

Health Ministry Said on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From The Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 90,996 With 366 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Information and Communications Technology Minister Called Majlis Plan “Protecting Users’ Rights in Cyberspace and Organizing Social Media” Both Necessary But Not Capable of Meeting the Needs

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President Raisi's Endorsement Ceremony Scheduled for Tuesday

TEHRAN (PressTV) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei will formally endorse Seyed Ebrahim Raisi as Iran's new president on Tuesday.

Raisi will receive the presidential mandate from Ayatollah Khamenei during the endorsement ceremony, which will be attended by a number of officials.

During the event, the Iranian interior minister will first present a report on the June 18 election, following which the endorsement decree will be read out, and Raisi and the Leader will deliver speeches respectively.

Two days later, Raisi will take an oath of office in an inauguration ceremony at the Iranian Parliament or Majlis.

Speaking on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that dozens of delegations at the level of presidents, prime ministers, members of parliament and foreign ministers will visit Tehran to take part in Thursday's swearing-in ceremony.

"Dozens of delegations traveling to Iran is a further manifestation of Iran's acceptance and legitimacy in the international arena," he added.

Tehran Denies Role in Attack Against Israeli-Operated Ship Near Oman

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has denounced the Tel Aviv regime for accusing it of attacking an Israeli-operated ship off the coast of Oman.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeid Khatibzadeh said Iran is no stranger to such baseless charges.

"The occupying regime of Quds should stop levelling such unfounded accusations. This is not the first time that the occupying regime of Quds is pressing such charges against our country," said the spokesman.

"Wherever this regime has gone, it has taken with it insecurity, terror and fear. The responsibility for the current situation lies on those who paved the way for the Israeli regime to gain a foothold in the region," he added.

"Definitely, such remarks are condemned. The Israeli regime cannot solve any of its problems with such blame games," the spokesman noted. He also slammed calls on the U.S. president to deny the Iranian president-elect an entry visa for the United Nations annual General Assembly meeting in New York.

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President Calls for National Unity In Last Cabinet Meeting



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani defended his government's record of activities in the last cabinet meeting, saying that national unity should be the priority for all.

Rouhani said on Sunday at the last meeting of the 12th cabinet: "A very lofty goal that we must all pursue is national unity." Iran's 7th president said: "In the past, we talked to the people and announced that nothing was against reality and we told the people what was real."

"Of course, we did not tell people part of the truth, and I do not think we could tell them because I did not find it useful," added Rouhani.

He went on to highlight: "A very lofty goal that we must all pursue is national unity."

"We tolerated many issues in order to maintain national cohesion and national unity in our country," stressed the president.

Rouhani called his first term a period of interaction with the world when his government was quite confident that they were the opponent of the great powers in the negotiations.

The president added: "We did not negotiate to win only in politics. Of course, we also won in politics. We saw its effects in the economy. Of course, this was our wish."

Rouhani also stressed the fact that his government has made efforts for reducing the effects of U.S. sanctions.

He noted that the 12th administration has tried to lessen the negative consequences of the economic war imposed on Iran by the United States since 2018, and that the country has suffered from high inflation and difficulties in trade exchanges with the world.

Principally, when a country enters a war, it leaves behind development and attaches importance to people's normal life, the President said, adding that the Iranian people have the right not to be satisfied because of the hardships in terms of livelihood.

The country has faced difficulties in exporting oil and even in banking transactions, he noted.

The condition is completely clear, but unfortunately some do not find out the difference between war and peace; however, Iran did not initiate the war, he emphasized, adding that the people are well-aware that the situation of the administration was not the same during the first four years and the second term, because the country was in a better situation in terms of domestic and international conditions in the first tenure of the administration.

The government has tried to be honest with the Iranian people, but it told parts of the facts on the ground, because it was afraid that the other parts could harm national unity, he argued.

Iranian diplomats are very qualified, so the administration had been confident that they could guarantee the country's national interests and they succeeded in negotiations, Rouhani added.

Iraqi PMU Forces Launch Operation Against Daesh

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraqi anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units – better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi – have launched an operation to clear Daesh remnants from villages and rural areas in the eastern province of Diyala near the border with Iran.

Talib al-Mousawi, commander of Hashd al-Sha'abi operations in Diyala, said in a statement that PMU brigades pushed into areas north of the provincial capital city of Baquba some 50 km northeast of Baghdad to chase Daesh militants.

A unit of Hashd al-Sha'abi forces carried out a rapid mopping-up operation in an area of the Hamrin heights where Daesh militants were holed out, preparing for terrorist attacks against security forces and local civilians, he added.

The senior commander said PMU fighters detonated several explosive devices belonging to the terrorists, and successfully completed their mission despite scorching heat in the rugged mountainous area, adding they will continue to pursue Daesh remnants. Meanwhile, Hashd Sha'abi forces successfully foiled an infiltration attempt by a group of Daesh terrorists into an area in the central province of Salahuddin.

According to a report published by Iraq's al-Ahad television network, the 41st Brigade of Hashd Sha'abi responded on Saturday to a terrorist group attempting to cross into al-Ajiliyah area of the Yathrib district.

"Following the terrorist attack, Hashd Sha'abi forces launched an operation to hunt down Daesh elements and establish stability and security in the area," the report added.

The developments came a day after Daesh terrorists attacked a funeral in the Balad district of Salahuddin province, killing at least five people and wounding 20 others.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Era of Hit-and-Run Is Over

In recent days a drone-attack at an Israeli-owned vessel off the coast of Oman has enraged the Zionists and they have resorted to the UN to take action and they have blamed the Islamic Republic of Iran for the attack but they have forgotten this fact that they have committed crimes against Muslims in any part of the world and the attack can be an appropriate response from them to the Zionists' atrocities.

In a statement on Friday, Zodiac Maritime, the Israeli-owned firm managing the oil tanker, claimed that two crewmen, a Briton and a Romanian, had been killed in the assault. In recent months, several other Israeli ships have come under apparent attacks on various maritime routes across the world.

Informed sources have told Al-Alam television that an attack on an Israeli-managed petroleum products tanker off the coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea that killed two crew members was in response to an Israeli missile attack on Syria that killed two resistance forces.

The Mercer Street, a Liberian-flagged, Japanese-owned ship, came under attack about 152 nautical miles (280 km) northeast of the Omani port of Duqm on Thursday, according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), which provides maritime security information.

For many years Israelis used to commit crimes against Palestinians and Muslims in the Middle East without facing an appropriate response but it seems the era of hit-and-run has come to an end and Israeli from now on have to witness proper response to any attack or atrocities of them.

Once the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution during his speeches reiterated and warned the enemies that the era of hit-and-run has ended and the Islamic Republic of Iran will have proper response to any atrocities from the enemies and now other Muslim states have proved the Zionists that they follow Iran and will not remain quiet against the Zionists' crimes because they have learned that the international bodies will not take a major action against the Zionists because of the world arrogance support.

A political commentator on Saturday reacted to the retaliatory attack on an Israeli-managed petroleum products tanker off the coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea, stressing that the resistance front will not allow the Tel Aviv regime to commit crimes with impunity.

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Iraqi President to Visit Tehran Soon

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iraqi President is going to visit Tehran soon to talk with Iranian officials about the bilateral issues of interests.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said that the country's President Barham Salih would travel to Tehran after the formation of a new government in Iran.

The Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi will visit Iran also, but, according to Fuad Hussein, no date has been set for this visit yet.

He highlighted: "The change in administration in Iran requires the start of new talks on Iran's relations with Iraq, the countries of the region and the United States."

Regarding the Iran-Saudi Arabia talks, the top Iraqi diplomat stated: "The third round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia was held, and the results were satisfactory."

"What matters most is that the two countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia started discussing their stances on bilateral relations, and Iraq played an important role in this regard," he concluded.



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10th Shipment of COVID-19 Vaccine by IRCS Enters

TEHRAN (IP) - Head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said the tenth consignment of COVID-19 vaccine purchased by the society entered Iran.

Karim Hemmati stated that the consignment was delivered to the officials of the Health Ministry at Imam Khomeini Airport on Sunday. According to Hemmati, the consignment includes 1,120,000 doses of COVID vaccines.

He announced that with the entrance of this consignment, the Iranian Red Crescent Society has so far imported 11,520,000 doses of COVID vaccine.

U.S., West Not to Get What They Intend Over JCPOA

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underlined that the U.S. and the West must understand that Iran only negotiates over the 2015 Nuclear Deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and it is possible to go back to full compliance with the deal.

“Also, the West and U.S. must understand that they won’t get now what they have not achieved in 2014-2015,” Zarif said yesterday.

Stressing that the content of the nuclear agreement is ready, he said: “It has been said many times, and I also told the parliament in my report that reviving JCPOA only needs the Western countries to take a realistic approach towards it.”

Responding to a question about German Foreign Minister comments who urged Tehran and Washington to return to JCPOA, Zarif reiterated that the West and the US must explicitly believe and accept the notion that they were the only ones who violated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and withdrew from it, but now the doors are open for them to return to it easily. “What is clear is that if the U.S. and Western countries try to get more than they have achieved during the initial JCPOA negotiations, definitely they will not succeed,” he stressed.

Speaking on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting, he said that in his latest letter to the UN Secretary-General dating two weeks ago, he had said that the book on the history of US disloyalty would be soon published.

