

**Health Ministry Said on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From The Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 92,194 With 409 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**According to the Reports, 602 Out of 8,965 Abroad Iranian Elites Have Joined the Faculty of Iran's Top Universities Since 2016 and It Is expected the Number of Elites To Rise in the Next Years**

VOL. XXVII, No. 7285 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY AUGUST 5, 2021 - MORDAD 14, 1400

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**President Briefed On COVID Situation In First Meeting**



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**Call for Launch of Mechanism for Barter Trade Between Iran and Denmark**



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## China, Iran Enjoy Political Will to Expand Long-Term Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majid Reza Hariri, the chairman of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce, believes that both countries are politically determined to develop long-term relationship.

Hariri made the remark in an interview with China Radio International, noting that high-ranking political authorities of Beijing and Tehran are keen on expanding ties in all fields.

The Chinese and Iranian officials have time and again emphasized that they are determined to develop mutual relations, he said, noting that they should find the potential ways to implement the expansion of ties.

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## Maritime Incidents Allegations, Western Psywar for New Adventurism



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian Armed Forces have denounced recent contradictory reports of maritime incidents and hijacking in the Sea of Oman as a Western "psychological warfare" meant to set the ground for new adventurism.

Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi, spokesman of the Armed Forces, made the remarks on Tuesday, after Reuters

claimed that "Iran-backed forces" were believed to have seized an oil tanker off the coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Citing maritime security sources, the report identified the seized vessel as the Panama-flagged asphalt/bitumen tanker Asphalt Princess.

Meanwhile, The Times of London newspaper quoted British sources as saying that they were "working on the assumption Iranian military or proxies boarded" the Asphalt Princess.

In a warning notice based on a third-party source, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) alleged a "potential hijack" and advised ships to exercise extreme caution around 60 nautical miles east of the UAE's Fujairah emirate.

Early on Wednesday though, the same agency said the suspected hijacking of a ship in the Gulf of Oman has ended and that the vessel was safe.

"Boarders have left the vessel. Vessel is safe. Incident complete," UKMTO tweeted, without making any clarifications surrounding the incident, and without naming the vessel involved in the alleged incident.

The developments came days after the US, the UK and Israel blamed Iran for a deadly drone attack on an Israeli-managed oil tanker off the coast of Oman, but Tehran rejected the accusations as "baseless."

In response, Shekarchi said, "Contradictory news from some Western, Zionist and Saudi media about any maritime insecurity and hijacking of ships in regional waters is a kind of psychological warfare and setting the stage for new bouts of adventurism."

"In addition to helping the safe movement of commercial ships, the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran have full intelligence about any suspicious movements and stand completely prepared," he told Fars news agency.

The commander also said, "The powerful naval forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and Army are ready to provide any assistance and dispatch relief units if necessary and at the request of foreign vessels."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has dismissed rumors about the entry of the country's military forces into foreign ships passing in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

Additionally on Tuesday, a senior military official in the Persian Gulf told Iran's Nour news agency that based on reports from the Iranian naval forces in the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf, "the movement of commercial vessels is quite normal and no official naval sources or Persian Gulf countries have reported any uncontrolled incidents in the region."

Referring to an announcement by several commercial vessels regarding the disruption of their navigation systems, the source said that the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran had offered assistance to the ships in order to solve the problem.

"Certainly, the psychological warfare, which has been waged by certain known Western and regional media outlets to portray the Persian Gulf region as insecure, is pursuing specific goals, whose dimensions will soon be determined," the source said.

"However, what is significant is that the Islamic Republic of Iran — as one of the main pillars of stability and security in the region — is keeping up comprehensive efforts to safeguard the strategic waterways of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman and is closely monitoring any attempt to instigate or insinuate regional insecurity and will take necessary measures to counter these moves," the source said.

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**Top Japan Medic Urges Nationwide State of Emergency Amid COVID Surge**



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**PSV and Monaco Edge Closer to Playoffs**



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## CBI Launches Legal Action Against Bahrain

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The central Bank of Iran (CBI) has announced it has started taking legal action against a court ruling in Bahrain to confiscate funds belonging to the CBI and other Iranian banks under allegations of money laundering.

The Tuesday statement by the CBI said that its complaint will be based on a 2004 agreement between Iran and Bahrain which is aimed at encouraging and boosting mutual investment in the two countries.

"The CBI ... started its legal action against the Bahraini government on August 2, 2021 to demand the repatriation of the (Iranian) funds invested in banks in that country," said the statement.

Bahrain's High Criminal Court issued a verdict on July 29 to confiscate nearly \$1.3 billion worth of Iranian funds in the country, according to a report by the official BNA news agency.

The funds belong to the Future Bank, a joint commercial entity that was closed down in 2016 after Iran and Bahrain cut their diplomatic relations.

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## Iran Favors Security Everywhere, New President Says

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The new president of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, emphasized that the Islamic Republic's policy entails the maintenance of security in all regions and protection of the territorial integrity of other countries.

In a meeting with the foreign minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in Tehran on Tuesday evening, President Ebrahim Raisi said one of the underlying principles in the Islamic Republic's policies is to support the territorial integrity of other countries and defend the oppressed across the world.

"Our stance is maintaining security and welfare in all regions," he stated.

The Iranian president bemoaned the fact that many measures that violate human rights in the world are taken by the self-proclaimed advocates of human rights.

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## 3 Rockets Hit Israeli-Occupied Territories

BEIRU (Dispatches) - Three rockets have reportedly been fired from Lebanon towards northern Israeli-occupied territories, triggering alarm sirens.

Sirens warning of a rocket attack were sounded in several Israeli communities, including the town of Kiryat Shmona, near the Lebanese border. There were no immediate reports of casualties or material damage.

The surprise sirens sent residents scrambling to shelters in the town.

Explosions were heard in the area and videos showed smoke rising from an impact site.

One of the rockets reportedly caused a large fire in a field near the Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona.

Kiryat Shmona's mayor urged locals to stay close to bomb shelters until the situation becomes clearer, Israeli media outlets reported. The Israeli military announced in a statement that three rockets were launched from Lebanon, with one falling short of the border and the two others striking open areas inside Israeli-occupied lands.

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**Two years have passed since India revoked Kashmir's special status and intensified the killing of oppressed Muslims in the region.**



# TCCIMA to Hold Iran-Pakistan Business Webinar

TEHRAN (MNA) - Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) in collaboration with Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) will hold Iran-Pakistan Business Webinar on Pharmaceutical Industry on August 11.

As announced, official from the both sides including Hassan Nourian, the consul general of Iran in Karachi, and Masood Ahmed, the trade and investment counselor of Pakistan in Tehran, Najm-ul-Hassan Jawa, the chairman of Pakistan-Iran Business Counsel of FPCCI, and Tauqeer ul Haq, the president of Pharmaceutical Association of Pakistan, will deliver speech in the online event.

## President Briefed On COVID Situation In First Meeting

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - In his first formal meeting as the new president of Iran, Ebrahim Raeisi received reports about plans to tackle the fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic in the country and the vaccination program.**

One day after being endorsed by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution as the 8th president of Iran, Raisi on Wednesday held his first official meeting with the directors of the specialized committees of the Coronavirus Fight National Headquarters.

The participants provided the new president with reports about the implementation of the decisions adopted by the headquarters to contain the fifth wave of the pandemic, as well as the regulations on the religious rituals marking the anniversary of martyrdom of the third Shiite Imam.

The headquarters' officials also briefed the incoming president on the necessary conditions to reopen universities and schools in autumn and also the process of



carrying out a national document on COVID vaccination.

In this meeting, the commander of the operational headquarters and the heads of the committees of health, advertising and information and transportation presented reports related to the implementation of the resolutions of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus in dealing with and controlling the fifth wave of the disease, as well as preparing instructions for Imam Hussein's (AS) mourning ceremony during Muharram, as well as the instructions for the reopening of schools and universities in the new school year, as well as the process of implementing the national vaccination document.

Raisi said on Tuesday that he has formulated an immediate plan to bring about a major change and settle the country's problems in the short term.

## Iran Firm, Steadfast Against Enemies

TEHRAN (IP) - The Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) referred to the enemies' smear campaign against Iran, noting that following Iran's successes, the enemies tried very hard to take advantage of what has happened inside the country about some problems.

Major General Hossein Salami emphasized: "We are in the process of shifting the administration, different from the shift of administration in the United States, and this shift in Iran is healthy and calm."

Major General Salami said: "The enemies are trying to create a concern for the Iranian nation, but we warn them to learn from the past. We have been confronting the enemies for 42 years and today we are stronger and more determined than ever before." IRGC official stated: "The enemies must get rid of false thoughts and ideas because our responses are destructive and crushing."

He addressed the enemies, stressing: "Do not think of confrontation with the Iranian nation because we are firm and steadfast here."



## Senior Foreign Officials in Tehran To Attend Raisi's Inauguration

TEHRAN (PressTV) - High-ranking foreign officials from around the world are arriving in Tehran to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Iran's newly-elected President Ebrahim Raisi.

Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament, and other Iranian officials welcomed the speakers of the parliaments of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Niger — namely Nurdinjon Ismailov, Mahmadoir Zokirzoda and Seyni Oumarou respectively — and their accompanying entourage upon arrival early on Wednesday.

