

Health Ministry Said on Friday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 93,086 With 458 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Presidents of Italy and Portugal And Prime Minister of Belgium Congratulated Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi on Being Elected as the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

2 **DOMESTIC**

Iran's Reaction to Any Threat Will Be Crushing



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Artificial Maritime Incidents in Persian Gulf Harm Regional Peace

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian envoy to the United Nations has warned about recent suspicious attempts to create artificial maritime "incidents" in the Persian Gulf and the broader region, after the U.S. and its allies accused Iran of an attack on an Israeli-managed ship, urging a swift end to such "irresponsible acts" that harm the region's peace.

In a letter to the president of the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday, the deputy permanent representative of Iran to the UN, Zahra Ershadi, rejected the "unfounded" accusation leveled by Britain, Liberia and Romania that Iran had been behind the attack on the Israeli tanker — Mercer Street — off the coast of Oman without presenting any shred of evidence to substantiate their claims.

"This unfounded claim — which was first raised, for obvious political purposes, by the Israeli regime immediately after the attack — is factually wrong and politically and ethically irresponsible, and accordingly is categorically rejected," she said. She added that Iran enjoys long coasts and numerous port facilities in the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman as well as high maritime shipping capacity and attaches "great importance to the maritime security and freedom of navigation."

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3 **DOMESTIC**

Raisi Takes Oath of Office as Iran's Eighth President



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - After having his mandate endorsed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Ebrahim Raisi has taken the oath of office to be officially inaugurated as the eighth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The swearing-in ceremony was held at the Iranian parliament on Thursday afternoon, attended by high-ranking Iranian civil and military officials as well as a great number of foreign dignitaries from more than 70 countries.

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3 **DOMESTIC**

Iran Rejects Any Limit to Oil Exports



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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

New President, New Era

The Islamic Republic of Iran in recent days had been busy with holding two ceremonies regarding the endorsement and swear-in where its eighth president, Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, officially took office as the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

More than 100 officials from 82 countries took part in Raisi's inauguration ceremony, including 10 heads of state, 20 parliament speakers, 11 foreign ministers and 10 ministers, as well as special envoys, deputy parliament speakers and chairmen of parliamentary commissions and parliamentary delegations.

A high-level delegation from the European Union (EU), led by the Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service Enrique Mora, has participated in Raisi's inauguration. The presence of this amount of foreign guests bespeaks the significance of Raisi's presidency for the world as well as the Iranian nation.

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The director of the Modern Industry Research Group stated:

Interventions Have Taken Away Competition From Component Makers

Modern Industry Research Group is one of the largest and most important specialized manufacturers of car lights and mirrors in the country. The "modern" collection produced 100% of the equipment, materials and facilities used in the industry during the Corona era and at the height of the sanctions. Not only raw materials, but also technology, assembly lines and vacuum plating machines were made in the country. This is almost unique in the world. This set has produced a vacuum plating machine. At the same time, it has produced assembly lines, molds and complex raw materials used in other industries. At present, the company produces lamps and raw materials in 5 production units. The complex has created employment directly for 1,000 people and indirectly for about 3,000 people. Our interview with Ali Changi, CEO of the Modern Industry Research Group, is presented regarding the achievements of this collection as well as the obstacles of the auto parts manufacturing industry:

What are your raw materials used in this industry?

Today, raw materials used in the lighting industry include engineering and subspecialty polymers. Metal and glass are absolutely not used in this industry. All parts are made of plastic, which are called engineering polymers. These materials are mainly produced domestically. Part of it is also produced in our company. We supply raw materials from petrochemicals and other industries. We combine and formulate raw materials according to our needs to meet the needs of this industry.

How have the sanctions affected your work?

Sanctions have certainly been effective. More importantly, how we have dealt with sanctions. Sanctions are a deadly threat. This deadly threat becomes a golden opportunity if companies behave intelligently and appreciate the internal potential of their portfolio and the country. According to Turkish artisans, today all the honor that the country's industry has gained is due to the three-year sanctions imposed on the country in the 1970s. So we too can turn this threat into a golden opportunity.

So, with these descriptions, have you succeeded in overcoming the sanctions in the modern collection?



We are proud that today even the best lamp makers in the world can not compete with our products. We have competently and invincibly made our products competitive without rents and low-interest loans. We produce and supply the cheapest lights in the world in compliance with all international standards.

Now that you have successfully overcome foreign sanctions, what impact have self-sanctions and domestic problems had on your business?

Internal barriers are a disaster for us. If we want to assess the problems in today's industrial society, 10% of them are due to sanctions and 90% are due to mismanagement and self-sanction. We do not need government support. We need people who understand. The number of associations in the component making industry has increased so much that they have lost their intrinsic value. Existing associations are incomplete and inefficient. Therefore, one of the great problems of our guild in piece-making is the lack of a powerful association that can defend the rights of the guild. We feel this emptiness strongly. Managers need to know at what point in time and how they should manage the country's industry and GDP. We have a fundamental weakness in this area that threatens our society. If we can not manage the country's GDP and industry, there will be big problems in the production sector.

Which institutions are currently hindering your activities the most?

For the past 30 years, the country's banks have worked unilaterally and to their advantage. About 17 years ago, dozens of banks went bankrupt following the economic crisis in the United States. This situation indicates the existence of a healthy economy in a country. While in economic crises, our banks are getting stronger. This situation shows that the economic infrastructure in our country is not properly arranged. That is why today our banks are growing under any circumstances. All over the world, however, banks are collapsing or stagnating due to an economic problem. But in our country, in economic crises, the prices of goods are rising terribly.

How effective are they in producing bank loans?

The loans provided by banks are not in fact loans. Production loans should have no interest at all. If the system and the government really want to support the production units, provide cheap loans to those who really work in the production sector. Today, in industrial estates, 80% of production units are closed. People have set up a unit and then left by taking out support loans, buying land and providing equipment. While an artisan has to work and strive to earn an income. Giving support loans to these people who have no incentive to work is an injustice that they have done to our society in the name of the prosperity of production and industry. Meanwhile, those who work are victims of economic relations. Inefficient rules and regulations, which are sometimes in conflict with each other, also limit a production unit that wants to operate in depth. For example, in order to implement development plans, the Environment Organization and the Agricultural Jihad are blocking our way. There is no point in negotiating with them. Of course, this does not mean that environmental laws are not observed. Today, the environment is so important that all countries of the world sign the Paris-Japan agreement. We must also pay attention to it. But unfortunately, environmental laws in our country have become a means for the authoritarianism of the employees of the institutions. At the same time, unauthorized interference in the affairs of this guild has deprived the activists of this guild of competition.

Is there an association to protect the rights of auto parts manufacturers?

Today, the number of associations in the component making industry has increased so much that they have lost their intrinsic value. Existing associations are incomplete and inefficient. Therefore, one of the great problems of our guild in making parts is the lack of a decisive and powerful association that can defend the rights of the guild. We feel this emptiness strongly.

IRCS Imports 11th COVID-19 Vaccine Shipment to Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - The Iranian Red Crescent Society imported the 11th COVID-19 vaccine shipment.

Iran's Red Crescent Society imported the 11th COVID vaccine shipment on Thursday and handed it over to the Ministry of Health in Imam Khomeini Airport. The shipment included 1,110,000 doses of coronavirus vaccines.

So far, the IRCS has imported 12,630 million doses of the coronavirus to Iran with 13 flights.

Iran's Reaction to Any Threat Will Be Crushing

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s chief commander has sternly warned the enemies, especially Israel, against issuing threats against Iran, reminding them that the Islamic Republic's reaction to any act of aggression will be crushing.

During an inspection of IRGC units in southern Iran, Major General Hossein Salami referred to Israel's latest rants against the Islamic Republic, following a claim by the regime and its allies that Tehran was behind a reported attack on Tel Aviv-managed tanker Mercer Street in the Sea of Oman.

"The enemies who have been speaking, these days, with a language of threats about the Islamic Republic's establishment, particularly the usurping Zionist regime, must develop an understanding of the realities about the Islamic Republic of Iran's and the IRGC's defense and offense power," said Salami. "Under our defense policies and strategies, there is no action by any enemy, anywhere, and on any scale that will be tolerated and will not have us react harshly and firmly."

The IRGC chief commander said Iran's missile, naval and drone units are presently at an "unprecedented level of preparedness" for "any scenario."

Salami said insecurity in the region is rooted in the enemies' aggressive policies, adding, "Our enemies must know that the era is over for them to be able to threaten our interests or forces somewhere but face no reaction."



The IRGC commander said, "This is not a diplomatic message, but one from the field. We speak in the field."

"Those who speak against us with threatening rhetoric — including the Zionist regime's premier and its other officials — should beware of the dangerous repercussions of their statements and exercise the necessary caution in their calculations," Salami warned.

Tensions have simmered in the region after a suspected drone attack last week on an Israeli-managed tanker off the Omani coast killed two crew members and was blamed on Iran by the United States, Israel and Britain, without any evidence.

CBI Foreign Assets Up by 2.6% In June Quarter to \$26.4b

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has reported a 2.4% surge in its foreign assets for the first calendar quarter to June 21.

A Thursday report by Iran's official IRNA news agency cited CBI data showing that foreign assets had reached over 6,600 trillion rials (\$26.4 billion), up against 6,450 trillion rials reported in quarter to late March.

CBI's foreign assets in June had increased by 19.9% against the June quarter 2020 and by 46% against the June quarter 2019, showed the figures.

