

**Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 101,354 With 544 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

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## President Confers With His Russian and Chinese Counterparts

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi in separate phone calls with his Russian and Chinese counterpart reviewed the latest development in the region and ways for boosting cooperation.

Speaking during a phone call made by Chinese President Xi Jinping, President Raisi describes the Sino-Iranian relations as a priority for his pending government.

“Enhancement of the level of cooperation and expansion of relations with China is a priority for the Iranian government in the area of foreign policy,” the Iranian chief executive told his Chinese counterpart during the conversation on Wednesday.

Raisi said the complete implementation of the 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement that was signed by the countries back in March “should be on the agenda of all of the countries’ [various] apparatuses.” He voiced gratitude towards Beijing over its supportive stance concerning Iran over various issues.

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## Raisi Outlines Plans as Majlis Debates His Picks for Cabinet



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday said he has chosen a cabinet to improve Iran’s economy and fight corruption as parliament begins debating whether to approve his proposed ministers.

President Raisi attended an open session of the parliament on Saturday along with his deputy Mohammad Mokhber and his chief of staff Gholam Hossein Esmaeili.

The president started with an outline of his plans for the next cabinet, saying they have been devised to ensure justice and progress in Iran.

“We know that the time for service is short and the pains and problems of the people are numerous,” Raisi said. He pointed to efforts aimed at containing the coronavirus pandemic as a top priority, saying boosting the country’s economy and improving the livelihood of the people are also high on his agenda.

President Raisi said his proposed list of ministers constitutes young and experienced figures, whose main characteristic is commitment to working diligently and fighting corruption.

The president defended the cabinet make-up, saying he had tried to choose the most qualified in various fields. “The line-up is not based on a specific organization or political party,” he said. “Any causal, relative and family relationship or pressure from an individual, current or party has absolutely had no role in the nomination and selection of ministers.”

Raisi has said his plan is to form a “popular government”. Its roadmap for transforming Iran, he said on Saturday, is to push for the “excellence of the Islamic and Iranian culture”, develop a “resistance economy”, improve the livelihood of the people especially low-income groups, develop international relations based on national interests, and promote Iran’s inspirational role in the Islamic world.

The resistance economy is a concept proposed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in 2016 to leverage domestic capabilities in order to overcome gaps resulting from US policies to restrict business with Iran and insulate the economy from sanctions or hostile foreign activity.

The president noted that short- and mid-term plans have been formulated to tackle the country’s problems.

“You are well aware of the situation,” he told the parliament. “Solving the problems of inflation above 44% declared by the Statistical Center or more than 55% of the Central Bank, a sharp devaluation of the national currency, a significant budget deficit, severe power shortages and hardships, high liquidity growth, high government debt and other issues is possible, but it requires a plan. It also needs an efficient force that can be transformative in any part of the country.”

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## Iran GDP Soars By 43.7%

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) show that the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) increased by nearly a half in the calendar year to March this year.

A report by the official IRNA news agency cited CBI figures showing that GDP surged to 35,085 trillion rials (\$132.4 billion) in the year to March 20, up 43.7% against 24,413 trillion rials reported in the previous year.

Calculated on prices of baseline year 2011, when one US dollar was equal to 38,000 Iranian rials, GDP rose by 3.4% to 6,499 trillion rials (\$171 billion), showed CBI figures.

The figures are consistent with CBI reports released earlier this year suggesting that Iran’s economy had expanded by 3.6% last calendar year after two consecutive periods of contraction.

The Iranian economy has been struggling in recent years under the double burden of US sanctions and a major outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The country has seen high but controlled levels of inflation since the US sanctions were imposed in 2018.

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## Iran Nuclear Activities Fully in Line With JCPOA, NPT

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry says the country’s nuclear activities are fully in line with its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Saeid Khatibzadeh, Foreign Ministry spokesman, said on Tuesday that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been supervising Iran’s nuclear sites and that Iran’s reduction of its nuclear curbs has been done according to mechanisms within the JCPOA.

Khatibzadeh said Iran’s scaleback measures have been taken within the framework of the JCPOA and in response to the widespread violation of the landmark deal and Resolution 2231 by the United States in addition to the lack of full compliance of other parties to the accord, especially the three European countries.

Reaffirming the civilian and peaceful nature of the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Tehran will fully reverse its remedial measures if all the signatories honor their commitments and the U.S. verifiably removes all its sanctions.

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## Iran-Turkey Annual Trade Predicted to Hit \$10b by Next March

TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce stated that the value of bilateral trade between the two countries is forecast to reach \$10 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2020).

“Official Turkish statistics show that Iran-Turkey trade has been declining sharply since the second quarter of 2019, and the downward trend in trade with this country has continued until the second quarter of 2020. But since then, it has been on the rise and has increased in the first quarter of 2021 for the third consecutive season; In a way, we have witnessed a 53-percent growth in trade value between the two countries”, Mehrdad Sa’adat stated.

He mentioned gas and petrochemicals, raw materials and agricultural products as the major goods traded between the two sides.

The value of trade between Iran and Turkey rose by 53 percent in the first quarter of 2021 from the first quarter of 2020, Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) reported, based on the official statistics released by Turkey.

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## Iran Crude Output up 28% y/y in July to Nearly 2.5m bpd

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Latest data by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) shows Iran continued to increase its crude oil output in the calendar month to late July.

OPEC figures cited in a report by IRIB News showed that Iran’s crude output reached 2.485 million barrels per day (bpd) on average in July, up 28% against similar month in 2020.

Quarterly output reached an average of 2.443 million bpd in the June quarter, up against 2.214 million in first quarter this year, showed the figures.

Iran has managed to increase its oil output despite American sanctions targeting its exports. The country’s production was around 3.813 million bpd and exports were nearly 2.8 million bpd in 2017 a year before the sanctions were imposed.

Output declined to 3.553 million bpd in 2018 and then to 2.356 million bpd in 2019 before it hit its lowest as a result of the US bans at 1.988 million bpd in 2020, according to OPEC estimates which are based on data from secondary sources.

Rising production of crude means Iran is exporting more despite tight bans imposed on the country’s petroleum trade.

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## Singapore Tanker Safely Docks in Southern Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Sources close to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) say a Singapore ship that was thought to be abducted off the coast of the United Arab Emirates earlier this month has safely docked at a southern Iranian port.

A report by Iran’s semi-official Nournews, a website close to the SNSC, said on Thursday said that Golden Brilliant had docked at the Persian Gulf port of Shahid Rajaee earlier in the day. It said the safe landing exposed fake reports by international news agencies three weeks ago suggesting that the ship had been hijacked by forces close to Iran.

Nournews said it had interviewed the captain of the Singapore ship, saying he had dismissed rumors about abduction while insisting that no incident had happened to the ship and its crews earlier this month.

The Reuters news agency quoted maritime sources as saying in an August 3 report that Iran-backed forces had seized two ships, including Golden Brilliant, off the UAE coast. Reuters said in another report on August 4 that hijacking was over, citing statements by Omani officials and sources in the United Kingdom.

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

The reports came amid high tensions in the Persian Gulf after the United States, Israel and Britain alleged that two sailors had been killed in an attack on an Israeli-operated ship off the coast of Oman that they blamed on Iran. Iranian authorities have denied any involvement in all the incidents in the Persian Gulf in July and August.

The Thursday report by Nournews directly accused Reuters of fabricating stories to serve Israeli interest, saying the news agency has yet to come up with names of sailors who were allegedly killed in the late July attack on the Israeli-managed ship. It asked how Reuters would seek to repair its already stained reputation now that Golden Brilliant has safely docked in southern Iran.

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## President Offers Congratulations on Indonesia Independence Anniversary

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi in a message congratulated Indonesian government and people on the anniversary of Independence Day.

In his message to Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo, Raisi expressed congratulations on the 76th anniversary of Indonesia independence. He hoped that thanks to friendly and historical relations between the two countries and its constructive effect on the international norms, namely preserving international peace and stability and fighting unilateralism, the friendly cooperation would be developed and a new chapter would be opened in bilateral ties.

He also wished health and success for Indonesian counterpart and happiness and dignity for people of Indonesia.

## Tehran, Beijing Stress Cooperation on Regional Issues, Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament speaker and China's special envoy for Afghanistan in a meeting on Wednesday stressed continuation of cooperation between Tehran and Beijing on regional issues, including Afghanistan.

Hossein Amirabdollahian and Yue Xiaoyong discussed mutual issues and the recent developments of Afghanistan.

Criticizing the U.S. for its trial-and-error policies in the region, specifically in Afghanistan, Amirabdollahian said that the role of people in the country's fate and formation of an inclusive government should be taken into consideration.

The people of Afghanistan have proved throughout history that they do not stand foreign occupation, he said.

Referring to the relations between Iran and Beijing, he said that within the framework of the strategic cooperation document, the two countries can have



cooperation at different levels in Afghanistan.

Amirabdollahian and Yue also stressed Afghanistan's territorial integrity, independence, peace, and stability, urging the formation of an inclusive government and good relations with its neighbors, as well the country's being devoid of terrorists.

Based on a peace agreement between the Taliban and Washington signed in February, the U.S. and its allies withdrew from Afghanistan in the recent weeks after two decades of occupation. Following the pullout, the Taliban group managed to take control of almost the entire country, including Kabul, the capital city.