A parliamentary delegation from Guinea Conakry had landed at Imam Khomeini International Airport hours earlier. The inauguration ceremony of Iran's new president is due to be held at 5:00 p.m. local time today (Thursday).

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei officially endorsed Raisi as the eighth president of Iran during a ceremony in Tehran on Tuesday, as a group of senior Iranian state and military officials attended the event.

On the same day, a high-level delegation from the European Union (EU), led by the Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service Enrique Mora, arrived in the Iranian capital Tehran to participate in Raisi's inauguration.

He was welcomed by several officials from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon his arrival at Imam Khomeini International Airport.

Mora was accompanied by Stephan Klement, head of the EU delegation to the international organizations in Vienna, and Head of Task Force European Union Bruno Scholl.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Bisera Turković, Ghanaian Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts Ibrahim Mohammed Awal, and Speaker of the Syrian Parliament Hammouda Sabbagh, also arrived in Tehran on Tuesday to participate in Raisi's swearing-in ceremony.

The spokesman of the presiding board of the Iranian Parliament, Seyed Nezameddin Mousavi, announced on Monday that 115 officials from 73 world states have declared preparedness to attend the ceremony.



## Leader Attaching Importance to Boosting Relations With World



TEHRAN (MNA) – A senior Iranian lawmaker says that the Leader of the Revolution has always had the most progressive attitude toward Iran's foreign policy, attaching great importance to strengthen relations with the world.

The chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, said that communicating with the world is a necessity and the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys relations with all countries except the Zionist regime.

Referring to the hostile policies of the United States against the Iranian nation, Abbass Golroo said, "We are trying to adjust our relations with this country in a way that serves the interests of the Iranian people."

He went on to say, "The Leader of the Revolution has always had the most progressive attitude toward Iran's foreign policy, attaching great importance to strengthen relations with the world."

"The Leader has always emphasized that we must use the capacities of the world, especially in the field of science and technology", he said.

"Along with taking advantage of the capacities and opportunities countries in various fields, we must move towards maintaining independence, dignity, and reliance on our own resources and internal strength", he stressed.

Saying that Iran's distrust against the US is based on facts, the Iranian lawmaker highlighted, "The Americans stabbed us in the back at various times, they have not loyal to relations with Iran, and the interests of the Iranian people." Today, many countries, like Iran, have come to the conclusion that the United States never adheres to international laws in its relations with other countries.

## Oman FM Stresses Enhanced Cooperation With Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Al Busaidi has reaffirmed the sultanate's policy of expanding ties with neighboring Iran, saying Muscat will continue its close interactions with Tehran under the administration of new Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

The top Omani diplomat, who is in Tehran to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new Iranian president, held a meeting with outgoing Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday.

Busaidi hailed great efforts made by Zarif to bolster relations with Oman during his tenure in the past eight years and said his country's policy toward Iran is based on the enhancement of cooperation.

He added that Muscat would do its utmost to bring the views of the regional countries closer together in order to promote neighborly dialog.



Zarif, for his part, praised exemplary relations between Tehran and Muscat and the two sides' efforts to strengthen cooperation, emphasizing the need for the policy to continue in ties with the next Iranian administration.

The top Iranian diplomat said the Islamic Republic's principled policy is expanding ties

with the neighboring countries.

Zarif paid a visit to Oman late in April, after his visits to Qatar and Iraq.

In a meeting in Muscat on April 29, Zarif and Omani Minister of Royal Office General Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani discussed bilateral economic ties as well as major developments in the region, particularly the Yemeni crisis.

Meanwhile, in a telephone conversation with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said late last month, Raisi said interaction and dialog with neighboring countries is top on the foreign policy agenda of his administration.

## “Misleading Public Not Fair Game”

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Embassy in London has reacted to the reports of alleged security incidents in the regional waters, noting that it is not 'fair' to 'mislead public' for 'diplomatic gains'.

"According to our direct links in the Persian Gulf region, no information on new incidents for any merchant ship in the region is confirmed so far," the mission tweeted on Wednesday, adding, "Misleading the public all around the world for diplomatic gain in New York is not fair game."

The tweet came in response to conflicting reports which claimed that a security incident has happened for Panama-flagged asphalt tanker Asphalt Princess in the Sea of Oman on Tuesday. The Western media outlets claimed that the ship was hijacked by a group of armed men, blaming Iran for the alleged incident without providing any evidence or detail.

Later on Wednesday morning, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said in a statement that the alleged hijackers have left the vessel and the incident has ended.

## First NFT Multimedia Exhibit Themed on “Trump” Opens

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's first multimedia group exhibition on the non-fungible token (NFT) platform is underway in the capital city.

The exhibit showcases the works of eight artists themed on "Donald Trump" in the form of digital art.

The works of art illustrate concepts such as Trump's individual behavior and character, republicanism and democracy, social media, news headlines related to Trump, etc.

A non-fungible token is a unit of data stored on a digital ledger, called a blockchain, that certifies a digital asset to be unique and therefore not reproducible or interchangeable.

NFT products are traded online using cryptocurrency.

Although it is customary to use NFTs in different domains, it has specifically become popular in the domain of digital art and collections.

In recent years, the works of some renowned artists have been sold at high prices, setting marvelous records among the most expensive NFTs.

Moreover, there are companies which turn artistic masterpieces to NFTs.

These digital works, which are reproduced with the same size as the original work, are unique and theft-proof and have made their way into digital collections.

In Iran, too, a number of artists who use digital tools to create works of art have sometimes reproduced works in the form of NFTs some of which have been offered on foreign websites.

Nevertheless, there had been no opportunity to introduce and display these types of work in Iran before.

Now that the coronavirus pandemic has forced people to stay away from public places and become all the more dependent on the Internet and digital gadgets, the Dena Art Gallery has set up an exhibition in cooperation with a group of artists to showcase digital works of art on the NFT platform.

"There is almost no one in the world who does know Donald Trump. From our standpoint, he, who was the United States' 45th president, is the result of a kind of human thinking and the outcome of a form of democracy which are capable of creating such a phenomenon when combined with social media," read the exhibition's statement.

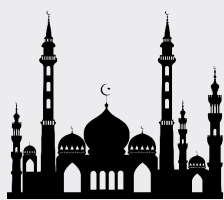
## Gas Storage in Shurijeh Plant Exceeds 1 bcm

TEHRAN (Shana) - The amount of gas stored in the Shurijeh storage facility has reached more than one billion cubic meters so far.

According to the Iranian Central Oil Fields Company, Ahmad Rajabi, the company's production manager, said: "With the coordination made between the company's production management, East Oil and Gas Production Company and the coordination and production management of the National Iranian Oil Company and the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), the amount of gas storage in the Shurijeh reservoir of Khangiran Sarakhs has exceeded one billion cubic meters." He added: "Considering the 1.856 billion cubic meters of gas storage record in [the calendar year of] 1399 (which ended on March 20) and the key and strategic role of this reservoir in the supply and production of gas in the winter in the northern and northeastern provinces, plans were made to break this record in the current year."

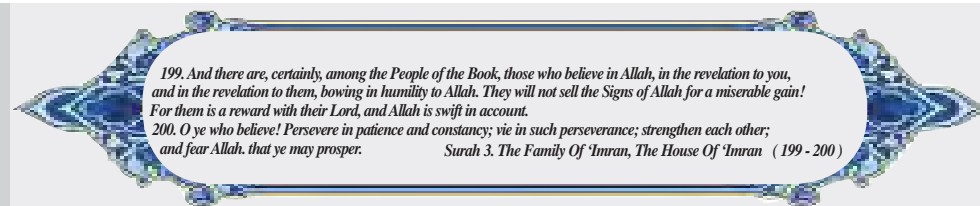
The official further stated: "If sufficient gas is supplied and delivered by the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and the maximum gas injection continues until October, the injection is expected to reach about 2 billion cubic meters and the amount of reproduction in the final four months of this [calendar] year will be an average of 15 million cubic meters per day." Rajabi also said the amount of gas stored in the Sarajeh storage facility in Qom is now more than 100% of the plan and this process continues accordingly.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:24
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:41
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:16



199. And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to Allah. They will not sell the Signs of Allah for a miserable gain! For them is a reward with their Lord, and Allah is swift in account.

200. O ye who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah, that ye may prosper.

Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (199 - 200)

## Call for Launch of Mechanism for Barter Trade Between Iran and Denmark

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN – In the Iran-Denmark Joint Commerce Committee meeting, the participants called for the launch of a mechanism for barter trade between Iran and Denmark.**

In the meeting, the participants explored the latest developments regarding cooperation between Iran and Denmark and the existing trade capacities of the two countries as well as ways for expanding the current trade level of these two states.

Head of the Iran Denmark Joint Commerce Committee Parham Rezaee, addressing the meeting, pointed to the good and historic political relations between Iran and Denmark and said since 1691 till now this diplomatic relation has continued strongly. He added although after the reimposition of the U.S. sanctions, the trade volume between the two countries has declined but some Danish companies have continued their activities in Iran despite the U.S. threats and its post-JCPOA-exit pressures.

He went on to say that for trade with Denmark there are several problems and hurdles due to the economic and banking sanctions and expressed hope in the near future these hurdles are removed, adding that even in this period, most of Danish companies in the fields of food and medicine have had good cooperation with Iran and Embassy of Denmark in Tehran has had close cooperation for resolving the problems of Iranian economic activists.

