

IRAN Expresses Its Condolences To Its Shiite Readers Over the Martyrdom Anniversaries of Imam Reza (AS) and Imam Hassan Askari (AS). The Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands on Saturday

IRAN NEWS

An Iraqi Source Reported That It Seems That Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Will Travel to Beirut Next Wednesday to Meet Lebanese Officials

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Foreign Policy, Economy Not to Be Tied to JCPOA

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN) – Stating that Iran does not escape from the negotiation, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that Iran's foreign policy and the economy will not be tied to the negotiations and the JCPOA.

"Political relations and bilateral relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan have been growing," said Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Saturday night in a televised interview on recent developments in relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran supported the liberation of the occupied territories of Karabakh at the highest level, and at various levels, we emphasized our support for this issue. However, during this liberation, unfortunate events took place, such as the transfer of part of the terrorist movements from the region to this critical area," he added. "The Zionist regime tried to make the most of the opportunity, and during the unsuccessful attempt of these terrorist groups to approach the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Zionists were present in parts of the Republic of Azerbaijan."

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U.S. Source of Destruction, Warmongering in Region



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Islamic Revolution Leader says the presence of foreign militaries, including US troops, in the region is a source of destruction and warmongering. Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei added regional security can be ensured by the armed forces of regional countries.

He said regional armies should not allow foreign militaries to interfere or be present in the region for the sake of their own interests.

Ayatollah Khamenei further said events going on in some countries to the northwest of Iran should be handled to prevent the presence of any foreign forces there.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader described the Iranian Armed Forces as bulwark against threats posed by enemies both inside and outside the country.

"Today, organizations of the Armed Forces, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Police and the Basij Force are, in the true sense of the word, a defense shield against the serious threats of enemies both inside and outside the country," said Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

"Our Armed Forces take pride in being a bulwark and a robust fortress for the country and nation," the Leader noted. "The security of a country is fundamental infrastructure for all of its activities to make progress," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "Security is the most important issue when it comes to the Armed Forces," said the Leader.

He made the comments in an online graduation ceremony for cadets of military academies of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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Secretive UK Base Reportedly Linked to U.S. Assassination of Martyr Soleimani

TEHRAN (Dispatches)- A new research reveals that a secretive UK intelligence base was likely involved in the US military's drone strike that assassinated Iran's Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in early 2020, among its other controversial targeted killings.

According to the research, it "was probable" that the targeted killing of General Soleimani — who headed the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) — had been planned using information obtained from the Menwith Hill intelligence base, run by the UK Royal Air Force, in Yorkshire, The Guardian reported on Saturday.

The research, titled 'Menwith Hill in 3D, Domes, Data and Drone Strikes,' was presented at a special meeting of the Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign, which works to raise public awareness meant to make the facility accountable for its activities. Menwith Hill, the report said, "acted as a foreign outpost of the US National Security Agency (NSA)."

The research also raised questions about whether British personnel on the site are involved in assisting deadly U.S. drone strikes — in particular in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia. "The involvement of the UK and Menwith Hill in an assassination that threatened to spark a war should be of great concern," Barnaby Pace, an investigative journalist, wrote in the report in reference to General Soleimani's assassination. "The UK government's failure to assure the public that the base was not involved raises deep questions about the accountability for actions at the base."

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NewPoint

By:Hamid Reza Naghashian



Baku, New Scenario of Zionists Against Tehran

Nowadays it seems the tension between Azerbaijan Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran has escalated and the Western media are also fanning the flame to tarnish the ties between these two neighboring countries.

In recent weeks, the Azeri police and customs officials have begun imposing a "road tax" on Iranian trucks shipping fuel and other goods to neighboring Armenia, causing a strained atmosphere in the relations between Tehran and Baku.

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev has claimed that Iran had ignored Azerbaijan's calls for many years to stop transporting goods to Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave that's internationally recognized as Azerbaijani territory. He said no Iranian truck has entered Nagorno-Karabakh since Azerbaijan started imposing taxes.

Aliyev had also accused Iran of sending over trucks to "illegally" cross into the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is a matter of dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Reacting to Azeri President's claims and threats, several Iranian officials reacted and some of Iranian Army officials lashed back at Aliyev's remarks. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said Aliyev's remarks are "surprising" because they come at a time when Tehran and Baku have good relations based on mutual respect and there are normal channels through which the two sides can talk at the highest level.

Khatibzadeh reiterated that Iran has always opposed any occupation of territory and stressed the need for respecting the territorial integrity of countries and internationally recognized borders. He said good neighborliness is a key matter and all neighbors are expected to observe it.

He added that the recent Iran's military drills along the northwestern border was a sovereign matter and was aimed at protecting regional security. He, however, said that Iran will not tolerate the Israeli regime's presence near its borders even if it is ceremonial and the Islamic Republic will do anything that it takes to protect its national security.

Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini, spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament, said the Iranian and Azeri people have the most religious, cultural, and ethnic affinities.

Meshkini also said that Iran believes that no behavior should result in tensions between the two neighbors, warning any tension "will only benefit foreigners, especially the Zionist regime."

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Borrell Says JCPOA Must Be Implemented

TEHRAN (MNA) – The European Union's top diplomat said that everyone must go back to full implementation of the JCPOA, which means a return of the US into the agreement with the lifting of sanctions.

"As coordinator of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), I have always been clear: We must go back to full implementation of the deal, which means a return of the US into the agreement with the lifting of related US sanctions and Iran's full compliance with its nuclear commitments", EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell told Arab News.

The European Union's top diplomat made the remarks in response to a question over Borrell's recent meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in New York.

"My message to Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian in New York City was simple: Diplomacy is the solution; let's go back to Vienna without delay", he also said.

According to him, diplomacy offers the only real path to address the open issues in the Persian Gulf and among neighbors.

Referring to the Baghdad Conference (for Cooperation and Partnership) on August 28 and the bilateral talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran, he added that these are welcome developments.

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Iranians Relieved as COVID-19 Vaccination Rate Increasing

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker emphasized that the increase in the vaccination rate has reduced the anxiety among the people, and continuing vaccination would relieve Iranians.

Referring to the actions of the parliament, at the open session of the Islamic Consultative Assembly on Sunday, the Speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, said that the results of the transformational plans of the parliament have yielded results.

He also thanked all the people and those involved in the Arbäeen March procession in different cities of Iraq and Iran.

“Conquerors of Kheibar” Military Drill A Warning to Zionists

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a statement issued on Sunday, the Iranian Parliament stressed that the ‘Conquerors of Kheibar’ military drill conveyed a message of peace and authority to the countries of the region and a warning to the Zionist regime.

“Any geopolitical changes in the region and at the borders of neighboring countries are the red line of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we will not ignore any foreign action in this regard, just as we do not tolerate the conversion of any country’s soil to a place for the movements of the Zionist regime,” the statement read.

“‘Conquerors of Kheibar’ military drill conveyed a message of peace and authority to the countries of the region and a warning to the Zionist regime. Our relations with the people and neighboring countries, including the Muslim people and the brotherly country, the Republic of Azerbaijan, are long-standing and stable, and creating differences by enemies and the fake Israeli regime will never affect this unity and brotherhood.”

“At the same time, the Iranian people will never back down from the aggression



against their country and security of the region and the interests of the country. Islamic Iran has repeatedly has proved its brotherhood and good neighborliness with neighboring countries, including the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

“The divisive statements of some are against good neighborliness, and the Baku government is expected to oppose any sedition by foreigners as soon as possible and to counter the divisive actions.”

‘Conquerors of Kheibar’ military drill was held in Northwestern parts of Iran on Friday Morning by Iran’s Army Ground Forces.

Neighbors Urged to Be Vigilant in Face of Foreign Influence

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran’s top security official has reiterated the Islamic Republic’s “benevolent” relationship with its neighboring countries, calling on them to remain vigilant in the face of “fruitless foreign influence” and settle issues through cooperation.

“Powerful Iran has always been benevolent to its neighbors & never posed a threat to them,” Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said in a tweet on Saturday.

He added that regional countries can resolve problems through collective cooperation.

“Any foreign influence is fruitless so we call on neighbors to be vigilant in this regard & to stay away from them,” Shamkhani tweeted.

Iran recently held military drills in the country’s northwestern border area, which was criticized by Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev said he was “very surprised” by Iran’s decision to hold drills close to his country’s borders, and questioned the timing of the maneuvers.

Aliyev had also accused Iran of sending over trucks to “illegally” cross into the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is a matter of dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Spokesman Underscores Iran Commitment to Dialogue, Diplomacy

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said here on Saturday that he has in France emphasized the Islamic Republic of Iran’s commitment to dialogue and diplomacy as the only way ahead.

Writing about the details of his visit of France on his official Twitter page, Khatibzadeh said, “In my address at the Normandy World Peace Forum and in my meetings with my counterparts, the media, and the French think tanks, I emphasized Iran’s commitment to holding dialogues and resorting to diplomacy as the only possible path ahead.”