## Japan's FM Due In Tehran Today

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Foreign Minister of Japan Motegi Toshimitsu will arrive in Tehran (today) for a two-day visit that includes meetings with senior Iranian officials, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced.

In comments at a press conference on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh said the top Japanese diplomat will travel to Iran at the invitation of his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The two-day visit by the Japanese foreign minister will be of great significance ahead of the formation of a new administration in Iran, the spokesman noted.

Motegi will be visiting Iran in response to a visit to Japan by Foreign Minister Zarif two years ago, he added.

"The relations between Iran and Japan, as two major powers in West and East Asia, have been always important. During 90 years of diplomatic relations, the two countries have enjoyed friendly ties on the basis of mutual interests, and they are also engaged in consultations now about the bilateral and multilateral issues at the highest level," Khatibzadeh stated.

## Leader Appoints New Chief for Iranian Navy



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has named a new Navy chief, calling on him to do his utmost to promote the capabilities of the country's naval forces.

In a decree, Ayatollah Khamenei, in his capacity as commander-in-chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, promoted Shahram Irani to the rank of rear admiral and appointed him as commander of the Navy.

The Navy is one of Iran's two maritime military branches alongside the Navy of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

Irani replaced Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, who had held the position since 2017.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that the appointment was made in view of the commander's commitment to his duties and positive work experience and upon a proposal by the Army commander.

The Leader stressed the need for serious efforts toward putting the capacities of the Armed Forces to good use in order to pave the way for the Navy to make progress and boost its capabilities.

The Leader also praised Rear Admiral Khanzadi for his effective efforts during his tenure over the past four years.

## Iran's New School Year to Start in Late September

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's president says the new school year will begin in late September, but in-person training will be postponed until the health conditions are met.

Ebrahim Raisi made the comments during a meeting of the taskforce to fight against Coronavirus on Friday adding that due to the approaching school reopening season, all the necessary health conditions and infrastructure must be provided to hold the classes in person.

"Providing the desired standards of health services, enabling minimum density in classrooms, ventilation, vaccination of teachers and administrative staff, vaccination of parents and the students with underlying diseases are among the preconditions to be met."

After presenting a report on the observance of health protocols during the recent holidays, the President thanked the people for following the instructions approved by the National Anti-Corona Taskforce, and appreciated the efforts of unions, law enforcement, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Roads.

"I hope that by increasing the level of observance of health regulations by the general public, we will be able to control the spread of corona as soon as possible," he noted.

At this meeting the Ministry of Health presented a report on the latest situation of the Corona pandemic and measures taken in the field of treatment and control of the disease, including supply of medicine, serum, oxygen and increasing the number of treatment boards with the cooperation of different departments and accelerating the import of vaccines.

The president also appreciated the quality of observance of health protocols in the mourning ceremonies of Muharram and thanked for the good cooperation of the people.

"Reports indicate successful and effective implementation of bans and restrictions approved by the taskforce and I need to thank the people for their cooperation and the efforts of health care staff, as well as guilds, merchants and religious groups to observe the protocols."

At this meeting, it was decided that the Ministry of Health would review and submit instructions on how guilds operate in malls and indoor markets, and expedite the issuance of licenses for the production of various domestically produced vaccines, taking into account technical and specialized aspects.

The members also stressed the need to develop e-businesses for the supply of goods, sales and transportation.

The need to continue the implementation of traffic restrictions until August 27 was emphasized and it was decided to decide on the manner and form of implementation of these restrictions after this date based on the evaluation of the results.

## Iran's Export of Non-Oil Products to Syria Hits 36% Growth

TEHRAN (MNA) - Director-General of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO)'s Office of Arabian and African Countries put Iran's export of non-oil products to Syrian Arab Republic at 36 percent in the first four months of the current year.

Farzad Piltan reiterated that country's export of products to Syria in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to July 21) registered a 36 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Turning to this point that Islamic Republic of Iran stands at 7th rank among exporting countries of goods to Syria, Piltan said that Iran accounts for only three percent of export share in the Syrian market.

The Islamic Republic of Iran exported about

38,000 tons of goods, valued at \$66 million, to the Syrian Arab Republic from March 21 to July 21, 2021, he added.

Piltan went on to say that Islamic Republic of Iran exported 51,000 tons of non-oil products, valued at \$48.5 million, to Syria in the first four months of the previous Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to July 21, 2020).

Accordingly, Iran's export of products to Syria in the first four months of the current year showed a 36 percent hike in terms of value and 26 percent decline in terms of volume as compared to the same period of last year.

He then pointed to the spread of coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic as the main reason behind trade decline between the two countries and expressed hope that the country's export to Syria would increase in coming months.

## Tehran, Moscow Envoys Discuss Resumption of Talks in Vienna

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Senior diplomats from Iran and Russia have exchanged views about the resumption of talks in Vienna, Austria, on a potential revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, which was suspended amid a power transition in the Islamic Republic following the June presidential election.

In a post on his Twitter account, Russian Ambassador to international organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said he met with his Iranian counterpart Kazem Gharibabadi.

He said the two sides discussed a restart of the talks on the revival of the Iran deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Action (JCPOA), which has been in crisis since the US's unilateral withdrawal in May 2018, as well as issues on the agenda of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the body tasked with monitoring the technical aspects of the agreement's implementation.

The JCPOA was reached between Iran and six world powers, including the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China in 2015. However, the deal was ditched by former US President Donald Trump in 2018 in spite of Iran's full compliance with its contractual obligations.

Since April, the remaining signatories to the JCPOA have been holding face-to-face talks in the Austrian capital aimed at bringing the U.S. back to compliance and putting the deal back on track.

So far, six rounds of negotiations have been held in Vienna, as a result of which, according to participants, "significant progress" has been made in the course of the "constructive" and "businesslike" talks.

## Seven Iranian Companies Active in Corona Vaccine Production

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Food and Drug Administration says 7 Iranian companies are active in producing coronavirus vaccines in the country.

In a press conference held at the Health Ministry, Mohammad Reza Shanesaz highlighted that Iran successfully prepared all prerequisites for the domestic COVID-19 vaccine infrastructure in the country.

Shanesaz underlined that two homemade COVID-19 vaccines received FDA license, and nonstop efforts were fully made to import vaccines to contain the disease soon.

Emphasizing that Iran was the third country in the world to produce Remdesivir as an approved and proscribed anti-corona medicine, he noted that Iran had significantly increased its anti-corona items, including masks, ventilators, and medicines to combat the virus, improve the country's economy, and meeting people's needs.

The official also referred to the long-term plan of Iran's FDA to resist the imposed sanctions on Iran and noted that the country banned importing similar products in order to create opportunities for domestic producers of medical equipment and pharmaceutical supplements.

## Tehran Censures Terrorist Attack On Ashura Mourners in Pakistan

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign ministry has condemned a brutal terrorist attack in Pakistan's Punjab province against commemorative Ashura mourning ceremonies held by local Shia Muslims, expressing deep sympathy with the families of the victims.

Insisting on the need to combat all forms of such inhumane acts of terrorism, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh called on Thursday for collaboration among all regional states in the persistent fight against perpetrators, organizers, sponsors and financial backers of such attacks.

Tehran's reaction came after a powerful bomb exploded among a group of Pakistani Shia mourners commemorating Ashura -- marking the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Shia imam and grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the Karbala tragedy -- in the eastern province of Punjab, killing at least five people and injuring scores of others.

Local police estimated that more than 50 mourners, including children, had also been wounded when a roadside bomb struck the mourning procession in the city of Bahawalnagar on Thursday.

## SNSC Secretary Warns Israel About Humiliating Dismissal

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top security official says a "humiliating" defeat awaits the occupying regime of Israel as it befalls on its number-one ally, the U.S., in Afghanistan.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), pointed to the U.S. defeats in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, and stressed any occupying regime will face the same fate.

"The end of any occupation is a humiliating dismissal. The fate that befell the United States in Vietnam, #Afghanistan and Iraq is also the inevitable fate of the occupying Zionist regime," Shamkhani said in a post on his official Twitter page.

The remarks come as the Taliban militant group has sealed its control of Afghanistan, two decades after it was ousted irrespective of years and hundreds of billions of dollars spent by the United States under the declared bid to build up the war-ravaged country's defense power and fight militancy and terrorism.

Taliban's takeover came in the wake of the pullout of U.S.-led forces from Afghanistan, which President Joe Biden defiantly defended, rejecting criticisms of the withdrawal.

## Armed Forces to Increase Ability to Attack Centers of Threats

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri said on Sat. that the policy of the Armed Forces is to increase the ability to attack the centers of threats.

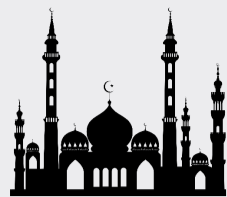
In a statement released on the occasion of the anniversary of 'National Day of Defense Industry', the commander said, "Increasing the ability to attack the centers of threat against the Islamic country is a strategic, unstoppable policy of the armed forces."

Major General Bagehri congratulated the anniversary and highlighted the role of the Armed Forces in the development of the country.

He noted that the Armed Forces pursue peace, friendship, and unity with the regional nations against foreigners and trans-regional adventurers.