Zarif said that the government has made efforts to take some steps in the field of economy. He went on to explain further that in the first two years of Rouhani’s term the government had achieved successful results leading back to unprecedented growth of the country, however, Iran had faced US disloyalty.



He added: “In a letter, I wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations two weeks ago, we recorded the history of these terms of unfaithfulness since September 2016, and these abuses became a book that will be published soon.

“This shows that we tried our best, but factors outside the government and factors outside the country prevented us from achieving the result we wanted,” explained he. “The second thing we had to provide people in this COVID-19 outbreak situation was a vaccine,” Zarif said.

“Of course, we must pay attention to domestic production. But as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we had a duty to help for easy access to foreign vaccines, for which we served to help the Ministry of Health, and we are pleased that more than 10 million foreign vaccines have entered the country so far, and another 10 million vaccines are planned in the coming months which will enter and this important shortcoming which is general vaccination will be continued,” concluded Zarif.

Iran Inaugurates Isotopic biotech Unit of Khondab Nuclear Site

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has inaugurated the isotopic biotechnology unit of Khondab Nuclear Complex (Arak) set up to prevent the selling of heavy water as raw material and meet medical and diagnostic requirements.

The unit was opened during a ceremony on Saturday, with head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi, senior managers of the nuclear industry and Khondab city officials in attendance.

It cultivates algae and engineers its culture medium by opening the cell wall and making it build the desired labeled products, like a small cell factory.

This pioneering method can be used to produce a variety of screening kits to diagnose neonatal diseases as well as illnesses in pregnant women and potential addicts.

It is also applicable in the fields of medical standards and pioneering vitamin compounds and supplements.

The method can further be used to produce labeled isotopic sugars for positron emission tomography (PET) scan, glucose analysis and deuterium metabolic imaging (DMI).

Additionally on Saturday, Salehi attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a set of research-production laboratories for isotopic technologies, branded as Kimia project.

“This huge project includes scientific, research and production activities in the field of technology by the AEOI and the health sector,” he said, expressing hope that other important products will reach mass production in the next 3 to 4 years.

Iran, Germany to Further Expand Cooperation in Science

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran’s Deputy Health Minister for Science and Technology said Iran would boost its cooperation with Germany in health and medicine.

Farid Najafi told IRIB News Agency that Iran and Germany would hold a webinar on Wednesday to discuss bilateral cooperation in health and medicine.

“The joint research studies have earlier been conducted with the cooperation of Iranian and German scientists, as well as Iranian and Turkish scientists,” Najafi stated.

Iran Opens Largest Pediatric Hospital in Middle East

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A 700-bed pediatric hospital has been inaugurated in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz making it the largest such facility in the Middle East region.

The Zahra Mardani hospital, a charitable facility to which the Iranian government has contributed by providing the required land, was inaugurated on Saturday during a video conference ceremony attended by the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

The hospital has been built in seven years, said a report by IRNA news agency, adding that the facility would offer various pediatric treatments, including mental and rehabilitation services.

The hospital is the largest health facility built in Iran over the past decade, said Rouhani during the inauguration ceremony while adding that a 1,000-bed general hospital would officially open in the capital Tehran just after he leaves office in early August.

The president was referring to the Mahdi Clinic Hospital, a project described by authorities as the largest hospital built in the Iranian history.

Six other hospitals and five specialized clinics also came on line on Saturday to add over 500 beds to the hospital system capacity in Iran.

The projects, including the pediatric hospital in Tabriz, have cost over 30 trillion rials (\$120 million) in government and private investment, said a report on website of the Iranian Presidency, adding that they would add 2,996 permanent jobs for doctors and nurses and other staff.

Iran Embassy Criticizes Korean Athlete’s Immoral Comments

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran’s Embassy in Seoul reacted to the Korean athlete’s insult to the Iranian shooting champion of Tokyo Olympics 2021, Javad Foroughi.

Issuing a statement, Iran’s embassy called on athletes from other parts of the world, including South Korea, to refrain from accusing others, and to take steps towards a spirit of sports and friendship between nations.

In unsportsmanlike remarks, South Korean shooting champion Jin Jong-o insulted Iran’s Javad Foroughi and his victory in the Tokyo Olympics 2021 games, accusing him as a terrorist because of his affiliation to Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The statement says that IRGC has played a very important role in defending Iran and creating peace, stability, and security in the West Asian region, and has sacrificed thousands of martyrs for that.

South Korea is an Asian ally of the US the former Secretary of State of which Hilary Clinton acknowledged in her 2016 presidential election campaign that it was the US that created the Al-Qaeda terrorist group.

Iranian Armed Forces Help Turkey To Put Out Forest Fires

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The head of the Air Fire Control and Logistics Center of the Ministry of Defense of Iran said that the Iranian Armed Forces launched the first firefighting operation in large-scale forest fires in southern Turkish provinces.

Pilot Mohammad Mehdi Nouri Al-e Agha said here on Sunday that this operation was launched with the capacity of 40 tons of water after forest fires started in Antalya’s Manavgat district and spread over a large area.

He added that firefighting team and a firefighting aircraft designed by young Iranian experts with a capacity of 40 tons of water arrived in the city of Muğla on Saturday evening, hoping that two more water-spraying helicopters would be deployed to the area the next days to help extinguish more areas and prevent the fire from progressing.

Iranian Armed Forces help Turkey to put out forest fires Turkey is fighting multiple wildfires in three provinces. The fires started on Wednesday. At least four people have lost their lives due to the fires, and the number is likely to increase, according to officials.

44% Price Growth, 70% Drop In Housing Transactions in Tehran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Central Bank of Iran reported a 43.7 percent increase in house prices in Tehran in July compared to the same month last year.

According to the report published on the Central Bank’s website on Saturday, the average price per square meter of housing in Tehran exceeded 30 million tomans during July of this year.

Also, the number of housing transactions in Tehran has reached 571, while last July it was 1447.

Thus, the number of transactions in July is down about 70% compared to July last year.

Houses with an infrastructure of 50 to 60 meters had the largest share among housing transactions, with more than 15 percent of homes traded last solar month. Also, approximately one-fifth of the houses traded had a price of about 500 to 1,000 million tomans.

Regionally, the highest amount of transactions with 731 items was related to Tehran’s 5th district, with the average price per square meter of housing in this area reaching about 38 million Tomans. Next in the category is Tehran’s 10th District, where 525 housing transactions have occurred over the past month. The average price per square meter of houses in this area was also a little over 20 million Tomans.

Economies of Iran, Brazil Complementary

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Ambassador to Brasilia Hossein Gharibi said that the economies of Iran and Brazil are complementary.

In a tweet on late Saturday, Hossein Gharibi wrote, “The economies of Iran and Brazil are complementary. As an agricultural hub, Brazil is in dire need of fertilizers and petroleum and petrochemical products.”

“Iran is a cost-effective and quality supplier and, in contrast, imports agricultural items in large volumes with 60,000-ton ships,” he added. “Each country has its own place in bilateral relations.”

Rouhani Gov’t Front-Runner In Resolving Problems of Sunni Women

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The administration of President Hassan Rouhani has been a leading government in the Islamic Republic of Iran in resolving issues related to jurisprudential and legal topics concerning Sunni women, a deputy president said.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, made the remark in the fourth seminar on issues of Sunni women in Iran on Saturday, noting that subjects such as child marriage and divorce are among the topics of the four rounds of seminars, which have been welcomed by Sunni scholars and activists.

The administration of President Rouhani held the four seminars because it is of the opinion that such issues are important and they should be raised in the Iranian society, she argued.

Pointing to the first seminar, which was held in Kurdistan province, she said that thinkers and lawyers participated in the event and they agreed upon holding talks with Sunni scholars in this respect.

The second round was held in Zahedan, Sistan, and Baluchestan province, with the presence of Mowlavi Abdulhamid, a prominent Sunni cleric, and some other muftis, she said, adding that the third seminar was held in Golestan province, where the participants raised issues such as problems that the Sunni women are facing in today’s society of Iran.

As to the life of Hazrat Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), she noted that the first lady of the Islamic world was one of the most successful entrepreneurs and traders in then Saudi Arabia, who played a key role in supporting the Prophet and the religion.

Ebtekar went on to say that research on the life and business of Hazrat Khadija has been accomplished by Iranian researchers, which is an inspiring story for today’s women to study.



In the name of God

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT



Brief Notice of International Tender No. 39476

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

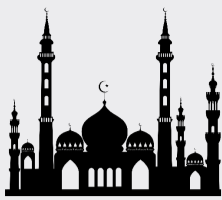
Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.’s Website at www.esfahansteel.ir (Tender & Bids, Suppliers Comprehensive System) to get the tender documents no later than 31.July.2021.

Date of opening envelopes “A” & “B”: 01.August.2021

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

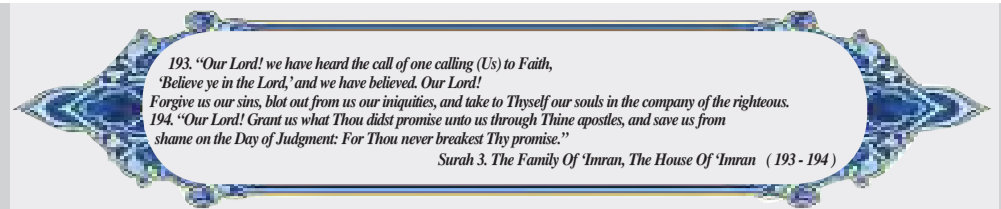
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■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:14



Tehran, Dushanbe Explore Ways to Boost Economic Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In a webinar which was held by Tehran Chamber of Commerce last week, Iran and Tajikistan explored ways to expand their economic relations especially between their private sectors.