The Foreign Ministry spokesman further reiterated

that Iran has the regional anchor for peace and stability and will always continue its constructive role.

Khatibzadeh who had traveled to Paris to take part at the Normandy World Peace Forum had earlier in an interview with the French daily, Le Monde in response to a question on the recent UN General Assembly, the perspective for the nuclear negotiations, and the fact that the Iranian foreign minister had in New York announced that the negotiations will soon be resumed, said that what the Iranian foreign minister said in New York is the same thing that ever since the new government took charge has been said and heard.

Gov’t to Introduce COVID Vaccine Mandate in Mid-October

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian health ministry official say a coronavirus vaccine mandate will be enforced in the country in mid-October amid efforts by the government to fully reopen the economy now that vaccination rates have improved.

Outgoing deputy health minister Alireza Raisi said that in two to three weeks’ time Iranians should produce vaccination cards to access public services including those offered at places of gathering.

Raisi, who also serves as the spokesman of Iran’s National Headquarters for Battling Coronavirus (NHBC), said that the vaccine mandate will cover all forms of transportation, including air travel.

The announcement came a day after a government website used for registering COVID vaccinations started offering “vaccine cards” to citizens who have been inoculated against the disease.

Making coronavirus vaccine compulsory comes as Iran is racing against the time to expand the coverage of its vaccination campaign to more people months after it got off to a very slow start.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi who took office in early August has promised to reopen schools and businesses in the very near future.

“Technology-based restrictions will gradually replace closures,” Raisi said during a Saturday meeting of the NHBC.

He said that his government was even ready to introduce coronavirus jabs for children below 12 pending a final decision by scientists.

Data published earlier in the day showed that the number of coronavirus vaccinations had exceeded 56 million with over 16.5 million people fully vaccinated against the disease.

Afghans Residing in Mashhad Receive Over 62,000 COVID-19 Shots

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghans residing in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad have received over 62,000 doses of coronavirus vaccine.

The head of foreign nationals and immigrants’ affairs department in Iran’s Razavi Khorasan province said over 52,000 Afghans have received their first dose and about 10,000 others have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

“All vaccination centers in this province are required to inject coronavirus vaccine to foreign nationals,” Mohammad Taghi Hashemi noted.

The northeastern Iranian province bordering Afghanistan hosts a very large number of Afghan refugees. The Islamic republic has repeatedly

announced, despite several problems due to US sanctions, it will spare no effort to vaccinate Afghan refugees. Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in last August, thousands of Afghans have flocked into Iranian borders.

Iran, which has intensified its vaccination program in recent weeks, seems to have managed to contain the outbreak of the deadly respiratory disease to some extent.

The country has suffered five waves of the outbreak with official figures showing nearly 121,000 Iranians have lost their lives so far. Now only 16 cities across the country are marked red in which the risk of covid contraction remains high.

Heads of Gov’t Branches Discuss Economic Difficulties



TEHRAN (IP) - The meeting of the heads of the three branches of Iran’s government was held on Saturday evening hosted by the head of the Iranian judiciary.

Judiciary Chief Mohseni Ejei, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, and Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf were present.

In this meeting and following the previous meetings, the heads of Iran’s judiciary, the government, and the parliament discussed and consulted on the most critical issues of the country, including economic issues, so that the process of addressing the problems of the country can be followed faster and more seriously.

Economic Attaches Should Not Be Gov’t Employees

TEHRAN (IP) - The chairman of the Parliament Industry and Mining Committee said the attaches who will be used to facilitate Iran’s economic diplomacy should not be government employees.

Ezatollah Akbari Talarposhti said on the sidelines of the opening of Dubai International Expo 2020: “In choosing economic attaches for Iranian embassies in different countries, it should be considered that the economic attaches should not be a salaried employee of the Iranian government.”

He added: “Of course, the selection of economic attaches is up to the Ministry of Mine, Trade, and Industry, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the parliament emphasizes on the selection of these people from among economic and private sector activists.”

He further said: “In the field of economic diplomacy, the government should not be in charge and interfere, and the government’s duty is to guide and supervise the private sector.”

Water Expert Takes Helm at IEPO

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – President Ebrahim Raisi appointed a university professor and natural resources engineer as the new head of Iran’s Environmental Protection Organization (IEPO).

In a decree issued on Sunday, Raisi appointed Ali Salajeqeh as vice president and head of the IEPO.

The president hailed the university professor’s managerial experiences, calling on him to interact with the cabinet of ministers to settle the environmental problems.

Salajeqeh has a PhD in watershed management with specialty in river engineering.

The new IEPO chief is faced with a tough mission in saving and resuscitating the country’s water resources as droughts and soil erosion threaten the natural resources.

IRICA Puts Total Imported Dose of COVID-19 Vaccines at 80m

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) put the total number of doses of COVID-19 vaccines imported into the country at 80 million.

Technical Deputy of President of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) broke the news on Sunday and reiterated that a totally of 80 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines were imported into the country up to the present time.

Mehrdad Jamal Arvanaghi added that the 62nd shipment of COVID-19 vaccine including 350,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine was imported into the country from Austria on Sunday morning.

He went on to say that doses of the COVID-19 vaccine imported into the country were handed over to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

With the discharge of the aforementioned shipment of COVID-19 vaccine, the total number of COVID-19 vaccines imported into the country reached 80 million at large, Deputy President of IRICA added.

All-Inclusive Participation Will Take Afghanistan Out of Current Situation



TEHRAN (IRNA) -- Head of Parliamentary Friendship Group of Iran and Pakistan Ahmad Amirabadi Farahani said that Afghanistan would come out of the current situation with cooperation and participation of all-inclusive groups.

In a meeting with Pakistani Ambassador in Tehran Rahim Hayat Qureshi, the lawmaker outlined the long-lasting ties and commonalities between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and highlighted the necessity of new outlook in expanding the ties.

Amirabadi Farahani said that Tehran was interested in strengthening its relationship with Islamabad through parliament friendship group which would hopefully accelerate economic and business interactions.

He also touched on the developments in the region - in Afghanistan, in particular - saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran believed that cooperation and participation of all-inclusive groups would take the country out of the current crisis.

Pakistan Ambassador said that his country was seeking to strengthen ties with neighbors in cultural, economic, and trading areas.

He said that the trip by parliamentary friendship group to Islamabad was a turning point in boosting Iran-Pakistan relations.

Qurashi underscored that Pakistani government and parliament was interested in and welcomed expanding cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran in every field.

Iranian Inventors Shine in 6th Istanbul Int’l Inventions Fair

TEHRAN (IP) - With its museum-related invention, an Iranian group won the gold medal of Turkey’s 6th International Exhibition of Inventions.

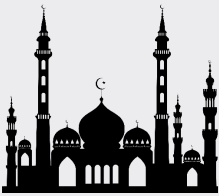
For the second time, the Iranian inventors won the gold medal of Turkey’s International Exhibition of Inventions, competing with 260 inventors from 20 countries.

Mahmoud Reza Gorji, Marjan Haji, and Salar Basiri invented a device to protect historical monuments and make museums smart, hence snatch the Turkish expo’s gold medal.

The same device achieved a gold medal earlier in the Swiss International Exhibition of Inventions.

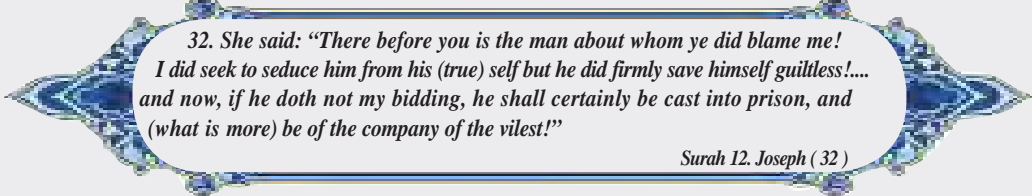
Mahmoud Reza Gorji, who represented the group at Turkey’s 6th International Exhibition of Inventions, said: “This is the only museum-related device in the exhibition.”

International Federation of Inventors’ Associations (IFIA), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and European Patent Organization (EPO) sponsored the fair.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:53
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:02
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:39
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:02



32. She said: “There before you is the man about whom ye did blame me! I did seek to seduce him from his (true) self but he did firmly save himself guiltless!... and now, if he doth not my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and (what is more) be of the company of the vilest!”

Surah 12. Joseph (32)

Iran Seeks Barter Trade With Brazil

TEHRAN - Chairman of the Board of Directors of Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce Seyed Fakhredin Amerian said that due to the current problems, the ships are cooperating with Iran based on the credit and unload their cargos, and for this reason the import of the livestock inputs is decreasing and details of these problems have just been handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Speaking to ILNA, Amerian went into details of the latest development in the trade between Iran and Brazil, and said since the container ships do not enter Iran water directly and they go to Jabel Ali Port in Dubai and there they are cross-stuffed, there are no idea on the exact statistics on the trade of the two countries. He added but it is estimated that Iran's exports to Brazil is less than \$100m that major part of it relates to urea, petrochemicals, hand woven carpet, pistachio, raisins and foodstuff.