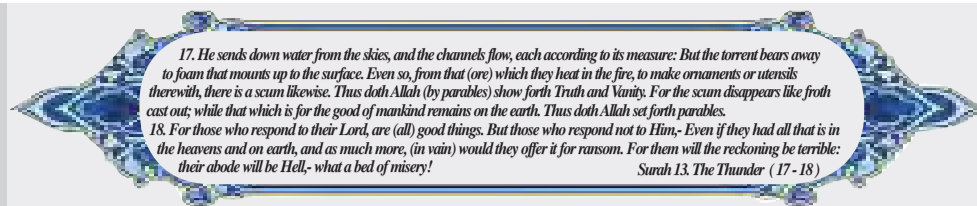
"The Armed Forces do not pay attention to the media war and psychological imperialistic operations of the U.S., the Zionist regime and their allies."





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:04
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:00
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:29



## Iran Can Launch Production Centers in Ghana

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – The Ambassador of Ghana to Tehran Eric Owusu-Boateng in meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei said Iran can launch production centers in Ghana and after removal of sanctions both countries can launch direct flight between Tehran and Accra.**

In the meeting, Shafei said Ghana's economy is considered as one of the advanced economic models among the African states and its economy is the biggest in Africa after Nigeria. He went on to say that the amount of economic growth of Ghana has been very considerable and this country attaches great importance to trade.

He noted that economic and political stability in Ghana is very excellent and this stability has created great attractions for cooperation. He stated economies of Iran and Ghana can be complementary, for example, Iran has great potentials for developmental and construction projects in Ghana while Ghana is important for Iran in the field of wood, rubber and paper.

Shafei went on to say that there are other grounds for bilateral cooperation like producing medicines, cement, tile, and textile and food industries. He reiterated that one of the major problems for trade between the two states is lack of enough information for the economic activists of the two countries from capacities of the two countries. He said in the current condition, setting up of the Iran-Ghana Joint Economic Commission can be very important and both countries should strive to launch this commission as soon as possible.

Shafei stated that the policy of new government in Iran is to pay great importance to economic relations between Iran and African states and one of the active chambers of commerce in Iran, Hamedan Province Chamber, has been selected as the assisting chamber which can have considerable effects on the economic relations.

He emphasized the ICCIMA supports developing economic ties with Ghana and expressed hope the esteemed Ambassador of Ghana would help this cooperation to continue. He concluded that Hamedan Chamber of Commerce has signed a MoU with Ghana's Chamber of Commerce and expressed hope this MoU come into effect as soon as possible.



Then Owusu-Boateng, for his part, said that the political relation between Tehran and Accra is in the highest level and both countries have shown their supports in both some mutual interest fields and in multilateral issues.

He said Ghana has had exchange of high-ranking delegation with Iran but the challenge that the country is currently facing with is that it cannot turn this warm political relation into a warm economic one and both sides should remove hurdles in order to boost their economic relation.

He noted that both countries should engage their private sectors to resolve problems and it is possible through chambers of commerce. He added that the potentials of Ghana in the economic indexes is high and some of these indexes have encouraged the international businesses to enter the country and companies like Suzuki, Kia Motors and Hyundai have invested in Ghana. He reiterated that the existing security and peace in Ghana has caused Ghana to be chosen as the top destination for foreign investment and the private sector of Iran can also join the wagon.

Owusu-Boateng then said in those fields that both countries are keen to cooperate, there is the possibility for Iranians to launch production centers in Ghana. He said that Ghana can create a condition for Iranian goods exempted from tax in Ghana to be offered in the free zones of other African countries.

He also urged ICCIMA to hold an investment webinar wherein the members of chambers of the two countries would attend to explore challenges and find ways to resolve hurdles.

He expressed hope after the sanctions are removed, a direct shipping and a direct flight between the two countries would be launched.

The Ghanaian diplomat continued to say that Ghana's Oil Company is ready to cooperate with Iran in the field of LPG and ready for investment.

## Iran Among Top Producers of Gold, Gems

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Union of Manufacturers and Exporters of Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones in Iran has said that Iran is currently among the top 7 producing countries in the gold and gemstone sector.

Hojjat Shafei added that in the industry of producing gold, silver, and precious stones, Hong Kong, Turkey, Thailand, India, Italy, South Korea, and Iran are active.

The head of the Union of Producers and Exporters of Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones in Iran said, of course, in the consumption sector, Iranians are among the top 15 in using gold, silver, and precious stones in the world.

Shafei added that the fluctuations in gold and currency prices have affected the amount of trade of gold, and have led to a stagnation in the trade of gold and precious stones.

The head of the Union of Producers and Exporters of Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones in Iran said that there are about 18 gold, silver, and precious stones mines registered in Iran, and according to the official statistics, 5 mines are more active than the other ones.

Shafei added that in the field of precious stones mines, Iran can be one of the exporters of this sector in the world because 17% of the world's precious stone mines are located in Iran.

## CEO of BMI Named as Value Creating Manager

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Bank Melli Iran (BMI) won the value creating manager award during the national conference of value creating managers which was held in Tehran.

According to reports, Deputy Head of BMI on Branches Affairs Mr. Hassan Mounesan received the award of value creating manager on behalf of the CEO of the bank Mr. Mohammad Reza Hosseinzadeh.

The conference was held by the ministry of industry, mine and trade in collaboration with Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and Iran Technical and Vocational Training Organization.

The goal behind holding this event was to promote the culture of entrepreneurship and production, and the approach of the conference was to honor the top managers of the production, industrial and economic units.

Some factors like developing the business in the domestic and international climates, significance of strategic management in the businesses, role of skill, renovation and creativity as well as measures by the managers in the field of marketing and sales were decisive in selecting the best managers by the conference.



## Project-Centered Companies Can Set Target for Course of Development

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company Eng. Naser Taghizadeh in an interview touched upon the existing challenges in implementing projects in the mine and industrial mining sector of the country and said Iran is one of the top ranking countries in the world and the first in the Middle East in terms of having mineral reserves but despite this amazing capacity, the country has not been able to take advantage of it for its economic growth.

Taghizadeh said currently miners in the country are challenging with several problems and in recent years most of small and big mines in the country have faced with different hurdles in exploitation and extraction and these problems have led to the shutdown of considerable number of mines and sharp reduction of activities in most of mines.

Pointing to the current economic condition of the country and massive economic sanctions, he said one of the advantages of the country for getting out of this crisis is to focus on mineral resources and domestic potentials. He noted he believes with investment in the mining sector, the country can increase the value added from its sales and exports of mineral material and on the other hand, investment in the processing sector will lead to the pick-up in discovery, extraction and exploitation.

Taghizadeh reiterated that one the most important priorities in the mining sector to materialize the goals of the economic resistance is to reform and stabilize laws and regulations.

He added that 83 percent of the mines in the country are in the deprived and rural areas, and activation and exploitation of those mines will lead to creation of jobs and development of those areas. He said according to statistics, 6,242 mines and mining industry are in 26 provinces and in the deprived areas which enjoy considerable reserves for extraction and in case it is extracted, considerable jobs will be created and those areas will be developed.

Taghizadeh also said that project-centered companies can define the target for the course of development, adding that for this reason Chadormalu Company launched the public joint stock company, Tajali Mines, and Metals Development Company which its shares will be soon offered at the stock market.

He reiterated that Tajali Company as the first project-centered company can both be an arm for developing the projects of the active companies in this industry and for developing the culture of investment and new methods of financing.

Taghizadeh also warned that if new exploration operations are not conducted and iron ore reserves required by the national steel industries do not increase, soon the national steel industry will face recession or be dependent on imports of raw material.



## Kazakhstan Embassy Holds Photo Exhibition on Country's Achievements

BY: F. TAHERPOUR

TEHRAN – The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan on August 15 held a photo exhibition on the achievements of the country since its independence day.

Kazakhs in December will celebrate the 30th independence anniversary of the Republic of Kazakhstan and on this occasion the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Tehran held a photo exhibition to display some of achievements of the country.

A collection of historical photographs were put on display which showed the main milestones of the formation and development of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's Counselor Gamzat Khairov hosted this exhibition and briefed the visitors of some of the achievements of Kazakhstan which have been achieved since the Independence Day. He said Kazakhstan managed to create a modern progressive state with a dynamically developing economy, preserving peace and social harmony in the multinational Kazakh society.

He said after the country took major economic policies, foreign investors from the U.S. and Europe rushed to Kazakhstan for investment and currently major big foreign companies are present in the country.

Khairov added that Kazakhstan is a peaceful country and it has no enemies and it is a friend to the whole world and has no border disputes with any neighboring state. He went on to say that, in the very heart of Eurasia, a new capital was erected which is called today Nur-Sultan as the capital has been built from a scratch in a record short period and the main city of Kazakhstan has received worldwide recognition, being



Kazakhstan's Counselor Gamzat Khairov (L) provides the visitors with more information on the photos

awarded the title of "City of the World" by the decision of UNESCO.

The diplomat went on to say that Kazakhstan has become the leader of Central Asia due to its achievements and progresses and now it is the largest economy in the Central Asia region, as the country's economy has grown 16 times since its independence.

He reiterated that this year, the country's GDP is expected to grow above 3%.

Then he pointed to some other achievements of the country in the fields of sport culture and politics.

Khairov by pointing to some photos in the exhibition touched upon Kazakhstan's ties with Iran since 1992 when their diplomatic relation was established. He said at the end of January-May 2021, the growth of mutual trade between Iran and Kazakhstan amounted to \$212.9m having increased by 59.8%. He emphasized that the potential of the two countries has not yet been fully utilized, noting that recently direct flight from Gorgan to Aktau which was launched in April can boost expansion of cooperation between Tehran and Nur-Sultan.