Referring to the existing grounds for the joint cooperation between Iran and Denmark, he said medical and medicine equipment, food industries and providing machineries, providing raw materials, clean energies and also exports to the countries in the region make Iran and region's market a very attractive one for the new investments.

Rezaee, pointing to the probable openings in the near future, called for paving the required grounds for the surge in exports in the country and developing trade and economic cooperation. He also urged the Embassy of Denmark to introduce small and medium-size companies of Denmark to Iranian economic activists and he also announced that the committee is to hold a webinar in the near future for announcing its future plans and programs.



He also admitted that the trade exchanges between Iran and Denmark has been affected by the pandemic and declined, expressing hope that with the prudence and wisdom of the new Danish diplomatic team in Tehran and its new ambassador Mr. Jesper Vah, these trade exchanges would enhance.

Rezaee also said Denmark can cooperate with Iran in the fields of new technologies, renewable energies and environment, health and social health, raw material required by the industries, petrochemical industries, transportation and shipping.

Then Danish Ambassador Mr. Vahr, for his part, expressed his interest to Iran's culture and nation and said expansion of close economic cooperation with Iran is of the major plans of the embassy in Tehran.

He said in 2016 and after taking an initiative, a Danish trade delegation visited Tehran which was a turning point for expanding cooperation between the two countries and new co-operations began. However, reimposition of the sanctions turned into hurdles for expansion of trade between Tehran and Copenhagen, the diplomat said, and expressed hope the problems of the JCPOA as well as the FATF would be resolved soon and exchange of forex is restored like before.

He admitted although resolving banking hurdles after the revival of the JCPOA will take time, the Danes as much as Iranians are interested these hurdles are removed for more joint cooperation.

Vahr then announced the readiness of the embassy in Tehran for any cooperation with the Iran-Denmark Joint Commerce Committee and economic activists of both countries and resolving problems regarding the bilateral trade.

Then the members of the committee and participants in the meeting raised their suggestions and views for expansion of economic cooperation between Iran and Denmark. They also called for the launch of a mechanism for barter trade between the two states.

## Smuggling of Oil Products Close to Zero in Iran

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Products Refining and Distribution Company said: "With the launch of the Petroleum Products Request System (SADAF), I can say



with confidence that smuggling of petroleum products in the country's borders, except for the Pakistani border, has been zero."

Alireza Sadeghabadi announced at the unveiling ceremony of the oil products request system (SADAF): "Fortunately, the system has been launched successfully and now we can say with confidence that there is no smuggling in many borders of the country."

He stressed: "Markets such as Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan region and Armenia have a certain amount of demand and when most of it is supplied through the official channel, it shows that there is no smuggling."

Sadeghabadi, noting that I can say with confidence that we no longer smuggle products on the Afghan border, added: "All these achievements have been the result of collective efforts."

## Petchem Plant Turns Waste Into Valuable Product

TEHRAN (Shana) - Karun Petrochemical Plant converts part of its waste into a valuable product called "Petrocarbon" which is used in various industries such as steel, casting, water treatment, nuclear, military, sugar and ferroalloy.

According to the company, in addition to helping to preserve the environment, the item gives good profitability to Iranian companies.

The unveiling ceremony of the company's new "Petrocarbon" product was held this morning (Tuesday, August 3) in the central city of Tabas.

"Petrocarbon" is produced as a result of cooperation between Karun Petrochemical Company and Ferroalloy Knowledge-based Company. The raw material of this product is the waste of Karun Petrochemical Company, which used to incur costs for disposal, burial, and incineration, but with this measure, from now on, it becomes a valuable product.

This product is used in various industries such as steel, casting, water purification, nuclear, military, sugar and ferroalloy industries, and in addition to helping the environment, it provides good profitability to Iranian companies.

## Fire in Mahshahr Petrochemical Zone Under Control

AHVAZ (IP) - Manager of Public Relations of Mahshahr Petrochemical Special Economic Zone in Khuzestan Province, southwest of Iran, said the warehouse of chemical waste of Hamour Company located in Mahshahr Petrochemical Special Economic Zone caught fire.

Mohsen Adibi elaborated on the published news about the explosion in Mahshahr Petrochemical, saying: "Yesterday, following an announcement made through the fire control room, the chemical waste warehouse of Hamour Company, located in the Mahshahr special economic site, caught fire."

The Public Relations Manager of Mahshahr Petrochemical Special Economic Zone said: "Following the announcement of this incident, firefighters were immediately dispatched to the scene and controlled the fire as soon as possible. Fortunately, there have been no casualties, and experts are investigating the cause of the accident."

Adibi added that Hamour Company, located in site number one of Mahshahr Petrochemical Special Economic Zone, operates in manufacturing metal industries.

## Special Measures Taken To Attract Iranian Elites Studying Aboard



**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN - Science, Research, and Technology Minister said that significant measures have been taken by the National Elites Foundation to attract and introduce young elites who are studying abroad.

"In recent years, the Elite Foundation has been allowed to attract more elites," said Mansour Gholami said on the sidelines of the 28th ceremony of honoring top faculty members of the country.

Gholami emphasized the promising scientific achievements of Iran and noted: "Many Iranian scientists and elites are active in foreign universities, which indicate Iran's high-level capabilities in professional and specialized manpower."

Stressing that Iran would do the best of its ability to facilitate and attract young Iranian elites studying abroad, Gholami said that Iran's university students had shared their knowledge, technology, and experiences with the world.

The 28th ceremony honoring top faculty members of the country was held on Tuesday at Science, Research, and Technology Ministry in Tehran.

Meanwhile at the ceremony, highlighting Iran's place globally, Gholami added that Iran's scientific sector had grown perfectly in less than 20 years after the Islamic Revolution.

"The country's scientific should be announced publicly to encourage people," he noted.

The head of the Center for Boards of Trustees and Supervisory Boards of the Ministry of Science, Abdolreza Bagheri, said in this ceremony: "This year, 75 professors from 31 universities and research institutes were introduced and 17 of them were elected as top ones in four specialized groups of humanities and arts, basic sciences, engineering, agricultural sciences, and veterinary medicine."

## Gov't Debt to CBI Up by 70%

**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN - While economy minister claimed in June that the government had not borrowed "even one rial" from the Central Bank last year, the Central Bank of Iran issued a report on the 24 percent growth in government debt to the Central Bank last year.

He also said that in June of this year, the government's debt to the Central Bank grew by more than 70 percent compared to June last year.

According to central bank statistics, the government's debt to the bank has reached 165,000,000 tomans by the end of June. This figure is the only government debt to the central bank.

Central Bank statistics show that the total government debt to all domestic banks in June compared to last June



has grown by 47 percent to 587,000 billion tomans.

Of course, this is just the government's own debt. In addition, the debt of state-owned companies to the country's banks has grown by 27 percent to more than 60,000 billion tomans.

The government has not yet published a report on its total debts

to banks, companies, contractors, entities such as the National Development Fund, etc., but the IMF said in its latest report, published in the beginning of spring, that total government net debt had doubled over the past two years.

The IMF says Iran's net debt from the beginning of 2000 to 2017 averaged 5.1 percent of the country's GDP, but last year it peaked at 35.7 percent of total GDP, equivalent to \$227 billion.

## Record Demand for Fuel Despite Pandemic Curbs

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Gasoline consumption has reached a new record high in Iran, says the country's Oil Ministry, as demand for fuel keeps rising despite government efforts to curb movements to prevent a fresh surge in the number of coronavirus infections.

Head of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) said on Tuesday that average gasoline consumption for the month to July 22 had reached 107 million liters per day.

Karamat Veis Karami said that the figure was a new high recorded in the country, adding that demand for fuel had been much lower over the same month in 2020.

Veis Karami said that gasoline consumption has been rising in recent weeks despite the fact that the government has tightened its restrictions on travel amid a reported surge in infections with the Delta variant of the coronavirus.

Iran had reported a 20% year-on-year drop in domestic consumption of gasoline for the year to late March. Consumption had declined to as low as 45 million liters per day in April 2020 when the government imposed its first and only nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the coronavirus just two months after the disease started to circulate in the country. Iran had also seen a sharp fall in demand for fuel after price hikes of November 2019. Figures by the NIOPDC published at the time showed that the country had some 35 million liters of gasoline surplus from a total daily production of 110 million liters per day.

Increased demand for gasoline means lower exports for Iran, a country that went from being a net importer of gasoline in early 2020s to being the largest net exporter of the fuel in the region later in the decade.

## 564k Containers Loaded, Unloaded at Shahid Rajaei Port

TEHRAN (MNA) – The director-general of Hormozgan Province's PMO announced that in the first four months of the current Iranian year (ended on July 22) up to 564,000 containers have been loaded and unloaded at Shahid Rajaei port.

The director-general of Hormozgan Province's Ports and Maritime Organization Alireza Mohammadi said the figure shows an increase of 16 percent year on year.

The official added, since the beginning of this year (March 21), 550 container ships have moored at the port's private wharf.

Shahid Rajaei is Iran's biggest container port near the Strait of Hormuz. Shahid Rajaei Special Economic Zone,

which has a loading/unloading capacity of 100 million tons, accounts for over 55% of Iran's trade and 70% of transit.

Over 85% of Iran's containers are handled in Shahid Rajaei Complex. With 18 gantry cranes and 40 berths, it is the most advanced container port of Iran where 12,000 TEUs-plus Panamax cargo ships can enter.