He noted but Iran's major basic goods are provided via Brazil but since bills of lading are destined to Dubai or other destinations and there they are changed, there are no exact figures on the trade volume of the two countries but it is estimated Iran's exports from Brazil are valued at \$4b annually. Mutton, beef, chicken, soya, corn and edible oils are major imports of Iran from Brazil, he said.

He noted due to these problems, the vessels only cooperate based on the credit and for this reason the amount of imports of livestock inputs is declining. Amerian reiterated that Iran's trade with Brazil this year has not changed considerably comparing to the past year but last year Iran's export of urea to Brazil was more but the amount was not considerable.

On the launch of direct shipping line between Iran and Brazil, he said cargo ships enter our ports directly but their container ships avoid entering directly and they go first to Jabel Ali Port and from the port around \$6,000 the containers are shipped to



Bandar Abbas. He said transfer of each container costs and Iran has to pay it twice to have it in Iranian port. It means the cost of transportation will be doubled because of the lack of the direct shipping line, he noted.

Amerian went on to say that this problem can be resolved, adding that giant shipping lines may refrain working with Iran but the Chinese, Japanese and other Asian countries which have smaller shipping companies can work if the government steps in and signs a contract with them.

He noted most of Iran's imported chicken meat is coming from Brazil and it can be imported directly which will be better in terms of health and economy. He said unfortunately to date, no action has been taken for the launch of the direct shipping line and the trade exchange is still being cross-stuffed. He claimed the reason for this passiveness is not lack of ship but is because of passiveness of the related officials.

He went on to say that next month, the Iran-Brazil Joint Commercial Chamber's office will be opened in Sao Paulo of Brazil and it is the same Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce. Through this office both chambers will cooperate and will link trade of the two countries.

Amerian stated that the chamber is working to advance the idea of bartering trade with Brazil in order that Iran could import its basic goods on the base of barter to avoid banking problems. He reiterated that one of the goals of the office in Sao Paulo is to convince at least one shipping line to have direct shipping to Iran.

He also urged the government to barter petrochemical in exchange of basic goods because Iran has problem for getting its money for its exports and barter trade is some way for repatriating the money.

Amerian concluded that the private sector can resolve most problems and each trader should be allowed to have export which can help the country.

Iran, Syria Examine Economic Cooperation, Investment

TEHRAN (IP) - The Syrian Minister of Economic and Foreign Trade and Iran's Deputy Minister of Tourism discussed economic cooperation and bilateral investment.

On the sidelines of Expo 2020 Dubai, Mohammad Samer al-Khalil and Ali Asghar Shalbafan discussed the importance of continuing cooperation and coordination in economy and investment between the two countries.

Shalbafan urged Iran to be more active in the reconstruction of Syria and the reparation of ancient Syrian monuments, where were harmed due to the terrorist attacks.

He also stressed the need to invest in tourism by building hotels and reconstructing damaged ones.

The two sides also agreed on boosting trade, economic, and tourism cooperation between the two countries.



Economy Minister Eyes Brakes on Price Rises

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Days after President Seyed Ebrahi Raisi's comments about the government's red line on inflation, the government's economy minister said that "the increase in inflation in September is by no means desirable, and with the measures that will be taken, the brakes on price increases will be pulled."

Ehsan Khandozi said that part of the inflation was related to the increase in currency prices as well as the pressure of the budget deficit in the early months of the year, which led to excessive withdrawals from the central bank.

He added that economic policy will "delay" its impact, and if the government borrows 50,000 billion tomans of budget deficit from the central bank in the first four months of this year, it will show itself in the sixth and seventh months.

The minister added that the 13th government has put measures on the agenda to control price increases, including controlling exchange rate fluctuations by increasing oil and condensate sales.

His comments come as, according to the treasury report, only 9 percent of oil revenues in the government budget were realized in the first four months of this solar year.

The minister claimed that unlike the first five months of the year, the 13th government was able to fund itself in September without a new borrowing rial from the central bank, and the salaries of government employees were paid sooner than the end of September.

47% Decline in Water Inflows to Dams

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Water Resources Management Company says the amount of water inflows to dams in the country has dropped by 47 percent at the end of this year.

According to the office of basic studies of Iran Water Resources Management Company, "following the reduction of rainfall, the volume of water inflow during the 2020-2021 water year was 29 billion and 430 million cubic meters, which represents a 47 percent reduction in water inflows to reservoirs of dams in the country compared to the same period of the previous year (55 billion and 720 million cubic meters).

Of the 199 dams in the country, 118 dams are less than 40 percent and only three have between 90 and 100 percent water, the report said.

Reducing the amount of water inflow to Iranian dams could once again cause water stress in different parts of the country. Last week, a former ministry of energy official said the volume of water resources in Khuzestan dams was "low" and that if "substantial action" was not taken, the province would once again suffer "water stress."

"About 13 percent of dams in Khuzestan province have water resources, and if there is no significant rainfall according to forecasts, Khuzestan will face serious problems," said Hedayat Fahimi, former deputy director of the country's water and water planning office.

Trade Agreement With Turkey Likened to Turkmenchay Deal



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Gholam-Hossein Shafei, President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says the Iran-Turkey preferential trade agreement is "very inappropriate" and is "no different" from the Turkmenchay agreement.

Speaking at a "meeting of the heads of Iran's chambers of commerce," he stressed that Iran has "bad conditions in terms of "preferential and free trade agreements compared to surrounding countries."

Shafei's reference goes back to the "preferential trade agreement between Iran and Turkey", which came into force on January 1, 2015. Under the agreement, 140 items of Iranian export goods, including agricultural, fisheries and food items, and 125 of turkey's export goods, including industrial production, have been covered by tariff discounts.

The term "Turkmenchay Agreement" refers to the Iran-Russia Tsarist agreement and the loss of large parts of Iran in the south of the Caucasus.

The signing of the preferential agreement between Iran and Turkey was met with much opposition in Iran, with some Iranian businessmen calling for its cancellation in a letter to senior Iranian officials, including the first deputy of President Rouhani's government, but that did not happen, and this May, Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Dönmez said the two countries were negotiating to "expand the preferential trade agreement."

Iranian and Turkish officials have repeatedly announced a target of 30 billion dollars for trade between the two countries in recent years, but according to official reports in 2019, trade between the two countries was \$6 billion.

Iran Can Export \$100b to Its Target Countries

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mr. Alireza Peyman Pak says the country will increase its annual exports to \$35b in the next four years and said that Iran has capacity of exporting \$100b to its export target countries.

Speaking in the brainstorming meeting with heads of chambers of commerce and some of exporters, he pointed to the significance of Expo 2020 Dubai for Iranian traders to boost their interaction with their partners in other countries and called for more talks and exchange of views between domestic producers and exporters with their counterparts in other countries. He then pointed to the strategy of the TPO and Industry ministry for promoting the foreign trade and said the organization has tried to have more exchange of views with the private sector and business activists.

Payman Pak said Iran's share of imports of the neighboring countries that it does not have any problem with them is very insignificant and the organization is doing its best to reform the infrastructures and remove hurdles to increase Iran's share of the neighboring states' markets.

He added that the major problems of the organization will be to materialize \$35b export target in the next four years with emphasis on developing the non-oil exports, boosting relations and interactions with neighboring states, reforming the trade and export balance, coordinating the trade and forex policies, increasing industrial competitiveness and completing the chain of provision and value.



Payman Pak then pointed to the priorities of the country for increasing exports and said in order to meet the export goals, export markets have been divided into two groups of first and second priorities, adding that due to the restrictions in resources, the first priority for promoting the foreign trade is to trade with neighboring states as well as India and China.

He added that according to the conducted studies at the TPO, there is a \$100b capacity for Iran's exports to the target countries which have been planned based on the priorities and advantages existing in the market.

He then pointed to defining 14 infrastructural projects for promoting the exports and said they are managing the trade events in the form of fairs, reforming the structure of the TPO, boosting the capacity of commercial attaches, using the capacity of the private sector, making permanent the trade agreements, financing export activities and chains if financing and reviving the logistic routes, activating the air transport lines, resolving the forex challenges and regulations in the export sector, improving the commercial dimension of 25-year agreement with China, reinforcing the Export Guarantee Fund and reliance insurance, improving the brands and capabilities of exporters, developing trade centers and border markets with the target markets.

Payman Pak then pointed to defining 11 corridors and especial trade channel with the target countries and said using the import capacities of Russia, activating the export consortium and resolving export challenges with different countries are of the other programs of the TPO.

Iran Steel Production Volume Exceeds 20m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) – World Steel Association (WSA) in its latest report said that Islamic Republic of Iran produced 20.4 million tons of steel in the first eight months of the current year in 2021 (from Jan. to Aug.).

As the world's steel production volume registered a 1.5 percent decline in August, Iran's steel production increased in this period.

According to WSA, Iran's steel production in August 2021 hit 2.5 million tons, registering an 8.7 percent hike as compared to the same period of last year.

