unemployment into next year, when Brazilians vote in general elections.

"As the economy will take some time to re-absorb workers and bring back up employment, we continue to expect average unemployment to remain at double-digit this year at 13.6%, from also 13.6% in 2020," Bank of America analysts wrote in a report.

"The high unemployment will limit services inflation, which represents almost 40% of the headline," the bank said. Consumer prices have jumped this year due to currency depreciation and other factors, forcing the central bank to turn ultra-hawkish.

In the Reuters survey, Brazil's average unemployment rate for 2021 was forecast at a record 14.2%, according to the median estimate of 20 economists polled July 5-13. That contrasted with a significant lift in GDP projections.

On a wider sample of 40 respondents, Latin America's No. 1 economy was forecast to expand 5.1% in 2021, well above the more modest 3.2% clip seen in April's poll. Inflation expectations also moved up, to 6.5% from 5.1% last quarter.

Many Brazilians have seen their jobs disappear during the pandemic. Critics also blame President Jair Bolsonaro's pro-business policies. The government points to other data showing solid job creation.

As the 2022 presidential election is still more than a year away, Bolsonaro and his likely opponent, former center-left President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, have not formally announced their candidacies yet.

In Mexico, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador appears to be on firmer ground than his Brazilian

counterpart. While both are facing corruption scandals, Lopez Obrador is taking much less heat.

Likewise, Mexico's economy is coming back in better shape, with higher growth and lower inflation than Brazil. Mexican GDP and consumer prices are expected to rise 5.9% and 5.1% respectively this year, versus 4.7% and 3.9% in April's survey.

Mexicans are keeping close track of the U.S. Federal Reserve's plan to carefully begin rolling back its extensive stimulus. So far it has been well received across the border, rather than as a headwind against capital flows.

Contrary to a reduction in Brazil's expected growth in 2022, to 2.2% from 2.3%, the survey forecast Mexico's economy to expand 2.9% next year, above the 2.5% clip seen in April's poll.

In a report, BBVA Mexico analysts wrote, "We upwardly revise our 2022 GDP forecast to 3.0% from 2.8%, driven by an improved investment outlook. This boost will likely allow formal private employment to reach its pre-pandemic level in 1Q22."

### No Problem for...

FROM PAGE 1

Abdoli added that each batch of coronavirus vaccines undergoes more than 10 quality control tests.

"After the production of each batch of coronavirus vaccine, tests such as Host Cell DNA, Endotoxin, microbial and viscosity and other tests are conducted on the vaccine. All these tests should be completed for the production of each batch of vaccine. All these tests must also be completed for the Barekat jab before we can mass administer it among the public. This process is being completed well," said Abdoli.

The virologist added that quality, and not the quantity, is of prime significance when it comes to anti-COVID vaccines, stressing that these jabs are being produced in Iran with utmost care.

Abdoli also dismissed allegations on social media about shortage of the raw material and a special gel used in the Barekat vaccine.

"There are discussions on the shortage of raw material for the Barekat vaccine, which are pure gossip. The production technology for this Iranian coronavirus vaccine is fully indigenous and we need no country in the processing of the jab. We have raw material required for production of 100 million doses of the anti-COVID shot. Rest assured, if we were dependent on another country for the manufacturing of this vaccine, they would not allow us to produce it inside the country," he said.

He was reacting to rumors that a gel, exclusively produced by the US, is needed to manufacture the Iranian vaccine, and lack of access to the gel has forced officials to discard over a two million doses of the jab.

"The gel being talked about is the chromatography gel and naturally Iran has no exchanges with American companies to import it," Abdoli added.



## Verstappen Quickest In Final Practice

LONDON (Dispatches) - Championship leader Max Verstappen set the fastest time in the second and final free practice session of the British Grand Prix, at Silverstone on Saturday.

Verstappen's best lap in his Red Bull was 1 minute 29.902sec, just ahead of the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz in a session which may hold little significance on a weekend when Formula One is experimenting with a new qualifying format.

Grid positions will be determined by a sprint qualifying race later.

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## McIlroy's Rollercoaster Entertains Crowds

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rory McIlroy's realistic shot at a fifth major championship faded on the back nine of the British Open on Saturday after an electrifying start from the Northern Irishman entertained the thousands following his third round at Royal St. George's.

Crowds of up to 32,000 have been allowed into the 149th Open Championship despite surging infection rates for coronavirus in England.

# Brooksby Powers Into First ATP Semifinal In Newport

NEWPORT (Dispatches) - Jenson Brooksby played like a veteran to take down Peter Gojowczyk 6-0, 6-3 and reach his first ATP Tour semi-final at the Hall of Fame Open.