Launched in 1985, the port has expanded every year. Today it is connected to 80 top ports of the world.

The significance of this port lies in its large capacity, including its location in the Persian Gulf, container terminal, fuel bunkering, access to 24 kilometers of railroads and round-the-clock truck transportation.



## Bangladesh to Vaccinate 10m in Seven Days

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh extended its strict lockdown on Tuesday and announced plans to vaccinate at least 10 million people in a week as the country battles a major Covid-19 surge.

The vaccination drive from August 7 will be led by tens of thousands of health workers at 14,000 health centers, senior minister A.K.M Mozammel Haque said. "More than 10 million people will be vaccinated in a week. Elderly people, workers and shopkeepers will be given the priority," Haque said.

Health ministry spokesman Maidul Islam Prodhon said there was enough stock to inoculate 12 million people following the arrival of vaccines from China and the US under the Covax initiative.



## More Than Dozen People Killed in East DR Congo

ITURI (Dispatches) - At least 16 people were killed in an attack in the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) conflict-plagued east, believed to be the work of rebels, military and local sources said.

According to local civilian sources, the victims of Monday's attack, including two women, had been taken hostage weeks earlier by members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

The hostages were knifed to death along a main highway near Idohu, in the restive Ituri province, local official Dieudonne Malangai said on Tuesday. Ituri's military governor, Johnny Luboya Nkashama, speaking in Komanda, some 40km (25 miles) from the incident, condemned the killings.



## Top Japan Medic Urges Nationwide State of Emergency Amid COVID Surge



TOKYO (Dispatches) - The head of the Japan Medical Association called on Tuesday for a nationwide state of emergency to contain a surge in COVID-19 cases in Olympics host city Tokyo and elsewhere, Kyodo news agency said, as worries grow about a strained healthcare system.

The call by JMA President Toshio Nakagawa followed Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's announcement that only COVID-19 patients who are seriously ill and those at risk of becoming so will be hospitalised, while others isolate at home, a shift in policy some fear could boost the death toll.

Japan has seen a sharp increase in coronavirus cases. Tokyo, which had a record high of 4,058 new infections on Saturday, had another 3,709 new cases on Tuesday.

Tokyo hospitals are already feeling the crunch, Hironori Sagara, director of Showa University Hospital, told Reuters.

"There are those being rejected repeatedly for admission," he said in an interview. "In the midst of excitement over the Olympics, the situation for medical personnel is very severe." Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters fewer elderly people, most already vaccinated, were getting infected.

"On the other hand, infections of younger people are increasing and people in their 40s and 50s with severe symptoms are rising," he said, adding some could not immediately get admitted to hospital.

Suga announced the change in hospital policy on Monday, saying the government would ensure people isolating at home can be hospitalized if necessary. Previous policy had focused on hospitalizing a broader category of patients.

Suga and Olympics organizers say there is no link between the July 23-Aug. 8 Summer Games and the sharp increase in cases.

Medical experts, however, have said holding the Olympics sent a confusing message about the need to stay home, contributing to the rise.

Unlike the voluntary restrictions and low vaccination rates elsewhere in Japan, more than 80% of the people in the Olympic village in Tokyo for athletes and coaches are vaccinated, testing is compulsory and movement is curtailed.

Organizers on Tuesday announced 18 new Games-related COVID-19 cases, bringing the total since July 1 to 294.

On Tuesday, Suga, meeting with heads of national medical groups, vowed to "protect people's lives".

Commuters wearing face masks arrive at Shinagawa Station at the start of the working day amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Tokyo, Japan, August 2, 2021. REUTERS/Kevin Coombs

"The spreading infections on a nationwide scale are approaching our biggest crisis since last year's first wave," Nakagawa said.

Some worry the hospital policy shift could lead to more deaths.

## N. Korea Wants Sanctions Eased To Restart Talks With U.S.

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea wants international sanctions banning its metal exports and imports of refined fuel and other necessities lifted before it restarts denuclearization talks with the United States, South Korean lawmakers said on Tuesday.

The North has also demanded the easing of sanctions on its imports of luxury goods to be able to bring in fine liquors and suits, the lawmakers said after being briefed by Park Jie-won, head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), South Korea's main intelligence agency.

The briefing came a week after the two Koreas restored hotlines that North Korea suspended a year ago, the first hint in months that North Korea might be more responsive to engagement efforts. "As a precondition to reopen talks, North Korea argues that the United States should allow mineral exports and imports of refined oil and necessities," Ha Tae-keung, a member of the parliamentary intelligence committee, told reporters, citing Park.



## Saudi Arabia Ramped Up Executions in First Half of 2021

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia has ramped up executions in the first half of 2021 following a drop during its G20 presidency in 2020, according to United Kingdom-based rights group Amnesty International.

The rights group said on Tuesday that the kingdom executed at least 40 people between January and July 2021 - more than during the whole of last year.

Although Saudi Arabia executed a record 185 people in 2019, the state-backed Human Rights Commission said in January that the kingdom had reduced the number of executions by 85 percent in 2020 compared with the previous year, putting the number for 2020 at 27.

Amnesty said executions had resumed immediately after Saudi Arabia handed over the presidency of the Group of 20 rich nations to Italy, with nine people executed in December 2020 alone.

"The brief respite in repression coinciding with Saudi Arabia's hosting of the G20 summit last November indicates that any illusion of reform was simply a PR drive," said Lynn Maalouf, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International.

According to the rights group, executions took place following convictions in "grossly unfair trials, marred by claims of torture during pre-trial detention leading to forced 'confessions' which the prosecution systematically failed to investigate."

This included the June 2021 execution of a man for offences rights groups said he allegedly committed while under the age of 18, although Saudi Arabia has said it has abolished death sentences for many childhood crimes.

The government's media office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Amnesty's report.

In the report, Amnesty also said there had been an increased crackdown on human rights activists and dissidents. It referred to the cases of 13 activists who were prosecuted, sentenced or had their sentences ratified after what Amnesty said were grossly unfair trials before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC).

## Bolsonaro Lashes out at New Probe

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - President Jair Bolsonaro lashed out Tuesday at electoral authorities for ordering an investigation of his campaign against Brazil's electronic voting system, saying he refused to be "intimidated" and that the country "is under attack."

The far-right president, who is up for re-election next year, has recently stepped up his long-time criticism of Brazil's voting system, claiming -- without evidence -- that it is riddled with fraud and insisting there will be no elections in 2022 if it is not overhauled.

Brazil's Superior Electoral Court said Monday it would investigate the president for abuse of office, improper use of official communication channels, corruption, fraud and other potential crimes in his attacks on electronic voting.

"I refuse to be intimidated," Bolsonaro fired back.

"I'm going to continue exercising my right to freedom of expression, to criticize, to listen to and above all answer to the will of the people," he told supporters outside the presidential palace.

"I swore to give my life for the nation in case of foreign or domestic attack. Brazil is under internal attack."

Bolsonaro has long criticized electronic voting, introduced in Brazil in 1996.

He has stepped up his attacks in the build-up to the October 2022 elections, insisting on "printable and auditable" paper ballots as a backstop to the electronic system.

He has called the Superior Electoral Court's president, Luis Roberto Barroso, an "imbecile" for suggesting introducing a paper ballot could open the process to manipulation.

On Sunday, thousands of Brazilians took to the streets in several cities to support Bolsonaro's campaign against electronic voting, though the president did not take part.

Opinion polls place the 66-year-old leader well behind leftist ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in next year's presidential race.

Bolsonaro is under fire on various fronts, including a Senate investigation into his government's widely criticized handling of Covid-19.

There are fears he could try to use fraud claims to undermine the election if he loses, following in the footsteps of former U.S. president Donald Trump, to whom he is often compared.



## Taliban Seek Lion's Share of Power in Deadlocked Peace Talks

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Taliban and the Kabul government are far apart in U.S.-backed talks on bringing peace to Afghanistan, with the insurgents demanding "the lion's share of power" in any new government, the special U.S. envoy said on Tuesday.

Afghan-born veteran U.S. diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad's bleak assessment of the peace process coincides with the Taliban advancing on provincial capitals that have uprooted thousands of civilians as the U.S. troop pullout nears completion after 20 years of war.

"At this point, they (the Taliban) are demanding that they take the lion's share of power in the next government given the military situation as they see it," Khalilzad told the Aspen Security Forum in an online conference.

The deadlocked negotiations in Doha were the subject of a telephone call on Tuesday between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, with them agreeing on the need accelerate talks, the U.S. State Department said.

Blinken and Ghani also "condemned the ongoing Taliban attacks and displacement of the civilian population," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

The Taliban's rapid advances have fueled fears that the insurgents aim to re-establish by force their harsh brand of Islamist rule ended by the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, including the repression of women and the independent media.

The insurgents say they want a peace deal.

Khalilzad was the architect of the U.S.-Taliban deal for a U.S. troop pullout reached in February 2020.

In his rare public assessment of the Doha talks started under that deal, Khalilzad said peace can only be reached through a ceasefire and negotiations that would establish a transitional government.

Ghani's administration says the talks should focus on "bringing the Taliban into the current government," he said.

The Taliban contend that Ghani's government "is the result of military occupation" and they want an agreement on a transitional government and constitution, Khalilzad continued.