The ceremony was attended by the representatives of Iranian community, mass media, scientific-educational and business circles of Islamic Republic who viewed photos displaying main stages of establishment and development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, its achievements in the fields of foreign policy, economy, sport, arts as well as photographs with important moments of the bilateral Kazakh-Iranian relations.

During the event, a short video about success of the Republic of Kazakhstan over the years of independence and historical contribution of Kazakhstan's First President – Elbasy N.A. Nazarbayev was shown to the guests.

## NIOC Raises September Crude Prices for Asian Customers

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has raised the September official selling prices (OSPs) for crude deliveries to customers in Asia.

A report by ISNA news agency said that NIOC had increased its Iran Light's September OSP to \$2.65 above the Oman/Dubai average for Asia, up \$0.25 against the price announced in August. Iran Heavy also rose by \$0.25 to \$1.55 above the Oman/Dubai average for Asian customers, said the report, adding that the NIOC's Soroush had been raised by \$0.20 to \$1.6 above the average. The new prices comes two weeks after Saudi Arabia's state oil company Aramco made a similar announcement raising OSPs for Asia by up to \$0.6 against August prices.

The NIOC aims to increase its supplies to major customers in Asia if Iran and world powers can revive a 2015 nuclear agreement that unraveled three years ago when a former US administration pulled out of the deal and imposed sanctions on Tehran. Iran's current oil exports figures are believed to be around 1 million barrels per day (bpd), down from 2.8 million bpd reported in early 2018 but up from lows of 300,000 bpd seen in late 2019, when the country faced an abrupt decline in oil sales because of US sanctions.

China and India used to be the top buyers of the Iranian crude before the sanctions while South Korea had accounted for a bulk of purchases of condensate, a very light form of crude, from Iran. Unconfirmed reports suggest NIOC's sale of crude to small Chinese refiners have increased in recent months as the company finds new methods of getting round the US sanctions.

## MAPNA, CDTIC Sign Deal on Building Isfahan-Ahvaz Double-Track Electric Railway

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - MAPNA Group and Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to cooperate on building the Isfahan-Ahvaz double-track electric railways.

According to reports, after one year and a half of technical, commercial and tense contract studies, the MoU was finalized. In this regard, the engineering and executive affairs of the Isfahan-Ahvaz double-track electric railway will be carried out by a consortium comprised of MAPNA Group companies, MAPNA International Company and MAPNA Rail Development and Construction Company.

According to the MoU, all strong capacities of Iranian contractors will be used in this project.

The Isfahan-Ahvaz double-track electric railway will be constructed with the approximate length of 500 kilometers and is comprised of 80 kilometers of tunnels and 15 kilometers of long bridge equipped with the modern signaling system, telecommunications, providing electricity and it is considered as the biggest national rail project.

The financial source of the budget will be provided through foreign finance and cooperation of the industries which will enjoy participating in the construction of this railway. The main role of MAPNA Group companies in the project is the studies and engineering the project, supervising the execution of the project as the public contractor, and also executing the final part of the project and managing its financing.

The main goal behind this project is to transfer cargo especially iron ore and passenger from the west of Isfahan to Ahvaz and to the southwestern border areas like Imam Port, Mahshahr Port and Khorramshahr.

The project will be completed in 7 years and during this period 6,000 direct jobs will be created and it will turn into one of the most important rail corridor of the country.



## New Zealand Extends Delta Outbreak Lockdown

WELLINGTON (Dispatches) - New Zealand extended a national Covid-19 lockdown Friday as case numbers continued to rise and a Delta variant outbreak spread from Auckland to the capital Wellington.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the initial three-day lockdown, which would have expired overnight Friday, would be extended by another four days.

She said New Zealand was still trying to assess the scale of the outbreak, which emerged in Auckland this week, ending the country's run of six months without community transmission. "We just don't quite know the full scale of this Delta outbreak. All in all, this tells us we need to continue to be cautious," she said.



## S.Korea Extends Social Distancing

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea has extended its social distancing curbs for two weeks amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, while allowing vaccinated people some latitude, its prime minister said on Friday.

The country's fourth COVID-19 wave has shown few signs of abating six weeks after the toughest Level 4 distancing rules, which include a ban on gatherings of more than two people after 6 p.m., were imposed in the greater Seoul area.

South Korea reported 2,052 new COVID-19 cases on Thursday, 2,001 of which were locally acquired, Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) data showed.



## NATO Pledges to Speed Evacuations From Afghanistan



KABUL (Dispatches) - More than 18,000 people have been flown out of Kabul since the Taliban took over Afghanistan's capital, a NATO official said on Friday, pledging to redouble evacuation efforts as criticism of the West's handling of the crisis mounted.

Thousands of people, desperate to flee the country, were still thronging the airport, the official who declined to be identified told Reuters, even though the Taliban have urged people without legal travel documents to go home.

The speed with which the Taliban conquered Afghanistan as U.S. and other foreign troops were completing their withdrawal surprised even their own leaders and has left power vacuums in many places.

The Taliban urged unity ahead of Friday prayers, the first since they seized power, calling on imams to persuade people not to leave Afghanistan amid the chaos at the airport, protests and reports of violence.

A witness told Reuters several people were killed in the eastern city of Asadabad on Thursday when Taliban militants fired on a crowd demonstrating their allegiance to the vanquished Afghan republic, as the Taliban set about establishing an emirate, governed by strict Islamic laws.

There were similar shows of defiance in two other cities - Jalalabad and Khost - in the east, as Afghans used celebrations of the nation's 1919 independence from British control to vent their anger with the Taliban takeover.

Another witness reported gunshots near a rally in Kabul, but they appeared to be Taliban firing into the air.

A Taliban spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

Kabul has been largely calm, except in and around the airport where 12 people have been killed since Sunday, NATO and Taliban officials said.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in an interview with NBC News that the United States was "laser-focused" on "the potential for a terrorist attack" by a group such as Islamic State during the evacuation.

Criticism of NATO and other Western powers has mounted as images of the chaos and desperation are shared around the world.

In one scene captured on social media, a small girl was hoisted over the airport's perimeter wall and handed to a U.S. soldier.

U.S. President Joe Biden is set to speak about the evacuation efforts at 1 p.m. (1700 GMT) on Friday, having faced a torrent of criticism for his handling of the troop withdrawal, negotiated by the previous U.S. administration.

Media in Britain reported its spy chiefs may face a grilling over intelligence failings. Several British officials remained on holiday as the Afghan debacle erupted, and Foreign Minister Dominic Raab has been heavily criticized for his initial response to the unfolding crisis.

## China Passes New Personal Data Privacy Law

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China's National People's Congress officially passed a law designed to protect online user data privacy and will implement the policy starting November 1, according to state-media outlet Xinhua.

The law's passage completes another pillar in the country's efforts to regulate cyberspace and is expected to add more compliance requirements for companies in the country.

China has instructed its tech giants to ensure better secure storage of user data, amid public complaints about mismanagement and misuse which have resulted in user privacy violations.

The law states that handling of personal information must have clear and reasonable purpose and shall be limited to the "minimum scope necessary to achieve the goals of handling" data.

It also lays out conditions for which companies can collect personal data, including obtaining an individual's consent, as well as laying out guidelines for ensuring data protection when data is transferred outside the country.



## Turkey Is Not Europe's Refugee Warehouse

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Faced with a new migration wave from Afghanistan, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on European nations to shoulder the responsibility for Afghans fleeing the Taliban.

Erdogan said that his country would not become Europe's "refugee warehouse." In a televised address after a Cabinet meeting, he said his government would, "if necessary", engage in talks with a government that could be formed by the Taliban, "for the stability and security of this country".

There has been an increase in recent weeks in the number of Afghans making their way into Turkey across the border from Iran.

Anti-migrant sentiment is running high in Turkey as it tackles economic woes, including high unemployment, that have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, and there is little desire to take in more people.

"We need to remind our European friends of this fact: Europe, which has become the center of attraction for millions of people, cannot stay out of the problem by harshly sealing its borders to protect the safety and well-being of its citizens," Erdogan said.

"Turkey has no duty, responsibility or obligation to be Europe's refugee warehouse."

He said Turkey was home to 5 million foreign nationals, including 3.6 million Syrians who fled the civil war in the neighboring country, and 300,000 Afghans.

About 1.1 million are foreigners with residence permits, Erdogan said.

In 2016, Ankara and the EU signed a deal for Turkey to stem the flow of hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees towards Europe, in return for visa-free travel for Turkish citizens and EU financial support.

Erdogan has frequently accused the EU of not keeping its side of the bargain. He said he was aware of the Turkish public's "unease" about refugees.

Erdogan repeated that the country had reinforced its border with Iran with military, gendarmerie and police, and that a wall being built along the frontier was nearing completion.

"Our state is primarily responsible for the safety and well-being of its 84 million citizens," he said.

"On the other hand, we are not a society that lacks character, thinks only about itself and turns its back on those who come to our door."

## Foreign Aid Trickles in to Rural Haiti

CAVAILLON (Dispatches) - A drip of foreign aid began to reach more rural areas of southwestern Haiti, arriving five days after a powerful earthquake killed more than 2,000 and flattened tens of thousands of buildings into rubble.

Hundreds of people lined up to receive provisions from the U.N. World Food Program at a camp in the rural town of Camp-Perrin for people displaced by Saturday's 7.2 magnitude quake. The official death toll stood at 2,189 but was expected to rise.