The American, who had never played a tour-level match on grass courts before arriving in Newport, raced through the first set and recovered from an early break in the second to seal the victory in just 62 minutes.

"I'm especially happy with a good first set to start it out," Brooksby said in an on-court interview. "In the second set I could have done some things better, and I'm thinking about that still now, but I'm just happy to get through. Props to him though on a good match, and I'm going to get ready for tomorrow."

The 20-year-old was contesting his fourth tour-level event, but came in with his confidence high after amassing a 21-2 record at the ATP Challenger Tour level this year. He has lifted three trophies, at Potchefstroom-2, Orlando-1 and Tallahassee, so far in 2021.

"It's been a good year, and I just want to keep pushing forward," Brooksby said. "I definitely have a lot of confidence going into these next few matches."

Brooksby shook off two break points against Gojowczyk as he powered through the opening set, winning it to love in 23 minutes. He had to hit the reset button after going down 0-2, with the German breaking to love to start the second set. Brooksby won six of the next seven games and sealed the victory with his third ace of the match to move into the semi-finals.

He will next face seventh seed Jordan Thompson, who needed two sets to see off American Maxime Cressy 6-3, 7-6(6).



Cressy, who was into his first tour-level quarter-final in Newport, saved two match points at 5-4 in a tightly contested second set and held set point at 5-6. But the Aussie held firm to reach his first tour-level semi-final of the season after an hour and 51 minutes.

Meanwhile the top-seeded Ruud rolled through eight straight points closing a trip to his fifth career final with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Roberto Carballes Baena on the red clay of Bastad.

Ruud converted five of eight break points and won 13 of 18 points played on the Spaniard's second serve in a 79-minute triumph.

It's Ruud's second final of the season. The 13th-ranked Ruud defeated Pablo Andujar and Denis Shapovalov in succession in May to collect his second career title on the red clay of Geneva.

Ruud scored his 19th clay-court win of the season moving into his fifth ATP final. "I am looking forward to the final," Ruud said afterward. "It is my fifth final of my career, and I am looking to make it three titles and my second one this year. I hope we can have some Scandinavian cheering."

The 22-year-old Ruud will play for his third career title tomorrow when he takes on maiden ATP finalist Federico Coria.

Playing what he called the best tennis of his career, Coria crushed Yannik Hanfmann 6-2, 6-1 in his semifinal sweep. Coria did not face a break point in a one hour, 11-minute victory.

## Krajinovic Topples Tsitsipas

HAMBURG (Dispatches) - No. 6 seed Filip Krajinovic of Serbia knocked out top-seeded Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 in the quarterfinals of the Hamburg European Open in Germany.

Despite Tsitsipas smashing 11 aces compared to Krajinovic's one, Krajinovic fared better on first serves won with a 76 percent success rate (31 of 41). Krajinovic also converted on five of eight break-point opportunities.

No. 2 seed Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain advanced past Serbian No. 5 seed Dusan Lajovic 7-6 (4), 6-3. Another Serb, Laslo Djere, upset Georgian No. 3 seed Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-2, 6-2, and Argentina's Federico Delbonis defeated No. 8 seed Benoit Paire of France 4-6, 7-6 (9), 6-4.

No. 7 seed Jordan Thompson of Australia and Jenson Brooksby of the U.S. reached the semifinals Friday at Newport, R.I.

Thompson defeated American Maxime Cressy 6-3, 7-6 (6). Brooksby cruised past Peter Gojowczyk of Germany 6-0, 6-3.

The winners will meet in one semifinal match. No. 1 seed Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan and No. 8 seed Kevin Anderson of South Africa will square off in the other.

## Germany Walk off Olympics Friendly After Racist Abuse

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Germany walked off after 85 minutes of Saturday's pre-Olympics friendly with Honduras after Jordan Torunarigha suffered racist abuse.

The 2016 silver medallists played the Central Americans in Wakayama, Japan, as they warmed up for their Games campaign which starts on July 22 against champions Brazil.

"The game has ended 5 minutes early with the score at 1-1. The Germany players left the pitch after Jordan Torunarigha was racially abused," the German Football Association (DFB) tweeted.

German head coach Stefan Kuntz defended his 23-year-old squad member.

"When one of our players is racially abused, playing on is not an option," told DFB's Twitter account.

The Honduras Football Federation said on Twitter the situation was down to a "misunderstanding on the pitch."

In February 2020, Hertha Berlin centre-back Torunarigha was sent off for reacting to alleged monkey chants from Schalke fans during a German Cup loss.

In that match, Torunarigha, who is of Nigerian descent, picked up a water bottle carrier and slammed it to the ground before being shown a red card for second bookable offence.