"They are far apart," he said. "They are trying to affect each other's calculus and the terms by what they are doing on the battlefield."







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## Alibaba Earnings Down as China Tech Giants Face Turmoil

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese e-commerce leader Alibaba Group said Tuesday that it posted lower profit but maintained steady revenue growth, indicating that a government crackdown on the country's tech giants was having little impact on its core business.

Alibaba said its net income in the April-June quarter came in at 45.1 billion yuan (\$7 billion), down five percent on-year.

The Hangzhou-based company was the first of China's tech champions to feel the wrath of a government that has become concerned over their rapid growth and data security.



## IMF Allocates \$650b to Help States Deal With Covid Fallout

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Member nations approved the biggest resource injection in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) history, with \$650 billion (€547b) meant to help countries deal with mounting debt and the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The creation of the reserve assets – known as special drawing rights (SDR) – is the first since the \$250 billion issued just after the global financial crisis in 2009, with managing director Kristalina Georgieva billing it as “a shot in the arm for the world” that will help boost global economic stability. The SDR allocation will be effective on August 23rd, the IMF said in a statement Monday.

“The SDR allocation will benefit all members, address the long-term global need for reserves, build confidence, and foster the resilience and stability of the global economy,” Georgieva said. “It will particularly help our most vulnerable countries struggling to cope with the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.”

The guardians of the global economy have wrestled with the plan for more than a year. It was initially delayed when the U.S. – the IMF's biggest shareholder – blocked it in early 2020. President Donald Trump's treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin said that the funds wouldn't get to the nations that most need it. Republican Representative French Hill called it a “giveaway to wealthy countries and rogue regimes” such as China, Russia and Iran.

The US's position changed under President Joe Biden and Mnuchin's successor, Janet Yellen, and with the fund exploring options for members with strong financial positions to reallocate the reserves to support vulnerable and low-income countries. Still, a global allocation of \$650 billion was about the maximum that the U.S. could support without needing to get approval from Congress. Reserves are allocated to all 190 members of the IMF in proportion to their quota, and some 70 per cent will go to the Group of 20 largest economies, with just 3per cent for low-income nations. Overall, 58per cent of the new SDRs go to advanced economies, with 42per cent for emerging and developing economies. So of the \$650 billion, about \$21 billion go to low-income countries and \$212 billion to other emerging market and developing countries, without counting China, according to US treasury department calculations.

The Group of Seven advanced economies in June endorsed a plan to reallocate \$100 billion of new SDRs to poorer countries, but the G20 in July only specified support for a general allocation of \$650 billion in SDRs, without detailing how much would be re-lent.

Reallocation will be crucial to help countries in Africa, for which only about \$33 billion is earmarked in the SDR issuance. France has committed to reallocating part of its SDRs for countries on the continent.

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa has previously said that from the total allocation, about one-quarter – equivalent to around \$162 billion – should be made available to African countries. He has called on rich nations to donate – and not just on-lend – their allotments.

Rich nations currently can use the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust to help channel reserves to low-income countries interest free. Fund staff also are working to set up the so-called Resilience and Stability Trust for redirecting new reserves to vulnerable low-middle-income countries and small island economies, an option that Georgieva has said she hopes will be established by year-end.

The fund will “continue to engage actively with our membership to identify viable options for voluntary channeling of SDRs from wealthier to poorer and more vulnerable member countries to support their pandemic recovery and achieve resilient and sustainable growth” Georgieva said in Monday's statement.

More than 200 groups including the Jubilee USA Network, a non-profit organization that advocates for debt relief for developing countries, had called on the G20 to support the creation of \$3 trillion in SDRs, saying the funds are needed to help free up resources for health care and social spending.

“Developing countries need more aid to get beyond the crisis,” Eric LeCompte, the executive director of Jubilee USA Network, said in a statement late Monday. “Wealthy countries receive most of these emergency reserves and must donate them to developing countries.”

## Indonesia Begins Work on Southeast Asia's Largest Floating Solar Plant

JAKARTA (Reuters) - Indonesia will begin work on a 145 megawatt (MW) floating solar power project, the largest in Southeast Asia, after state power utility Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) and Masdar of United Arab Emirates agreed financing for the project on Tuesday.

Indonesia aims to have 23% of its energy from renewable sources by 2025 and the government has said the country will try to reach net zero emissions by 2060 by moving away from coal.

“By securing the financial support for this project, we can immediately start the construction stage,” PLN chief executive Zulkifli Zaini said in an online briefing on Tuesday. “We are optimistic that, with the support of all stakeholders, this environmentally friendly project can start commercial operation on schedule,” he added.

A joint venture between a unit of PLN and Masdar in West Java, the Cirata floating photovoltaic power plant is expected to be the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia and is scheduled to begin commercial operation in November 2022.

Financing of the project was arranged through Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp., Societe Generale, and Standard Chartered Bank, Masdar said in a separate statement on Tuesday.

Construction of the project was underway, the statement added.

PLN has said it will start to gradually shut down its coal-fired power plants, which currently meet around 60% of Indonesia's energy demands. Around half of Indonesia's estimated 417 gigawatt (GW) renewable energy potential could come from solar power, but less than 0.1% of that potential has been utilised, senior energy ministry official Dadan Kusdiana said during the online briefing.

## Kashmiri Lives Also Matter

BY: MALIK MUHAMMAD ASHRAF

The 5th of August marks the day when Modi Government abolished article 370 and 35 A of Indian Constitution thus conspiring to integrate Muslim majority areas of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) with India. For implementing the decision, the people of Indian Occupied Kashmir (IIOJK) were forced to live under siege, cut-off from the outside world and also bear the brunt of the brutalities and atrocities of the Indian security forces who relish their indulgence in extra-judicial assaults.

What is even more unfair, is that the global community and the UN which adopted a number of resolutions regarding settlement of the question of accession of Kashmir through a plebiscite – which are legally binding – did not react the way they should have against Indian action to scrap Article 370 of the Indian constitution, amalgamation of the state in the Indian Union through Jammu and Kashmir Re-organization Act 2019 and the promulgation of new domicile law designed to change demographic realities in IIOJK. India has already issued domicile certificates to 25,000 non-Kashmiris. All the foregoing actions taken by India in IIOJK constitute nothing also but a blatant violation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on Kashmir, bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan as well as 4th Geneva Convention.

5th August 2019, further deteriorated the already prevalent inhuman living conditions of the people of IIOJK. The Indian government has been attempting its best to keep I IIOJK out of the focus of the global community by denying access to foreign journalist and other independent observers to travel to the region in order to hide their excesses. The International media has, however, been successful in unraveling Indian behavior in IIOJK while independently exposing Indian brutalities. The Guardian, The New York Times, Washington Post and other eminent publications have been regularly reporting on the human rights abuses with more focus after 5th of August 2019.

India under Modi, has not only violated the UNSC resolutions and trampled 4th Geneva Convention in IIOJK but it has also enacted discriminatory laws against the Muslims within India itself. The implementation of National Register of Citizenship in Assam which rendered 1.9 Muslims stateless and the promulgation of the Citizenship Amendment Act, speak volumes about hatred against the Muslims. Although, the Muslim Minority in India has all along been subjected to discriminatory treatment and from time to time also had to endure the wrath of the Hindu zealots in the shape of massacres during anti-Muslim riots, but what has been happening since the BJP came into power, knows no parallel in the history of oppression of Muslims in India. The Muslim minority is the worst hit community to face the wrath of Hindutva ideology.

India is consistently employing the tactics to cover up the state terrorism that it has unleashed against the people of IIOJK not realizing that it could have very serious repercussions on the identity, culture, beliefs and lives of Muslims. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan beginning from his address to the UN General Assembly during 2019, has been sensitizing the world about the dangers lurking on the horizons due to the actions of Indian regime in IIOJK and its burgeoning animosity against Pakistan in pursuance of the supremacist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sankh (RSS) ideology of Hindutva.

As the killing spree and complete lockdown continues unabated against the people of IIOJK who were resisting the Indian oppression, they are looking up to the Muslim Ummah, UN and the International community to come to their rescue through concrete actions to prevent India in her tricks, instead of merely showing muffled concerns over the evolving situation in the state, realizing that the Kashmiri LIVES ALSO MATTER.



## ADB, Fin Firms Draw Plan to Close Asia Coal-Fired Power Plants

LONDON (Dispatches) - Financial firms, including British insurer Prudential, lenders Citi and HSBC and BlackRock Real Assets are devising plans to speed up the closure of Asia's coal-fired power plants in order to reduce the biggest source of carbon emissions, five people with knowledge of the initiative said.

The novel proposal, which is being driven by the Asian Development Bank, offers a potentially workable model and early talks with Asian governments and multilateral banks are promising, the sources told Reuters.

The group plans to create public-private partnerships to buy out the plants and wind them down within 15 years, far sooner than their usual life expectancy, giving workers time to retire or find new jobs and allowing countries to shift to renewable energy sources.

It aims to have a model ready for the COP26 climate conference which is being held in Glasgow, Scotland in November. “The private sector has great ideas on how to address climate change and we are bridging the gap between them and the official-sector actors,” ADB Vice President Ahmed M Saeed said.

The initiative comes as commercial and development banks, under pressure from large investors, pull back from financing new power plants in order to meet climate targets.

Saeed said a first purchase under the proposed scheme, which will comprise a mix of equity, debt and concessional finance, could come as soon as next year.