A mudslide caused by two nights of heavy rain earlier this week had partly blocked the main road leading to the area. Any more rain could make it impassable, locals said. People were sleeping out in a field under trees.

"No one is coming to help us," said Montette Joseph, a 33-year-old with four children who had traveled two hours in a pickup truck to reach the distribution site. The price of small bags of drinking water had tripled since the quake, she lamented.

"I am looking for assistance so I can rebuild my home and take care of my children. We are living a tragedy."

Many Haitians have complained about the sluggish

arrival of aid, while fresh tremors are adding to anxiety.

In the coastal city of Les Cayes, one of the areas worst hit by the quake, residents were jolted from their beds by a fresh aftershock overnight.

There were no immediate reports of damage, a police officer said. Families slept on mattresses on the streets across the city, nervous about the state of buildings.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas, and is still recovering from a 2010 quake that killed over 200,000.

Foreign nations have been ramping up aid deliveries. The United States on Thursday dispatched the warship USS Arlington to offer humanitarian assistance while the U.S. Coast Guard was transporting the injured from Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince. One flight ferried a newborn baby along with its mother and father, a Reuters photographer witnessed.

France also sent a ship with humanitarian cargo, a helicopter and 25 soldiers, said Florence Parly, the French armed forces minister.

The latest disaster struck just weeks after President Jovenel Moise was assassinated on July 7, plunging the nation of 11 million people deeper into a political crisis that has worsened its economic woes.



## U.N. Chief Calls for Immediate Ceasefire in Ethiopia

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters)

- U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pushed for an immediate ceasefire and unrestricted aid access in Ethiopia's Tigray region, where he said millions of people needed help and women had suffered "unspeakable violence."

"It is time for all parties to recognize that there is no military solution, and it is vital to preserve the unity and stability of Ethiopia which is critical to the region and beyond," Guterres told reporters in New York.

Ethiopian federal government troops and forces from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) have been battling since November in a war that has killed thousands of people, led to a major refugee crisis and ethnic killings, rape as a weapon of war and a humanitarian crisis.

"Humanitarian conditions are hellish. Millions of people are in need. Infrastructure has been destroyed. We have heard first-hand accounts of women who have been subjected to unspeakable violence," Guterres said.

"The spread of the conflict has ensnared even more people in its horror," he said.

In recent weeks, the conflict has spread into two neighboring regions, Afar and Amhara, displacing about 250,000 more people and raising international concerns about a wider destabilization of Africa's second most populous nation.

Guterres pushed for the start of an Ethiopian-led political dialogue to end the conflict.



**Shanon**  
(adviser)

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S, J, & pkg  
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**Parsian**

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Fully Furn

**Farmanieh Apt (\$2500)**  
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Sauna, Jacuzzi, & pkg  
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## IMF Carefully Watching Taliban's Advance in Afghanistan

LONDON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund is "carefully watching" the Taliban's advance in Afghanistan a spokesperson said on Friday, but added it was too early to predict the economic spillover in neighboring IMF program countries like Pakistan.

Taliban insurgents tightened their grip on

Afghanistan on Friday, wresting control of its second and third biggest cities.

"The IMF is carefully watching the fast-moving situation on the ground in Afghanistan," an IMF spokesperson told Reuters. "It is premature to speculate on the outcome and potential economic spillovers to Pakistan".



## Turkey, South Korea Ink \$2B Currency Swap Deal

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The central banks of Turkey and South Korea have signed a currency swap agreement that will allow both countries to provide liquidity for the counterparty in a move aimed at strengthening financial stability, the Bank of Korea (BOK) said on Thursday.

The \$2 billion (TL 17.19 billion) agreement will enable the Bank of Korea to provide the South Korean won to Turkey and for the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) to provide the Turkish lira to financial institutions in South Korea, the central bank said in a statement.

The swap agreement, signed by CBRT Governor Şahap Kavcıoğlu and his South Korean counterpart Lee Ju-yeol, aims to boost bilateral trade through a swap-financed trade settlement facility and promote financial cooperation for the economic development of both sides, the bank stressed.

"The effective period is three years from today, and could be extended by mutual agreement between the two sides," the BOK said.

The lender said the central banks of both countries will cooperate further to enable payments from bilateral trade to be settled in the South Korean won and Turkish lira.

Last year, Turkey also tripled its currency-swap agreement with Qatar to \$15 billion.

Enver Erkan, chief economist at Istanbul-based private investment firm Tera Yatırım, said a new swap agreement with an Asian central bank had been expected following Turkey's similar deals with the Chinese and Qatari central banks.

He underlined that one function of the new agreement is developing trade in local currencies between the two sides. "This can contribute to the overall trade volume," he said.

Citing the current Turkish-South Korean trade volume of \$7 billion annually, he said Turkey has a trade deficit of \$4.4 billion with South Korea.

"In trade in local currencies, an equal balance of trade is desirable, so Turkey should boost its exports and potential in terms of increasing its trade volume," Erkan said.

Turkey last year actively conducted talks to establish swap lines with many countries, including the U.S., Japan, Malaysia and India.

The country first signed a swap agreement with China in 2012 and subsequent deals have allowed Turkish companies to pay for imports from China using the Chinese yuan.

In June 2021, the CBRT said in a statement its swap agreement with China had been increased by TL 35.1 billion (\$4.10 billion) and 23 billion Chinese yuan (\$3.55 billion), to facilitate bilateral trade and to support financial stability.

The agreement reached TL 46 billion and 35 billion Chinese yuan, the statement said.

## Lebanese Troops Deploy at Gas Stations

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's army Saturday raided gas stations and seized petrol to curb hoarding as the central bank chief stood firm on his decision to halt fuel subsidies. The shortages have forced several businesses to scale back operations. The American University of Beirut Medical Center said it was threatened with a forced shutdown as early as Monday.

Lebanon is gripped by one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850's, according to the World Bank, and is struggling with fuel, bread and medicine shortages.

On Wednesday central bank chief Riad Salameh said he would halt state subsidies on fuel imports to ease pressure on the bank's dwindling foreign reserves, sparking panic across the country.

Beirut is a ghost city today. Shops are closed, streets are nearly empty, and there's just miles and miles of cars parked on the side of the road, waiting for fuel. Saturday Salameh insisted he would not back down from his decision without a parliamentary vote, saying foreign reserves had fallen to \$14 billion. "I will not review the removal of subsidies on fuel unless the use of compulsory reserves is legalised" by a parliamentary vote, he told a local radio. The Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 percent of its value on the black market, and 78 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Crippling shortages of fuel and power cuts lasting more than 22 hours per day have left many businesses and homes without the diesel needed to power private generators, plunging the country into darkness.

They have also caused giant queues at petrol stations that are rationing gasoline supply, allegedly because of low stock.

Fuel importers blame the crisis on a delay by the central bank in opening credit lines to fund imports.

Salameh denied those charges on Saturday, accusing importers and distributors of holding back fuel to sell it higher prices in the black market, or across the border in Syria.

"The importers are to blame," Salameh said, accusing them of squandering \$820 million the lender had fronted for three months of imports.

To stem hoarding, the army on Saturday said it was raiding closed gas stations to seize gasoline and distribute it "free of charge" to the people.

It shared pictures and video footage on its social media pages showing soldiers working pumps at gas stations and filling up car tanks.

An AFP correspondent saw soldiers deployed at several gas stations north of Beirut, where hundreds of vehicles had been queuing for long hours to fill up on petrol.



## 90% of Firms See Japanese Economy Growing in 2022

TOKYO (KYODO) - Ninety percent of major Japanese companies expect the country's economy to expand in 2022 on hopes that the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic will subside, according to a Kyodo News survey.

The survey on 111 companies, including Toyota Motor Corp and Sony Group Corp, also showed companies increasingly joining global efforts to curb greenhouse gases and striving to ensure economic security amid an intensifying U.S.-China rivalry, with a focus on supply chains for chips and energy resources.

The survey found 75 percent of the firms expect moderate economic growth next year, followed by 15 percent that said the world's third-largest economy will expand in 2022. Five percent said they expect economic conditions to remain unchanged, while no company projected a moderate decline or contraction.

With multiple answers allowed, 93 percent of the firms foreseeing economic expansion said they believe so due to the progress in coronavirus vaccinations, while 83 percent cited the recovery in private consumption and 72 percent pinned hopes on an easing of coronavirus restrictions on economic activities.

Despite the optimistic outlook by the companies, concerns remain over the pandemic going forward, with the government's inoculation campaign remaining slow and the highly contagious Delta variant driving up infection cases nationwide, analysts say. If the infection situation does not improve as hoped for, recovery of private consumption could be delayed, and supply chains could be disrupted, respondents in the survey said.

As for the current condition of Japan's economy, 56 percent of the companies said it is flat, and 40 percent said it is expanding moderately.

## Growth Rates of Azerbaijan's Economy in H1 Exceed Int'l Forecasts

BAKU (Dispatches) - Growth rates of Azerbaijan's economy in the first half of 2021 exceeded forecasts of international organizations, Executive Director of the Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communications (CAERC), Doctor of Economics, Professor Vusal Gasimli said in an interview to Trend.

According to Gasimli, the main priorities of the state budget of Azerbaijan are the restoration of the territories liberated from

Armenian occupation [in the 2020 Karabakh war], the development of army, growth of the economy and social welfare of the population, including meeting the needs of the families of martyrs and participants of the war.

