

Health Ministry Announced On Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 123,275 With 194 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, Commander of the Aerospace Division of the IRGC, Underlined That All Air Defense Systems Deployed in The Modafean Aseman Velayat 1400 Drill Are Domestically-Manufactured.

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Top Iran, Pakistan Generals Discuss Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri has exchanged views with Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan Army General Qamar Javed Bajwa on a range of issues such as defense ties between the two neighboring countries.

The two generals met in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi on Wednesday.

During the meeting, they expressed confidence in the growing trend of military, security and border interactions between Iran and Pakistan in recent years and vowed to advance their contacts.

They also reviewed the latest developments in bilateral relations, defense ties and regional developments, including Afghanistan.

Heading a high-ranking military-security delegation, the top Iranian general arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday at the invitation of the Pakistan army chief for a three-day trip. It is Baqeri's second official visit to Pakistan over the past three years. **See Page 7**

Iran Wheat Imports Could Triple

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran is expected to more than triple its wheat imports in the 2021/22 marketing year and could import up to 8 million mt after hot and dry weather conditions in the region, while at least half of the needed volume has already been covered.

Analysis by Agricensus of shipping line-up data from the region also suggests the country has already secured significant volumes of Russian wheat this marketing year, despite official data showing no such exports.

Along with other countries in the Middle East region, Iran has faced severely dry and hot weather that has significantly downgraded crop production and increased its import needs, with much of the volume likely to be handled by the state-backed Government Trading Corporation (GTC).

"We need to import 8 million mt this year and GTC discharged 2 million mt last week," a source with knowledge of the matter said.

The source also said that local estimates for the current crop stand at around 4.5 million mt, while consumption is expected to reach 12 million mt. **See Page 7**

IMF Revises Iran Economic Growth Projection to 2.5%



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has lowered its expectation of Iran's economic growth for 2021 by 0.7% to 2.5%, according to a latest document published by the Fund.

Tables in the IMF's World Economic Outlook published on Tuesday projected that Iran will end the current year with a lower-than-expected growth in gross domestic product (GDP), mainly because of the continued impacts of the US sanctions and the hit suffered to the economy from the coronavirus pandemic.

However, the international lender increased its estimate of economic growth in Iran for 2020 to 3.4%, up from a negative growth of 5% announced in a previous report.

The IMF projected that Iran's economy will continue to grow in 2022 by 2.0%, lower than an estimate published in July.

The report said that Iran's inflation will decrease from a projected rate of 39.3% in 2021 to 27.5% next year. It estimated that consumer prices had risen by 36.4% in 2020.

Iran's unemployment rate will remain relatively high, about 10.5% in 2022, up by half a percentage point against this year and near one percent higher than last year.

IMF's projections showed that Iran's current account balances would return to a positive growth zone by an increase of 1.3% expected for 2021 and by another percentage point forecasted for next year. The indicator had dropped by 0.1% year on year last year.

Lowering growth figures was consistent for almost all countries and regions of the world in the IMF's Tuesday report which was published just before a joint meeting of the IMF and World Bank. That comes as the report expected some resource-based economies like Saudi Arabia and Nigeria would benefit from a global recovery in demand for hydrocarbons.

The report said that inflation pressures and supply chain disruptions would continue to affect the global economic recovery from the coronavirus in the next months.

India Proposes Iran's Chabahar Port Be Included in North-South Transport Corridor

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Stressing on the need for enhanced connectivity, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday proposed that the strategic Chabahar Port in Iran be included in the North-South Transport Corridor that has the potential to bridge connectivity barriers, as he agreed on a roadmap for future course of cooperation and exchanges during bilateral talks with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan.

Jaishankar was speaking at a joint press meet with Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan following their meeting here.

Jaishankar on Tuesday arrived in Armenia on the last leg of his three-nation tour to Central Asia with an aim to further expand bilateral ties and discuss key regional issues including the developments in Afghanistan. It is the first-ever visit by an External Affairs Minister to Armenia.

"Both India and Armenia are members of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which has the potential to bridge the connectivity barrier. So Minister Mirzoyan and I discussed the interest which Armenia has shown in utilisation of the Chabahar Port in Iran and being developed by India," Jaishankar said in his remarks.

"We also proposed the Chabahar Port be included in the International North-South Transport Corridor; we welcome the use of the Chabahar Port and any other initiative that will encourage regional connectivity," he said.

The Chabahar port in the Sistan-Balochistan province in the energy-rich nation's southern coast is easily accessible from India's western coast and is increasingly seen as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar Port located at a distance of around 80 km from Chabahar.

The first phase of the Chabahar port was inaugurated in December 2017 by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, opening a new strategic route connecting Iran, India and Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan.

The Chabahar port is being considered as a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries, besides ramping up trade among the three countries in the wake of Pakistan denying transit access to New Delhi.

On asked about India's interest in developing the Chabahar Port, Jaishankar said, "we are interested because if we develop more ports in Iran and then connectivity from those ports to northwards of Iran, it opens up more trade routes which are land-based, which are more efficient than these sea-based routes."

"So the key today to economic progress is to be more competitive in terms of movement of goods and that is why this is important and, at least, I mentioned Chabahar to the minister because it is a port in Iran which India is developing and for us it opens up a pathway at least one side to the Caucasus (intersection of Europe and Asia), opens up a different pathway to Central Asia and it is an initiative that we are working with the Russians very closely." **See Page 7**

Tehran Blasts Israel For Disseminating False Accusations

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Representative at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly blasted the Israeli regime for disseminating false and fabricated accusations against regional countries, particularly Iran.