CBI's foreign debts declined by 1.4% year on year in first quarter of the current fiscal year to 1,810 trillion (\$7.24 billion).

Government sector debt to the bank rose by 35.1% against the March quarter to reach 2,010 trillion rials (over \$8 billion) while banks debts to the top lender declined slightly by 2.5% to 1,130 trillion rials (\$4.52 billion).

The figures come as the CBI expects an overhaul in its top management team amid a change of administration in Iran that started to take effect this week.

President Ebrahim Raisi has vowed he will continue to use diplomatic efforts to have U.S. sanctions on Iran removed, especially those targeting CBI's assets in other countries.

Lifting of U.S. sanctions is expected to significantly boost Iran's oil revenues and improve balances in the CBI.

Iran and Pakistan Enjoy Unbreakable Ties



TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi emphasized in a meeting with Pakistan Senate Speaker Muhammad Sadeq Sanjarani that Tehran and Islamabad enjoy unbreakable ties and said both countries must identify the capacities for expansion of ties and broadening of the sphere of cooperation both in bilateral and regional levels.

Raisi said the Tehran-Islamabad relations are beyond the two neighboring countries' ties, adding that the ties between the two nations are based on shared strong beliefs and cultures, and this makes our close ties unbreakable.

The new Iranian president said that the satisfactory level of Iran-Pakistan relations is far beyond their current level, pointing out that new ways for further deepening our bilateral ties can be sought. We need to identify the capacities for broader bilateral ties and greater cooperation between our two countries to serve both nations' interests as well as the region's interests, added Raisi.

The president also referred to the significance of broadening parliamentary ties between Iran and Pakistan, adding: The parliaments of the two countries can play constructive and beneficial roles in the path towards having broader bilateral ties.

Elsewhere in his remarks, President Raisi expressed deep worries about the existing tensions and unrest in Afghanistan, emphasizing that cooperation between Iran and Pakistan aimed at establishing sustainable peace and security in that country is urgently needed.

The current status of the Afghan nation is nerve-racking, he said, adding the two countries should take joint initiatives to prevent further plight for Afghanistan's Muslim nation. The new Iranian president said that the presence of the American forces has nowhere in the world led to resolving problems, but has, on the contrary, further aggravated the difficulties.

President Raisi reiterated that Afghanistan must be free from the interference of the aliens and by the Afghans, themselves, decide its own fate through peaceful, all-Afghan dialogues.

The Pakistani Senate Speaker Muhammad Sadeq Sanjarani, too, in the meeting conveyed the warm congratulations of the Pakistani president and prime minister, arguing that Iran and Pakistan are like two souls in the same body, enjoying brotherly ties.

I am sure with the positive approach of your good self about the further expansion of bilateral ties with Pakistan, the two countries' comprehensive cooperation will reach a spectacular level, added Sanjarani.

He referred to America's impotence in securing peace and stability in Afghanistan and said the United States is the main source of insecurity in various regions of the world, and keeping in mind the status quo of our region, we request you to harmonize among the Islamic countries for the establishment of regional peace and stability.

Tehran-Caracas Ties Strategic, Brotherly

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami considered the relations between Iran and Venezuela as strategic, deep and brotherly and emphasized strengthening bilateral cooperation with Caracas.

The Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami made the comments in a meeting with the visiting Venezuelan Vice President Ricardo Menendez Prieto, who is in Tehran to attend President Raisi's inauguration later today at the Iranian Parliament on Thursday.

Gen. Hatami said in the meeting that the high-ranking officials of the two countries have strong intention to develop cooperation and achieve a clear prospect for deepening the future relations between the two countries.

The absolute and principled policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the revolutionary, anti-tyrannical and friendly country of Venezuela is to further strengthen relations, Gen. Hatami said in the meeting.

The Minister of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran stressed the need to strengthen bilateral cooperation and the efforts of both countries to reach an agreement between the two countries.

The Vice President of Venezuela, for his part, said that relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are of special priority and importance for Venezuela and added, "We are very pleased that the relations between the two countries have been developing in recent years, and we hope that these relations will develop further on a daily basis with the holding of a joint summit on economic cooperation between the two countries."

Also, the meeting was also attended by a number of officials and authorities of the two countries in the political and economic fields, and the process of cooperation between the two countries was reviewed within the framework of the joint commission.

Energy fields including oil, power plant, mining, science and technology, food industry, fisheries, automobile and banking and financial cooperation have been improved and the necessary strategies and mechanisms for the development of this cooperation, especially the entry of the private sector and support of the banking system of the two countries and joint activities were among the topics of this round of talks.

Italian Official Meets Araqchi

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Director-General of Political and Security affairs of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pasquale Ferrara, who traveled to Tehran to attend the inauguration of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Thursday.

Referring to the latest developments in bilateral relations, Ferrara expressed hope

for the return of relations between Tehran and Rome to the previous level with the finalization of the Vienna talks.

Reviewing recent developments in the region, he also



stressed his country's readiness to help strengthen regional stability and security.

Araqchi, for his part, evaluated the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Italy constructive and said that the presence of Italy's envoy at the inauguration showed the closeness and friendly relations between the two states.

Criticizing the dual approach of some states towards regional

developments, he added that the principled policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is dialogue and cooperation with regional states within the framework of intra-regional initiatives.

Better Neighborly Ties Need Further Deepening Tehran-Ankara Relations

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said the betterment of good neighborly relations between Iran and Turkey is tied to further deepening multilateral ties between the two countries.

In a meeting with the visiting Speaker of Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mustafa Sentop here on Thursday, the president said the common beliefs the two nations share brings the peoples of the two countries even closer.

Highlighting Iran's ever expanding ties with Turkey in all possible areas as Iran's basic policy towards the brotherly neighbor state of Turkey, he also said Tehran and Ankara enjoy very amicable potentials for expanding and improving ties in every possible areas in a way that their cooperation in regional and international areas could progress in a more effective way.

The Turkish official convey the congratulation message of his President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Raisi over his election as the new president of Iran and noticed that relations between Iran and Turkey surpassed that of two friendly neighbors.

He expressed hope that holding of upcoming supreme council of cooperation in near future will serve as a big step towards promoting bilateral relations.

Sentop also voiced concern over developments in Afghanistan and said lack of a satisfactory progress in the peace process has created a security void in the country which requires both Iran and Turkey to help establish peace and stability there.

Afghanistan's Insecurity Rooted in Foreign Plots

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi says the current state of insecurity in Afghanistan is rooted in foreign plots, stressing that security must be established only by the regional countries.

"With the reduction of the presence of American forces in Afghanistan, their acts of provocation and sedition will undoubtedly continue in different ways because their interests and existence depend on insecurity," the Iranian president said during a meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday, stressing that presence of foreign forces was the root cause of insecurity and tension in the country.

"The Islamic Republic is ready to use its capacities to establish lasting peace and prevent bloodshed in Afghanistan."

The Iranian president underscored the importance of Tehran's cooperation with the legitimate government in Kabul in establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan's security must be provided by the Afghans themselves and Iran is ready to assist and cooperate in this regard so that lasting peace and justice will be established and the people of Afghanistan be freed from suffering."

President Ghani, for his part, congratulated Raisi on his election and expressed hope for the beginning of a new chapter in Tehran-Kabul relations, saying Afghanistan wishes to expand political and economic ties with Iran in all fields.

Stressing that Tehran enjoys pivotal capacities in creating regional security, the Afghan president said, "Iran has a prominent role in establishing regional stability and [Kabul] intends to use Iran's capacities for cooperation in that regard."

Iran, Russia Parliament Speakers Stress Expansion of Ties

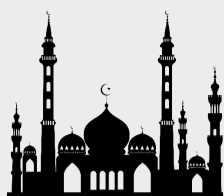
TEHRAN (IP) - Meeting the chairman of Russia's State Duma in Tehran, Iran's Parliament Speaker emphasized the expansion of relations between the two countries.

Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf noted that Russia had sought to solve the economic issues and some projects were implemented.

Calling Iran-Russia parliamentary ties as the top priority of his country, the chairman of Russia's State Duma for his part underlined: "Despite the coronavirus pandemic, Iran-Russia parliamentary ties have been satisfactory."

Vyacheslav Volodin said that the Russian parliament welcomes the policy taken by Iran's Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Parliament and new President Ebrahim Raisi.

The Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation arrived in Tehran to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:22
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:43
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:18

1. A.L.M.R. These are the signs (or verses) of the Book: that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the Truth; but most men believe not.
2. Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that ye can see; is firmly established on the throne (of authority); He has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law)! Each one runs (its course) for a term appointed.
He doth regulate all affairs, explaining the signs in detail, that ye may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.
Surah 13. The Thunder (1-2)

Iran Rejects Any Limit to Oil Exports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran says it will not accept any limit to its exports of oil when the situation normalizes with the lifting of the most draconian U.S. sanctions on the country.

Tehran is facing a race against time to reclaim its standing in the global energy market as producers plan to ramp up oil production through the end of 2022. President Ebrahim Raisi, who took office on Thursday, has said that he will seek to lift the "tyrannical sanctions imposed by America".

Negotiations in Vienna to bring the U.S. back to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran have been suspended since mid-June. Iran's traditional customers are watching the talks with interest and some companies are said to have held discussions to resume purchases.

Outgoing Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said last month that some members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) were concerned about how a return of Iranian barrels to the market would affect the prices.