The participants in this virtual meeting reviewed opportunities for cooperation and expansion of economic cooperation especially between the private sectors of Iran and Tajikistan.

Tajikistan Ambassador to Tehran and Iran's Ambassador to Tajikistan were also present in this webinar wherein more than 150 economic activists involved in.

At the beginning of the webinar, head of international affairs of Tehran Chamber of Commerce pointed to the abundant commonalities between the two countries especially in their language, religion and history and called Tajikistan as the closest country to Iran but he reiterated that despite such commonalities, the volume of economic relations between the two states have not grown as it is expected.

Hessamuddin Hallaj then said while the two countries are on the eve of the 30th anniversary of restoring diplomatic relations, Tehran Chamber of Commerce decided to hold this webinar to boost the knowledge of economic activists regarding the common trade capacities and reviewing the opportunities for cooperation.

He went on to say that unfortunately the total trade volume of the two states regardless of their trade via the third party countries is around \$25m and the goal behind such meetings and events is to make the most of this opportunity for paving the ground for economic activists and tradesmen of both states.

Then Seyedeh Fatemeh Moqimi, a member of presiding board of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, described Tajikistan a country with capacity to become a big economic trade partner of Iran in the Central Asia and by referring to the close cultural and



historical bonds of the two states, she said Tajikistan can have access to free waters via Iran's southern ports while Iran's access to Europe via Tajikistan is an ideal opportunity for improving Iran's trade and economy.

She then pointed to Iran's experience in the fields of oil, gas and electricity, and said Iran and Tajikistan have also high capacity for cooperation in the food industries, metals and tourism beside expansion of cooperation in the fields of implementing projects in oil, electricity and dam construction.

Meanwhile Tajikistan Ambassador to Tehran Nizomiddin Zohidi, for his part, pointed to 85 percent decline in the bilateral trade in recent years, adding that holding such virtual events, presence of economic activists in the exhibitions being held in both states and dispatch of trade exhibition for getting more familiar with capacities for trade cooperation are of the joint actions by Iran and Tajikistan for improving the level of economic ties.

He then pointed to the readiness of Iran and Tajikistan for signing several MoUs and announced signing of MoU on cooperation between Tehran Stock Exchange and Tajikistan's Central Asia Stock.

Zohidi then reiterated that so far 170 MoUs and documents on cooperation have been signed between Iran and Tajikistan, noting that the legal grounds are very important for bilateral cooperation in trade and economy.

Capital Market Realizes Over \$161b of Financing in a Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Farhad Dejpasand has said the capital market realized 6.8 quadrillion rials (over \$161.9 billion) of financing in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Sunday, Dejpasand said: "The Economy Ministry plays a major role in formulating the country's economic policy."

"This ministry should take measures to facilitate business and remove barriers so that investors can enter the market, and as a result, new job opportunities will be created," he added.

Over the past few years and especially since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, the Iranian government has been implementing new strategies to cut reliance on oil and promote domestic production using internal capacities.

The capital market was one of the major areas in which these new strategies manifested. As part of the mentioned strategies, the government defined a holistic program to encourage the country's production sector to enter the capital market and use its huge capacities for funding development projects and boost production.

Back in February, Dejpasand had said that the capital market provided five quadrillion rials (over \$119 billion) of financing in the first 10 months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-January 19, 2021).

Iran's July Oil Exports Steady

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's July crude output remains steady despite a major surge in production by OPEC members.

Iran has pumped steady amount of crude in July despite a 15-month record production reported by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a survey shows.

Reuters news agency's analysis of data released by OPEC members in July showed that Iran's exports was steady over the month compared to June when it had exported more than 600,000 barrels per day (bpd).

The survey found, however, that the OPEC had pumped 26.72 million bpd of crude in July, up 610,000 bpd against June and a record since April 2020.

The increased OPEC output comes as the group and allies have agreed to gradually ease cuts to the global supply amid a recovery in international demand which has been fueled by vaccinations against the coronavirus pandemic.

Nearly \$15b Supplied for Import of Basic Goods

TEHRAN (MNA) - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has supplied about \$15 billion for importing basic and essential commodities as well as medicine in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), IRIB reported.

As reported, the figure has increased 27 percent compared to the same period in the previous Iranian calendar year.

Some \$4.6 billion of the mentioned figure was allocated for the imports of essential goods and medicine, which was 70 percent more than the allocation in the previous year's same time span.



Of the above-mentioned figure, \$1.546 billion was provided for importing corn, barley and wheat, \$1.124 billion for oilseeds and edible oil, \$1.171 billion for medicine and medical equipment, and \$348 million for soybean meal.

Also, \$10.4 billion in foreign exchange was provided for other basic commodities, registering an increase of 15 percent over the same period last year.

Back in July, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had said that enough basic and strategic goods were imported into the country and there are no worries over the supply of such commodities.

PGSOC Donates 40 Hospital Beds to Hormuzgan Health Network

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Manager of public relations and international affairs of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) says the company has donated 40 hospital beds to the health network of Hormozgan Province in line with its commitment to the social responsibilities.

Narges Sedaqat termed Persian Gulf Star Oil Company of the pioneer industries in fulfilling its social responsibilities and said, in this company it has been tried that people of Hormozgan and Iran would be considered as the main benefactors and the refinery has put on agenda the efforts always to create sustainable development.

Explaining the goals behind donating 40 hospital beds to the Hormozgan health network, she said nowadays defenders of the field of health and medical network are fighting with coronavirus round-the-clock and defenders of securing the fuel basket of the country in the super refinery of Persian Gulf Star have rushed to help the medical network of the province in line with its social responsibility obligations.

She added that the value of the donated beds is around 17b rials, adding that the company in recent months has tried to also complete Persian Gulf Star Oil Hospital which will have undoubtedly unique role in improving the medical infrastructures of Hormozgan and it has also been supportive of the medical network of the province.

Sedaqat then pointed to observance of all health protocols in the refinery in order to contain the spread of the virus.



Production of Hydrochloric Acid Gas a Creative Move at BORC

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company (BORC) says the idea of producing hydrochloric acid in the form of gas is of the creative projects which have been implemented innovatively at this company and it was for the first time in the world it was implemented successfully at the refinery with great efforts of its experts.

Addressing the ordinary general annual meeting of the company and major shareholders of the company, Eng. Hashem Namvar pointed to the implementation of some successful and knowledge-centered projects at the company, adding that the project for producing hydrochloric acid gas from Tetrachloroethylene based on the refining industries standards like its high purity and pressure is of the successful projects which has come on stream at BORC.

Namvar went on to say that the hydrochloric acid required by the domestic refining industries is not produced in the country and producer companies in the world produces this acid in the form of liquid whose purchase and transfer to Iran is difficult because it needs special capsules and it also faces the problem of sanctions which makes it cost dear for the country.

He added that by this achievement the produced hydrochloric acid in the form of gas, some of the processing problems in the refinery have also been resolved and it has improved the quality of the product.

Namvar reiterated that this project last year received the golden plaque and certificate for top innovative Iranian product.



60 Iranian, Italian Companies Participate in B2B Meetings

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - After holding the big trade event by the Iran-Italy and Italy-Iran Joint Chamber s of Commerce, 30 Iranian companies as well as 30 Italian companies participated in the B2B meetings to talk and review capacities for mutual cooperation.



According to the reports, the big trade event by these two joint chambers was held virtually in Tehran and Rome on July 20. In this event, companies from the two countries introduced their economic capabilities and potentials and expressed their interests for expanding ties with the other party.

The event started by speeches from the heads of the two Iran-Italy and Italy-Iran chambers of commerce. First the new head of the Italy-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce Mr. Giuseppe Zampini expressed his gratitude for the efforts of the two chambers for holding the webinar and wished success for continuation of cooperation and strengthening the relations between Iranian and Italian companies.

He called Iran as the gateway for entering the Middle East and the Central Asia and called for developing economic relations of Italian companies with their Iranian counterparts.

Then the Head of Join Iran-Italy Chamber of Commerce Mr. Ahmad Pourfallah wished success for the new head of Italy-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce and expressed hope on the removal of sanctions against Iran and return of Italy and Iran to its past good economic co-operations, reiterating that holding such webinars and meetings are useful for the members of the chambers.

Then representatives of 30 Iranian and Italian companies in a B2B meeting exchanged views and explored ways for boosting cooperation.

MAPNA Group to Unveil Charging Services App Soon

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Electric Vehicle and Infrastructure Development Center of MAPNA Group announced that the group will soon unveil its application for charging services at the charge stations for electric vehicles.



The center in its announcement said by addition of battery swap stations and possibility for hiring electric vehicles, the charging services app will be updated based on the capabilities of the charging stations for electric vehicles.

The announcement reiterated by developing the electric vehicles and rise in their numbers, the needs of users to the software for reserve or navigating the position of charging stations will rise.