It should be noted the Islamic Republic of Iran produced 20.4 million tons of steel in the first eight months of the current year in 2021 (from January to August), showing a 9.7 percent growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

According to statistics, Iran stood among the 10th largest steel producers in the world in February 2021.



Iran Accounts for 3% of Caucasian States' Imports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of commission for non-oil-exports of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says Iran's share of Caucasian states' imports is very insignificant and currently it accounts for 3 percent of those countries' imports and the figure should reach at least 20%. Speaking to ILNA, Jamshid Nafar talked about the conditions and requirements for more trade with the Caucasus states and having more share of their markets said that it seems the path of neighboring states passes from the Caucasus region.

He said we should first study the amount of imports and exports of the neighboring states and to see how much we can have our share of those markets. He added that then we need required infrastructures but currently our infrastructures especially in the field of logistic is very weak.

Nafar added that in this stage, our international relations should get better to remove sanctions hurdles in order to tread without any concern. He went on to say that currently Iran's share of the Caucasus states markets is only 3 percent and this figure should at least be 20 percent and we need to work more to export our goods with good price and quality.

Algeria Recalls Ambassador To France for Consultations

ALGIERS (Dispatches) - Algeria recalled its ambassador from France for consultations, the presidency said on Saturday, following Paris's decision to reduce the number of visas granted to Algerian nationals.

"Algeria recalls its ambassador from Paris for consultations and a statement will be issued regarding this," said Algeria's state broadcaster, quoting a statement released by the presidency. The development came days after the Algerian foreign ministry summoned the French ambassador on Wednesday to protest France's decision to reduce the number of visas granted to Algerian nationals.

France last week said it would sharply reduce the number of visas granted to people from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, accusing the former French colonies of not doing enough to allow illegal immigrants to return.



Bangladesh Vows Stern Action Against Killers of Rohingya Leader

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh's foreign minister vowed "stern action" on Saturday against the killers of Rohingya refugee leader Mohib Ullah as calls grew to investigate his shooting.

Mohib Ullah, who was in his late 40s, was killed by unknown gunmen in a camp in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday night. He led one of the largest community groups to emerge since more than 730,000 Rohingya Muslims fled Myanmar after a military crackdown in August 2017.

"The government will take stern action against those who were involved in the killing. No one will be spared," Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen said in his first comment since the killing.



Georgia Holds Vote After Ex-President Saakashvili's Arrest



TBILISI (AFP) - Georgians vote Saturday in closely watched municipal elections, a day after ex-president and opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili returned from exile and was arrested.

The detention of Georgia's foremost opposition figure raised the stakes in the elections seen as a key test for the increasingly unpopular ruling party.

Saakashvili, 53, the founder of Georgia's main opposition party, the United National Movement (UNM) and the country's president in 2003-2014, on Friday said he had returned from Ukraine, where he heads a Ukrainian government agency steering reforms.

The flamboyant pro-Western reformer was detained shortly afterwards over a 2018 conviction in absentia on abuse of office charges. He denies wrongdoing and had denounced his sentence to six years in jail as politically motivated.

His jailing will almost certainly spark upheaval in the small ex-Soviet nation that has been plagued for years by political instability. "I want to ask you all to go to the elections so that not a single vote is lost," he wrote on Twitter Saturday, posting a picture of a

letter to supporters from prison. "My freedom and, more importantly, the freedom of Georgia depends entirely on your actions and fighting ability."

Prior to his arrest, he posted on Facebook a video message calling on supporters to take to the streets against the government. The municipal elections are being watched inside and outside Georgia for signs of the ruling party Georgian Dream backsliding on democracy.

Saakashvili -- who commands a fiercely loyal following -- called in one video Friday for his supporters to gather on the main thoroughfare in the capital Tbilisi on Sunday. Founded by powerful billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgian Dream has been the ruling party since 2012.

Critics have accused the party of using criminal prosecutions to punish political opponents and journalists. Interpol turned down requests from Tbilisi to issue a red notice against Saakashvili.

Taiwan Angered by Chinese Air Force's Largest Ever Incursion

TAIPEI (Reuters) - Taiwan sharply criticized China on Saturday after Beijing marked the founding of the People's Republic of China with the largest ever incursion by the Chinese air force into the island's air defense zone.

Taiwan, a democratically governed island that is claimed by China, has complained for more than a year of repeated missions near it by China's air force, often in the southwestern part of its air defense zone close to the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands.

Taiwanese fighters scrambled against 38 Chinese aircraft in two waves on Friday, the Taiwan Defence Ministry said. It said Taiwan sent combat aircraft to warn away the Chinese aircraft, while missile systems were deployed to monitor them.

Qataris Vote in First-Ever Legislative Elections

DOHA (Dispatches) - Qataris voted in the emirate's first legislative election Saturday in a symbolic nod to democracy that analysts say will not lead to power shifting away from the ruling family. The vote for the advisory Shura Council has also stirred domestic debate about electoral inclusion and citizenship.

The vote is for 30 members of the 45-strong Shura Council, a body with limited powers that was previously appointed by the emir as an advisory chamber.

At a polling station in the Jawaan bin Jassim school in the Onaiza district of the capital Doha, Qatari citizens wearing white thobes signed in to vote at a registration desk. After queuing briefly, they cast their ballots into a semi-transparent plastic box emblazoned with the dhow boat, crossed swords and palm tree emblem of Qatar.

Observers say the decision to hold the election, approved in a 2003 referendum but repeatedly delayed in the "national interest", comes amid heightened scrutiny as Qatar prepares to host the 2022 World Cup.



Hungary Watchdog Withholds Nuclear Expansion Permits

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungary's nuclear watchdog withheld permits for two new reactors at the Paks nuclear power plant pending additional information from the Russia-led project's managers, further hampering a planned expansion beset by years of delays.

The government wants to more than double the two-gigawatt plant's capacity with two new 1.2 GW VVER reactors. A 10 billion euro (\$11.6 billion) loan from Moscow is financing most of the 12.5 billion euro project, which is being led by Russian state atomic energy corporation Rosatom.

Awarded to Rosatom in 2014 without a tender and often cited as an example of the warm ties between Hungarian Premier Viktor Orban and Russian President Vladimir Putin that have unnerved the West, the project was initially delayed by a lengthy European Union review focused on its financing.

After a 15-month-review of the new bloc's construction documentation, Hungary's Atomic Energy Authority said on Thursday it would seek additional information from the company managing the project, Paks II Atomeromu Zrt, before granting approval.

"For the authority to be reassured that all conditions are fully met, further assessments and analysis are needed in some areas," it said in a statement on its website.

Without specifying further, it said it was also taking into account recommendations from a parallel International Atomic Energy Agency review.

Hungary has amended its nuclear safety protocols to allow some work to begin before the entire expansion - initially planned to start in 2018 and with the first bloc set for completion in 2025 - got the regulatory nod.

It was unclear how much more the latest setback could delay construction of a project still in its preliminary stages and on which Russia this year agreed to delay payments for five years.

Barricades at Kosovo-Serbia Border Dismantled

JARINJE (Dispatches) - Kosovo Serbs on Saturday removed vehicles they had positioned to block roads leading to border with Serbia, after Belgrade and Pristina agreed to end a tense deadlock.

The former foes were at loggerheads for nearly two weeks after Kosovo banned cars with Serbian registration plates from entering its territory -- mirroring a years-long Serbian practice against vehicles travelling the other way.

Kosovo dispatched special police units to oversee the ban's implementation, angering local Serbs who blocked the roads leading to the border.

Serbia responded by deploying armored vehicles close to the frontier and flying fighter jets over the border region which prompted foreign diplomats to press the two sides to calm tensions and prevent further escalation.

According to a European Union-brokered deal struck Thursday in Brussels, Kosovo was to remove the special police by Saturday and the local Serbs to dismantle the barricades.

NATO-led peacekeepers replaced the Kosovo special police that withdrew on Saturday.

The NATO-led peacekeepers from the KFOR mission will be deployed at the border for the next two weeks, according to the deal.

The removal of barricades and tents in which Serb protesters were sleeping at the roads leading to the two border crossings in Kosovo's tense north was carried out without incident, an AFP correspondent reported.

"It's great that it's all over. We showed Pristina that special police have nothing to do here," a 33-year-old ethnic Serb, who identified him as Slavko, told AFP.

"We don't mind KFOR or ordinary police at crossings."

The traffic slowly resumed at the Jarinje crossing with the first trucks that were blocked there for days crossing the border.

In Brussels, the two sides also agreed to put stickers over national symbols on the number plates, a provisional solution until a permanent one is reached.

Both Serbia and Kosovo claimed they had secured the agreement they desired.



Duterte to Retire From Politics

MANILA (Dispatches) - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said Saturday he will not run for vice president in 2022 and will retire from politics,

potentially paving the way for his daughter to contest the country's highest office.

Duterte, who polls show remains almost as popular as when he was swept to victory in 2016 on a promise to rid the country of drugs, is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term as leader.