“If you can come up with an orderly way to replace those plants sooner and retire them sooner, but not overnight, that opens up a more predictable, massively bigger space for renewables,” Donald Kanak, chairman of Prudential's Insurance Growth Markets, told Reuters.

## Spanish Jobless Figures Slump by Record 5.5% in July

MADRID (Reuters) - The number of people registering as jobless in Spain fell by a record 5.47% in July from the previous month, labor ministry data showed on Tuesday, as eased COVID-19 restrictions spurred a recovery in hiring despite rising infections.

The data marks the fifth consecutive month of falling jobless figures and the sharpest one-month reduction since the series began in 1996, breaking the previous two months' records, the ministry said.

Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz said the data demonstrated that government support measures were working and an economic recovery was now in sight.

“This great collective effort allows us today to speak of promising figures, but behind the unemployment data, however, there are people, families, lives,” she tweeted.

With 3.41 million people out of work compared with 3.01 million in July 2019, employment has yet to recover its pre-pandemic levels.

Employment rose across all sectors, with the hard-hid services industry accounting for the bulk of the hiring, likely a result of the arrival of the summer tourism season.

Separately on Tuesday, the National Statistics Institute said the number of foreign tourists visiting Spain jumped almost ten times to 2.2 million in June from a year ago, although it was still just a quarter of its June 2019 levels.

Rising vaccination rates and looser COVID-19 restrictions have galvanised Spain's economy in recent months, leading second quarter output to increase by a better-than-expected 2.8% in the second quarter.

Spain gained 133,049 jobs in July, in the third consecutive month of net job creation, while the number of people supported by a national furlough scheme fell by 116,439 from the previous month to 331,486 people, 90% less than during the pandemic's peak in May 2020.

## Turkey's Inflation Accelerates to 18.95%, Pressuring Bank to Hike Rates



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's consumer price inflation rate climbed to 18.95 percent last month, virtually matching the central bank's benchmark interest rate of 19 percent.

Inflation accelerated from 17.5 percent in June, the Turkish Statistical Institute said on Tuesday. It was the highest level since April 2019. CPI had stood at 11.8 percent in July last year.

Turkey's central bank is under pressure from economists and investors to hike its benchmark interest rate, which it has kept stable over the past four months even as inflation accelerated. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who sacked the bank's governor in March after he raised rates, is a vocal opponent of higher borrowing costs, saying they are inflationary, a view that contradicts with conventional economic theory.

“Confidence in the Erdoğan administration is now so low that some conspiracy theorists will argue the data is now being manipulated to keep inflation below the 19 percent level so the central bank does not have to hike rates,” Tim Ash, senior emerging markets strategist at BlueBay Asset Management in London, said in e-mailed comments. He pointed to recent changes to the management of the statistics institute as fuel for the speculation.

The central bank has pledged to keep interest rates at above inflation to help slow annual price increases to a year-end forecast of 14.1 percent, which it raised from 12.2 percent last week. It has declined to state clearly whether it is willing to hike rates if needed.

The increase in the inflation rate was led by an annual jump of 24.9 percent in the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages. The cost of furniture and household equipment climbed by 22.7 percent.

The inflation print for July exceeded average predictions of 18.6 percent and 18.5 percent in surveys of finance industry professionals by Bloomberg and Reuters, respectively.

At the start of June, Erdoğan called for rate cuts in July or August to help lower costs for businesses, sparking a sell-off in the lira. The currency has weakened to successive record lows against the dollar over the past three years. The central bank will meet to decide on interest rates on Aug. 12.



# Geraei Wins Iran’s 2nd Gold in Tokyo Olympics

TEHRAN (MNA) – Greco-Roman wrestler Mohammadreza Geraei won the gold medal of men’s 67kg category at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics on Wednesday.

In the final match of the category, Geraei overpowered Ukraine’s Parviz Nasibov 9-1 and snatched the gold medal. Germany’s Frank Staebler and Egypt’s Mohamed Ibrahim Elsayed won the bronze medals of this category.

This is the second gold medal of the Iranian delegation. The first one was gained by Javad Foroughi in men’s shooting.



## Economists Fear Europe’s Recovery Could Be Derailed by One Key Issue

LONDON (Dispatches) - European consumers are proving more reluctant to spend money this summer, and it could hurt the economic recovery following the shock from Covid-19, experts told CNBC.

The behavior marks a sharp contrast to last year, when there was a feeling of seizing the moment after the first Covid lockdowns in the region were lifted. Now, consumers are afraid they will be living with Covid-19 for longer than they had expected and are adjusting their attitudes accordingly.

“Because [the pandemic] has been going on for 18 months or so, we have got used to working from home and [are] more cautious about spending,” Marchel Alexandrovich, European economist at investment bank Jefferies, told CNBC on Monday.

Consumers are particularly skeptical about attending crowded events, according to Paul O’Connor, head of the U.K.-based multi-asset team at Janus Henderson.

Speaking to CNBC on Monday, O’Connor said there had been a “steady improvement” in some economic indicators, such as the number of people using public transport, going shopping and even attending the gym. “But there are some areas where we see continued consumer caution,” he added.

A survey published in July by Ipsos Moris showed that 40% of U.K. consumers were not yet comfortable taking vacations abroad. Over 40% of respondents also said they were not comfortable going to large public gatherings such as sports or music events.

In addition, “the return to work has been very hesitant,” O’Connor said, despite the relaxation of Covid restrictions in the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe. This is impacting “the economy around the office,” such as coffee shops, he added, as people opt for a hybrid working model, spending most of their time at home.

This consumer behavior is being influenced by both government legislation and the evolution of the pandemic.

Alexandrovich gave the example of some “hesitant” consumers who are not leaving their house before they go on holiday to avoid being in contact with someone who has the virus.

In the U.K., for instance, if you are in contact with someone who tests positive for the coronavirus in the following days, you must self-isolate for 10 days — even if you’re fully vaccinated (at least for now).

Meanwhile, the highly transmissible Delta Covid variant has led to a surge in infections in recent weeks.

“The evidence from the U.K. suggests that the surge in cases is hampering economic activity as people refrain from taking full advantage of reopening,” economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics said in a note in July.

As a result, this economic consultancy slightly lowered its expectations for U.K. growth in the third quarter. “We suspect forecasters will soon have to contemplate the same in Europe, especially those coming into the third quarter with a baseline



that (euro zone) GDP will leap by 3%,” they wrote.

Data released Friday showed that the euro zone grew by 2% in the second quarter of this year, recovering after two consecutive quarters in negative territory.

Though many economists are bullish on the euro zone economy in the coming quarters, they describe it as a “cautious optimism”.

“The surging ‘delta’ variant of SARS-CoV-2 infections across Europe during June and July raised the risk that the ongoing lifting of restrictions could be delayed significantly,” analysts at Berenberg said in a note last week, although they did note that the number of new infections seems to be cresting in the 19-member bloc.

Bert Colijn, senior economist at ING, also said in a note last week that “looking ahead at [the third quarter], we would note that the Delta variant is causing some delays in the easing of restrictions and that supply chain problems continue to weigh on manufacturing production.” However, he is still expecting GDP to grow by 2% next quarter.

Momentum could be hit by other factors too.

“Growth in most major economies is likely to slow over the coming quarters,” Neil Shearing, group chief economist at Capital Economics, said in a note Monday.

“But the main reason is that most economies have already recouped much of their lost output,” he added, arguing that this likely be seen in the U.K. and euro area later this year.

# China to Release Updated Climate Plans in Near Future



HONG KONG (Dispatches) - China’s climate envoy on Tuesday said the world’s most populous nation would release its updated plans to reduce carbon emissions “in the near future” as nations prepare to meet later this year for a pivotal global conference.

Climate negotiators from 196 countries and the European Union as well as businesses, experts and world leaders will gather in Glasgow in November for the COP26 summit.

The meeting is the crucial next step in getting the world’s nations to agree to the kind of reduction in carbon emissions needed to stave off catastrophic climate change.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries are meant to have submitted updated 2030 climate targets ahead of COP26.

But nearly half have yet to do so, including key global emitters like China and India.

On Tuesday, China’s top climate negotiator said Beijing’s updated plans would soon be released, potentially before the Glasgow meet.

“In the near future relevant policy papers will be out there, there will be detailed implementation plans,” Xie Zhenhua told an online webinar organised by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

“Then we’re going to talk about that support to the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow,” he added, according to a simultaneous English translation of his speech.

The United Nations is pushing for a global coalition committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 which will cover all countries. China has said it will aim for carbon neutrality by 2060.

The 2015 Paris Agreement adopted a collective promise to cap the planet’s rising surface temperature at “well below” two degrees Celsius and an aspirational limit on 1.5 degrees. Many scientists now say 1.5 degrees must be reached to effectively tackle climate change and say huge emitters like China will be crucial in making that a reality.

Record-smashing heatwaves, floods and drought across three continents in recent weeks -- all amplified by global warming -- have added pressure for decisive action in Glasgow.

China is reluctant to commit to 1.5 degrees.