Zanganeh said he told an OPEC+ meeting on July 18 that Iran would not hesitate to fully regain its market share once the sanctions were removed.

On Thursday, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, Kazem Gharibabadi, reiterated the stance.

"Iran has always been an active and important founding member of the OPEC and we will continue our positive role in the Organization. However, we have always said that Iran will not accept any limitation on its oil production and export level when the situation is normalized," he tweeted.

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we will continue our positive role in the Organization. However, we have always said that Iran will not accept any limitation on its oil production and export level when the situation is normalized. 1

His remarks came in response to his Russian counterpart Mikhail Ulyanov's tweet that hoped after the removal of the sanctions, "Iran will join efforts of OPEC+ to maintain the oil market stability".

"This would be merely a national decision rather than a decision to be taken through joint efforts," Gharibabadi responded.

In their meeting, OPEC and its Russia-led oil-producing allies agreed to unleash millions of barrels of bottled-up crude that would see oil output return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022. Under the deal, oil producers would ramp up production by 400,000 barrels per day every month.

Iran has been exempt of cuts to global supply agreed between OPEC and non-OPEC members in recent years in order to shore up prices.

Oil ministry officials have said a removal of the sanctions could bring back 3.8 million barrels per day of Iranian oil to the market over time. They are confident of the country's ability to increase production quickly. One senior official said recently that most output could be restored within a month.

Energy groups say the global oil market is able to absorb the additional supply relatively quickly, given rising demand for fuel as global economic activity recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Praises OPEC's Efforts in Maintaining Stability in Oil Market

LONDON (IRNA) - The new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi praised the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Secretariat's efforts to maintain the stability of the oil market over the past two years.

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Kazem Gharibabadi announced the written response of Raisi to the congratulatory message of the OPEC Secretary-General, adding that the President wished the Secretary-General and his colleagues' success.

Secretary-General of OPEC Mohammed Barkindo sent a message congratulating the election of Raisi to the Iranian presidency.

On Friday, June 18, the 13th presidential election was held simultaneously with the sixth round of city and village councils elections, the first mid-term for the 11th parliament's by-election, and the second mid-term for the fifth Assembly of Experts election.

Out of over 59.3 million eligible voters in the presidential election, nearly 29 million took part in the national event. Ebrahim Raisi won the presidential race with over 18 million votes out of the total 28,933,004 ballots, which shows a 48.8 percent turnout.

Tying Frozen Assets to JCPOA "Unacceptable"



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says tying the talks on reviving the JCPOA to the issue of frozen assets of the country in South Korean banks are unacceptable.

He made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting South Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister Choi Jong-Kun who arrived in Tehran this morning to attend the inauguration ceremony of President Ebrahim Raisi.

Pointing to the problems ahead of ties between Tehran and Seoul, including the freezing of Iranian assets in Korean banks, Araqchi said that tying these assets to JCPOA talks is unacceptable and shows that Americans are exploiting the issue in favor of their illegitimate political interests.

Around \$7 billion of Iran's revenues from oil sales to South Korea has been blocked in the country for years under the excuse of US sanctions.

The two officials conferred on issues relating to bilateral relations and the JCPOA.

For his part, Choi Jong-kun said the implementation of the JCPOA will be in favor of all parties, including the Korean government, voicing Seoul's support for the nuclear deal.

He said that this is his third visit to Tehran in six months which shows the determination of the Korean Republic for expanding relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Seoul is determined to do utmost effort to solve problems, including those relating to Iran's frozen assets, he said.

Jong-kun hoped that bilateral relations between the two states would further improve during Raisi's tenure.

U.S. Renews Sanctions Waiver for Iraq to Import Iranian Energy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The United States has allowed Iraq to continue to import gas and electricity from Iran until the start of December as part of Washington's temporary waivers from sanctions imposed on Iran since 2018.

An Iraqi official told the AFP news agency on Wednesday that the new sanction waiver had taken effect last week. The new four-month waiver comes just after a visit to Washington by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi. Iraqi government officials have been pressing the US to renew the waivers as the Arab country is heavily reliant on Iran to respond to a growing demand for energy.

That comes as Iran has continued to supply gas and electricity to Iraq in recent years despite Baghdad's failure to pay its energy arrears.

Exports have declined slightly in recent months both because of the arrears and also because of an unexpected surge in demand for energy inside Iran.

Iraqi authorities have urged Iran to restore normal gas supplies while waiting for a solution on the issue of arrears. That comes as terrorist attacks on electricity transmission lines in Iraq have caused more power cuts in the country in recent weeks.

Supplies from Iran currently account for almost a third of demand for electricity in Iraq, a country where many power plants rely on Iranian gas to generate electricity.

Iran Exposes Comprehensive System for Training, Data Analysis

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - According to the portal of the Energy Ministry known as Paven, Iranian Energy Ministry exposed a comprehensive system for training and data analysis in the water and electricity industry, in a virtual ceremony.

IRIB also reported that the ceremony was attended by officials and managers from the Energy Ministry, energy-related companies and subsidiaries of the Energy Ministry in addition to training institutions.

Deputy Energy Minister Mohammad Saleh-Olia cited the requirement for improving information systems according to modern technology for scientific analysis in several fields of human resources, including training, and stated that "Access to real statistics and information requires precise planning based on reality rather than speculation, and there are several benefits to using new ways of providing services over the Internet."

Applying the new system is going to offer great positive changes in the industry, the advantages of which will turn into tangible soon, Saleh-Olia added.

Cuba Confers Special Award to Iranian Scientist

TEHRAN (IP) - Cuba granted the Carlos J. Finlay Order on the director of the Pasteur Institute of Iran, Alireza Biglari, for his contribution to the scientific activities of the two countries.

Cuba's Council of State, by the virtue of Presidential Decree number 281, decided to award the order, stressing the importance of the contribution of the Iranian scientist in reaching Cuba's vaccine technology transfer agreements.

At the proposal of Cuba's Minister of Science, Technology, and Environment, Elba Rosa Pérez, the Order recognized the collaboration of Biglari in the development of Soberana 02 for the support of the scientist that led to carrying out the third phase of clinical studies on the vaccine candidate so to obtain approval for the emergency use of in Iran.

Similarly, such cooperation allowed reciprocity of academic knowledge, while opening the possibility of a significant commercial exchange.

The Council of State recognizes with the Carlos J. Finlay Order the merits and contributions to the development of the natural or social sciences of Cuba of national and foreign personalities.

Also deserving the distinction are research activities that made an exceptional contribution to scientific progress and for the benefit of humanity. Recently, the director-general of the IFV, Vicente Vérez, paid a visit to Iran, where he held meetings with representatives of that country, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, and Biglari.

The Pasteur Institute of Iran was established almost a hundred years ago and is active in research, production, and education fields. It has played a key role in controlling infectious diseases in Iran and the world ever since its establishment.

The institute has served as a key hub for producing vaccines in the region since 1920. Currently, it is working with Cuba on producing a COVID-19 vaccine.

South Pars Phase 19 Refinery Boosts Propane, Butane Output



TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of Petropars Operation and Management Company (POMC) said production of propane and butane in the South Pars Phase 19 refinery increased with the commissioning of all refrigeration compressors of propane and butane units.

According to Petropars Group, Amir Shahram Zaman stated that the assembly and preparation of refrigeration compressors was done for the first time by the company's specialists, adding: "Previously, foreign specialists and companies assembled and prepared these compressors."

He stressed the importance of increasing the production of propane and butane gases: "These gases have a high temperature when transferred to storage tanks, and with the use of refrigeration compressors, the temperature of these gases is reduced to prevent evaporation and their full capacity is used."

The purpose of Phase 19 South Pars Project is to produce 56.6 million cubic meters of rich gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate, 400 tons of sulfur per day and also produce 1.05 tons of liquefied petroleum gas (propane and butane) and one million tons of ethane annually to feed petrochemical units.

WHO Provides North Khorasan With Medical Equipment

BOJNOURD (IRNA) - The World Health Organization (WHO) has provided hospitals in Bojnourd and Shirvan, North Khorasan province, with various medical equipment during the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2021), a provincial official said.

Hassan Sohrabi, director of supervision department of medical equipment at the North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences, told IRNA on Thursday that the medical equipment has been dedicated to Imam Hassan (AS), Imam Ali (AS) and Bent al-Hoda hospitals in Bojnourd as well as Imam Khomeini hospital in Shirvan. The equipment dedicated to Imam Hassan (AS) hospital consist of ECMO, MRI, portable X-Ray machine, Ultrasound Echo device, Echocardiography and CT scan, he noted.

The Organization also dispatched a CRRT machine, a portable X-Ray device to Imam Ali (AS) hospital and a Laryngoscope device to Bent al-Hoda hospital and Imam Khomeini hospital in Bojnourd and Shirvan respectively, the official added. There are some other donations, including an Ultrasound Echo device and a CT scan device for Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani hospital in Shirvan, another CT scan device for Poursina hospital in Ashkhaneh, a liquid handling device and a Nucleic acid and antigen detection test machine for the provincial health department, he mentioned.

There are 11 hospitals with 1,444 beds in North Khorasan province. Some 5,000 staff are providing patients with medical services in the northwestern province. Some 350 general physicians and 256 specialist doctors are active in North Khorasan with a population of around 863,000 inhabitants.

China Pledges Two Billion Vaccine Doses to World



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China will "strive to provide" two billion Covid-19 vaccine doses to the world this year and donate \$100 million to the international vaccine distribution system known as Covax, President Xi Jinping said Thursday.