"The overwhelming... sentiment of the Filipinos is that I am not qualified and it would be a violation of the constitution to circumvent the law, the spirit of the constitution" to run for the vice presidency, Duterte, 76, said.

"Today I announce my retirement from politics."

The authoritarian firebrand declared in August he would contest the country's second-highest office in the May election -- a move critics said was a smokescreen and motivated by fear that could face criminal charges after leaving office.

But a recent poll by PulseAsia Research showed Duterte well back in second place among preferred vice presidents.

A survey by Social Weather Stations showed 60 percent of Filipinos did not think Duterte's run for the vice presidency was in the spirit of the constitution.

Duterte made the surprise announcement at the venue where he was expected to register his candidacy. He did not specify when he would leave politics.

His close aide, Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, registered for the vice presidency instead.

The tough-talking leader has not yet announced his preferred successor, but many expect it will be his daughter, Sara, who has been the front runner in recent polls.

She would likely protect Duterte from criminal charges in the Philippines, and International Criminal Court prosecutors probing his deadly drug war, which rights groups estimate has killed tens of thousands of people.

But the mayor of the southern city of Davao -- a position held by her father before he became president -- has said she would not run if Duterte sought the vice presidency.





Fereshteh Apt (\$2500)
250sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Tajrish Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Kamranieh (\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F
Zaferanieh (\$2500) 230sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F
Gheitarieh (\$1800) 160sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F
Pasdran (\$2300) 170sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

Darrous Apt (\$2000)
180sq.m, 3bdrs, balcony
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Bitcoin Climbs to Highest in Nearly Two Weeks

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Bitcoin rose to its highest level since around mid-September, bolstered in part by seasonal factors as well as supportive comments overall from U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell on Thursday.

In testimony to Congress, Powell said the Fed had no intention of banning cryptocurrencies, in response to a question from House Representative Ted Budd. Some analysts also said October is typically a bullish month for digital assets, with September historically a bearish period for the sector.



Kazakhstan to Host 19th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

IRAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL DESK



NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan will host the 19th Secretariat of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and Working Shop on October 5-6.

The Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in the capital of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan, will host this big international event on October 5-6. The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is to be held on October 6 under the chairmanship of Head of the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions Mr. Maulen Ashimbayev.

Within the framework of the secretariat meeting it is planned to exchange views on the results of the VI Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, as well as the agenda, determine the exact date of the next edition of the Congress in 2020.

On the eve of the 19th Secretariat of the Congress on October 5, a meeting of the Working Group of the Secretariat of the Congress will be held under my leadership as the Commissioner for promoting the goals and objectives of the Congress, chairman of the management board of N. Nazarbayev Center for Development of Interfaith and inter-civilization dialogue.

Spiritual leaders of world and traditional religions from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, as well as representatives of international and religious organizations – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, UAE, Egypt, Israel, Vatican, Great Britain, China, Japan, Thailand, India, USA and other countries are expected to participate in the work of the 19th Secretariat of the congress.

The idea of creating the N.Nazarbayev Center for Development of Interfaith and Inter-civilization Dialogue was initiated by the participants of the VI Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in October 2018.

The N.Nazarbayev Center for Development of Interfaith and Inter-civilization Dialogue was established by Decree №226 of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on April 25, 2019.

The main subject of activity of the Center is to promote international initiatives of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Elbasy to preserve and ensure the inter-religious and inter-civilization dialogue, as well as the promotion of the ideas of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

The Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is the working agency of the Congress (during the 1st Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held on September 23-24, 2003, the forum participants decided to create a working body of the Congress – the Secretariat).

The Secretariat ensures the activities between the sessions of the Congress. The Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the head of the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

The members of the Secretariat are representatives of the leaders of world religions participating in the Congress, among them are representatives of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, international organizations.

For the first time, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was convened on September 23-24, 2003 on the initiative of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Speaking on February 13, 2003 at the International Conference of Peace and Accord, which played an important role in the rapprochement of religions, cultures and peoples and in which representatives of Christian, Muslim, Jewish organizations took part, Nazarbayev appealed to representatives of all faiths with the initiative to hold the Congress of World Leaders in Kazakhstan and traditional religions. Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church were among the first to support the idea of the Congress during the visit of the President of Kazakhstan to the Vatican.

Objectives of the Congress are:

- *search for common human landmarks in world and traditional forms of religions;
- *functioning of a permanent international interfaith institution for the dialogue of religions and the adoption of agreed decisions.

Main priorities of the congress are:

- the establishment of peace, harmony and tolerance as the unshakable principles of human existence;
- achieving mutual respect and tolerance between religions, confessions, nations and ethnic groups;
- preventing the use of religious feelings of people for the escalation of conflicts and hostilities.

The six Congresses of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana, held in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018, were attended by leaders and prominent representatives of the clergy from Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism and other traditional religions.

Partners of the N. Nazarbayev Center for Development of Interfaith and Inter-civilization dialogue are:

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UN, USA), Muslim World League (KSA), King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue: KAICIID (KSA), Muslim Council of Elders (UAE), Global Council for Tolerance and Peace (UAE), The International Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (UAE), Religions for Peace (USA), Lutheran World Federation (Switzerland), Islamic Research Institute for the International Islamic University, (Pakistan), Al-Azhar Center for Interreligious Dialogue (Egypt), Baku International Centre for Interfaith and Inter-Civilizational Cooperation (Azerbaijan), National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, University of Sharjah (UAE), Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Vatican), Center for Islamic Civilization under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Nazarbayev University, Agency «Khabar».

Russian Oil, Gas Condensate Output at Highest Since April 2020

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian oil and gas condensate output rose to 10.72 million barrels per day (bpd) in September, the highest level since the 11.34 million bpd pumped in April 2020, Reuters calculations based on an Interfax report showed on Saturday.

Total oil and gas condensate production was 43.86 million tons last month, Interfax news agency reported citing official data, versus 44.09 million tons in August, when it edged down following fire at Gazprom's processing plant.

Interfax also said on Saturday that output of natural gas in Russia rose last month by almost 10% from August to 61.05 billion cubic meters.

The rise in Russian oil and gas condensate production was in line with previous reports. An industry source said output of gas condensate, a type of light oil which is excluded from Russia's output quota under the OPEC+ deal, has almost recovered last month to the levels of July, when condensate production stood at 3.07 million tons.

The OPEC+ group of leading oil producers, which includes Russia, is holding an online meeting to decide on further production policy on Monday. Under the current arrangement the group is raising its cumulative output by 400,000 barrels per day each month.

Industry sources said that OPEC+ was considering going beyond its existing deal against a backdrop of oil near a three-year high and consumer pressure for more supply.

OPEC oil output also rose in September to its highest since April 2020, a Reuters survey found, as Nigerian output recovered from involuntary losses and the group's top producers further eased supply curbs under a pact with its allies.



Emerging Market “Cryptoization” Threatens Financial Stability

LONDON (Reuters) - The advent of digital currencies in emerging markets could spark “cryptoization” of local economies, potentially undermining exchange and capital controls and upsetting financial stability, the International Monetary Fund said.

Bitcoin and its kin have in the last year soared in price and popularity, with emerging and developing market economies such as Vietnam, India and Pakistan seeing rapid growth in some measures of adoption, according to U.S. blockchain researcher Chainalysis.

Cryptocurrencies offer, in theory, a cheaper and quicker way of sending money across borders. Backers say digital tokens such as stablecoins could also help protect savings from high inflation or fluctuations in local currencies.

In September, El Salvador became the first country in the world to adopt bitcoin as legal tender, with backers tipping the experiment to lower costs for billions of dollars of remittances sent to the Central American nation.

The IMF said that unsound macroeconomic policies and inefficient payment systems are among the drivers of cryptocurrency adoption in emerging economies, along with the lure of quick gains that has also excited investors across the world.

But the IMF said the exact level of adoption of crypto in emerging economies was hard to gauge accurately. Factors such as low credibility of central banks and weak domestic banking systems that can fuel “dollarization” can also contribute to growing crypto use, the Fund added.

Dollarization is where a foreign currency - typically the U.S. currency - is used in addition to, or instead of, a domestic currency. High inflation or the instability of a domestic currency are among the drivers of the process.

Wide adoption of stablecoins - digital tokens designed to hold a steady value and seen as useful for savings and commerce - could also pose significant challenges by reinforcing existing dollarization forces, the IMF said. “Dollarization can impede central banks’ effective implementation of monetary policy and lead to financial stability risks through currency mismatches on the balance sheets of banks, firms, and households,” it said.

“Cryptoization” could also become a threat to fiscal policy, with digital assets possibly facilitating tax evasion, the IMF added.

S&P Revises Oman Outlook to Positive on Higher Oil Prices, Reforms

UBAI (Reuters) - S&P Global Ratings said on Saturday it had revised its outlook on Oman to positive from stable due to higher oil prices and fiscal reform plans that are expected to narrow state deficits and slow a rise in debt levels over the next three years.

The ratings agency affirmed Oman's ‘B+/B’ long- and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings.