Social expenditures of the state budget in the first half of 2021 amounted to 44.1 percent of actual expenditures and exceeded 5.1 billion manat (\$3 billion). "Current expenses exceeded last year's figure by 2.6 percent, or 127.3 million manat (\$74.8 million). They also include salaries, stipends and social benefits, medicine and food costs according to economic classification. Social payments in Azerbaijan have increased by more than 60 percent over the past three years," he noted.

"During this period, the minimum pension in Azerbaijan increased by 82 percent, the average pension - by 60 percent, the average benefit - by 100 percent, the amount of targeted social assistance - by 72 percent. With a living wage of 196 manat (\$115.3), the average pension is 360 manat (\$211.7), and the minimum wage is 250 manat (\$147)," Gasimli further said.

Besides, according to the executive director, the growth rates of the non-oil sector of the Azerbaijani economy in the first half of 2021, compared to other countries, exceeded the forecasts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"By early July, the growth of the Azerbaijani economy reached 2.1 percent, while the growth of the non-oil sector amounted to 5.1 percent. Moreover, growth in the non-oil industry amounted to 16.6 percent, in crop production - 8.9 percent, in livestock - 2.4 percent, in the information and communication services sector - 5.5 percent, and in retail trade - 1.7 percent," he said. "From January to June 2021, Azerbaijan's exports reached \$8.8 billion, increasing by \$1.1 billion, or 15 percent compared to the same period of last year."

The center's director stressed that a positive balance of \$3.4 billion was formed in Azerbaijan's foreign trade turnover. According to him, the non-oil sector is becoming the main driver of ensuring the revenues of the state budget of Azerbaijan.

## U.S. Consumer Sentiment Plummets in Early August to Decade Low

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. consumer sentiment dropped sharply in early August to its lowest level in a decade, in a worrying sign for the economy as Americans gave faltering outlooks

on everything from personal finances to inflation and employment, a survey showed on Friday.

The unexpected reading could give Federal Reserve policymakers pause if it translates in the months ahead to a dent in economic activity. The central bank has been getting closer to a decision on when to begin pulling back the extraordinary stimulus it put in place to shield the economy from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The University of Michigan said its preliminary consumer sentiment index fell to 70.2 in the first half of this month from a final reading of 81.2 in July. That was the lowest level since 2011, and there have been only two larger declines in the index over the past 50 years. Those were at the depths of the 2007-2009 recession and during the first wave of shutdowns in April 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic.

The losses were widespread across income, age, and education subgroups and spanned all regions. E U.S. stock market indexes slipped immediately after the report was released, while the price of gold gained ground. U.S. Treasury bond yields hit session lows.

"The renewed plunge suggests the latest wave of virus cases driven by the Delta variant could be a bigger drag on the economy than we had thought," said Andrew Hunter, an economist at Capital Economics.

Economic growth is still expected to grow this year at its fastest pace in four decades after falling into a brief recession in 2020 caused by the coronavirus pandemic. But the recovery is showing some indication of cooling off.

COVID-19 cases have doubled in the past two weeks to reach a six-month peak as the more transmissible Delta variant spreads rapidly across the country. Labor shortages across the service sector also persist while supply chain disruptions have continued.

"The pandemic's resurgence due to the Delta variant has been met with a mixture of reason and emotion... mainly from dashed hopes that the pandemic would soon end," Richard Curtin, the survey director, said in a statement.

The survey's gauge of current economic conditions also declined to a reading of 77.9 from 84.5 in July while its measure of consumer expectations slid to 65.2 from 79.0 in July.

The survey also showed consumers raising their expectations for medium term inflation, another measure the central bank is closely monitoring to ensure that inflation expectations remain anchored.

The survey's one-year inflation expectation edged lower to 4.6%, down from 4.7%, but its five-year inflation outlook ticked up to 3.0% from 2.8% in July.

## Cuba Dips Toe in Market Economy With Legalization of Small Businesses



HAVANA (Dispatches) - Thousands of small and medium-sized Cuban businesses will be allowed to incorporate in the coming months, in one of the most important economic reforms taken by the island's Communist government since it nationalized all enterprises in the 1960s.

The reform, details of which came to light this week, will permit small and medium-sized businesses for the first time since 1968, putting an end to the legal limbo in which many have existed for years in the Soviet-style economy.

The law will also apply to small and medium-sized state firms, paving the way for an important decentralization of some activities and forcing subsidized operations to become profitable or fold, according to Cuban economists.

In the food service sector, thousands of government-subsidized eateries will either close, become cooperatives or turn into small businesses, according to a mid-level manager involved in the process who spoke on condition of anonymity. Those it keeps will become small- and medium-sized state-owned businesses competing with them.

While there have always been private farms and agricultural cooperatives in Cuba, most of the economy was in state hands until the 1990s when heavily regulated small businesses were allowed in a few areas under the rubric of self-employment, limiting their legitimacy and legal standing.

The new measures are a key part of the economic reforms undertaken by new Cuban leader Miguel Diaz-Canel over the last year, as the coronavirus pandemic and tougher U.S. sanctions pushed the shaky economy into a tailspin and shortages of food, medicine and other basic goods reached alarming proportions.

Economy Minister Alejandro Gil said in a televised presentation Wednesday evening the measures would put state and private business on an equal footing to compete, work together and create joint companies, much as in capitalist countries.

## Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce's Meeting to Be Held in Mid-Sep.

TEHRAN (MNA) - The meeting of the founding general assembly of Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce will be held at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on September 13. As reported by the news portal of the ICCIMA, the meeting will be held online. In last December, ICCIMA deputy head for International Affairs Mohammad-Reza Karbasi had held an online meeting with Mukhtor Umarov, the chairman of the Association of Exporters of Uzbekistan, in which the two sides expressed the need for implementing a trade agreement between the two countries' chambers of commerce.



## Putin Alarmed by Unprecedented Natural Disasters in Russia

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin on Saturday said the scale of natural disasters that have hit Russia this year is "absolutely unprecedented" as local officials ask for Moscow's help to tackle fires and floods.

A former skeptic of man-made climate change, the Russian leader called on authorities to do everything possible to help Siberians affected by the region's gigantic wildfires, as well as Russians living in the flood-hit south of the country.

Speaking at a video conference with the leaders of the affected eastern and southern regions, Putin said he received daily reports on the climate situation in the country.

"In the south (of Russia), the monthly norm of rainfall now falls in a few hours and in the Far East on the contrary, forest fires in drought conditions are spreading rapidly," Putin said.

In Russia's largest and coldest region of Yakutia, this summer's forest fires have already burned through an area larger than Portugal.

Russian weather officials and environmentalists have linked the increasing intensity of Siberia's annual fires to climate change.

"All of this once again shows how important it is for us to deeply and systematically work on the climate and environment agenda," he said.

He called on authorities to be ready to evacuate more people living in areas affected by the fires -- especially the elderly -- as well as provide economic support for them.

He also asked officials to calculate the effects of the fires and make plans to reconstruct houses.

The Russian leader said it was important to do everything to "save the forest riches" and "minimise damage for animals of the taiga", a word used to describe northern Russian forests.

Local officials pleaded for reinforcements and Moscow's economic help to deal with the human cost of damage caused by extreme weather.

Aysen Nikolayev, the head of Yakutia, said firefighters were able to save 230 houses from flames.

He said evacuated villagers had received psychological help, with local children being sent to holiday camps.

He called the scale of the fires a first "in history" and asked for help after the region's harvest was severely affected.

"We will continue to save more houses," he said, thanking Putin for his support.

This week Russia launched a national response centre and deployed additional firefighters to battle the devastating Siberian fires.



The governor of the southern Krasnodar region Veniamin Kondratyev said 132 people -- mostly holidaymakers -- had been evacuated in the Black Sea resort of Anapa last night amid rising floods.

"We could not predict what would happen at night," he said, adding that the region had "the same rainfall in a day as we usually get in a year."

Kondratyev said that despite difficult climate conditions, the holiday season in resort areas is "continuing and under control."

The head of Moscow-annexed Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said that two people have died as a result of floods on the peninsula and that over 3,000 have asked authorities for help.

Heavy smog hung over the regional capital of Yakutsk on Friday, which was declared a non-working day in much of the region over health concerns due to wildfire smoke.

For years Putin was notorious for his scepticism about man-made global warming and saying Russia stands to benefit from it.

But in recent months he has also made statements to the effect that climate change is not just a boon to Moscow.

The Russian leader this year participated in a summit hosted by US President Joe Biden and said Moscow is interested in "stepping up international cooperation" on climate change.

### Raisi Outlines Plans...

FROM PAGE 1

President Raisi described Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, his pick for foreign minister, as a person with sound knowledge and expertise in his major.

"Balanced foreign policy, development of neighborly relations, prioritization of economy in foreign interactions and activation of economic diplomacy will be high on the Foreign Ministry's agenda," he said.

Raisi went on to defend his choice for Iranian defense minister, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, saying he is a prominent figure among members of Iran's Armed forces and very well-informed of military affairs.

Iranian legislators started debating the ministerial picks in an alphabetical order. One supporter and one opponent of each nominee gave a speech.

Addressing the session, MP Karim Hosseini said Iran is definitely at a critical juncture, and a high vote for President Raisi's cabinet signifies the Islamic Republic's power, and the authority of the establishment.