“Some countries are pushing to rewrite the Paris Agreement,” Xie said. “That is, they want to strive to change the target of control for the rise of temperature from two degrees Celsius to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”

## Brazil Set for Biggest Rate Hike Since 2003 as Economy Reopens

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - A cotton candy seller passes by visitors on Paulista Avenue as it reopens for pedestrian and cyclist only use in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Sunday, July 18, 2021. Paulista Avenue, one of Sao Paulo’s busiest streets, has opened on an experimental basis for the first time since the pandemic for pedestrians and cyclists, after over a year of closure to stem the flow and spread of Covid-19.

A cotton candy seller passes by visitors on Paulista Avenue as it reopens for pedestrian and cyclist only use in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Sunday, July 18, 2021. Paulista Avenue, one of Sao Paulo’s busiest streets, has opened on an experimental basis for the first time since the pandemic for pedestrians and cyclists, after over a year of closure to stem the flow and spread of Covid-19. , Bloomberg

A new front is opening up in Brazil’s war against inflation amid surging costs for services from airline fares to appliance repairs, sparking speculation that one of the world’s most aggressive central banks may this week deliver its biggest interest rate hike in almost two decades.

Food and energy have been leading price increases in Brazil, with imports and other tradable goods close behind amid global supply-chain issues and a weaker currency. But now, with the Covid-19 vaccination rate slowly creeping up in a population eager to get back to restaurants, nightclubs and beach trips, services inflation is quickly accelerating: The annual rate is now more than double what it was less than a year ago.

Overall consumer-price increases are already running at more than twice the central bank’s target, leading economists to predict that policy makers will boost the Selic rate a full percentage point Wednesday to 5.25%, which would be the biggest increase since 2003.

The risk is that a surge in services inflation combined with the painful price increases already seen will require interest rate hikes so steep that the higher borrowing costs will sap economic growth.

“This is a dangerous moment,” Bruno Serra, the central bank’s monetary policy director, said at an online forum last month. “This is the most critical time for us to understand how the economy will react in the post-pandemic era.”

Brazil was already the most hawkish central bank in the region this year, with its 2.25 percentage points of interest-rate increases, second only to Angola worldwide. The median estimate of economists surveyed by the central bank is for the benchmark rate to end the year at 7%.

While faster inflation is a worldwide phenomenon a year-and-a-half into the pandemic, Brazil’s price increases



began to take hold earlier than in most developed countries. It’s among the few nations in the world to have boosted interest rates to pre-pandemic levels, and economists say its struggles to mute inflation could be a sign of what’s to come in the rest of the world.

For now, one measure of Brazil’s services inflation shows prices rose 2.3% in June. That’s still far below the overall inflation rate of 8.35%,

but compares with services inflation of less than 1% in August 2020. That rapid acceleration is what’s worrying economists.

Only about one-fifth of the population is fully immunized, and yet the economy is almost fully reopened at this point. Airline fares surged 36% in the most recent data set from the statistics institute, while food outside home jumped 7.2%. Appliance repairs were 11% more expensive, while eyebrow waxes climbed a more modest 6.2%.

“We are seeing some segments of the services sector bouncing back faster than expected,” said Silvia Matos, an economist at the economic researcher Getulio Vargas Foundation.

Mobility isn’t back to pre-pandemic levels, but either out of exhaustion or boredom, Brazilians are taking their chances and traveling. After eight months of isolation, Joao Victor de Medeiros, a 28-year-old from the city of Natal who works at a startup, decided to go to the beach with his friends in early January. No one was vaccinated.

“Back then I was still very fearful, wearing masks everywhere, using tons of hand sanitizer,” he said in an interview. He’s loosened up since then, and is planning a trip to Sao Paulo a month from now.

The central bank began raising interest rates from a record low in March, increasing the benchmark by 0.75 percentage point three times. Both economists and traders are now signaling they expect a full percentage point increase on Wednesday, with more to come in upcoming meetings. That could drag on economic growth that analysts estimate will reach 5.3% this year.

Analysts surveyed by the central bank are optimistic that inflation will slow to 6.79% by December. But that’s still significantly above the bank’s 3.5% target, and pundits predict inflation will near 3.8% in 2022. Things could get worse if prices for services continue to climb at a fast clip.

“It’s a cause of concern,” said Daniel Karp, an economist at Banco Santander SA’s local unit. “Food, energy, gas -- they are all rising. Business owners can’t keep their margins so low anymore. So we have a spread of primary inflationary shocks.”

## China, Iran Enjoy...

FROM PAGE 1

A joint communique by Chinese and Iranian top officials in 2016 indicates that the two countries are resolute to increase strategic cooperation, which has been symbolized in the bilateral 25-year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement signed during President Xi Jinping’s trip to Tehran, he noted.

Iran expects China to prefer political ties over economic and business considerations in order to remove obstacles in the way of expanding relations, the head of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce said.

Fortunately, Beijing and Tehran have pursued growing, converging, and amicable ties over the course of recent 50 years, he said, adding that the two countries enjoy proper ground to expand bilateral ties in the future.

He also went on to say that Iran is considered one of the main points in the way of connecting China to the West, in particular states in Western Asia, northern Africa, and southern Europe; thus, Iran can play a key role in finalizing the One Road, One Belt Initiative, which is somehow the new Silk Road to connect China’s great economy with other parts of the world.

## CBI...

FROM PAGE 1

The Bahraini ruling claims that Iran’s Bank Melli and Bank Saderat who control the majority of shares in the Future Bank have been engaged in money-laundering activities in recent years to benefit the CBI and other Iranian entities.

Iran has dismissed the case, saying it lacks any legal merit and is simply an attempt to confiscate Iranian funds in the Future Bank under fabricated allegations.

CBI’s Tuesday statement said that the lender had withdrawn a bulk of the Iranian funds in the Future Bank in 2015 in anticipation of deteriorating diplomatic relations with Bahrain.

However, it said that Bahraini banks have refused to return the rest of the funds since then while rejecting CBI’s repeated requests to use them for funding humanitarian missions to help Iran avoid US sanctions targeting its banking system.

## Iran Favors Security...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi also praised the friendly and deep-rooted relations between Iran and Bosnia and Herzegovina, calling for efforts to identify and activate the potential for broad economic cooperation between the two nations.

For her part, Bisera Turkovic congratulated the new Iranian president on taking office, appreciated the Islamic Republic’s support for her country, and expressed Sarajevo’s readiness to enhance ties with Tehran.

Bosnia and Herzegovina stands with and supports Iran in the international arena, she added.

Turkovic is among dozens of foreign officials that have traveled to Iran to take part in the swearing-in ceremony of Raisi.

## 3 Rockets Hit...

FROM PAGE 1

“In response, artillery forces attacked Lebanese territory,” the Israeli military said.

On July 20, the Israeli military fired artillery shells into southern Lebanon, shortly after the regime’s aircraft launched a number of missiles at targets near the northwestern Syrian city of Aleppo.

The Israeli army said in a statement at the time that two rockets had been fired from Lebanon at the northern part of the occupied territories, setting off warning sirens in the Western Galilee region.

The Israeli military said it later fired artillery shells at targets in Lebanon. It gave no details about which targets were hit or who was behind the rocket fire.

The commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces has warned Israel against any provocative moves across the country’s borders, saying the forces will allow no one to take advantage of Lebanon’s political and economic crises to foment instability there.

“We keep an eye on our border to confront the Israeli enemy’s danger, which has recently stepped up its aggressiveness against Lebanon and threatened to wage a new war,” Joseph Aoun said on the occasion of the Lebanese Army Day on July 30.

“The Lebanese armed forces will remain the safety valve of our homeland and the backbone of the state. We will remain faithful to our oath no matter how rough the road or heavy the challenges. Our priority has been and will remain to protect and fortify the military,” Aoun said then.



## Biles a Winner After Capping Comeback

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Simone Biles made a fearless return to competition on Tuesday, capping a tumultuous Tokyo Games with a bronze medal on the balance beam and then using the Olympic stage to remind everyone that athletes are human beings.

The final gold of the women's artistic gymnastics program would go to China's Guan Chenchen with a score of 14.633 and the silver to her compatriot Tang Xijing but it was Biles who grabbed the spotlight for her courageous comeback.

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### ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

### Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Djuraev Wins Men's 109kg Weightlifting

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Uzbekistan's Akbar Djuraev defeated Armenia's world record holder Simon Martirosyan to win gold in the men's 109 kg weightlifting category at the Tokyo Olympics on Tuesday.

The 21-year old Djuraev lifted 193kg for the snatch and 237 kg for the clean and jerk for a total of 430kg, five kilos short of Martirosyan's record set in 2018.

Martirosyan took silver with 423kg after failing in his last two clean & jerk attempts. Latvia's Arturs Plesnieks won bronze with 410kg.

# PSV and Monaco Edge Closer to Playoffs

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Former European Cup winners Red Star Belgrade were held to a 1-1 home draw by Moldovan side Sheriff Tiraspol on Tuesday in the first leg of their Champions League third qualifying round tie after they were reduced to 10 men.

PSV Eindhoven, the 1988 winners, closed in on the playoff round with a 3-0 home rout of Danish side Midtjylland and 2004 runners-up Monaco won 2-0 at Sparta Prague.

A last-gasp goal by Steven Davis kept Scottish champions Rangers in contention to advance although they suffered a 2-1 reverse at Swedish side Malmö, who took a two-goal lead through Sören Rieks and Serbian striker Veljko Birmančević.