Oman, a relatively small oil producer, is more sensitive than its hydrocarbon-rich Persian Gulf neighbors to oil price swings, meaning it was hit especially hard by 2020's price crash and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Economic and fiscal pressures on Oman are easing, as the effects of the sharp drop in oil prices in 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic abate,” S&P said in a statement.

It expected the fiscal deficit to decrease to 4.2% of gross domestic product this year from 15.3% of GDP in 2020.

But lower oil prices from 2023 would result in a worsening fiscal trajectory despite planned reforms, it said, adding that total funding needs -- fiscal deficit plus maturing debt -- would remain high, averaging about 12% of GDP through 2024.

Oman's debt as share of GDP hit nearly 80% last year having been little more than 5% in 2015. The International Monetary Fund last month estimated that total government debt is expected to drop to 70% this year.

The sultanate has begun measures in the past year to fix its finances, including the introduction of a value-added tax and the decision to work with the IMF to develop a debt strategy.



India's Economy Looking Up At the End of the First Half of FY22



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India ended the first half of the current fiscal with lots of good news on the economic front. The Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for manufacturing for September is 53.7, up from 52.3 in August; the index of eight core sectors was 133.5 in August, higher than its value in that month in both 2020 and 2021; goods and services tax (GST) collections in September were ₹1.17 lakh crore, the second highest this financial year and the fourth higher since July 2017; and the Nomura India Business Resumption Index (NIBRI) was at an all-time high of 105 for the week ending September 26.

The month also saw a record 236 million doses administered; by September 30, 1 in four eligible Indians had been fully vaccinated and another 44% had received one dose of the vaccine.

The happy picture at the end of the first half is a stark contrast to that at the end of the first quarter, the period from April to June, when the country was ravaged by the second wave of Covid-19 infections. The Indian economy grew by 20.4% in the June quarter, largely on account of the base effect; it contracted by 24.4% in the corresponding quarter of 2020-21, courtesy a federal lockdown.

The answer might not be an unambiguous yes, according to another set of indicators. This tension between these two trends is likely to dominate the discussion when the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) assembles for its customary bimonthly meeting which will begin on October 6.

There is no doubt that economic activity has been increasing gradually in the second quarter, but questions remain about the depth of economic recovery and its impact on employment.

NIBRI has emerged as one of the most popular ultra-high frequency—it is released every week—measures of economic activity. NIBRI is a weekly indicator of economic activity which takes into account Google mobility indices, driving mobility from Apple, power demand, and the labour force participation rate. A NIBRI value of 100 refers to pre-pandemic level (February 23, 2020) of economic activity and subsequent data entries have been indexed to it. NIBRI crossed the psychological threshold of 100 for the first time since the pandemic in the week ending August 15. It reached an all-time high of 105 in the week ending September 26. NIBRI had reached 99.3 in the week ending February 21, before the second wave derailed the ongoing recovery and pushed NIBRI to 60.3 once again in the week ending May 23.

Iran Nominated for Four Awards at Asian Film Awards

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majid Majidi’s “Sun” and Ahmad Bahrami’s “Silent Plain” were nominated for four awards at the 15th Asian Film Award in South Korea.

The 15th edition of Asian Film Awards announced the nominees for the 2021 Awards and the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with nominees from countries including China, Japan, and South Korea, was nominated for four awards.

Iranian cinema has been nominated for four Asian Film Awards as follows, the nomination of Best New Director for Ahmad Bahrami’s “Silent Plain” Film, the nomination of Best New Leading Actor for Ruhollah Zamani for his role in “Sun” Film, the nomination of Hassan Hasandoust in the section of the Best Editor for “Sun” Film and nomination of Masoud Amini Tirani for the Best Cinematography for “Silent Plain” Film.



ASEAN Urged to Look Beyond China for Investment

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Cash-strapped Southeast Asian countries should look beyond China and its Belt and Road Initiative for economic help as Beijing is seen focusing more domestically, analysts say.

Regional governments have looked at the BRI to bolster their economies in coming years, but analysts have told VOA that Chinese generosity and foreign investment have limits and that Beijing is more concerned with shoring up its own economy than with new initiatives to promote post-pandemic growth elsewhere.

“In recent years we have to say that the development of BRI, for example, the trade like investment, are slowing down. It’s not as robust as, let’s say, five years ago,” Kaho Yu, principal analyst in Asia politics and energy at Verisk Maplecroft in Singapore, said. He said pandemic lockdowns had worsened already significant delays in building infrastructure projects, with geopolitical tensions and anti-Chinese sentiment also affecting investment.

Launched in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the BRI is the centerpiece of Chinese foreign policy, with investments in 70 countries as well as in international organizations.

According to the American Enterprise Institute, signed BRI contracts totaled \$46.54 billion by last year – with Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries taking the lion’s share of 36% – to be spent on infrastructure projects ranging from highways and ports to railroads and dams.

Decades of strong growth ended with the pandemic, though, and all countries suffered steep economic contractions in 2020. A much-vaunted rebound failed to materialize this year as the delta variant took hold.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi toured Indochina last month after ASEAN country ministers held an online BRI summit to discuss new initiatives needed to promote post-pandemic growth.

Analyst Yu said BRI would remain a cornerstone of Beijing’s foreign policy for the foreseeable future and ASEAN, given its proximity to China, was better positioned to win investment dollars than countries in other parts of the world.

“However, having said that, it is unlikely to see those megaprojects which we have been seeing over the last few years,” he said.

Beijing’s problems at home have been highlighted by the case of China Evergrande, which has \$305 billion worth of liabilities, and regulators warning of a systemic risk to the Chinese economy if its second-largest property developer fails to meet debt obligations.

David Totten, managing director of Emerging Markets Consulting, said the pandemic had resulted in Chinese companies taking “a big hit in terms of delays to their implementations” of planned projects and in terms of their financial situation.

“So probably a very good time to consolidate, focus on what they’ve got, execute, make them successful projects, and expanding into further, more peripheral locations in newer projects perhaps should take a backseat for the time being,” he said.

Beijing has also announced it will cease building coal-burning power plants abroad. The decision could affect 44 coal plants totaling \$50 billion earmarked for Chinese state financing, Global Energy Monitor, a U.S. think tank, told Reuters.

“I think you’re going to see some rocky periods ahead as China’s industrial development, economic development, is retooled,” analyst Keith Loveard said.

“The statement that they will not fund overseas coal-fired power stations,” he said,



“is quite a game changer for Indonesia,” a country for which coal remains a major foreign exchange earner.

In August, ASEAN granted “dialogue partner” status -- meaning higher-level access to the group’s summits -- to Britain, which is redefining itself after Brexit. Britain is the first country afforded that privilege in 25 years, joining 10 others, including Australia, China, Russia the European Union and the United States.

The Biden administration has bolstered U.S. efforts in Southeast Asia, in part, as a means of countering China, and could move forward on the U.S.-ASEAN Expanded Economic Engagement Initiative to promote increased trade, investment, and economic cooperation.

Initially launched in Cambodia in 2012 it was part of then-U.S. President Barack Obama’s “pivot to Asia” policy, as he sought to make this region a higher strategic priority. “The sensible thing for ASEAN would probably be to diversify their international relationships, perhaps hope that the recent change at the White House in America opens up further opportunities for them to build those partnerships,” Totten said.

However, the bloc’s relevance is being challenged by outside alliances as relations between China and Western nations hit their lowest ebb since the Cold War amid Beijing’s the South China Sea claims.

That includes a revised Indo-Pacific strategy with groups like the Quad – Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. – emerging to further counter expanding Chinese interests, which Beijing would like to see protected by its chief ASEAN ally, Cambodia, when Phnom Penh assumes the ASEAN chair next year.

Analysts said that puts ASEAN countries in a difficult position where they will have to balance their own interests between China and the West as everyone emerges from the pandemic.

“Obviously ASEAN has taken a big hit with COVID but I think generally everybody looks forward to a resolution of that situation but in the meantime, it’s been economically very expensive for them all,” Totten said.

Foreign Policy...

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“Simultaneously, we expressed our concern through diplomatic, regional and political channels to Azeri high-ranking officials,” Amir-Abdollahian said, adding that Iran has always announced its support for the liberation of occupied territories but “Iran will never tolerate the presence of elements of the fake Zionist regime near its borders.”

“We will not tolerate geopolitical change in the region and at the borders,” he stressed.

The Foreign Minister went on to say, “In the past week, we have been following the issue that caused problems for the transit of some trucks in parts of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Armenia, and two Iranian trailer drivers were arrested in Azerbaijan. In New York, I met with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan and I explicitly expressed my concern about these issues and said that if tolls and restrictions are to be imposed, these new rules should be announced through the embassy and the official ways.”

“Our policy in the 13th administration is to develop cooperation with our neighbors,” he added, saying, “We understand the situation of the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and some foreign interventions in this country are quite clear to us. The presence of Zionists and terrorists, who are somehow connected to each other, and this issue has caused us concern because it may cause problems for the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the not too far future.”