The pledge came in a written message by Xi to a video forum on vaccine cooperation as China battles a fresh outbreak fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant.

Delta has now been detected in parts of China, prompting mass testing and sending the number of daily cases to their highest in months.

At Least Two Dozen Chadian Soldiers Killed



N'DJAMENA (Dispatches) - Twenty-four Chadian soldiers were killed in an attack by suspected jihadists in the troubled Lake Chad region, a senior local official said Thursday.

"Troops from a returning patrol were resting when they were attacked by Boko Haram", the region's deputy prefect, Haki Djiddi, told AFP.

"Twenty-four troops were killed, several were wounded and others have scattered into the countryside."

Army spokesman General Azem Bermendoa Agouna confirmed that an attack had taken place at Tchoukou Telia, an island 190 kilometres (118 miles) northwest of the capital N'Djamena, but refused to give any toll.

Taliban Target Provincial Afghan Cities in Response to U.S. Strikes



KABUL (Dispatches) - Taliban militants have switched strategy from targeting rural areas of Afghanistan to attacking provincial cities, in response to increased U.S. air strikes after the United States said it was ending its longest war, three militant commanders said.

The Taliban have stepped up their campaign to defeat the U.S.-backed government as foreign forces complete their withdrawal after 20 years of conflict.

A regional U.S. commander said late last month the United States had increased air strikes to counter growing Taliban attacks, a move condemned by the Islamist group. Fighting has been particularly heavy inside the city of Herat, near the western border with Iran, Lashkar Gah, capital of Helmand province in the southwest, and Kandahar in the south. The three Taliban commanders, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that they were focused on capturing Herat and Kandahar, with Lashkar Gah in their sights.

"Mullah Yaqoob argued that when U.S. didn't fulfil their commitment why should Taliban be made to follow the accord?" said one of the commanders, based in Kandahar, referring to the group's military chief.

"Mullah Yaqoob has decided to capture Kandahar and Herat and now Helmand and then it could be Kunduz, Khost or any other province," said the commander, saying the military leader's arguments had won over the group's political office.

A Taliban spokesman did not respond to a request for comment. Taliban negotiator Suhail Shaheen told Reuters the group was continuing its policy of seizing control of rural areas and implementing Islamic Sharia there, rather than focusing on cities.

The Taliban, who ruled with an iron hand from 1996 until 2001, had said previously they would focus on lucrative border crossings and large rural areas, though they have encircled and at times entered provincial capitals.

The group has been waging a massive nationwide offensive since April when President Joe Biden announced troops would withdraw by September and as officials warned peace talks in Doha were failing to make substantive progress.

In recent weeks, there have been sustained attacks on Herat, Kandahar and Lashkar Gar, stretching Afghan Special Forces thin and killing dozens of civilians.

"The operations in Kandahar and Herat are very much important to us and our priority is to capture the two crucial airports or airbases in Kandahar and Herat," the Taliban commander in Kandahar said.

Officials and experts said they saw signs of a change in strategy last month.

"Taliban are pushing against the provincial capitals ... not just to exert pressure but to capture them," said Asfandyar Mir, a South Asia analyst from Stanford University.

Biden Offers Temporary Safe Haven To Hong Kong Residents



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Responding to Beijing's crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong, the United States will provide "safe haven" to citizens of the Chinese territory for the next 18 months, allowing thousands to extend stays in the U.S., the White House has said.

China "has continued its assault on Hong Kong's autonomy, undermining its remaining democratic processes and institutions, imposing limits on academic freedom, and cracking down on freedom of the press", President Joe Biden said in a memo outlining the new policy on Thursday. "Offering safe haven for Hong Kong residents who have been deprived of their guaranteed freedoms in Hong Kong furthers United States interests in the region," Biden said.

The vast majority of thousands of Hong Kong residents currently in the U.S. are eligible for the program, a senior administration official told the Reuters news agency. Legal conditions apply, such as individuals not having been convicted of serious crimes. The "safe haven" action is the latest step by the Biden administration to address the erosion of free speech and democratic rights in the former British colony, which was returned to China's control in 1997.

At the time, Beijing pledged to respect Hong Kong's democratic system of governance under the principle of "one country, two systems" which was memorialized in a joint British-China declaration and in Hong Kong's "Basic Law".

But with Beijing's crackdown on rights over the past year, nearly 50,000 Hong Kong citizens left the bustling south China port city to rebuild their lives elsewhere including in the United Kingdom which has opened its doors to potentially three million Hong Kong residents to live and work in the UK.

"Today we send a clear message that the United States resolutely stands with people in Hong Kong," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

In June 2020, Beijing imposed a new "national security" law on Hong Kong and delayed elections, disqualified politicians who were critical of Beijing and shut down the free press.

Hundreds of thousands protested in widespread and recurring demonstrations and more than 10,000 people were arrested in a police crackdown directed by Beijing, U.S. officials said. "The PRC has fundamentally altered the bedrock of Hong Kong's institutions and suppressed freedoms of Hong Kongers," Blinken said.

Greece Battles Wildfires

ATHENS (Dispatches) - Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said authorities were doing "whatever is humanly possible" to tackle wildfires burning across Greece for the third day, including near the ancient site of the first Olympic Games.

Dozens of towns and villages have been evacuated since Tuesday, from the outskirts of Athens to the island of Evia near the capital, and in the Peloponnese, as a protracted heatwave and strengthening winds fuelled more than 150 wildfires in recent days.

The Civil Protection Authority issued an "extreme fire warning" for Friday as temperatures continued to hover around 40 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit).

"If there are even few people who have reservations about whether climate change is real, I call on them to come here and see the intensity of the phenomena," Mitsotakis said from Iliia, where a blaze on Wednesday threatened Ancient Olympia.

The fire near the archaeological games site in Ancient Olympia continued to burn wooded areas on Thursday, prompting the evacuation of more villages, but its treasures had escaped danger.

"Our forces fought an all-night battle... to keep the archaeological site and the town intact," Citizens' Protection Minister Mihalis Chrisohoidis said.

The site, where the Olympic flame begins its journey to the city hosting the modern Olympics, is one of Greece's most popular tourist attractions.

"Nightmare with no end," the Eleftheros Typos newspaper wrote on its front page on Thursday. "Fires Everywhere," the left-wing Avgi said.

On Evia, more than a dozen villages have been evacuated since Tuesday, with some 85 people rescued by boat from a beach, as the wildfire scorched pine trees and sent clouds of ash and smoke into the air. Miles away, skies in Athens were darkened.

Authorities cleared more people from the island on Thursday as church bells sounded a warning and more than 170 firefighters with 52 engines and six aircraft were operating in the area. The armed forces announced the doubling of fire patrols this month and offered vehicles to help with evacuations.

Fires that had threatened the northern outskirts of Athens on Tuesday rekindled on Thursday, with firefighters and aircraft still working there. An Athens prosecutor launched a preliminary probe into the causes of the fire, which burned scores of homes.

Belarus to Close Border as Lithuania Turns Away Migrants

MINSK (Dispatches) - The president of Belarus has ordered the country's security forces to tighten control over the border with Lithuania, which had begun turning away migrants attempting to cross from Belarus earlier this week.

Lithuania, a European Union member state, has faced a surge of mostly Iraqi migrants trying to enter the country irregularly in the past few months. The surge is emerging as another source of tension between Belarus and its European neighbours to the west. It says the flow has been a retaliatory tactic by Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko after the EU sanctioned his country for diverting a plane flying to Lithuania to force it to land in the Belarusian capital Minsk in order to arrest a dissident on board.

On Tuesday, Lithuania said it reserved the right to use force to stop such irregular immigration and turned away 180 people attempting to enter the country. Lukashenko on Thursday ordered defence and security agencies to "close every metre of the border" so migrants turned away by Lithuania could not get back into Belarus.

"God forbid they start implementing the policy of removing people they invited over there through official border crossing points," Lukashenko said during a meeting with defence and security officials.

"Starting from today, not a single person should set foot



on the territory of Belarus from the adjacent side, be it from the south or from the west," he added. Lukashenko's remarks came after the EU summoned the Belarusian envoy in Brussels on Wednesday over the border dispute.

The bloc has accused Minsk of orchestrating the crisis and using it as a political weapon in retaliation for EU sanctions. Lithuania, a nation of fewer than 3 million people, has no physical barriers on its 679km (420-mile) border with Belarus and some 4,090 migrants have crossed over this year from Belarus.

"These practices must stop and Belarus must respect its international commitments in combating irregular migration and human trafficking and migrant smuggling," a spokesperson for the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, told a news conference on Thursday. The spokesperson said EU leaders had also held talks with the Iraqi government over the issue.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and other officials have sought a solution with the Iraqi government which could include a suspension of flights from Baghdad to Minsk.

Authorities in Belarus this week alleged that Iraqi migrants expelled from Lithuania to Belarus had injuries, including dog bites, and had to be hospitalised.

Belarus also claimed Wednesday that a "non-Slavic" person died from injuries at a border town but Lithuania dismissed the report as propaganda from a hostile regime.

Indonesia Hails New Era for U.S. Ties

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia's foreign minister said on Thursday her nation had entered a "new era of bilateral relations" with the United States, as the countries' armed forces launched their biggest ever joint training exercise this week involving 3,000 troops.