"The new administration is expected to address the concerns of the nation, especially those that have been expressed in recent years by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah (Seyed Ali Khamenei) and the country's sympathizers," he said.

Hosseini cited economic stability, resolution of livelihood problems, strengthening the business environment, promotion of justice in the society, elimination of injustice, securing legal freedoms, fight against corruption, and further attention to cultural issues as major concerns of Iranians in recent years.

On August 13, Raisi submitted the list of his proposed ministers to the parliament to receive a vote of confidence.

The formal sessions on the vote of confidence for the ministerial picks will reportedly continue for four days.

### Iran GDP Soars...

FROM PAGE 1

The sanctions have hampered Iran's normal sales of crude but have spurred more manufacturing and agricultural activity in the country.

However, GDP started to return to positive growth region in second quarter of last fiscal year in late September.

IRNA's Sunday report showed that Iran's net national income had topped 28,121 trillion rials (\$106.1 billion) in the year to March 2020, 150% up against the previous year.

Gross national saving, a sum reached by deducting consumption expenditures from national income, reached 13,010 trillion rials (\$49.09 billion).

### Iran-Turkey...

FROM PAGE 1

The report put the worth of the two countries' bilateral trade at \$986 million in the first three months of this year.

Of the mentioned figure about \$505 million was related to Iran's exports to Turkey and about \$481 million was related to Iran's imports from this country. Meanwhile, in the first quarter of 2020, Iran's main trade with Turkey was related to Iran's imports from this country, while during the first quarter of 2021, Iran's trade balance with Turkey was positive.

During the first quarter of 2021, Iran's imports from Turkey increased by about 29 percent compared to the same period last year, and during the same period, Iran's exports to this country increased by 87 percent, which caused Iran's trade balance with Turkey from minus \$104 million in the first quarter of 2020 reach a positive \$24.4 million in the first quarter of 2021.

As previously reported by the head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce, Iran has exported \$2 billion of commodities to Turkey in 2020. Putting Iran's imports from Turkey at \$2.254 billion in 2020, Sa'adat said, "Iran-Turkey trade declined highly in 2020, while we had experienced an annual bilateral trade of \$15 billion, and meanwhile our target is to reach \$30 billion".

Saying that Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce is looking for a roadmap to improve trade transactions between the two sides, Sa'adat said, "In this regard, last year, the issue of trade ethics between the two countries was addressed and some indicators were selected in this field, because if we want to improve the volume of trade and achieve the goals, we must take action to solve the root problems."

During the 27th meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee, which was held in Ankara in mid-September last year, the two sides investigated different ways of reaching the targeted \$30-billion bilateral trade and reiterated that reaching this figure is possible despite the pressures of the U.S. sanctions.

### Iran Crude...

FROM PAGE 1

Reports in recent months have suggested that oil exports from Iran mostly to Asian customers have reached an average of 1 million bpd, up from lows of below 300,000 seen in 2020.

Iranian authorities say crude exports could easily return to pre-sanctions level if Tehran and world powers reach an agreement to revive a 2015 nuclear agreement which Washington pulled out of in 2018 before it imposed its sanctions on Iran. Increased output and sales of crude comes as Iran is benefiting from a recovery in demand for fuel in countries like China where governments have eased coronavirus restrictions on travel and economic activity.

## Coca-Cola Clocks 60 Years in Sri Lanka



COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Coca-Cola's journey in Sri Lanka began 60 years ago on April 1961, when consumers tasted their first ice-cold sip of Coca-Cola from a 300-millilitre glass bottle.

By establishing its footprint in Sri Lanka, Coca-Cola has invested in the future of its business, demonstrating long-term commitment, while adding economic value to the country. The Coca-Cola system has invested US\$ 99 million in Sri Lanka over the past two decades and created thousands of jobs directly and indirectly.

Through this evolution, for 60 years, Coca-Cola has silently broken new ground with impactful environmental and social projects that deliver enduring value to the nation, refreshing communities by making a difference.

Coca-Cola's vision is to craft the brands such as Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta and Kinley to refresh people and create a more sustainable business and better shared future that makes a difference in people's lives, communities and our planet. The company is continuously evolving to cater to consumers better and is now providing more convenient packages, innovating, and introducing new lower and no-sugar drinks.

To celebrate its 60th anniversary in Sri Lanka, Coca-Cola recently took the initiative to spread positivity with the '60 Days of Kindness' radio campaign to reward people in need and celebrate those who have gone above and beyond to spread kindness and compassion.

Recording its 60th year in Sri Lanka for posterity, 12 local artists have been commissioned to design Coca-Cola bottles 3 feet tall. Each artist has been given a theme central to Coca-Cola and once complete, the pieces of art will be auctioned for charitable causes.

Reflecting on its enriching journey, Coca-Cola can take pride in having built close community ties, achieving growth and expansion of its beverages portfolio, and embarking on impactful sustainability initiatives.

## Iranian, Pakistan Navy Commanders Hold Meeting on Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran Army's Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani met and held talks with the Commander of the Pakistan Navy Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi on the bilateral maritime relations. Heading a military delegation, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi attended the National Museum of the Islamic Revolution & Holy Defense on Saturday morning.



He was welcomed by Iran Army's Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani.

During this visit which took place at the official invitation of the Commander of Iran Navy, the

expansion of military relations, the deepening of relations in the maritime field, the maintenance of regional security, the use of military experience in the implementation of missions and the preservation of the national interests of the parties at sea level were discussed.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Iranian and Pakistani commanders paid tribute to the martyrs of the eight years of Sacred Defense (Iraqi imposed war against Iran in 1980-1988).

The commander of the Pakistani Navy is scheduled to visit the Iranian Northern Fleet tomorrow.

### President Confers...

FROM PAGE 1

These he said, included backing Tehran against instances of the United States' unilateralism, including its withdrawal from a 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic Republic and others.

The U.S. has to indicate its commitment towards Iran "in action," Raisi said, adding that this necessitated that Washington stop its violation of the obligations and relieve the sanctions. The Iranian president also thanked China for backing Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Raisi urged that Beijing expedite delivery of millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccines that Iran had bought from China in order to be able to fight the pandemic.

He, however, thanked China for helping Iran fight the pandemic, and also attached respect to the country's efforts to help many other nations confront the deadly disease. The Iranian president, meanwhile, said efforts aimed at the politicization of the virus and its source posed "serious threat" to the entire international community's health situation. Such malign attempts, he added, exemplified some countries' push to try to isolate China.

Iran backs China's sovereignty over the entirety of its territory, Raisi also said, communicating the Islamic Republic's strong opposition to the US and its allies' "impudent" efforts to violate the principle. The Islamic Republic is prepared to cooperate with China on the issue of establishment of security, stability, and calm in Afghanistan. The Chinese head of state, for his part, said that the countries' relations had weathered various international developments over the past half a century. The ties began fairing even "remarkably" better after the conclusion of the comprehensive Sino-Iranian cooperation deal.

China would expend maximum effort to help Iran receive the vaccines, the Chinese statesman also asserted.

He thanked Iran over its support for China's "fundamental interests," and said his country's support for Iran's membership of the SCO was in line with the organization's "long-term interests." Xi also referred to the U.S.'s unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear accord as the source of the problems that currently surrounds the deal, saying China "backs Iran's logical demands."

Later in a separate phone call, Raisi and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, expressed readiness to contribute to the establishment of peace and security in war-torn Afghanistan. The two presidents discussed the situation in Afghanistan, along with a range of other issues, during a telephone conversation. "The establishment of security, peace and tranquility in Afghanistan has always been emphasized by the Islamic Republic [of Iran], and we believe that all active Afghan groups should work together to establish stability in the country as soon as possible and make the U.S. withdrawal a turning point for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan," Raisi told Putin.

He said that the strengthening of relations with Russia was a central plank of Iran's foreign policy.

Emphasizing that Iran is determined to promote friendly and comprehensive relations between the two countries in a way that will set a successful model for neighborly relations, Raisi said, "We have a serious will to finalize the comprehensive document of Iran-Russia cooperation as soon as possible." He also thanked Russia for its initiative to launch the process of Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and described it as a step towards strengthening very close relations between the two countries. On Iran's nuclear program, the president said the Islamic Republic, as a party to international treaties, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is serious about restoring the rights of its people to pursue peaceful nuclear activities and to enjoy the benefits and achievements of the technology in all peaceful areas.

Raisi lashed out at the U.S. for seeking to use political and media hype to stand as a plaintiff instead of a criminal, and blaming Iran for Washington's own violations of its obligations and its oppressive and

Regarding the situation in Afghanistan, he expressed Iran's readiness for any cooperation for the establishment of peace in the war-ravaged country, and said, "The successful experience of Iran-Russia cooperation in the fight against Takfiri terrorism in Syria has opened new windows for the two sides to increase Tehran-Moscow interaction." For his part, Putin said that his country attaches great significance to the promotion of ties with Iran, citing remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei that a high level of mutual trust and a high economic capacity in the two countries can lead to tangible results in bilateral areas.

He also welcomed signing of a comprehensive bilateral cooperation agreement between the two countries.

On Vienna talks aimed at the revival of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Putin said the agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, "cannot be held hostage to problems not related to the nuclear deal."

### Iran Nuclear...

FROM PAGE 1

The remarks were made after the IAEA said in a report on Monday that Iran has made progress in its work on enriched uranium metal, with Tehran saying the process is aimed at producing a reactor fuel plate.