“In recent days, we have sent a message to the Zionists and terrorists by holding a military drill. Of course, two or three days ago, the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, made negative statements about Iran, and we protested diplomatically,” the FM said. “Due to the deep diplomatic relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the presence of foreigners should not be allowed to affect the relations between the two countries.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is closely following the provocations in the region. The truth is that behind these provocations are actors who seek to destabilize the region,” he noted.

Referring to the Zionist moves around Iran, including in the UAE and Bahrain, Amir-Abdollahian said, “The Zionists are trying to normalize the situation with these dramatic moves and the foreign minister’s visit to a country. The Bahraini government and the countries that establish these relations with the fake Israeli regime are undoubtedly betraying the Muslim cause for the liberation of Quds and the Palestinian people.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian also pointed to the recent meetings of the United Nations in New York on the developments in Afghanistan, saying, “As Iran has a long border with Afghanistan, the developments in this country and a new wave of refugees and war victims can affect Iran, too. During the meetings in New York, while explaining the policies of Iran, we encouraged the UN members to send humanitarian aids to Afghanistan, and of course, good results were achieved.”

“Iran can facilitate the delivery of aid to Afghanistan through border and airlines,” he added.

The FM also spoke about the negotiations on reviving the JCPOA, saying, “Negotiations should be beneficial for the Iranian nation. In the meetings I had, I said that we would not run away from the negotiation and we would accept it, but we need a reasonable amount of time to prepare.”

“We will not tie the country’s foreign policy and economy to negotiations and the JCPOA. The government has an economic development plan. If the negotiation is successful, it will be a catalyst for an economic development plan. But if the negotiations do not reach the desired result and the other parties do not want to show their true intention and will as they claim, we will not wait for negotiations.

UN Urged to...

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The six Palestinian prisoners, who recently tunneled their way out of a maximum security Israeli detention center and were all recaptured nearly two weeks later, are transferred to solitary confinement, lawyers say.

The Iranian diplomat criticized the international community for its inability to force the apartheid Israeli regime to abide by international law, saying such a failure underlines the need for UN human rights mechanisms to take immediate, decisive and effective measures to help end Israeli crimes against Palestinians.

Sadatenejad said justice-seeking and accountability for crimes committed against Palestinians should be part of the international community’s demand for an end to the catastrophe unfolding in the Palestinian territories.

“Advocates of Israel, including the United States, European states and Canada, which provide financial, military and political support to the regime, should also be held accountable for encouragement of crimes against Palestinians and obstruction of justice,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Commission for Detainees and Ex-Detainees’ Affairs at the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) said Israeli forces had arrested more than 7,000 Palestinian children since the outbreak of a new wave of protests in al-Quds in October 2015.

The commission said in a statement, issued on the 6th anniversary of the protests, that the number of Palestinian minors in Israeli detention centers had increased markedly.

It also pointed to the serious violations of Palestinian children’s rights, namely mass arrests, long prison sentences, and draconian punitive measures.

Baku, New Scenario of...

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Despite efforts to calm down the tension, some attackers targeted Iran’s Embassy in Baku which led to Iran’s official protests as they vowed to seriously pursue the case until a result is achieved. Meanwhile Iranian ambassador vehemently rejected allegations leveled by his Israeli counterpart against the Islamic Republic, saying the Tel Aviv regime would never be able to achieve its dreams for the West Asia region. “The dreams of Zionism for this region will never be interpreted,” Mousavi said in a post on his Twitter account.



It seems the Zionists are trying to provoke the Azeri President against the Islamic Republic to tarnish the amicable relation of these two neighboring states for their wicked goals. Meanwhile, Commander of the northwestern headquarters of the Iranian Army’s Ground Forces Brigadier General Ali Hajilou said on Friday that the Islamic Republic would not tolerate the presence of foreign and Zionist elements along its common borders with neighboring states.

He added that Iran has never carried out an act of aggression over the past two centuries but has always defended its rights and interests decisively. The commander emphasized that the Islamic Republic would not accept any geographical change in common borders with regional states.

“Today is the time for peace, security and the reconstruction of the liberated areas, as well as the expulsion of the Zionist regime from the region. The sinister Zionist regime seeks to sow discord in the region... and we, the Muslim countries of the region, will have a region full of peace and stability through [our] awareness and togetherness.”

By the way Iran’s top security official reiterated the Islamic Republic’s “benevolent” relationship with its neighboring countries, calling on them to remain vigilant in the face of “fruitless foreign influence” and settle issues through cooperation.

“Powerful Iran has always been benevolent to its neighbors never posed a threat to them,” Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said in a tweet. He added that regional countries can resolve problems through collective cooperation.

Azerbaijan should be vigilant and it should not play in the game of the Zionists because Israel will be the real winner of any tension in the region and especially between Iran and its neighbor states. Now that Israel has failed to stop powerful Iran’s influence among the Islamic nations, it tries to create rift among the Muslim nations to catch fish from the muddy water and Azerbaijan government should be vigilant and not to be fooled by the Zionists.

War would be the easiest thing between the two countries but keeping peace and friendship is difficult and enemies do not like friendship continues, and therefore they create ethnical, language or land disputes to materialize their vicious plots.

Iran has proved that it has never been the beginner of any war but in case a war is waged on, it will defend bravely and will give crushing answer to any invader. So Azerbaijan is better to continue friendship with its neighbor rather than being entrapped in the Zionists’ plots. Azeris can boost Muslim front and avoid wasting the wealth of two Muslim states in fight against the Zionists rather than they waste their energy and wealth to please the Zionists.

Borrell Says...

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“I was happy to participate in the follow-up event to the conference in New York recently”, he added.

The EU is ready to support the countries in the Persian Gulf region to build a shared sense of security and cooperation, he said.

“I am still convinced that if we do manage to preserve the JCPOA and ensure its full implementation, it can become a stepping stone toward addressing other shared concerns, including those related to regional security”, Borrell noted.

Global COVID-19 Deaths Hit 5m as Delta Variant Sweeps the World

LONDON (Dispatches) - Worldwide deaths related to COVID-19 surpassed 5 million, according to a Reuters tally, with unvaccinated people particularly exposed to the virulent Delta strain.

The variant has exposed the wide disparities in vaccination rates between rich and poor nations, and the upshot of vaccine hesitancy in some western nations.

More than half of all global deaths reported on a seven-day average were in the United States, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and India.

While it took just over a year for the COVID-19 death toll to hit 2.5 million, the next 2.5 million deaths were recorded in just under eight months, according to a Reuters analysis.

Secretive UK...

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He also complained that the U.S. and UK forces at Menwith Hill “operate beyond public scrutiny and accountability,” and that, unless there were change, “Orwellian surveillance systems and extrajudicial executions exposed in recent years will likely continue.”

“Intelligence programs at Menwith Hill have reportedly played a key role in operations to ‘eliminate’ people in Yemen, as part of a deadly drone bombing campaign that has resulted in dozens of civilian deaths in a country that neither the UK nor U.S. has declared war with,” he added.

“Any U.S. military activity or U.S. security agency activity carried out at Menwith Hill [must] be carried out in such a way as to make those responsible fully accountable to the UK.”

Menwith Hill is the largest known overseas site of the NSA, with 600 U.S. personnel and 500 British civilians on site.

The base is part of an eavesdropping network, able to collect data from hundreds of millions of emails and phone calls daily and of pinpointing phones on the ground, according to the files leaked by U.S. whistleblower Edward Snowden. Information obtained can be used in “capture-kill” operations. Late last year, a senior Iranian Judiciary official said British security services firm GS4 had been linked to General Soleimani’s assassination.

Agents of the company handed the information of General Soleimani and his entourage to the US as soon as they entered the Baghdad International Airport, outside of which the then Quds Force commander was murdered by the US drone raid, Tehran Prosecutor Ali Alqasimehr told Mizan on December 31, 2020.

Joyce Wants Olympic Gold

LONDON (Dispatches) - British boxer Joe Joyce believes he should be awarded an Olympic gold medal after an independent investigation highlighted his defeat at Rio 2016 was one of more than 10 bouts suspected of being manipulated.

The Londoner settled for silver five years ago after being on the wrong end of a split decision to France's Tony Yoka in their super-heavyweight final, one of several controversial judging decisions at the Games.

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Ryu Shoots 65 To Share Lead

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Ryu So-Yeon shot a six-under 65 in the opening round of the LPGA Tour's ShopRite Classic on Friday to grab a share of the lead with Jodi Ewart-Shadoff.

Starting on the back nine, South Korea's Ryu began her round with back-to-back birdies then closed with three straight birdies beginning at the par-three seventh. In between she made an eagle on the par-five third hole.

This was her first start in this event in three years.

Man Utd Stumble Again as Chelsea Top Premier League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United were held at home by Everton on Saturday after Cristiano Ronaldo was dropped to the subs bench as Chelsea scored two late goals against Southampton to top the Premier League table.

Elsewhere, Leeds beat Watford for their first league win of the season while Norwich avoided defeat for the first time during the campaign.