Speaking from Washington after meeting U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other officials, Retno Marsudi welcomed more U.S. engagement in the region and expressed high hopes for closer ties with the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden. "As a democratic country and Southeast Asia's largest economy, a strong strategic partnership with Indonesia will provide significant added value for U.S. engagement in the region," the minister told a news conference.

The "strategic partnership" between the countries spanned trade, investment, security and public health, she said, with the U.S. announcing this week it would donate an additional \$30 million in COVID-19 assistance to purchase oxygen and medical supplies and to boost Indonesia's vaccine rollout.

India to Deploy Neutral Force After Deadly Internal Border Clash



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India will deploy a "neutral force" at the frontier of two states in its north-east, after their long-running border dispute escalated into a deadly showdown, officials said Thursday.

The July 26 clash on the border between Assam and Mizoram left six police officers dead and dozens injured, in a major embarrassment to the central government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a joint statement released Thursday, the governments of both states said a "neutral force" would be deployed by the Indian government in disputed areas.

"For this purpose, both the states shall not send their respective forest and police forces for patrolling, domination, enforcement or for fresh deployment to any of the areas where confrontation and conflict has taken place", the statement read.

Mizoram was part of Assam until 1972 and became a state in its own right in 1987.

The two states have been wrangling over their border for decades, but such deadly escalations are rare.

The government of Mizoram Thursday also expressed regret -- for the first time since the clashes -- over the death of the six police from Assam.

Last week, the chief ministers of both states tweeted that they would seek an amicable approach to the dispute.

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma belongs to Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party while Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga heads the Mizo National Front -- an ally of the ruling BJP alliance.

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Parsian

Tajrish Villa (\$4000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
marble floor
Fully Furn

(\$2000)
Pasdaran Apt
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, & F.F

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Toyota, Honda Beat Profit Estimates

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Toyota Motor Corp posted record quarterly earnings and Honda Motor Co (7267.T) raised its annual profit forecast on Wednesday as post-lockdown sales surge, but the pair joined other automakers in warning that the global chip shortage would persist. A resurgence in COVID-19 cases has disrupted parts supplies and production at car companies, compounding a months-long pandemic-fuelled chip crunch.

The two Japanese car makers are facing production problems in China, which on Wednesday reported the most new locally transmitted COVID-19 cases since January.

Honda Executive Vice President Seiji Kuraishi told reporters that the company suspended production at its plant in Wuhan on Aug. 3 due to a COVID-19 case cluster that developed at a supplier. He added that the stoppage was not expected to last long.



France, U.S. Pledge Close to \$200m Worth of Emergency Aid for Lebanon

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron pledged nearly €100 million (\$118.54 million) worth of additional emergency aid for Lebanon, as well as 500,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccines for the country during a UN-backed donor conference. The U.S. will provide nearly \$100 million in additional aid to Lebanon, President Joe Biden announced.

One year since an explosion ripped through the capital's port and plunged Lebanon further into economic crisis, its politicians have yet to form a government capable of rebuilding the country, despite French and international pressure.

"Lebanese leaders seem to bet on a stalling strategy, which I regret and I think is a historic and moral failure," Macron said in opening remarks as host of a UN-backed international donors' conference that aims to raise at least \$350 million.

"There will be no blank cheque for the Lebanese political system. Because it is they who, since the start of the crisis but also before that, are failing."

Later in the day, Biden also promised nearly \$100 million in additional aid for Lebanon.

"But no amount of outside assistance will ever be enough if Lebanon's leaders do not commit to do the hard but necessary work of reforming the economy and combating corruption," warned the US leader as he took part in the donors' conference.

France has led international efforts to lift its former colony out of the crisis. Macron has visited Beirut twice since the port blast, raised emergency aid and imposed travel bans on some senior Lebanese officials in his quest for a reform package.

He has also persuaded the European Union to agree on a sanctions framework that is ready to be used.

But his initiatives have so far been in vain.

About 40 heads of state and governments, diplomats and heads of international organizations are taking part in the conference, according to Macron's office. Participants include Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, King Abdullah II of Jordan and the European Council's President Charles Michel. Last year's conference in the wake of the blast raised about \$280 million, with the emergency aid being kept away from politicians and channelled through NGOs and aid groups.

The new aid will be unconditional, Macron's office said, but about \$11 billion raised in 2018 remains locked away and conditional on a series of reforms.

According to the UN, over half of Lebanese people now live in poverty, one in three Lebanese suffer from food insecurity and nearly 4 million people are at risk of not being able to access safe water.

India's SBI Pins Hopes on Economic Recovery

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - India's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) reported a record first-quarter profit and bet on economic activity picking up to contain a spike in bad loans, sending its shares to an all-time high.

Domestic banks have struggled to contain bad loans, especially in their retail portfolios, as the pandemic and resultant lockdowns hit economic activity and limited borrowers' ability to repay loans.

SBI posted a four-fold jump in slippages, or new bad loans, for the first quarter ended June as its home loan and small business segments struggled.

"If economic activity is back on track, our ability to maintain better performance in terms of asset quality will be maintained," Chairman Dinesh Khara told reporters after the results.

The country's deadly COVID-19 second wave has eased from a peak in April and May, allowing businesses to get to work, although restrictions are still in place in some states and analysts worry about a third wave later this year.

The bank said it had recovered 47 billion rupees of the June quarter's 157 billion rupees of slippages in July. It also said it would still aim to keep its current-year slippage ratio at 2%, compared with the Indian banking industry's overall slippage ratio of 2.5% in fiscal 2021.

Half of SBI's home loan book, typically one of the most insulated segments for most lenders, is to non-salaried people.

Khara said the bank aims to bring down its bad loans in the segment to less than 1% versus 1.39% at June end.

He expected its loan book to grow by 9% in the current financial year, versus an earlier estimate of 10%.

Credit growth was 5.64% in the first quarter, led by a 16.5% growth in retail advances.

Net profit rose 55% to 65.04 billion rupees (\$877 million) in the first quarter, versus analysts' estimates for a profit of 61.09 billion rupees.

A recovery of 16.92 billion rupees from bankrupt airline Kingfisher also boosted the bottom line.

SBI's shares closed up 2.3% at a record high of 456.95 rupees. They have outperformed the Nifty Bank index with a more than 60% jump this year.



(P)GCC Economies Expected to Grow 2.2% This Year

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Economies of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council ((P)GCC) will likely grow at an aggregate 2.2% this year after a 4.8% contraction last year caused by the pandemic and lower oil prices, the World Bank said.

"With recent progress made with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine globally and with the revival of production and trade worldwide, the prospects for an economic recovery are firmer now than at the end of last year," it said in a research report.

"Although downside risks remain, the forecast stands for an aggregate (P)GCC economic turnaround of 2.2% in 2021 and an annual average growth of 3.3% in 2022-23."

It remains vital for (P)GCC countries - which include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates - to diversify their economies, the World Bank said, as oil revenues account for over 70% of total government revenues in most (P)GCC countries.

It said it expects Kuwait and Qatar to introduce a value-added tax this year, following the example of other (P) GCC states that have implemented the revenue-diversifying measure in different phases over the last few years.

On the fiscal side, most (P) GCC countries are expected to continue to post deficits over the coming years, the World Bank said, after shortfalls intensified last year because of the coronavirus crisis.

The countries that posted the largest deficits in 2020 - Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman - are expected to remain in deficit until 2023, but with narrower ratios than in the 2020 downturn.

Kuwait Financial Wealth Grows to \$266b

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) - Kuwait's financial wealth grew by a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.3% annually from 2015 to reach a high of \$266 billion in 2020 - 82% of which is investable wealth - as the Kuwaiti market showed resilience in the face of the protracted COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

The report, titled 'Global Wealth 2021: When Clients Take the Lead', reveals that

despite the pandemic's enduring financial impact, global prosperity and wealth grew significantly throughout the crisis and are likely to continue to expand significantly over the next five years, in line with the emerging economic recovery.

"The COVID-19 pandemic indeed resulted in an array of complex challenges, yet what's also beyond any doubt is the resiliency of Kuwait's wealth segment, which has been instrumental behind the growth recently recorded. Vision 2035 has helped to ensure sustained growth, supporting economic activity and inspiring residents to become involved in the increasingly global economy. Therefore, growth in wealth has been achievable, positioning Kuwait to attain further wealth segment development moving forward," said Harold Haddad, Managing Director and Partner at BCG.

Kuwait, which represented 12% of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's ((P) GCC) financial wealth in 2020, is expected to witness strong growth of 2.9% CAGR to reach \$307 billion by 2025, a \$41 billion increase from 2020. Meanwhile, the region's financial wealth is forecast to reach \$2.7 trillion in 2025 from \$2.2 trillion in 2020. A spotlight on onshore asset allocation shows that currency and deposits (49%) accounted for the largest proportion of assets in 2020. Looking ahead, the allocation of onshore assets by 2025 is expected to be similar.

The Changing Landscape of the Wealthy in Kuwait BCG's report also shows Kuwait's changing landscape of the wealthy in the coming years, with the rise of the next-generation affluent and high net-worth clients. These individuals, between 20 and 50 years of age, have longer investment horizons, a greater appetite for risk, and often a desire to use their wealth to create positive societal impact as well as earn solid returns.

Turkish Inflation Climbs To Two-Year High

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's annual inflation rate rose higher than expected in July, reaching a two-year high of 18.95%, according to data published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).

Driven by growing food and transportation costs, annual consumer prices climbed 1.42% last month, up from 17.53% in June, surpassing a Bloomberg forecast for 18.6% in July.