The comprehensive app of MAPNA charging stations has several options like reserving the charging stations, finding the charging stations, increasing the rial-credit and instruction how to use the chargers.

The application will be comprised of two main menus and by scanning the QR code on the charging machine, the user can charge its vehicle.

Thousands Displaced as Floods Hit Bangladesh

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Heavy monsoon rains triggered landslides and flash floods in refugees camps displacing thousands of Rohingya Muslims in southeastern Bangladesh this week, U.N. and other officials said on Friday, with further heavy rainfall expected.

At least six Rohingya, including three children, died in landslides and flooding while 15 Bangladeshis were killed and more than 200,000 stranded by flooding in Cox's Bazar, said Mamunur Rashid, the district administrator.

Nearly one million Rohingya live in crowded camps in the border district of Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee settlement, after fleeing a military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017.



Mastermind Behind Deadly 2019 Kashmir Attack Killed

SRINAGAR (Reuters) - The mastermind behind a 2019 attack that killed 40 Indian paramilitary troops has been killed in a shootout with security forces, Indian police in Kashmir said on Saturday.

Mohammad Ismail Alvi, the commander of militant organization Jaish-e-Mohammad was killed south of the regional capital Srinagar, Vijay Kumar, the police chief of Kashmir told Reuters. "Mohammad Ismail Alvi alias Lamboo alias Adnan was from the family of Masood Azhar. He was involved in conspiracy and planning of Lethpora Pulwama attack," Kumar said.

A suicide bomber rammed a car into a bus carrying Indian paramilitary police in Kashmir on February 14, 2019, killing 40 of them in the deadliest attack in decades on security forces in the disputed region, raising tensions with arch foe Pakistan.



U.S. Issues New Cuba Sanctions



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States imposed sanctions on the Cuban police force and two of its leaders on Friday in response to the Havana government's crackdown on protesters, and President Joe Biden promised Cuban-American leaders more actions were coming.

The U.S. Treasury Department said the sanctions, which appeared to be largely symbolic, were a reaction to "actions to suppress peaceful, pro-democratic protests in Cuba that began on July 11."

Targets of the sanctions are two Cuban police force leaders, as well as the Cuban interior ministry's national police force, the department said.

"There will be more, unless there's some drastic change in Cuba, which I don't anticipate," Biden said during a meeting with Cuban-American leaders at the White House.

His meeting came as the politically important community calls for more support for protests in Cuba that represent the biggest populist outpouring against the government on the Communist-run island in decades.

"The United States is taking concerted action to bolster the cause of the Cuban people," said Biden.

Biden said he had asked the Treasury and State departments to report back in a month on how to allow remittance payments from Americans to Cubans without the Cuban government profiting.

In addition, Biden has been working on a plan to try to provide wireless communications to Cubans and augment U.S. embassy staff in Cuba, a senior administration official said.

The protests erupted this month amid Cuba's worst economic crisis since the fall of its old Soviet Union ally and a record surge in coronavirus infections. Thousands took to the streets, angry over shortages of basic goods, curbs on civil liberties, and the authorities' handling of the pandemic.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has blamed the unrest on the United States, which in recent years has tightened its decades-old trade embargo on the island. He has said many protesters were sincere but manipulated by U.S.-orchestrated social media campaigns.

Last week, the U.S. Treasury announced sanctions on Cuba's defense minister and an interior ministry special forces unit over allegations of human rights abuses in the crackdown that followed the protests, which saw hundreds of activists detained.

Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill have urged more measures.

Participants in Friday's meeting included Yotuel Romero, a hip hop musician and author of "Patria y Vida," a song that has become the anthem for the protesters; Ana Sofia Pelaez, founder of the Miami Freedom Project; and former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz.

Florida's 1.5 million Cuban Americans voted heavily for Republican Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. Winning back their support is crucial for Biden's Democratic Party to clinch the swing state in the 2024 presidential election.

"I think if Biden has a successful Cuban policy that is able to put the regime on the defensive and provide concrete support to Cubans, that will benefit him with voters in Florida," said John Suarez, executive director of the Center for a Free Cuba. "If the regime collapses on his watch, that could be a game changer."

Turkey Declares Disaster Areas as Wildfire Death Toll Rises

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has declared parts of southern Turkey ravaged by wildfires as "disaster areas", with the death toll from the fires rising to six after two forest workers were killed.

Fires across Turkey since Wednesday have burned down forests, encroaching on villages and tourist destinations and forcing people to evacuate.

Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Bekir Pakdemirli said on Saturday that 88 of 98 fires that broke out amid strong winds and scorching heat have been brought under control. At least five people have died in Manavgat and one died in Marmaris. Both towns are located on the Mediterranean and are tourist destinations.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said 400 people affected by the fires in Manavgat were discharged from hospitals and 10 were still receiving treatment. In Marmaris, 159 people were treated and one person was still undergoing treatment for burns.

New fires erupted in southern Hatay province where flames jumped to populated areas but appear to have been brought under control. Turkish media said hotel guests in parts of the Aegean town of Bodrum were told to evacuate and authorities called on private boats and yachts to assist in evacuation efforts by sea.



Taliban and Afghan Forces Clash Again Outside Herat city

HERAT (Dispatches) - Afghan and Taliban forces clashed again on the outskirts of Herat Saturday, a day after a police guard was killed when a United Nations compound in the western city came under attack.

Violence has surged across the country since early May, when the Taliban launched a sweeping offensive as U.S.-led foreign forces began a final withdrawal that is now almost complete.

The militants have seized scores of districts across Afghanistan, including in Herat province, where the group has also captured two border crossings adjoining Iran and Turkmenistan.

Officials and residents reported renewed fighting on the outskirts of Herat Saturday, with hundreds fleeing their homes to seek shelter closer to the heart of the city.

Herat governor Abdul Saboor Qani said most of the fighting was in Injil and Guzara district -- where the airport is located.

"At the moment the fighting is ongoing in the south and southeast. We are moving cautiously and to avoid civilian casualties," Qani said.

During fighting Friday, the main Herat compound of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan came under attack from rocket-propelled grenades and gunfire that the UN blamed on anti-government elements.

The militants say they will not target foreign diplomats, but have blatantly violated international protocol before.

Afghan forces and militiamen of veteran warlord and anti-Taliban commander Ismail Khan have been deployed around the city of 600,000 in recent days.

Khan, who previously fought the Soviet occupation forces in the 1980s and then the Taliban during their hardline regime in the 1990s, has vowed to fight the insurgents again to counter their staggering advances in recent months.

France Sees Third Weekend of Protests Against Obligatory Health Pass

PARIS (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of demonstrators are expected to take to the streets across France on Saturday to protest against the Covid-19 health pass that is now obligatory for entrance to many public cultural venues.

Authorities estimated that some 150,000 demonstrators would take part in Saturday's demonstrations. Some 161,000 people gathered at similar protests last week and 110,000 took to the streets a week earlier.

More than 3,000 police and gendarmes have been mobilised to deal with the demonstrators and secure vulnerable landmarks. Protests are planned in more than 150 French cities, including Montpellier, Bordeaux, Marseille, Nice and Nantes.

According to the results of a Harris Interactive x Euros Agency study for LCI published on Friday, 4 in 10 French people say they support the demonstrations. Among those who support the protesters, 65 percent said do so because they oppose the obligatory nature of the new measures and "not having a choice".

But according to another Ipsos-Sopra Steria survey for Franceinfo and Le Parisien on July 16, 62 percent of French people overall said they were in favour of requiring a health pass to enter public places. Some 69 percent said they supported compulsory vaccination for healthcare workers, a measure set to come into effect in France in September.

As of July 21, people wanting to enter French cinemas, museums, sporting matches and other cultural venues need to show proof of a Covid-19 vaccination or a negative test as the country battles a spike in cases from the Delta variant. The so-called health pass, or passe sanitaire, is required for all events or places with more than 50 people.

Once indoors, people can take off their face masks but masks must still be worn inside shops or businesses or on public transportation.

Beginning in August, the pass will become obligatory for access to shopping centres, cafés and restaurants – even on France's famed outdoor terraces.



Malaysians Stage Anti-Gov't Protest Despite Covid Curbs

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Hundreds of black-clad Malaysians staged an anti-government protest Saturday in defiance of a ban on public gatherings under coronavirus curbs, piling pressure on the embattled prime minister to resign.

The protesters, wearing masks and keeping a distance from one another, waved banners reading "failed government" as well as black flags.

It was the first sizeable demonstration in Malaysia for some time, as many had been reluctant to take to the streets due to virus curbs and for fear of getting infected.

But anger is growing at the government's handling of the virus outbreak -- which is escalating despite a lockdown -- and Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's attempts to keep his crisis-riven administration in power.

"We fight because while the people are suffering, this government is busy playing politics," Karmun Loh, taking part in the protest in downtown Kuala Lumpur, told AFP.

"This government is... crippling the economy and also destroying our country's democracy."

Muhyiddin "is a terrible prime minister", added demonstrator Shaq Koyok. "He needs to step down."

There was a heavy police presence and officers blocked attempts by protesters to enter a central square before the rally peacefully dispersed.

Organizers said about 1,000 demonstrators took part but police put the number at around 400.

Police told local media that the protesters will be called in for questioning as they had violated the ban on gatherings.