## German Sprinter Greipel To Retire From Cycling

PARIS (Dispatches) - Andre Greipel, who spent his 39th birthday on Friday riding a 207km Tour de France stage, announced on Saturday he will retire at the end of the year.

The muscular German sprinter, nicknamed the Gorilla, has ridden every Tour since 2011, winning 11 stages including two, in 2015 and 2016, in the traditional closer along the Champs-Elysees, where the race was to end on Sunday.

"Tomorrow's stage will be definitely my last in the Tour de France," Greipel said in a video posted on social media by his team the Israel Start Up Nation. "I am super happy with what everything I have achieved together with my team-mates," added Greipel.



# Giroud Completes AC Milan Move

MILAN (Dispatches) - Chelsea's France attacker Olivier Giroud has completed his move to AC Milan, the Italian club announced on Saturday.

The 34-year-old World Cup winner underwent a medical on Friday before signing with the Serie A runners-up who return to the Champions League next season after a seven-year absence.

"AC Milan are delighted to announce the signing of Olivier Jonathan Giroud on a permanent transfer from Chelsea," the club said in a statement without giving details of the duration which Italian media reported is for two years.

"The French striker will be wearing the number 9 jersey."

Chelsea extended Giroud's contract last month for a year until June 2022,

but he preferred a move away from Stamford Bridge after falling out of favour with just eight Premier League starts last season.

"To all the Blues, to my teammates, to all my coaches, to the whole club, a huge thank you for these special moments I'm starting a new journey with a light and happy heart," Giroud said on Twitter after his medical on Friday.

"Our victories in the FA Cup, Europa League and Champions league have been magnificent."

At AC Milan, Giroud is expected to rotate with Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic, 39, who is recovering from knee surgery and remains uncertain for the start of the coming campaign.

He joins compatriots Theo Hernandez and Mike Maignan, the new goalkeeper at the Rossoneri, who last won Serie A in 2011.

Giroud won Ligue 1 with Montpellier in 2012 before moving to England, spending six seasons in Arsenal before joining Chelsea in 2018.

For the Gunners he scored 105 goals in 253 games, winning three FA Cups and three Community Shields.

## Jamaica, Costa Rica Rally to Win in Gold Cup

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Junior Flemmings notched the winning goal as Jamaica came from behind to beat Guadeloupe 2-1 on Friday in Group C of the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Guadeloupe took the lead after just four minutes at the Exploria Stadium in Orlando, when Dimitri Ramothé's blast deflected off Jamaica defender Amari'i Bell and snuck past goalkeeper Andre Blake at the near post for an own goal.

The Reggae Boyz would find their leveller within 10 minutes, however, when Philadelphia Union striker Cory Burke hit a perfectly placed shot from the top of the area that handcuffed Guadeloupe goalkeeper Yohann Thuram-Ulien.

Flemmings snapped the deadlock in the 87th minute, making a brilliant individual effort by outsmarting several defenders and firing a shot through Thuram-Ulien's legs.

The group's other game also ended in a comeback 2-1 win, in this case for Costa Rica over Suriname.

Gleofilo Vlijter opened the scoring in the 52nd minute with Suriname's first ever Gold Cup goal.

But Costa Rica stormed back, scoring two goals in two minutes to take the lead.

In the 58th minute, Joel Campbell equalized with a powerful header and, just a minute later, captain Celso Borges netted after Suriname goalkeeper Warner Hahn lost control of the ball.



## First Covid-19 Case Detected in Tokyo Olympic Village

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Tokyo Olympics organizers on Saturday reported the first case of COVID-19 at the athletes' village, along with 14 other new cases connected to the Games that begin next week, raising fresh doubts over promises of a "safe and secure" event.

The latest COVID-19 cases are a blow to the local organizers and the International Olympic Committee, who have insisted the Games will not become a super-spreader event.

The Tokyo organizers confirmed that a visitor from abroad working for the Olympics had tested positive in a routine check on Friday. The person's nationality was not revealed due to privacy concerns.

The other cases included two members of the media, seven contractors and five Games personnel.

The case at the athletes' village, a 44-hectare site built on Tokyo's waterfront, is particularly worrying as the majority of the 11,000 competitors will be staying there.

IOC President Thomas Bach, facing unprecedented opposition to an Olympics days before it starts, acknowledged the concerns in the Japanese public but urged them to welcome the athletes.

Bach said he was hoping domestic sporting success could help shift the mood from what he said bordered on the aggressive to something more supportive.

"We are well aware of the skepticism a number of people have here in Japan. We ask and invite the Japanese people, humbly, to welcome and support the athletes from around the world," Bach told a news conference.