The accelerating rise of consumer prices places Turkey's inflation rate just shy of the Central Bank's 19% key interest rate, reducing prospects for early rate cuts that have been repeatedly touted by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. On June 2, Erdogan said interest rates should start falling "around July or August," adding it was "imperative" the Central Bank ease credit to help boost the nation's slow economic recovery amid the resurgent COVID-19 pandemic.

In light of the July inflation data, which also saw the domestic producer price index rise about 2.5% to 44.92% on an annual basis, plans for an interest rate cut will likely be postponed until more favorable economic conditions materialize, said Timothy Ash, an analyst at BlueBay Asset Management. The news comes as a large number of wildfires are impacting Turkey's southwestern regions.

Ash noted public anger over the government's perceived lack of preparedness in containing the fires may result in a dip in Erdogan's popularity, which the Turkish leader could seek regain by stimulating economic growth through a renewed push for interest rate cuts in the fall.

"By the autumn, we'll see a big pressure on the Central Bank to loosen policy because Erdogan's popularity will be under pressure and they'll need growth again," Ash told Al-Monitor, adding, "It's very hard for them to cut now."

The rise in Turkey's inflation rate comes amid rising global energy costs that forced Ankara to hike electricity and natural gas prices in July. Consumer prices were also likely impacted by a rise in international visitors last month during the country's peak tourism season. According to TurkStat's latest data, food and nonalcoholic beverages saw the highest increases, rising by nearly



25% annually, followed by transportation, which rose 24.62% and then home furnishings, which rose 22.70%.

On July 29, Central Bank Governor Sahap Kavcioglu announced the bank raised its year-end inflation forecast to 14.1%, up from 12.2%. Kavcioglu said the bank's monetary policy committee would seek to maintain a tight stance until a sustained decrease in inflation was achieved, adding volatility could be expected in the months ahead.

"Inflation may follow a volatile course in the summer months," Kavcioglu said last Thursday. "Our monetary policy stance is tight enough to prevent these volatilities being reflected in the main trend."

The Central Bank's next rate meeting is scheduled for Aug. 12. Since his appointment in March, Kavcioglu has maintained the key interest rate at 19% amid inflationary trends, despite political pressure to cut it.

Thai Central Bank Lowers Economic Growth Forecast Again



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - The Bank of Thailand lowered its growth forecast for Southeast Asia's second largest economy, as the spread of the delta COVID variant is seen adversely affecting private consumption and tourist inflows.

"The Thai economy was projected to expand 0.7% and 3.7% in 2021 and 2022 respectively," said the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee in its policy statement released on Wednesday.

In the previous statement in June, the bank viewed the economy as growing 1.8% in 2021 and 3.9% in 2022, down from its earlier projection of 3.0% in 2021 and 4.7% in 2022.

The rapid spread of the delta strain and its devastating impact has nullified the old forecast. Thailand, for the first time, confirmed more than 20,000 cases in a single day on Wednesday, as 20,200 people contracted the virus and 188 died of it.

Provinces where the virus is spreading rapidly, including Bangkok, have been put under soft business lockdowns and a nighttime curfew. The lockdown measures were to expire on Tuesday, but have now been extended until Aug. 18. The government warned that the measures may remain in place until the end of the month, if the situation does not improve.

Many people chose to stay at home for fear of catching the virus, thereby cutting back on external expenses. International tourists to Southeast Asia, including Thailand, may have also been put off by the outbreaks.

"Downside risks to the economic outlook remained significant from the possibility of the outbreak situation in Thailand and other countries becoming more severe," the bank said. "The committee would closely monitor these risks which would affect private consumption as well as income and employment in addition to impacts on foreign tourist figures," it added.

New Gov't Cabinet to Be Established Within Two Weeks

TEHRAN (IP) - A member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament expressed hope that the new government cabinet would be established in the next two weeks. Speaking before Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi's swearing-in inauguration, Abolfazl Amoui added that Raisi is ready to introduce the 13th government cabinet members

to the Parliament as soon as possible, and the Parliament is also ready to expedite the review of the 13th cabinet. Amoui stated that from the moment the President swears, he has a few days to introduce his cabinet members to the Parliament, after which the specialized committees of the Parliament begin talks with the nominees and review their plans and opinions.



WHO Calls for Moratorium on Booster Shots

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The WHO called for a moratorium on Covid-19 vaccine booster shots as China tightened overseas travel curbs after recording its highest number of infections in months, while Tokyo reported the Olympic Games' first cluster.

The World Health Organization said halting booster shots until at least the end of September would help ease the drastic inequity in dose distribution between rich and poor nations.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the move would help towards the goal of enabling "at least 10 percent of the population of every country to be vaccinated".

The coronavirus pandemic has killed at least 4,247,231 people worldwide since the virus first emerged in late 2019, according to an AFP compilation of official data.

The U.S. is the worst-affected country with 614,295 deaths, followed by Brazil with 558,432 and India with 425,757.

The Olympic Games, which went ahead despite a rise in cases in Japan, reported that all 12 members of the Greek artistic swimming team had entered isolation after five tested positive for coronavirus.

The team have withdrawn from remaining competition and the seven members who have so far tested negative have agreed to move to a facility for "close contacts" of positive cases, Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya said.

"We pray for their swift recovery," Takaya said, adding that it was the first "cluster" discovered at the Games.

So far, Tokyo 2020 has reported 322 positive virus cases among its "stakeholders" including athletes, officials and media. Most of the positive cases have been among Japanese residents working as employees or contractors.

The movement of people is coming under more restrictions inside China -- with localized transport closures and stay-at-home orders in places in some cities -- as well as beyond China's borders.

China's immigration authority on Wednesday announced it would stop issuing ordinary passports and other documents needed for exiting the country in "non-essential and non-emergency" cases.

However the authorities have pulled back from issuing a blanket ban on overseas travel. Immigration official Liu Haitao told a press briefing that those who "have real



needs for studying abroad, employment and business" will still have their documents issued upon verification.

China had previously boasted of its success in crushing Covid-19, with hard lockdowns in the early stages mixed with tight controls of its borders, but mass testing campaigns have uncovered Delta variant infections across the country.

The latest outbreak is threatening to undo the country's economic rebound and return to normal life, with nearly 500 domestic cases reported since mid-July.

Indonesia's coronavirus death toll topped 100,000 on Wednesday as the country struggles to control the spread of the Delta variant.

Southeast Asia's biggest economy has now detected Delta in dozens of regions since it was first found in the archipelago in June.

Scores of Indonesians are dying at home, unable to access hospital care or medical oxygen supplies as health care facilities are stretched to the limit.

More than 3.5 million infections have been recorded to date though official figures are widely believed to be an underestimate.

Big Screen Is Back at Locarno Film Festival



GENEVA (Dispatches) - The Locarno Film Festival opened Wednesday, with thousands returned to the open-air giant screen in the idyllic Swiss town after last year's edition was forced online by the pandemic.

Founded in 1946, Locarno is one of the world's longest-running annual film festivals and focuses on auteur cinema. Held on the shores of Lake Maggiore, in the Italian-speaking Ticino region of southern Switzerland, films are screened in Locarno's central square before up to 8,000 people -- a feature of Swiss national life depicted on the country's 20-franc banknotes.

However, the 2020 festival could not be staged in the usual way due to the Covid-19 crisis and so switched to a hybrid format, with films and content made available online.

"Last summer the Piazza Grande was a sorry sight, with no chairs, no people, no thrilling atmosphere in the evening," said the festival's president Marco Solari.

"Despite the disastrous impact of the global pandemic, however, we never gave up."

But the coronavirus pandemic has changed some aspects of the 74th festival, which runs until August 14.

Entry to the Piazza Grande -- featuring one of the largest screens in the world -- is restricted only to those with a Covid certificate: proof of either double vaccination, a recent negative test or having recovered from the disease.

"What did we miss the most during these 18 months? The pleasure of being together in front of a big screen," said the festival's artistic director Giona Nazzaro.

"Now we can reconnect with those sitting next to us. They're with us, being thrilled, moved or scared."

The festival's top prize is the Golden Leopard. Previous winning directors include Roberto Rossellini, John Ford, Stanley Kubrick, Milos Forman, Mike Leigh and Jim Jarmusch. Seventeen films are in the running for the award, including movies from France, Russia, Italy, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Spain and Indonesia.

The Golden Leopard comes with a prize fund of 75,000 Swiss francs (\$83,000, 70,000 euros), shared between the director and the producer.

The festival features 209 films being shown in 12 venues, including 100 world premieres and 21 debut movies.

The festival will open with French actress Laetitia Casta receiving the Excellence Award, for film personalities who have left their mark on contemporary cinema.

"When we thought about someone who could sum up the ideals of returning to the piazza... who better than Laetitia Casta?" said Nazzaro. "She embodies what it means to be a creative, liberated actress."

Following the ceremony, the opening film will be the world premiere of "Beckett", a thriller by Italian director Ferdinando Cito Filomarino starring John D. Washington and Oscar-winner Alicia Vikander.

Raisi Takes...

FROM PAGE 1

The ceremony started with a speech by Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf followed by an address delivered by head of Iran's Judiciary Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei.