Muhyiddin took power at the head of a scandal-plagued coalition last year without an election following the demise of a reformist administration.

But his government is on the verge of collapse after allies withdrew support. He came under renewed pressure to step down this week after parliament convened following a months-long suspension as part of a virus state of emergency.

His government was accused of dodging a vote that would have tested its shaky majority -- drawing a rare rebuke from the country's revered king.

Sunday is the final day of the six-month state of emergency but the nationwide lockdown will remain in place. Malaysia has reported almost 1.1 million virus cases and more than 8,800 deaths.





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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

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S/p, S, J, pkg
(\$1800)

Farnmanieh (\$2200)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

Sa'adat abad (\$1500)
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Velenjak bldg (\$10000)
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Chevron Tops Profit Estimates

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chevron Corp reported its highest profit in six quarters and joined an oil industry stampede to reward investors with share buybacks, as rebounding crude oil prices carried earnings and cash flow to pre-pandemic levels.

Oil and gas are trading near multi-year highs as fuel consumption has thrown off pandemic losses and natural

gas has soared on weather demand. OPEC's decision to carry production curbs into next year has kept oil above \$70 per barrel.

The company cut its annual capital spending forecast to about \$13 billion, now below what it had spent last year. It had earlier budgeted \$14 billion to \$16 billion a year in annual capital spending through 2025.



Euro Zone Growth Rebounds, Inflation Tops ECB Target

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The euro zone economy grew faster than expected in the second quarter, pulling out of a pandemic-induced recession, while the easing of coronavirus curbs also helped inflation shoot past the European Central Bank's 2% target in July.

The European Union's statistics office Eurostat said on Friday that its initial estimate showed gross domestic product (GDP) in the 19 countries that use the euro had expanded 2.0% in April-June from the previous quarter.

Compared to the same period a year earlier, when lockdowns to slow the spread of the coronavirus brought economic activity close to a standstill, GDP jumped 13.7%. But unlike the U.S. and Chinese economies, which have pulled above their pre-pandemic peaks, the euro zone economy remains some 3% smaller than it was at the end of 2019. Eurostat also said euro zone inflation accelerated to 2.2% in July from 1.9% in June - the highest rate since October 2018 and above the 2.0% mean expectation of economists.

Economic growth also surpassed a Reuters poll forecast of 1.5% for the April-June quarter and a 13.2% annual increase.

Among the outperformers were the euro zone's third and fourth largest economies, Italy and Spain, with quarterly growth respectively of 2.7% and 2.8%. Portugal's tourism-heavy economy expanded by 4.9%.

Since the start of 2020 the euro zone has twice suffered two consecutive quarters of contraction - defining a technical recession - with coronavirus curbs hitting most recently in the period spanning the end of 2020 and the start of 2021.

Activity was dragged down in the first three months of this year largely by weakness in Germany, where a lockdown from November had curbed private consumption.

Europe's biggest economy returned to growth in the second quarter, but the expansion of 1.5% compared to Q1 showed a weaker rebound than expected. The French economy, the euro zone's second largest, grew by 0.9%, just ahead of forecasts, with its third lockdown gradually being eased from May.

The strong growth could add to arguments for the ECB to start scaling back its crisis fighting measures.

The central bank's 1.85 trillion euro (\$2.20 trillion) Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program is due to expire in March at the earliest, and policy hawks are already arguing that it is time to start tapering purchases given the bloc's rebound. Policy doves are warning that the more transmissible Delta variant poses a threat to the recovery, however, so the ECB's Sept. 9 meeting is too early for a firm call on winding down the scheme early next year.

Bert Colijn, senior economist at ING, said supply chain problems were likely to have hampered growth in Germany, with its large auto industry, while Italy and Spain saw impressive growth because they were further behind pre-pandemic levels. Even with the Delta variant and continued supply chain issues, ING expects growth across the bloc to be 2% again in the third quarter.

"Despite all the greening efforts, the euro zone economy continues to perform like a diesel engine: it takes a while to get going but don't underestimate it once it's picked up steam," Colijn said.

Capital Economics saw third-quarter growth of a little over 2%, which would still leave the euro zone economy smaller than before the pandemic.

"Germany should reach that (pre-pandemic) benchmark in the second half of the year, but we don't expect the southern economies to do so until well into 2022," its chief Europe economist Andrew Kenningham wrote in a note.

EU Adopts Legal Framework for Lebanon Sanctions

PARIS (Dispatches) - The European Union said it has adopted a legal framework for a sanctions regime targeting Lebanese individuals and entities after a year of crisis that has left Lebanon facing financial collapse, hyperinflation and food and fuel shortages.

In a statement, the EU said the framework provided for the possibility of imposing sanctions on those responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon.

Led by France, the EU is seeking to ramp up pressure on Lebanon's squabbling politicians, part of broader international efforts to force a stable government capable of carrying out reforms to emerge from political chaos and economic collapse following a blast that ravaged Beirut port. "It is, however, of the utmost importance that the Lebanese leadership put aside their differences and work together to form a government and enact the measures required to steer the country towards a sustainable recovery," the EU statement said.

The EU said earlier in July that the sanctions measures would not be immediately implemented.

Under the sanctions regime, some people could face travel bans and asset freezes. Diplomats have said targets are not likely to be decided before the end of the summer. EU persons and entities are also forbidden from making funds available to those listed, the statement said. Criteria for EU sanctions would include corruption, obstructing efforts to form a government, financial misdeeds and human rights abuses.

The United States welcomes the EU's move, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement, adding that Washington "looks forward to future cooperation with the EU in our shared efforts."

China's Factory Activity in July Grows at Slowest Pace Since Feb. 2020

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's factory activity expanded in July at the slowest pace in 17 months as higher raw material costs, equipment maintenance and extreme weather weighed on business activity, adding to concerns about a slowdown in the world's second-biggest economy.

The official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) eased to 50.4 in July from 50.9 in June, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Saturday, but remained above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction.

Analysts had expected it to slip to 50.8. It was the lowest figure since the index slumped to 35.7 in February 2020, after China began

lockdowns to control the coronavirus pandemic.

An NBS official said in a statement the PMI's sub-index for production slipped to 51.0 from 51.9 in June, pointing to equipment maintenance and extreme weather. The new order sub-index fell to 50.9, from 51.5, reflecting a slowdown in demand.

"The most alarming signal is the new export order index, which is at lowest level since July last year," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist of Pinpoint Asset Management. The sub-index for new export orders has dropped for three straight months starting in May. It stood at 47.7 in July.

A sub-index for raw material costs stood at 62.9 in July, compared with June's 61.2, pointing to an increase in costs. High raw material prices have eaten into the profitability of industrial firms and deterred some Chinese exporters from taking on orders.

Authorities are eager to prevent high factory-gate prices being passed on to consumers, which would only add to current economic headaches as underlying demand remains weak.

Hit by extreme weather, the construction index dropped to 57.5, from June's 60.1, and analysts expect the sector to face headwinds amid Beijing's clampdown on the property market.

To bolster a slowing economy, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) in mid-July surprised the market by lowering the reserve requirement ratio (RRR) for banks, releasing around 1 trillion yuan (\$154 billion) in long-term liquidity.

China's economy has largely recovered from disruptions caused by the pandemic, with the consumption and service sectors gradually catching up to the improvements in exports and manufacturing.

However, manufacturers are grappling with new challenges including higher raw material prices, surging logistics costs and global supply chain bottlenecks, and the pace of gross domestic product growth is expected to moderate.

The country is also racing to contain a fresh COVID-19 outbreak of the more infectious Delta variant in the eastern city of Nanjing. China's zero-tolerance approach could present significant downside risks to the current economic recovery, analysts say.

OPEC July Oil Output Hits 15-Month High

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC oil output rose in July to its highest since April 2020, a Reuters survey found, as the group further eased production curbs under a pact with its allies and top exporter Saudi Arabia phased out a voluntary supply cut.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has pumped 26.72 million barrels per day (bpd), the survey found, up 610,000 bpd from June's revised estimate. Output has risen every month since June 2020 apart from in February.

OPEC and allies, known as OPEC+, have been unwinding record output cuts agreed in April 2020, as demand and the economy recover. With oil prices rising to a 2 1/2-year high, OPEC+ decided this month on further hikes from August. "Most forecasts are still predicting robust growth in demand in the second half of the year," said Carsten Fritsch of Commerzbank. "It is easy to believe that the oil market has learnt to live with the virus, in other words."

The OPEC+ agreement allows for a 360,000 bpd increase in OPEC output in July versus June, while Saudi Arabia had pledged to add 400,000 bpd as the final step in a plan to unwind a 1 million bpd voluntary cut it made in February, March and April.

The 13-member OPEC has slightly under-delivered on the expected month-on-month rise, the survey found. Members' adherence to pledged cuts declined but the group was still pumping less than called for under the latest deal. OPEC compliance with pledged cuts was 115%, the survey found, versus a revised 118% in June. Saudi Arabia delivered the biggest increase in July of 460,000 bpd, as it further unwound its voluntary cut and raised output as part of the July 1 OPEC+ boost.