United's 1-1 draw at Old Trafford continues an unimpressive run of home results including a League Cup defeat by West Ham and last week's shock Premier League loss at the hands of Aston Villa.

Ronaldo has scored five times in six games in all competitions since rejoining the club in late August but Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said he did not regret resting the 36-year-old -- who scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner against Villarreal in midweek.

"You make decisions throughout the season, you've got to manage the players' workload," said the Norwegian manager. "The decision was, for me, the correct one today."

"We have started better than last season, but it is still not what we wanted."

Everton created plenty of chances in the opening period but fell behind shortly before half-time when surprise pick Anthony Martial curled home his first Premier League goal since February from a Bruno Fernandes pass.

Solskjaer called on Ronaldo and Jadon Sancho 12 minutes after half-time as he looked to put the game beyond Rafael Benitez's men but Everton ruthlessly exposed United's frailty on the counter-attack.

Demarai Gray won the ball back on the left and freed Abdoulaye Doucoure into acres of space in

midfield. Doucoure played in Andros Townsend to fire home his fifth goal in nine appearances.

Townsend then performed a Ronaldo-style "Siuuu" goal celebration and said it was done in tribute to the Portuguese superstar, whom he said was his "idol".

Everton thought they had won it late on but Yerry Mina's close-range finish from a Tom Davies pass was ruled out for offside following a VAR review.



Chelsea ended a miserable week on a high, with Timo Werner and Ben Chilwell striking late in a 3-1 win against Southampton, who are still without a league victory this season.

The three points lifted the Stamford Bridge club to the top of the Premier League on 16 points, two clear of Liverpool, Manchester United and Everton.

Thomas Tuchel's side, tipped by many to win the Premier League in the early weeks of the season, were well beaten by Manchester City last week and lost to Juventus in the Champions League in midweek.

But they returned to winning ways in London on Saturday, helped by a second-half red card for Southampton midfielder James Ward-Prowse.

Trevoh Chalobah nodded Chelsea into an early lead but Ward-Prowse levelled from the penalty spot just after the hour mark before he was sent off in the 77th minute for a dangerous tackle on Jorginho after a VAR check.

Werner provided the decisive moment, sliding in from Cesar Azpilicueta's cross before Chilwell volleyed in from close range on 89 minutes to secure the victory.

"After two defeats we had to be careful that we didn't start being too sad or too worried because there was a chance to be on 16 points," Tuchel told the BBC.

"It was important to have a better performance than the last two games, that we sharpened our mindset so that we are not afraid to lose. It was nice to play the way we did and get a deserved win."

Leeds beat Watford 1-0 thanks to a first-half strike by Diego Llorente while Hwang Hee-chan struck twice as Wolves beat struggling Newcastle 2-1.

Norwich stopped the rot against Burnley after six straight league defeats but they remain rock-bottom of the Premier League table with just a single point after seven games.

Norrie Routs Shapo to Reach San Diego SFs

SAN DIEGO (Dispatches) - Briton's Cameron Norrie won the battle of the lefties against Denis Shapovalov to advance to the semi-finals of the San Diego Open. The 26-year-old, who also defeated the Canadian in the Queen's semi-finals during the grass swing, powered to his 40th match win of the year with a decisive 6-3, 6-1 victory.

Norrie's breakout season had turned into a bust of late. Since winning his maiden ATP Tour title at Los Cabos, Mexico, in July, he had won just two of seven matches, arriving at the Barnes Tennis Centre on a four-match losing streak.

But after taking out former World No. 5 Kevin Anderson in the first round and countryman and World No. 22 Daniel Evans in the second round, Norrie appears to have recaptured the form that has underpinned his banner year. He came into 2021 with just 51 wins throughout his career. After saving a break point to level at 3-all in the first set, Norrie immediately broke the 22-year-old as he stormed home to win 10 of the last 11 games of the match.

"Denis came out serving really well and it was tricky for me to get into the rallies and get some rhythm, but I held onto my serve early in the first and then managed to find my return and my lefty serves when I needed them. I'm really enjoying playing here in San Diego."

Norrie next faces the winner of top-seeded Russian Andrey Rublev and sixth-seeded Argentine Diego Schwartzman.

Ramos' PSG Return Date Still Unknown

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain coach Mauricio Pochettino said Saturday there is still no fixed timetable for injured defender Sergio Ramos to make his debut for the club.

Ramos has not played for PSG since joining the French giants on a two-year deal from Real Madrid in July, and has been training alone on his recovery from a calf injury.

"We're following his progress from day to day. We hope he'll be back as soon as possible, but for the moment we can't say when," Pochettino told reporters ahead of Sunday's trip to Rennes in Ligue 1.

Sinner Surges to 10th In Race, Sofia SFs



SOFIA (Dispatches) - Defending champion Jannik Sinner battled past in-form James Duckworth at the Sofia Open, winning 7-6(4), 6-4 to reach the semi-finals.

Climbing to 10th in the FedEx ATP Race To Turin, Sinner continues his campaign to reach

the Nitto ATP Finals, to be held on home soil 14-21 November. The top seed in Sofia recovered from both a 2-5 deficit in the first set and 2-4 down in the second to advance in straight sets.

"It's not easy coming back every time, you would prefer to stay up. Especially in a match like this," Sinner said. "I just tried to stay focused, try to make him think a little bit. In the first set it worked, when he was serving for the set he made a couple of unforced errors."

"I just tried to stay solid and in the second set when I was 2-4 down I tried to hit a little bit faster and strong, especially in the last game."

Sinner improves his ATP Head2Head against the Australian to 2-1, avenging a 6-3, 6-4 defeat against Duckworth earlier this year in Toronto.

"It feels very good to be honest," Sinner said. "Today was a very tough match. I lost the

last one against him in Toronto and he was in a very positive situation, winning a Challenger, making the final last week. It was not easy for me and it was a very close match, especially the first set."

Duckworth, a finalist in Nur-Sultan last week, had won 11 of his past 12 matches at all levels prior to the match. The 29-year-old Australian currently stands at a career-high No. 56 in the FedEx ATP Rankings.

"Playing here once again in Sofia is very special for me," Sinner said. "I am very proud of myself, knowing that tomorrow is a very tough challenge in front of me. So I will try to be ready for tomorrow."

Sinner is a three-time ATP Tour champion, adding two more titles to his collection earlier this year in Melbourne and Washington.

Chasing his fifth appearance in a tour-level final, Sinner will next play World No. 37 and fifth seed Filip Krajinovic, who defeated Polish lucky loser Kamil Majchrzak 6-3, 4-6, 6-3. Krajinovic has reached six quarter-finals in 2021, but this is just the second time that he has pushed on to the semi-finals. "Jannik is an unbelievable player. I have nothing to lose," Krajinovic said. "I will come here tomorrow and play free."

Germany Boss Flick Recalls Mueller, Ter Stegen

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany coach Hansi Flick today left out Mats Hummels for the forthcoming World Cup qualifiers against Romania and North Macedonia with two victories set to see the Germans punch their ticket for the Qatar 2022 finals.

Holding a four point lead at the top of Group J, Germany can sew up qualification for the World Cup by beating Romania in Hamburg on October 8, then away to North Macedonia in Skopje three days later.

In his 23-man squad, Flick recalled veteran Thomas Mueller, goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Matthias Ginter, but explained why he decided to rest Hummels, 32, who has a knee problem.

"We all know what qualities Mats has when he's 100 per cent fit," Flick said of the 2014 World Cup winner. Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan, Atalanta defender Robin Gosens and Dortmund defender Mahmoud Dahoud all miss out with injury, but there are places for promising teenagers Jamal Musiala and Florian Wirtz.

After sweeping aside Armenia 6-0 and Iceland 4-0 in last month's qualifiers, Flick wants further convincing displays in their next two games to book Germany's place at the World Cup finals.

"We have a four-point lead, we want to build on that and qualify as quickly as possible," he added.



De Bruyne Back for Belgium in Nations League Finals

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Kevin De Bruyne has returned to the Belgium squad after missing last month's World Cup qualifiers in a boost to their hopes for next week's Nations League in Italy, coach Roberto Martinez said.

The Manchester City midfielder has recovered from his ankle injury and is included in the 24-man squad for the tournament, where Belgium meet France in their semi-final in Turin next Thursday.

They will have a second game, either in the final or third place playoff, against European champions Italy or Spain on Sunday, October 10. The tournament presents Belgium, still top of the FIFA rankings, with a chance for a title after they were eliminated in the quarter-finals of the European Championship in July.

But Martinez said any success would not temper the bitter disappointment of their loss to Italy at Euro 2020. "Nothing, nothing makes up for that disappointment. But now that's gone. I think the team have reacted in the right way since and now we are ready for a wonderful competition that we had to work really hard to qualify for," he told a news conference.

"But it's a different tournament and while I hope that we can reach new levels with these games, it won't make up for any of the pain of the past. I can guarantee you that."

Martinez said the fact squad numbers were restricted for the mini-tournament meant striker Christian Benteke had been dropped.