After speeches were delivered by heads of the Judiciary and Legislature, Ebrahim Raisi took to the podium to be sworn in as Iran's eighth president following the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

During the oath-taking ceremony, Raisi read out the text of the oath, which says, "I, as the President, upon the Holy Qur'an and in the presence of the Iranian nation, do hereby swear in the name of Almighty God to safeguard the official Faith, the system of the Islamic republic and the Constitution of the country; to use all my talents and abilities in the discharge of responsibilities undertaken by me; to devote myself to the service of the people, glory of the country, promotion of religion and morality, support of right and propagation of justice; to refrain from being autocratic; to protect the freedom and dignity of individuals and the rights of the nation recognized by the Constitution; to spare no efforts in safeguarding the frontiers and the political, economic and cultural freedoms of the country; to guard the power entrusted to me by the nation as a sacred trust like an honest and faithful trustee, by seeking help from God and following the example of the Prophet of Islam and the sacred Imams, peace be upon them, and to entrust it to the one elected by the nation after me."

Addressing Majlis after taking the oath of office, Raisi said the U.S. policy of imposing sanctions and mounting pressure on the Iranian nation will not deter the nation from pursuing its legal rights, including the right to development.

"All sanctions on the Iranian nation must be removed and we support any diplomatic initiative that pursues this goal," Raisi added.

The Iranian nation, he said, created an epic landmark through participation in the presidential election "at a time that we were dealing with the peak of the enemy's mischief from unjust economic sanctions to extensive psychological war as well as the problems caused by the spread of the coronavirus." "Today, the Iranian nation expects us to fulfill our promise for establishing an administration [based on] dispensing justice and fighting corruption and discrimination."

"We are true defenders of human rights and do not accept silence in the face of oppression, crime and the violation of the rights of innocent and defenseless human beings ... whether it is at the heart of Europe and America, or in Africa, Yemen, Syria and Palestine. We will stand by the oppressed, and inside the country, people and the youth of this land expect us to be the voice of the oppressed," Iran's president said.

"The administration has arisen from the will of the nation to meet the interests of people and dispense justice; [therefore,] it will stand fast and will move in this direction tirelessly," he added.

Raisi said he would make utmost efforts to serve more than 80 million Iranians, noting, "An administration arising from people is an administration of national unity in which political factions as well as ethnic, religious and group-based demarcations have no place. Strengthening cooperation among the three branches of the government, Raisi highlighted, is crucial under the current sensitive circumstances "and no opportunity should be lost for serving people."

Saying that Iran's power in the region is aimed at establishing security, the Iranian president said, "Iran's regional capacities are at the service of peace and stability in countries and will be solely used to counter threats posed by hegemonic and oppressive powers."

He emphasized that intra-regional dialogue based on people's rights is the only solution to the current crises plaguing the region.

"I extend the hand of friendship and brotherhood toward all countries in the region, especially our neighbors," Iran's president said.

Artificial Maritime...

FROM PAGE 1

On Tuesday, Britain, Romania and Liberia told the UN Security Council that it was "highly likely" that Iran used one or more drones to carry out the attack on Liberian-flagged oil tanker, which was managed by Israel, last week.

Two crew members, a Briton and a Romanian, were said to have been killed in the incident.

"This attack disrupted and posed a risk to the safety and security of international shipping and was a clear violation of international law," the trio said in a letter to the 15-member council.

Ershadi reiterated Iran's full commitments to its relevant international obligations and said the country has significantly contributed to the promotion of maritime security and freedom of navigation.

"The deployment -- for well over a decade -- of Iran's naval forces to the Indian Ocean and the adjacent areas in support of international efforts in combating piracy therein has repeatedly been acknowledged by the United Nations Secretary-General in his relevant reports and commended by the Security Council in its numerous resolutions," the Iranian diplomat said.

The United States also joined its allies on Sunday in accusing Iran and said they would work with their allies to respond.

Citing an informed source, Nour News, a media outlet close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said the country would give a strong and crushing response to any measure taken against its national interests and security, blaming Britain and the U.S. for the consequences of such moves against Tehran. Elsewhere in her letter, Ershadi firmly rejected similar and other baseless claims made by the Israeli regime as the main source of instability and insecurity in the region and beyond for more than seven decades.

An informed Iranian source says the country will give a strong and crushing response to any measure against its national interests and security.

She drew attention to the Israeli regime's systematic violations of international law, including its significant threats to maritime security and freedom of navigation, as well as its long record

in conducting complicated false-flag operations in the high seas and key international waterways. "The Security Council must remain fully vigilant about the security and military adventurism of this regime in such a volatile region as the Middle East, condemn such acts and hold it accountable for all its unlawful and yet highly destabilizing activities," Ershadi said.

Pointing to the very recent provocative statements by the Israeli regime's officials threatening to use force in gross violation of the UN Charter, the Iranian envoy emphasized that Tel Aviv must be reminded that it shall bear the consequences of all its "possible adventurism and miscalculations." She warned about such threats from any source and said Iran "will not hesitate to take all necessary measures to vigorously protect its people, defend its sovereignty and secure its national interests."

Meanwhile, in a Wednesday letter to the secretary general of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Iran's Ambassador to London Mohsen Baharvand condemned the false news accusing the Islamic Republic of making certain moves to harm the security of naval traffic in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Baharvand rejected the baseless and politically motivated accusations, which he said are all aimed at harming the peaceful naval passage and urged international cooperation in confronting such destabilizing stands.

He reaffirmed Iran's commitment to safeguarding peace and security of navigation in the region, which is to the benefit of both Iran and the international community.

He emphasized that adventurist moves and ill-intentions of certain countries, mixed with a language of threats and harsh words against Iran, are in violation of the fundamental principle of refraining from resorting to force based on the UN Charter and would put at stake the security of navigation in the region in the long run. The Iranian ambassador called on every country and player on the international scene to remain committed to the accepted international laws, including the Convention of the IMO, on security and safety of navigation at international water passages, including in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

New President...

FROM PAGE 1

The new president opens a new era for the Islamic Republic of Iran and its nation while the country is struggling with several domestic and foreign challenges and problems. After the exit of a pro-West government, now a revolutionary President has taken office in the country and it is expected him to bring back the country to the course of prosperity and more successes and to correct the mistakes of the former governments.



At first, President Raisi should pick of a revolutionary cabinet, comprised of skilful and committed ministers, in order to rebuild the executive system. The former president and his team had pinned his and their hopes on talks with the West and had closed their eyes on the domestic potentials and capabilities but the new president has different view and is more focused on the domestic capabilities.

President Raisi's presidential election campaign slogan has been to fight the corruption and to promote the justice in the country where it had been missed badly during President Hassan Rouhani's era. Picking up the committed, skilful and sincere and above of all young and energetic ministers can help the new president and the government to restore public trust to the government and establishment which has been damaged during President Rouhani's terms.

As Raisi has reiterated, he will not tie the national economy or affairs to the relations with the West or any country in the world or to the JCPOA talks in Vienna but he has reiterated that his government welcomes any talks with the world but it does not mean that Iran would retreat from its rights because of the talks. The new president has also said that diplomacy must strengthen relations among nations of the region.

President's major domestic challenges are coronavirus pandemic, inflation and the economy which have put the country in a unstable condition because of the passiveness of the former government. Now the nation, especially the middleclass and working class in the country, has pinned its hopes on Raisi's revolutionary decisions to recover the national economy especially the inflation and unemployment and to stop spread of economic corrupt especially in the government body.

The countdown has begun for a new era in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the return of unity and trust to the country which has been badly damaged during the former government and Raisi has proved during his two years in the Judiciary that he is able to reform the executive system and to clean it from the corruption and unnecessary bureaucratic process which is a major hurdle in way of the national progress. Because of the good performance in the Judiciary, people have voted for Raisi as president and with the backing of his 18 million voters, he can do drastic reshuffle in the executive system that the nation expects it.

The nation should not expect him to resolve the problems overnight because the problems created by the former governments are so that Raisi needs more time to overcome them. Now everybody is waiting for his picks for the cabinet which is very important for the future of the government and the nation. He needs a revolutionary government to bring back the country to the correct economic track which has been derailed during Rouhani's era. As the country is encircled with enemies' plots and threats, the president needs an all-out support.

The president, as he has promised in the past, should rely more on the domestic potentials and pick-up in the domestic production which will accelerate the economic boom in the country. He needs unity and cooperation of all walks of the life in country to sail the country out of the current woes and as he has repeatedly said, he is the president of all 88m Iranians and not just the president of those 18m people who have voted for him. As a popular proverb says, "In unity there is strength".

Fofana Suffers Broken Leg

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leicester defender Wesley Fofana said he suffered a broken leg in his side's pre-season friendly against Villarreal.

Fofana sustained the fractured fibula when he was tackled by Villarreal forward Nino the second half at the King Power Stadium on Wednesday.

The France under-21s centre-back had lengthy treatment on the pitch, including being given oxygen, before he was stretchered off.

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Aston Villa Sign Ings From Southampton

LONDON (Dispatches) - Journeyman striker and former England international Danny Ings joined Aston Villa from Southampton on a three-year deal on Wednesday, the Premier League club announced.

The 29-year-old arrives on the same day Villa announced the signing of Jamaican striker Leon Bailey from Bayer Leverkusen on a deal running until 2025. With Villa bracing themselves to lose captain Jack Grealish to Manchester City for a British record £100million (117m euros), boss Dean Smith said he hoped Ings's experience would have a knock on effect in the squad.

USA to Face France In Olympic Basketball Final

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Kevin Durant scored 23 points and Devin Booker added 20 to power three-time defending champions United States past Australia 97-78 Thursday and into an Olympic men's basketball final against France.