The second-biggest came from the United Arab Emirates, which added 40,000 bpd in line with its new quota. Kuwait and Nigeria each added 30,000 bpd, the survey found, while output in OPEC's No. 2 producer Iraq edged up by 20,000 bpd. Iran, which has managed to raise exports since the fourth quarter despite U.S. sanctions, has not provided a further boost this month, the survey found. The country is exempt from OPEC supply curbs due to the sanctions.

A U.S. official said last week the United States was considering cracking down on Iranian oil sales to China, the top destination. Talks with world powers to revive Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal are on hold. Among the other two producers exempt from curbs, Venezuela managed to pump more while Libyan output was steady.

The Reuters survey aims to track supply to the market and is based on shipping data provided by external sources, Refinitiv Eikon flows data, information from tanker trackers such as Petro-Logistics and Kpler, and information provided by sources at oil companies, OPEC and consultants.

North Korea's Economy Contracted The Most in Two Decades in 2020



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea's economy in 2020 posted its sharpest drop since a deadly famine in the 1990s due to the coronavirus, natural disasters and international sanctions that have hit Kim Jong Un's already struggling state.

Gross domestic product contracted 4.5% in 2020 in the sharpest fall since 1997, according to estimates from South Korea's central bank, which for years has provided the best available accounting of the economic activity of the secretive state.

The report shows that North Korea's economy shrank last year to its smallest size Kim took over in late 2011. Gross domestic product fell to 31.4 trillion won (\$27.4 billion), down from 33.8 trillion won in Kim's first year at the helm, according to the South Korean central bank data released Friday.

Kim's decision to shut borders more than a year ago due to the pandemic has caused trade to plunge, slowing to a trickle the flow with its main benefactor, China. North Korea's exports last year dropped 67.9% to just \$90 million, while imports fell 73.9%, according to the Bank of Korea report.

Kim, who pledged to improve living conditions in the country with one of the world's lowest levels of per capita GDP, has let his people and ruling party know his state is feeling the pinch. He has issued rare warnings of economic struggles and food shortages but so far has shown no indication he's willing to return to discussions on reducing his nuclear arsenal in return for economic incentives from other countries including the United States.

But Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in this week agreed to a thaw in their chilly relations and to restore hotlines cut for more than a year due to political rancor, improving the dim prospects for a breakthrough in an extended stalemate in nuclear talks.

By making problems public, Kim may be sending a signal to the Biden administration to allow more assistance through international organizations like the United Nations World Food Program. But foreign aid organizations have had trouble getting into North Korea to deliver humanitarian assistance, with the World Food Program saying in late 2020 it was critical for the country to ease restrictions on the entry of international personnel.

Canadian Economy Likely Grows 0.7% in June

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - The Canadian economy most likely expanded by 0.7% in June as businesses reopened after shutdowns imposed to help fight the coronavirus pandemic, Statistics Canada said.

Statscan also said second-quarter annualized growth was set to be 2.5%, better than the Bank of Canada's July 14 forecast of 2.0%. Analysts predicted the third quarter would be stronger.

"With virus cases generally low across the country, the economy has some open road to recover even more ground this summer," Royce Mendes, senior economist with CIBC, said in a note.

Statscan said growth in retail trade and accommodation and food services was boosted by the easing of public health measures in many of Canada's 10 provinces in June.

There were also gains in manufacturing and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction.

"The strong handover from June means that GDP should accelerate in the third quarter to around 6% annualized," said Stephen Brown, senior Canada economist at Capital Economics.



The Canadian dollar was trading nearly unchanged at 1.2441 to the greenback, or 80.38 U.S. cents.

The Bank of Canada, which says third-quarter annualized growth should be 7.3%, has identified possible new variants of COVID-19 as a potential threat.

"There remain challenges on the horizon, most notably in the form of variants of the virus which have slowed progress towards healing in other developed economies," Mendes said.

The economy shrank by 0.3% in May, matching a forecast from analysts polled by Reuters. Statscan revised April's decline to 0.5% from an initial 0.3% drop.

In May, 12 of 20 industrial sectors posted decreases, with services-producing industries down by 0.2% and goods-producing industries contracting by 0.4%.

“The Cats” Finds Way to American Film Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – “The Cats”, a short film written, produced and directed by Mohammad Rasouli, is to be screened at Flickers’ Rhode Island International Film Festival.

The film tells the story of a lonely girl who has just broken out of an emotional relationship. Under the Coronavirus pandemic, she spends days with his two cats in quarantine.

Now in its 25th year, the Flickers’ Rhode Island International Film Festival™ (RIIFF) will take place August 9-15, 2021. The Festival has become a leading juried competition showcase for international independent filmmakers and their work. In 2021, the Festival will feature an expanded focus with seminars, expanded walks and tours, dinner and movie options, screenwriting retreats, history, and much more.



WHO Urges Action to Suppress COVID-19 Before Deadlier Variants Emerge

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The Delta variant of COVID-19 is a warning to the world to suppress the virus quickly before it mutates again into something even worse, the WHO said.

The highly-transmissible variant, first detected in India, has now surfaced in 132 countries and territories, the World Health Organization said.

“Delta is a warning: it’s a warning that the virus is evolving but it is also a call to action that we need to move now before more dangerous variants emerge,” the WHO’s emergencies director Michael Ryan told a press conference.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus added: “So far, four variants of concern have emerged -- and there will be more as long as the virus continues to spread.”

Tedros said that on average, infections increased by 80 percent over the past four weeks in five of the six WHO regions.

Though Delta has shaken many countries, Ryan said proven measures to bring transmission under control still worked -- notably physical distancing, wearing masks, hand hygiene and avoiding long periods indoors in poorly ventilated, busy places.

“They are stopping the Delta strain, especially when you add in vaccination,” he said.

“The virus has got fitter, the virus has got faster. The game plan still works, but we need to implement and execute our game plan much more efficiently and much more effectively than we’ve ever done before.”

The UN health agency has consistently called for vaccines to be distributed evenly around the world and has branded the drastic imbalance a “moral outrage”.

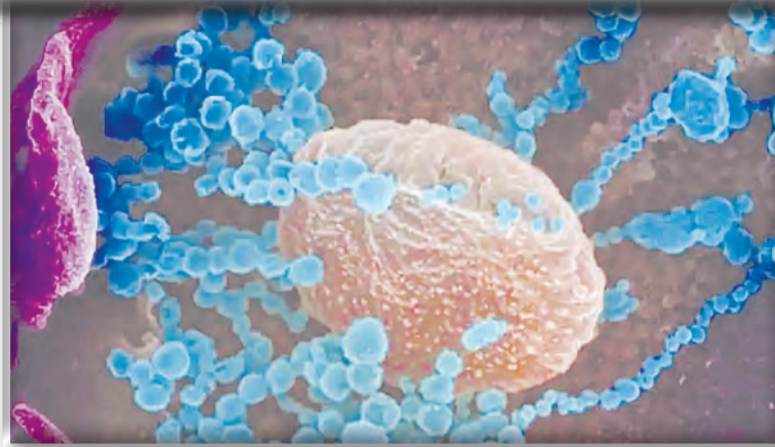
More than four billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have now been administered globally, according to an AFP count. In countries categorized as high income by the World Bank, 98 doses per 100 people have been injected.

That figure drops to 1.6 per 100 in the 29 lowest-income countries.

If the four billion doses had been administered equally to people aged over 60, “we basically could have gotten two doses into everybody at highest risk of severe consequences when we got to a strain like Delta”, said Bruce Aylward, the WHO’s frontman on the Covax scheme which aims to get donor-funded jabs to poorer countries.

Instead, those nations, “in the face of the Delta variant -- they’re going to pay a very, very different price as a result”.

The WHO wants every country to have vaccinated at least 10 percent of its population by the end of September; at least 40 percent by the end of this year, and



70 percent by the middle of 2022.

“We are a long way off achieving those targets,” Tedros lamented.

He said that just over half of the 194 WHO member states have fully vaccinated 10 percent of their population; less than a quarter have vaccinated 40 percent; and only three countries have vaccinated 70 percent.

Meanwhile the WHO says Burundi, Eritrea and North Korea are the only remaining member states yet to start COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 4.2 million people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, while nearly 196.6 million cases have been registered, according to tallies from official sources compiled by AFP.

Tedros said that on current rates of infection, the 200 million known infections mark will be surpassed within the next two weeks, although the true figure will be much higher.

“There are no magical solutions,” said Ryan. “The only magic dust we have is vaccination. The problem is we’re not sprinkling that evenly around the world and we are working against ourselves.”

Climate Change Connection Evident in China, India Floods



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Floods in the Asia-Pacific region have been frequent and devastating both in terms of fatalities and economic losses. Globally, 10 out of the top 15 countries with the most people exposed to annual river floods are in the Asia-Pacific region. In order of population exposed to flood risk, they include India, Bangladesh, China, Vietnam, Pakistan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Thailand and Cambodia.

Floods are the result of a combination of two factors: first, heavier-than-normal rainfall and second, limited capacity of rivers, drainage and water harvesting structures to withstand and discharge the excess rainwater, especially in a short time span, Srivastava wrote.

In all these recent events, the floods followed a period of unusually heavy rain, equivalent to almost a year’s rainfall being dumped in just a couple of days in some cases, overwhelming flood defenses.

Extreme event studies provide mounting evidence that climate change raises the risk of extreme weather events like heat waves, heavy rain and flooding, drought, cold/snow, storms, oceans and wildfires. Intense rainstorms are expected to be more frequent due to global warming as warmer air holds more moisture.