Iran representative to the international organizations in Vienna said in July that the Islamic Republic would soon produce enriched uranium metal and that the country had earlier informed the United Nations nuclear watchdog of the move.

## Emerson Joins Lyon On Season-Long Loan

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea defender Emerson Palmieri has joined French side Lyon on loan for the remainder of the season, the Premier League club announced. The 27-year-old Brazil-born Italy international, who can play at left-back or wing-back, joined the Blues from Roma in January 2018. Emerson, a member of the Italy squad that won Euro 2020, made his 71st appearance for Chelsea as a substitute in their Premier League opener against Crystal Palace.

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## Arsenal Set to Sign Real Madrid's Odegaard

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal are on the verge of a permanent deal for Real Madrid midfielder Martin Odegaard, according to reports. Odegaard joined Arsenal on loan for the second half of last season after failing to break into the Real Madrid team. The 22-year-old scored just two goals in 20 appearances for the Premier League club, but impressed Gunners boss Mikel Arteta with his composed performances.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY AUGUST 22, 2021

# New-look Tottenham Defeated in Conference League Opener

LONDON (Dispatches) - A new-look Tottenham slipped to a 1-0 defeat at Pacos de Ferreira of Portugal in their Europa Conference League play-off first leg. Coach Nuno Espirito Santo made 11 changes to the team that defeated champions Manchester City in their Premier League opener at the weekend. Not surprisingly, it was a disjointed performance by the Londoners who were again without England star Harry Kane. Three of Tottenham's summer signings started the game -- goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini, defender Cristian Romero and winger Bryan Gil. Teenagers Nile John and Dane Scarlett were handed chances to shine while identical twins Michael and Matthew Craig were on the bench. Lucas Silva struck the only goal on the stroke of half-time for the home side. The 23-year-old Brazilian striker, signed from Flamengo last year, nipped in behind the Tottenham defence to slot home the chance. "The decision was to try to give minutes to players, to get minutes on their legs and increase the levels of fitness," Nuno told the BBC. "Of course things take some time."



In Turkey, former Tottenham boss Jose Mourinho enjoyed a winning start with Roma as the Italian side edged out Trabzonspor 2-1. Mourinho fielded three new signings in his team and it was one of those, Eldor Shomurodov who grabbed the winner. With 10 minutes left, the Uzbek striker, signed from Genoa in the summer, was fastest to react when a header from Gianluca Mancini came back off the post. Lorenzo Pellegrini had given Roma a 55th-minute lead when Henrikh Mkhitaryan, another new arrival, played in the decisive pass. The Turks were level 10 minutes later when substitute Andreas Cornelius headed in just moments after replacing Gervinho. "This is not a Conference League level opponent, it felt more like a Champions League play-off," Mourinho told Sky Sport Italia. "They have a lot of experienced players. There was pressure and if anyone thought this would be easy, they were mistaken." Elsewhere, Colombian striker Luis Sinisterra scored a hat-trick as 1970 European Cup winners Feyenoord trounced Elfsborg of Sweden 5-0. In a tie featuring the most westerly club in a European top flight, Santa Clara of Portugal, who are based in the Azores, defeated Partizan Belgrade 2-1. In the Europa League play-offs, Greek champions Olympiakos closed in on the group stage with a 3-0 home win over Slovan Bratislava. Mady Camara, Pape Abou Cisse and an own goal from Vasil Bozhikov secured the victory. Galatasaray, defeated in Champions League qualifying by PSV Eindhoven, drew 1-1 at Randers who were only sixth in the Danish league last season. Antwerp endured a tough start to their campaign, losing 4-2 at Cypriot champions Omonia Nicosia. Scottish champions Rangers edged out Alashkert of Armenia 1-0 at Ibrox having played the entire second half with 10 men following a red card for John Lundstram.



PARIS (Dispatches) - Defending champion Dominic Thiem announced on social media on Wednesday the "tough decision" to pull out of this month's U.S. Open after failing to recover sufficiently from a wrist injury he picked up in Mallorca in June. The 27-year-old Austrian, who will also miss the remainder of the 2021 season, said he had been making a good recovery before feeling renewed pain last week. "Unfortunately, I've had to withdraw from the U.S. Open and will miss the rest of the 2021 season," he posted on Twitter. "I'm really disappointed not to be able to defend the title in New York but I haven't recovered from the wrist injury I suffered back in June at the Mallorca Open. "The past six weeks, I've been following medical advice, wearing the wrist splint, doing exercise to stay in shape before starting to train back on the courts. "My recovery was going really well but then last week I hit a ball during training and started to feel some pain again. I went straight to see the doctors. "After some tests, they said that my wrist needs more time, so we've agreed on being conservative and to give my wrist some time to recover. I'll wear the wrist splint for a couple more weeks before starting with exercises and then training with the racquet again."

## Murray Accepts Wildcard For Final U.S. Open Tune-Up Event

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's Andy Murray has been handed a wildcard for next week's Winston-Salem Open, the final tournament before the start of the U.S. Open Grand Slam, organizers said. Murray, who lost to Hubert Hurkacz in the second round of the Western & Southern Open in Cincinnati on Wednesday, was added to the main draw of the U.S. Open following the withdrawal of Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka. The three-time Grand Slam champion, who had hip surgeries in 2018 and 2019, has played only a handful of ATP Tour-level events this year having missed the Australian Open because of a positive COVID-19 test and opting out of competing at the French Open. Murray, who won his first Grand Slam at the 2012 U.S. Open, reached the third round at Wimbledon but withdrew from the singles at the Tokyo Games on the advice of his medical team, dashing his hopes of a third straight Olympic title. The 34-year-old played in the men's doubles in Tokyo, losing in the quarter-finals. The U.S. Open runs from Aug. 30-Sept. 12.

# Mbappe Not Unsettled by Speculation Over PSG Future



PARIS (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe is "relaxed" and not unsettled despite ongoing speculation about his future, Paris Saint-Germain coach Mauricio Pochettino insisted. "Kylian is relaxed, he is our player and I don't see him being anywhere else this season," Pochettino told reporters at a press conference ahead of PSG's Ligue 1 game against Brest. Mbappe, 22, has just a year left on his contract

in Paris and has been linked with a move to Real Madrid, with the speculation intensifying since the arrival of Lionel Messi in the French capital. In Madrid, Mbappe was on the front page of leading sports dailies Marca and AS on Thursday, with Real apparently hopeful of signing the World Cup winner before the transfer window closes in Europe on August 31. "This period is part of football," Pochettino said of the transfer window. "Lots of things are said and I know from experience that some things happen and others don't. "Kylian is preparing for tomorrow's game. The only conversations I have with Kylian are about football. He has a year left on his contract, if he doesn't renew it. We are happy with him and from what I see he is happy with us too."

## Osaka Falls to Teichmann in Cincinnati Shocker

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Naomi Osaka has no regrets over her stunning third-round loss at the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters to Swiss wild card Jil Teichmann. The four-time Grand Slam champion went down 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 to the world number 76 and admitted after the upset that her Tokyo Olympic third-round loss was on her mind. "I was doing all I was supposed to do," the Japanese world number two said. "In the second and third sets I was too defensive. "I learned a lot from this match -- I can sleep at night." Osaka lost to an opponent who has struggled with several injuries this season but is now back to health. "I knew inside I had this level and I was able to show it on court," said Cincinnati quarter-finalist Teichmann. "This week things are working out. I needed to be patient and here I am." Osaka stayed low-key throughout the post-match media sessions she says she dreads, answering questions and seeming to meekly accept the loss in her final tuneup for the US Open, which begins August 30. "I have high expectations of myself but there was nothing more I could do to win this match," Osaka said. "I'm almost glad I lost as it gives me so many things to work on in my game. I just hope the results come in time for the US Open."



## Van Gaal Aiming To Lead Dutch to World Cup Glory

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - Louis van Gaal says his ambition is to become a World Cup winner with the Netherlands after taking over the national team coaching job for a third time, he told a news conference. The 70-year-old said he had not taken the job to chase his own dreams but to help Dutch football out of a quandary after the resignation of Frank de Boer after the European Championship and the resumption of World Cup qualification next month. "I'm not doing this for myself but I'm doing it to help Dutch football. I've always done everything to help Dutch football. I've a lot to thank them for, the status that I have as a coach is thanks to them," Van Gaal said. The Dutch football association said they had approached the veteran coach because they felt they needed experience in the job with little time before next year's World Cup in Qatar. "I think if I was the Dutch football association, I'd also have approached me. Who else could have done it?" Van Gaal asked at his first news conference since being appointed. "It might sound a little melodramatic, but I think experience is now very important because we do not have any time." Van Gaal will have one day and a half with his squad before his first match against Norway in Oslo on Sept. 1, followed by Montenegro in Eindhoven on Sept. 4 and Turkey in Amsterdam on Sept. 7.



## Japanese F1 Race Cancelled For Second Year in a Row

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Japanese Formula One Grand Prix has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the second year in a row, race organizers said. The race was scheduled for the weekend of Oct. 8-10 at the Suzuka circuit and the cancellation follows the abandonment of Singapore's Oct. 1-3 night race. "Following ongoing discussions with the promoter and authorities in Japan the decision has been taken by the Japanese government to cancel the race this season due to ongoing complexities of the pandemic in the country," Formula One said in a statement. "Formula One is now working on the details of the revised calendar and will announce the final details in the coming weeks."