The Americans were 24-18 behind after the first quarter and 45-42 adrift at halfway, but stormed back during a dominant third term to stay on track for a fourth consecutive gold medal.

They will face two-time runners-up France, who upset them in the group phase, in Saturday's showdown after the world number seven battled past Olympic debutants Slovenia 90-89 in a thriller.

Nando De Colo poured in a game-best 25 points and Boston Celtics' Evan Fournier added 23 to give their team a third crack at upsetting the US after failing to do so in their two previous Olympic finals in 1948 and 2000.

Beating Australia was revenge for the USA who had crashed to Patty Mills' Boomers in their past two meetings, including a demoralizing 91-83 defeat in Las Vegas last month.

But when it comes to the Olympics the US are dominant and stretched their lead over their long-time foes at the Games to 9-0.

"We knew Australia would come out fast and hit us with a nice punch. We know that teams want to get us down early, see how we respond," said the Brooklyn Nets' Durant.

"We stuck with it, stuck with our principles, made a couple of switches on defense, and we were able to get some momentum going into the (second) half. Guys came out with that intensity, making shots as well.

"We've been down 15 in games before and came back," he added. "It don't matter what level it was at, or where it's at. A lot of guys have been in that position before. We know how to handle ourselves."

Australia, the world's third-ranked team, have never finished on the Olympic podium and they now face another bronze medal match, having contested four previously and lost the lot.

"A medal's still what we came here to do, even though it's not going to be gold or silver," said their disappointed Philadelphia 76ers guard Matisse Thybulle.

"Bronze is going to be the first ever for Australia so that's still a really big deal for us and we still have a lot to fight for."

Crouser Sets Record, Swimmers Navigate Elbows and Fish

TOKYO (Dispatches) - U.S. men continued to splutter on the athletics track at the Tokyo Olympics on Thursday, while kayaker Lisa Carrington became New Zealand's most decorated Olympian and American Ryan Crouser broke his own shot put world record three times.

Jamaica's Hansle Parchment stunned viewers and himself with an upset win over the overwhelming favorite, Grant Holloway from the United States, in the 110 meters hurdles. The Americans individually remain bereft of a running gold - a prize they have won every time they have entered since the inaugural 1896 Games.

A bedraggled U.S. 4x100 meters performance added to the American woes.

Elsewhere in the Games, which end on Sunday, skateboarders soared in the Tokyo heat, open-water swimmers had to navigate elbows as well as fish, and a Japanese mayor grossed out the nation and prompted a rebuke from automaker Toyota for biting a softball player's gold medal.

U.S. men, who once dominated the 4x100m, failed to qualify for the final despite having two individual 100m finalists on the team. A ragged run, with poor changeovers and a shocking second handover, dragged them to a desultory sixth in their semi-final.

Carl Lewis, the superstar sprinter of the 1980s and '90s, called his compatriots' performance "a total embarrassment, and completely unacceptable".

China were the surprise heat winners, while Jamaica took the other semi.

In the 110m hurdles, world champion Holloway looked set to win until Parchment surged past him to add a gold medal to his London Olympic bronze in one of the biggest athletics shocks of the Games.

"The greatest feeling, the greatest feeling, I've worked so hard," the Jamaican said. "It's unbelievable that I caught this guy."

Sydney McLaughlin notched a huge world record in the women's 400m hurdles, besting fellow American Dalilah Muhammad as the super-fast track and new shoe technology continue to make a mockery of historical comparisons.



The Americans opened their Olympic campaign with a shock defeat to France but have slowly found their groove, with Durant pacing their offense.

He was averaging 18 points, 4.3 rebounds and 4.3 assists a game heading into the semi-final and once more proved authoritative.

The Boomers' Joe Ingles sunk seven points, including two 3-pointers, in the first quarter to send his team into the second period with a six-point cushion.

Outside the arc shooting had been US team's primary weapon in Japan, but they struggled early against the Australians.

The Boomers opened a 15-point lead in the second term, but the reigning champions blew the game open in the third quarter, dominating it 32-10.

They took the lead when Damian Lillard nailed two points inside the paint as part of a 12-point run, which helped open a 19-point buffer going into the final stretch and they never looked back.

France lost in the last two Olympic quarter-finals to send four-time NBA championship-winning Tony Parker into retirement without a medal, but they now have a golden chance for a maiden title.

"We just had to fight to the last second, that's who we are as a team," said their Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert. "The U.S. are the best team in the tournament, we just need to get ready and be up for the challenge."

Slovenia came out fast and were ahead for almost the entire first quarter, with Luka Doncic and Mike Tobey both netting 10 points each to take a two-point advantage into the second term.

They led by the same margin at half-time, but a stronger third quarter saw France go into the final stretch with a 71-65 lead and they held on in a tense finale.



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdani Charati has put in impressive displays of grappling skills at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics in Japan, but was defeated by his tough rival in the final bout, and finished as the runner-up of the respected international sports event.

Yazdani - the 26-year-old champion of the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics - earned a silver medal after David Morris Taylor III from the United States downed him 4-3 in the last encounter of men's 86-kilogram weight category at Makuhari Messe Hall on Thursday.

The Iranian wrestler had started his campaign resolutely the previous day, and routed Uzbekistan's Javral Shapiev 11-2 in the first competition, before overcoming Swiss Stefan Reichmuth 12-2 in the quarterfinals.

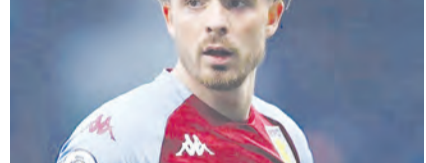
Yazdani emerged victorious over Russian wrestler Artur Naifonov 7-1 in the semi-final round and advanced to the final.

On Wednesday, Iran's Mohammad Reza Geraei triumphed over his Ukrainian rival Parviz Nasibov 9-1 in the final round of the 67-kilogram weight division, and clinched the gold medal.

He had previously defeated German opponent Frank Stäbler and Georgian competitor Ramaz Zoidze to make his way to the final encounter.

The Tokyo Olympics officially kicked off on July 23, and is going to last through August 8. Some preliminary events began on July 21.

Man City Set for £100m Grealish Swoop



Grealish on Friday and now it appears Villa are ready to let their captain move to the Etihad Stadium.

The Premier League champions have been heavily linked with the 25-year-old since the end of last season.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City are on the verge of signing Aston Villa playmaker Jack Grealish in a British record £100 million (\$139 million) deal, according to reports.

City made their blockbuster bid for Grealish on Friday and now it appears Villa are ready to let their captain move to the Etihad Stadium.

The Premier League champions have been heavily linked with the 25-year-old since the end of last season.

Neither club have commented but British media claim a deal should be concluded in the next few days.

That could put Grealish in contention to make his City debut in Saturday's Community Shield against Leicester at Wembley.

If Grealish does move to City, the mooted fee would shatter the British record of £89 million paid by Manchester United to sign Paul Pogba from Juventus in 2016.

Grealish, who has four years remaining on his Villa contract, scored six Premier League goals for Villa last season and provided 10 assists.

His four appearances for England during their run to the final of Euro 2020 underlined his quality at the highest level.

Nadal Battles to Victory in Return From Layoff

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal made a triumphant return from a two-month layoff but aggravated a foot injury and needed a third-set tie-breaker to outlast American Jack Sock and advance at the ATP Citi Open.

The 35-year-old Spanish left-hander, a 20-time Grand Slam champion making his Washington debut, dispatched 192nd-ranked Sock 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (7/1) in a three-hour thriller before about 7,000 spectators at the US Open hardcourt tuneup event.

"My fitness is fine," Nadal said. "I need to have a little bit less pain in the foot."

Third-ranked Nadal had not played since losing to top-ranked Novak Djokovic in June's French Open semi-finals, skipping Wimbledon and the Olympics due to the left foot injury that hindered him in the match.

"The foot was hurting me," Nadal said. "It was painful tonight. Hopefully it will feel better tomorrow. Winning the match helps."

"I finished the match playing better. That's important. I hope to be ready for tomorrow."

Top seed Nadal, chasing his 89th career title, will face 50th-ranked Lloyd Harris of South Africa for a quarter-final berth.

Nadal, Djokovic and Roger Federer all enter the US Open with a men's record 20 career Slam titles, with Djokovic trying to complete the first men's calendar-year Grand Slam since Rod Laver in 1969.



Alisson Signs Six-Year Contract Extension

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker signed a six-year contract extension with the Premier League club. Brazil's Alisson has established himself as one of the world's top keepers since arriving at Anfield from Roma for £66 million (\$91 million) in 2018.

He has won the Champions League, the Premier League and the FIFA World Club Cup with Jurgen Klopp's side, earning UEFA's Yashin Award for keepers for his performances during the Reds' 2019 European campaign.

Alisson is the first keeper in Liverpool history to score a goal after heading the winner at West Bromwich Albion in May. The 28-year-old is now tied to Liverpool until 2027, becoming the third player to commit his future to the Reds over the last week.

England defender Trent Alexander-Arnold and Brazil midfielder Fabinho also signed new long-term deals.

"I think I didn't waste too much time to think about that," Alisson told Liverpool's website. "It's something we just built in those last three years, the confidence, the trust that I have in the club and the club has in myself."

"Me and my family, we are really happy here. My kids are settled in England, in a different country, but they are growing up in that way. So we are really happy."

"I'm really glad that I can keep going on with my work here, doing a good job here. So, I'm really happy to make this decision - that is not hard for me."