Research also shows that climate change might make the storms producing intense rain across Europe move slower, increasing the duration of local exposure. It thus increases the number of large, slow-moving storms that can linger for long in one area and deliver deluges as seen in Germany and Belgium.

While China experiences severe flooding every year causing loss of life and property, this year’s intensity was unprecedented as the central Henan province witnessed its heaviest rainfall in 1,000 years. Initial observations suggest that the typhoon In-Fa may have been responsible for the heavy rainfall.

The typhoon and the air currents carried atmospheric water, concentrating at Zhengzhou city, which is surrounded by mountains, creating a basin effect, Srivastava. Likewise in Maharashtra in India, the recent floods were a consequence of 600-900 per cent excess rain in many severely affected districts.

As the South-West monsoon turned extremely active over India after a long break that ended on July 13, 2021, the rainfall was caused by an offshore region of extended lower pressure known as a ‘trough’ that runs from India’s long West Coast (from South Gujarat to Kerala) straddling the Arabian Sea.

Climate change is making the Indian monsoon seasons more chaotic with substantial disruptions in weather patterns and for every degree Celsius of warming, Srivastava pointed out.

Proposed Carbon Tariffs Not a Bad Thing

PARIS (Dispatches) - Controversy erupted earlier this month when the European Union proposed carbon tariffs that would slap taxes on imports from countries that fail to take adequate action to address climate change.

China decried the measure as illegal, OECD Secretary General Mathias Cormann called it a “last resort,” and a group of Senate Democrats introduced a carbon tariff plan of their own.

In a new interview, Pavan Sukhdev — the president of WWF International, one of the world’s leading environmental advocacy groups — said he backs such proposals, praising taxation as a key policy tool that can push industry toward environmentally friendly practices.

“I think it’s not a bad thing,” says Sukhdev, a former managing director at Deutsche Bank (DB).

“We know that there is a huge economic cost to greenhouse gas emissions, which comes home at some point in time, not immediately; but it could come later, a year later, a decade later, but these are the externalities,” he says.

“So I think we need to recognize that climate change is a result of unmanaged externalities,” he adds.

The EU carbon tariff proposal, detailed in a 291-page document, would not go into effect until 2026. The measure seeks in part to protect most European companies that must currently pay a charge for the carbon they emit. Without a tax imposed on foreign producers, they could undercut European competitors that face such carbon penalties, proponents argue.

“Carbon markets and carbon taxes are two sides of the same coin in the sense that these are alternative ways of ensuring that polluters pay and carbon is a form of pollution,” Sukhdev says.

China assailed the proposed carbon tariffs as a violation of trade principles adopted by the World Trade Organization, and warned that the measure would hurt economic growth across the globe. Reuters reported.

The EU proposal comes as Democrats in Washington D.C. move to pass a \$3.5 trillion infrastructure package that includes a slew of provisions aimed at tackling



climate change, including tax incentives for electric cars and a clean energy standard.

A similar carbon tariff plan proposed by Senate Democrats, which they say will raise \$16 billion in annual revenue, is expected to be included in the infrastructure package, The New York Times reported.

Speaking to Yahoo Finance, Sukhdev said the policy goal of addressing climate change can be attained with carbon markets that put a price on emissions and carbon taxes that put a levy on them. But the latter is more efficient, he added.

“We need to do what we can to address it,” he adds. “This is at the heart of it all. I believe the two ways of doing that is taxation or pricing, basically giving companies budgets so that they have to manage within those budgets.”

“Then that leads those who don’t meet the budgets to purchase carbon credits, and cover them through another cost,” he says. “I actually believe taxation is more efficient.”

Born in India and educated in Switzerland and England, Sukhdev worked as a banker for more than two decades before he turned to environmental advocacy. In 2017, he was named the president of WWF International, a top environmental organization with more than 6 million donors worldwide.

Sukhdev said governments should impose taxes on companies for their pollution, rather than for the goods that the companies produce.

“Frankly, look at what we are doing these days when we tax,” he says. “Our tendency in governments nowadays is to tax the goods. They’re not the bad.”

“When we come to resource usage and resource emissions, basically, pollution and especially the use of the atmosphere, it’s a limited space,” he adds. “We should be taxing that resource use — the resource of the atmosphere — but we don’t do resource taxation.”

“Hardly anyone does it. We are always taxing the goods and not enough taxing the bads,” he adds. “So I believe this doesn’t make sense. We should do it the other way around.”

Iraqi PMU Forces...

FROM PAGE 1

Hashd al-Sh’abai fighters have played a major role in the liberation of Daesh-held areas to the south, northeast and north of Baghdad, ever since the terrorists launched an offensive in the country in June 2014.

Back in November 2016, the Iraqi parliament approved a law giving full legal status to the fighters. It recognized the PMU as part of the national armed forces, placed the forces under the command of the prime minister, and granted them the right to receive salaries and pensions like the regular army and police forces.

The anti-terror group, however, is the occasional target of U.S. and Israeli airstrikes and a malicious campaign to sideline and dismantle the organization.

Era of...

FROM PAGE 1

“The Axis of Resistance won’t permit Israelis to commit any crimes without retaliation, whether from Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iran or elsewhere. They (Israeli officials) have to understand that resistance forces can reach them anywhere,” Beirut-based Mohsen Saleh said.

He underlined that the Israeli regime is engaged in a campaign doomed to failure against the resistance bloc, describing Israeli attacks on Syrian territory and the Iraqi-Syrian border as well as assassination attempts against Iranians as desperate attempts.

Saleh went on to say that the balance of power is tipped in favor of the resistance front.

“They have to re-calculate their existence or hostilities against resistance groups and factions, whether in Lebanon, Syria or Iraq. All these groups are really willing to counterattack or retaliate against Israel’s acts of aggression,” he pointed out.

By the way the Israelis as usual have accused Iran of this attack and they are not ready to accept this fact that Resistance has awakened in the Muslim states and Muslims will not let the Zionist go unpunished for their atrocities.

The analyst stressed that Israeli authorities have realized that their attacks, normalization agreements with some Arab countries, besides support from the United States and certain European countries, would not be beneficial as resistance fighters can target them anywhere.

Israeli newspaper The Jerusalem Post published articles on Iran’s growing drone power in the wake of a sophisticated attack on an Israeli-managed petroleum product tanker off the coast of Oman.

Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid pointed the finger at Iran after the Liberian-flagged Mercer Street, which was travelling from Tanzania to the UAE, was hit near the Omani island of Masirah. Citing two unnamed officials, The New York Times claimed that the raid, which killed two crew members, “appeared to have been carried out by several unmanned Iranian drones that crashed into living quarters underneath the ship’s command center, or bridge.”

The attack was a small sample of reactions that the Axis of Resistance can do against atrocities of the Zionists and the West and it was a warning to Israeli regime that if they continue their crimes they will not be safe in any part of the world and they will get the proper response.

The international bodies should not also fall into the trap of the Zionists for blindly support of them and this is the nations’ rights to have appropriate response to Israeli attacks when the world bodies cannot stop them from committing crimes. So the world should realize this fact that the era of hit and escape with no punishment has ended, or at least it will not so for the Muslims and the Axis of Resistance states.

Tehran Denies Role...

FROM PAGE 1

“The U.S. government must pay attention to the fact that it has an inviolable duty as a host to the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. Accordingly, regardless of its disagreements with other countries, it has clear duties as a host and must act within the framework [of its duties],” said Khatibzadeh.

The calls were made by several headline senators in a letter to U.S. President Joe Biden. They accused Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi of being a long-standing “violin of human rights”.

“Of course, this is nothing strange and the known Zionist lobby in the U.S. uses every opportunity to level baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran. They have conducted such measures in the past too,” Khatibzadeh added. On recent developments in Tunisia, Khatibzadeh highlighted that the Islamic Republic of Iran watches all movements in Tunisia carefully.

“Iran stands beside Tunisia’s government and nation to pass this crisis and believes in talks as the only effective way,” he stated.

He noted that the crisis in Tunisia should be resolved through consistent political behavior and decision.

The spokesman also referred to the dangerous situation in Afghanistan and reiterated that Afghan security is Iran’s priority, and the Taliban must consider this fact in all dialogues.

“Iran is ready to assist all parties in Afghanistan and pave the way for the second round of talks as it did in the first round,” Khatibzadeh underlined.

“Taliban is a part of today and future of Afghanistan and cannot be neglected,” he added. The spokesman went on to say that talks among various groups in Afghanistan are the only solution to create peace and stability in the country.

Afghanistan’s security equals Iran’s security and Tehran is in contact with all parties to assist them in reaching a peace deal, Khatibzadeh concluded.



Arsenal Swoop for £50m Brighton Defender

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal have signed England defender Ben White from Premier League rivals Brighton, the London club announced.

The 23-year-old, a member of England's Euro 2020 squad, has now completed a medical.

Although no fee, nor the exact length of a "long-term" deal has been disclosed, British media reports suggest White has moved to the capital for a fee of £50 million (\$70 million).

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Thompson-Herah Defends Olympic Sprint

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Elaine Thompson-Herah ran the joint second fastest time in history as she retained her Olympic 100m crown on Saturday ahead of pre-race favorite Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce in a Jamaican podium sweep.