Sheriff took the lead out of the blue in Belgrade as Frank Castaneda curled in a sublime free kick before Frenchman Lois Diony equalised on the stroke of halftime after he took advantage of some poor defending. Both sides missed several chances to snatch a winner after Red Star, who won Europe's premier club competition in 1991, had midfielder Guelor Kanga sent off in the 57th minute for a second yellow card.

"Sheriff are a team full of speed and talent," Red Star coach Dejan Stanković told Arenasport television after a frustrating evening for the Serbian champions.

"Having fallen behind, we managed to equalize and create some chances after we were reduced to 10 men. It's not over yet, we can pull it off in the return leg."

With the away goals rule no longer in effect, Stanković will rely on his misfiring side to show more bite in Moldavia after creating few chances against a rugged Sheriff defense.

Rangers were rattled by two quickfire goals as Birmančević set up the opener for Rieks in the 47th minute and then rifled in a sumptuous volley two minutes later before Davis kept Rangers' hopes alive with the last kick of the game.

An impressive first half saw PSV take a 19th-minute lead against Midtjylland as 19-year-old English prospect Non Made unleashed a superb shot from 20 meters into the top corner.

Germany midfielder Mario Goethe made it 2-0 in the 29th with a heavily deflected shot and Cody Gakpo added the third three minutes later with a simple tap-in from two meters after a flowing move.



A dominant Monaco forced Sparta into submission as midfielder Aurelia Tchouameni gave them the lead with a thumping header before Kevin Holland drilled a powerful shot into the roof of the net.

Meanwhile Monaco coach Niko Kovač said he was "disgusted" by the racist remarks his midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni received at Sparta Prague.

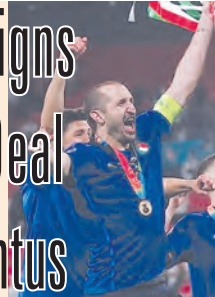
The France under-21s Tchouameni claimed the opener in the first half before Kevin Volland's second after the break gave them the win ahead of next Tuesday's return leg.

"We are all very sad and disgusted that it continues in the 21st century," Monaco coach Niko Kovač said. "A football field is part of the world. There can be those type of attitudes which have to be stopped. I hope it doesn't happen again."

"We won the game and we also won against racism," he added.

Elsewhere, Shakhtar Donetsk came from behind to earn a 2-1 win at Belgian side Genk and a stoppage-time goal from Vincent Sierro gave Young Boys a 1-1 draw at Romanians Cluj who took a third-minute lead through Cristian Manea. Olympiakos Piraeus also left themselves with work to do following a 1-1 home draw with Bulgaria's Ludogorets Razgrad.

## Chiellini Signs Two-Year Deal With Juventus



TURIN (Dispatches) - Giorgio Chiellini has signed a new two-year contract with Juventus, the Serie A club announced on Monday, a few weeks after the Italy captain led his country to triumph at Euro 2020.

Chiellini, 36, was out of contract after his previous deal with Juve expired at the end of June, while Italy were still on their charge to European Championship victory.

He put pen to paper on a contract which runs until 2023, contrary to initial reports in Italy which said he was prepared to agree to a deal until the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, which takes place in November and December next year.

"Giorgio Chiellini embodies everything that Juventus stands for, and it is through his commitment and excellent displays over the course of last 16 years that has earned him a contract renewal," Juve said.

"There is an overlap in Giorgio's DNA and that of Juve's. He forms a big part of Juve's history, yet also the present and the future," they added. The announcement of his new contract was expected, with chairman Andrea Agnelli saying last week that the club were waiting for the centre-back to return from his post-Euro holidays before agreeing a new deal.

## Brazil to Play Spain in Men's Olympic Soccer Final

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Defending champion Brazil will face Spain for the Olympic gold medal in men's soccer.

Spain beat host Japan 1-0 Tuesday with Marco Asensio scoring a curling shot in the 115th minute in Saitama. Brazil was taken to penalties by Mexico, winning the shootout 4-1 after a scoreless draw in Kashima.

Brazil goalkeeper Santos stopped Mexico's first penalty from Eduardo Aguirre, and Johan Vasquez's attempt then hit the post. Reinier converted the winning kick for Brazil.

Mexico will play Japan for the bronze medal in Saitama on Friday. The gold-medal match is set for Saturday in Yokohama.

Brazil won its first Olympic title at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games in a penalty shootout with Germany. Neymar converted the clinching penalty at the iconic Maracana Stadium. Spain's only Olympic title also came at home — at the 1992 Barcelona Games. The country's last final was at the 2000 Sydney Games, losing to Cameroon.

## Osaka, Medvedev Named Top Seeds For Canadian Events

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - World number twos Naomi Osaka and Daniil Medvedev have been named top seeds for next week's WTA and ATP tournaments in Canada, organizers announced on Monday.

Japanese star Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, will be the top seed for the women's event in Montreal while Russian Medvedev, who lost to Rafael Nadal in last year's Canadian final, tops the lineup for the ATP Masters Toronto tournament.

Seedings for the US Open hardcourt tuneup events follow Monday's latest rankings, with Nadal as the second seed, Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas third and Olympic champion Alexander Zverev of Germany seeded fourth.

"It's especially impressive this year with the Olympic Games and restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic that the top players will be coming to Toronto," Toronto tournament director Karl Hale said.



## Kyrgios Examines Resiliency, Ponders ATP Future

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Nick Kyrgios says tennis drove him into a dark place long before Naomi Osaka raised mental health issues and the Australian star ponders his ATP future with increasing uncertainty.

Kyrgios, who has played only five events since March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, spoke at the Citi Open in Washington, where he won the most recent of six career ATP titles in 2019.

"I'm a part-time player I guess," he said. "It feels still odd to be back."

"I don't miss it that much any more. I feel vibes, like every time I'm at a tournament it could be my last time I'm ever going to be here."

"I feel weird. I feel strange about my career at the moment. But I love being back. I love seeing all my mates."

Kyrgios said tennis is starting to embrace unique personalities, but the Aussie says it has taken strength to withstand the pressure.

"I'm just resilient," he said. "If someone is not as resilient as me mentally, the amount of hate I got, the amount of racism I got, the amount of bullshit that I got from the tour, from fans, from everything, I could have been..."

"I did fall into places where people like Naomi Osaka are now speaking about mental illness, where I was going through, in my personal opinion, 20 times as bad."

"I'm just saying this sport could have driven me into a place of dark, which it did for a bit, how mentally tough it was for 18, being one of the most well-known players in Australia, getting absolutely hammered with media. It's not so easy."

"Now I'm 26, I'm old enough. I know it's all bullshit."

## Italy Olympics Chief Blasts Jacobs Doping Suspensions

ROME (Dispatches) - Doping suspicions aimed at Italy's 100 metres Olympic champion Lamont Marcell Jacobs are embarrassing and unpleasant, the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) president Giovanni Malago said on Tuesday.

Jacobs claimed a stunning gold on Sunday, setting a European record time of 9.80 seconds in the showcase final in Tokyo despite having not gone under 10 seconds until this year.

However, the 26-year-old's unexpected victory resulted in the Washington Post writing that "the history of track and field casts suspicion on sudden and immense improvement", a reference to previous doping cases.

"Jacobs deserves the benefit of the doubt, but his sport does not," the article added.

The Times wrote that athletics' dark history with doping "means the arrival of any new star will alert the more sceptical".

But Malago blasted any suggestion of wrongdoing.

"The remarks of some of your colleagues are a source of great regret and embarrassment from every point of view," Malago told Rai Radio 1.

"We are talking about athletes, in this case, who are subjected to systematic and daily anti-doping checks."

"When you set a national or even continental record that number doubles, so much so that he said the number of checks was impressive."

"It is truly something unpleasant, it shows how some are not able to accept defeat."

Jacobs was one of several high-profile athletes to wear new running spikes featuring "performance-enhancing" carbon soles as he won gold.



## Durant Leads USA Into Semis With Slovenia

SAITAMA (Dispatches) - Kevin Durant scored 29 points to lead Team USA to a decisive 95-81 victory over Spain in Olympic men's basketball, earning a ticket to the semi-finals.

The final four are now set. The United States will face Australia on Thursday. France, the team that humbled Team USA earlier in the tournament, will take on Slovenia, making an impressive Olympic debut.

The U.S. were victorious despite a valiant 38-point effort from Spain's Ricky Rubio. Spain had a 10-point lead late in the second quarter, when the Americans came roaring back.

"We drove it to the rim at the end of the second and were able to get our rhythm back a little bit," said Brooklyn Nets star Durant. "I like how we played from the end of the second quarter all the way up to finish the game, and that's how winners play ball."

The stands of the Saitama Super Arena north of Tokyo were the most full they have been so far in these spectatorless Games, as athletes, officials and volunteers gathered for what would have been a hot-ticket match.

Team USA have looked strong at these Games after the French handed them their first Olympic defeat since 2004. The Americans have historically been the team to beat, with 15 men's basketball gold medals since 1936.

"We got to finish it," said Durant, who is appearing in his third Olympics. "You know, we're supposed to be here. For us, it's about getting the gold."

Dallas Mavericks star Luka Dončić scored 20 points and handed out 11 assists to lead Slovenia to a 94-70 rout of Germany. Dončić has led all players in the tournament in scoring and is second in rebounds only to his teammate Mike Tobey. For a nation of just two million people, Slovenia has fielded a powerhouse team in its Olympics debut.