Thompson-Herah, who won the sprint double at the Rio Olympics in 2016, had come into the blue riband event very much in the shadow of Fraser-Pryce.

Djokovic Thrashes 2 Rackets In Bronze Medal Loss

TOKYO (Dispatches) - After starting the Olympics with eyes on a "Golden Slam," Novak Djokovic is leaving Tokyo without a medal.

The world No. 1 and reigning Australian Open, Wimbledon and French Open champion lost his bronze medal singles match to Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta on Saturday. He then withdrew from a bronze medal mixed doubles match that was scheduled shortly after his singles loss, citing a left shoulder injury. Details of the injury were not immediately clear.

His withdrawal meant that Australia's Ash Barty and John Peers won bronze by default, while his Serbian playing partner Nina Stojanovic lost a chance to play for an Olympic medal. It also denied the tennis world a rare clash of No. 1s against top-ranked women's player Barty.

It all added up to a stunning pair of days on the court for Djokovic, who went to Tokyo riding a 23-match winning streak and now leaves with two straight losses. Djokovic found himself in the bronze medal match after losing to Germany's Alexander Zverev, 1-6, 6-3, 6-1 in Friday's semifinal.

Djokovic and Busta split the first two sets on Saturday, setting up a winner-take-all third set in the best-of-three match. At that point, the emotions of the week appeared to take their toll on Djokovic. After losing a point early in the third set, he threw his racket into the stands.

Later in the set, he destroyed another racket while slamming it into the net stanchion in frustration.

Busta won the set to secure a 6-4, 6-7(6), 6-3 victory and the bronze medal. After the win, an emotional Busta told NBC: "This is the best title of my career, and I didn't win the title."

The loss marked Djokovic's third straight Olympics without a medal. He lost the bronze medal match in London in 2012 after winning bronze in 2008 in Beijing. He lost an opening-round stunner to Juan Martin del Potro in Rio in 2016.

He has a month to get back on track before



the start of the U.S. Open on August 30.

Later Djokovic said he was "not sure" about his fitness for the U.S. Open after pulling out of the Tokyo Olympics mixed doubles bronze medal match with a shoulder injury on Saturday.

The 34-year-old Serb could become the first man to complete a calendar Grand Slam since Rod Laver in 1969 when the U.S. Open gets under way on August 30.

He admitted that his exertions in Japan have taken their toll but he still hopes to be fit enough to challenge at Flushing Meadows.

"The consequences physically hopefully will not create a problem for me for the US Open, but that's something that I'm not sure about right now," said Djokovic. "But I'm not regretting for giving it all because at the end of the day, when you play for your country, that's necessary."

The International Tennis Federation said Djokovic had withdrawn with a "left shoulder injury". "Ashleigh Barty and John Peers receive a walkover against Djokovic and Nina Stojanovic and win the bronze medal for Australia," the ITF added.

Djokovic had been eyeing two gold medals when he played the singles and mixed

Bencic Wins Tennis Gold

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Switzerland's Belinda Bencic won Olympic gold in women's singles tennis on Saturday with a three-set victory over the Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova.

It didn't come without controversy.

Leading 4-3 in the third set, Bencic called for a medical timeout to receive treatment on her right foot. She appeared to have sustained a blister on her big toe. A trainer spent several minutes working on the toe as Vondrousova kept warm on her side of the court, preparing for her serve.

NBC commentator Rennae Stubbs did not like what she was seeing.

"This is a pivotal time to call a trainer," Stubbs said.

When prompted to expound on her thoughts, the former tennis pro likened the timeout to icing the kicker in football.

"You should have to do this before you serve," Stubbs continued, noting that the blister wasn't a significant injury that required immediate attention. "This is an obvious blister. In my opinion, you shouldn't be allowed to do this before your opponent's serve. ...

"This is called icing the kicker — icing the server down on the other end."

Biles out of More Olympic Events

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Simone Biles pulled out of two more events at the Olympics on Saturday, raising major doubts over whether she will compete again in Tokyo as Nigerian sprinter Blessing Okagbare was thrown out after failing a doping test.

U.S. swimmer Caeleb Dressel powered to a third gold medal of the Games but his bid for a potential six titles was thwarted.

Biles came to Tokyo seeking five gold medals to equal the Olympic all-time gymnastics record of nine, but mental health issues forced her to pull out of the team final on Tuesday and she did not take part in the all-around competition.

USA Gymnastics said the 24-year-old would sit out two more events.

"After further consultation with medical staff, Simone Biles has decided to withdraw from the event finals for vault and the uneven bars," the USAG statement said.

"She will continue to be evaluated daily to determine whether to compete in the finals for floor exercise and balance beam."

Biles said on Friday she was struggling with the "twisties", a mental block that has taken away her ability to perform the high-risk moves that she has trademarked.

Elsewhere on Saturday Dressel established himself as the dominant male swimmer of the Tokyo Games as he smashed his own world record to win the 100m butterfly title for his third gold medal.

The American touched in 49.45 seconds to better his own world best of 49.50 set two years ago.

Dressel could win another two gold medals, having already won the 100m freestyle crown and the 4x100m relay title with his team.

But he can no longer win six titles after the US team were beaten by Britain as the mixed 4x100m relay made its Olympic debut.

His U.S. teammate Katie Ledecky stormed to her third straight Olympic 800m freestyle title with a dominant swim to bank her fourth medal in Tokyo.

Hamilton Takes Pole Position for Hungarian GP



alongside his Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez.

Hamilton was quickest during the final practice session on Saturday morning but the

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton secured the 101st pole position of his career as he went quickest in qualifying for Sunday's Hungarian Grand Prix.

Hamilton, who is aiming for his 100th Grand Prix victory and his ninth in Hungary, will be joined on the front row by Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas with championship leader Max Verstappen starting third

Briton bided his time and, unlike his rivals, sticking to the medium tyres in Q2 which saw him land just the sixth-quickest time.

Switching to the softs for Q3 he produced a blistering lap of 1min 15.419sec, over three-tenths of a second faster than Bottas, who had also used the mediums.

"It was an amazing qualifying lap and it has been amazing teamwork from everyone, Valtteri included, trying to push the car forward.

"The guys at the factory have left no stone unturned.

"The soft tyre is worth something like five meters into turn one. It was surprising to see everyone in the top 10 on the softs apart from us."

Verstappen, who crashed out of the last race after a first lap collision with Hamilton, had to make do with third, signalling a remarkable 20 consecutive top three qualifications. Verstappen leads the title race with an eight-point lead over Hamilton.

U.S. Clinch Playoff Spot, France and Australia Go 3-0

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The United States clinched a quarter-final berth in Olympic men's basketball as seedings for next week's last-eight showdowns took shape.

Kevin Durant led Team USA to a commanding 119-84 victory against the Czech Republic in the final group game at the Saitama Super Arena, north of Tokyo.

The U.S. ended the preliminaries 2-1 after dropping their first match to France, the first Olympic loss for the Americans since 2004.

"We're all just trying to figure each other out. This is literally our third game with all of us together," said Jrue Holiday, who plays for the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks. "But we knew KD would come in and do what he always does."

Team USA started slowly against the Czech team and were trailing at the end of the first quarter. But the Americans pulled away in the second half on a barrage of three-pointers from Durant and Jayson Tatum.

In earlier matches, France and Australia completed sweeps of their preliminary groups. Real Madrid's Thomas Heurtel led with 16 points in France's 79-62 victory over Iran.

They went 3-0 in Group A, including their shock defeat of Team USA.

Despite his team's dominant showing so far, Evan Fournier would not speculate on France's chances of a medal.

"Quarter-final first. Focus on that," said Fournier, who plays for the NBA's Boston Celtics. "Too many times we've beaten very, very good teams and we lost in the semi-final, so no more of that."



Mir Hits Hat-Trick To Send Spain Into Olympic Semi

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Substitute Rafa Mir hit a hat-trick as Spain finally saw off Ivory Coast 5-2 in extra time in the Tokyo Olympics men's football on Saturday to set up a semi-final with hosts Japan.

Brazil defeated Egypt 1-0 thanks to a first-half strike by Matheus Cunha and will play Mexico in the other last-four clash. Both matches are on Tuesday.

The Spaniards are one of the gold medal favorites after naming a strong squad featuring six members of the team that reached the Euro 2020 semi-finals.

But they suffered a major fright before reaching the last four at the pandemic-delayed Games, even if the scoreline suggested otherwise.

Spain were just minutes from going out when forward Max Gradel's deflected strike made it 2-1 to the Ivorians in the 91st minute of normal time.

But the Spaniards responded almost immediately, Wolves forward Mir lashing in from close range to force extra time, just a minute after coming on.

Manchester United defender Eric Bailly then conceded a penalty for handball after the intervention of VAR, with Mikel Oyarzabal stroking the ball in for a 3-2 Spain lead in the 98th minute.

Mir struck twice in the dying minutes to put extra gloss on the scoreline and claim the match ball for himself.

Japan's quarter-final with New Zealand was a far tighter affair with the score deadlocked at 0-0 after 120 cagey minutes. New Zealand had only two shots on target all match.

The hosts kept their nerve in the penalty shootout and the Kiwis missed twice from the spot, sending Japan through 4-2 on penalties.