"I am compelled to take the floor to reject the allegations made by the Israeli representative against my country," Heidar Ali Balouji said, addressing the First Committee of the 76th United Nations General Assembly.

"In fact, the dissemination of false and fabricated accusations against regional countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran, has long been a standard practice of Israel, with the exclusive purpose of concealing its crimes and brutalities against innocent Palestinian people. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that no amount of disinformation and manufactured crises can cover up the criminal nature, as well as the expansionist and warmongering policies, that this regime has pursued over the past 70 years," he added. **See Page 7**

Iran Opposes Alliance With Third Parties to Resolve Regional Disputes

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Alireza Haqiqian, a special aide to Iran's foreign minister voiced the Islamic Republic's opposition to any efforts to form a coalition or unity with third parties to resolve regional disputes.

Haqiqian, also the director of Eurasian affairs of Iran Foreign Ministry, was addressing the sixth Ministerial Meeting of Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Noting that the foreign policy of the new Iranian government is focused on development of regional cooperation, he urged the need for further activation of CICA to make use of the opportunities and prevent the threats.

He called for close cooperation between the member-states and resolving the existing disputes through political means.

Haqiqian referred to the so-called normalizing of relations of certain regional countries with the Zionist regime, noting that the deterioration of situation in the occupied lands of Palestine has to be strongly condemned as a clear example of systematic violation of human rights, humanitarian rights and international law.

He said that Iran welcomes the promotion of CICA into a regional organization via systematic and scheduled negotiations.

Qatar Calls on PGCC States to Establish Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Reiterating support for JCPOA, Qatari Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister called on member state countries of Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) to set up ties with Islamic Republic of Iran away from interference.

While reiterating Qatar's support for Iran's nuclear deal, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani Foreign Minister of Qatar said that return to nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is in favor of everyone, adding that Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC)'s member states should establish ties with Iran away from any interference.

Regarding the recent developments in Afghanistan, he said that withdrawing forces from Afghanistan is wrong and Qatar is in direct contact with Washington and Taliban in this regard.

Settling the existing problem is not possible without interacting with interim government of Afghanistan, he added. **See Page 7**

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Qalibaf Congratulates Re-Election of Russia's State Duma Chairman

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf congratulated Vyacheslav Volodin for his reelection as Chairman of Russia's State Duma.

In a congratulatory message, Qalibaf said that bilateral cooperation between Tehran and Moscow will lead to the strengthening of peace and security in the region.

Considering the important role of parliaments in strengthening bilateral friendly relations and emphasizing the strategic policies of the two countries of Iran and Russia, he expressed hoped that the two countries will see growing development of mutual relations in political, economic and cultural fields.

Environmental Protection a Key Priority

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi described the protection of the environment as one of the priorities of the country and stressed its importance, saying, “Influential people and institutions should not be allowed to endanger the health of the environment and the people.”

Speaking on Wednesday in the cabinet meeting, Raisi emphasized the observance of environmental regulations in the implementation of industrial and production plans and projects, and the need to prepare an environmental annex, saying, “In observing the regulations related to environmental protection, we must not ignore them in any way; in addition to the fact that the implementation of large projects should not be prevented by unnecessary strictures”.

Reiterating the importance of administrative discipline and regular presence of employees in the workplace, Mr Raisi said, “Taking care of employees' behavioral health and applying organizational supervision is necessary to prevent administrative corruption, bribery and embezzlement, and no administrative or economic corruption is not tolerable”.

Raisi also emphasized the timely implementation of the law in all executive bodies, especially in the public sector.

Meanwhile on Tuesday evening, Raisi reiterated the redoubled efforts of all agencies in organizing the cyberspace to compensate for the backlog in this area and achieve the main goals of the formation of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace.

Speaking in the meeting of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, Ayatollah Raisi referred to the need to make changes in the missions of the council, saying, “Using the views of the natural members and the expertise of legal members of the council,



effective steps can be taken to compensate for the backlog and the cyberspace management”.

The President described the completion and operation of the National Information Network a necessity and instructed the National Cyberspace Centre and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to seriously pursue the completion of the National Information Network.

Referring to the benefits of e-government and smart government, Raisi said, “Forming a smart government is necessary for the welfare of the people and facilitating their affairs, so all agencies should work together”.

Emphasizing the attention of all agencies and ministries to the digital economy, he said, “Activation of the digital economy is effective in increasing employment, wealth creation and creating added value”.

The President also called for the creation of strategic platforms to provide services in the fields of education, health, agriculture, finance and trade.

Raisi continued by emphasizing the importance of paying attention to intelligent and goal-oriented management in the field of entertainment and leisure in the digital space.

The President also referred to the need to make cyberspace safe and secure and said, “In a situation where the enemies are attacking the personal and private space of the people and the country, neglect in this field is not acceptable”.

Tehran, Baku Stress Need to Resolve Issues Through Cooperation

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Azerbaijani counterpart have in a phone conversation stressed the need for the resolution of recent issues between Baku and Tehran through dialogue and cooperation.

In a phone call focusing on latest developments in bilateral ties on Tuesday, Amir-Abdollahian told Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jehon Peramov that any concerns or issues between Tehran and Baku must be resolved through dialogue and cooperation, and also in a calm and friendly atmosphere.

The top Iranian diplomat stressed “the need for mutual respect, independence, sovereignty and integrity of the territories of both countries,” adding that “Tehran and Baku have a long-standing relationship.”

Amir-Abdollahian said the two countries must prevent misunderstandings in bilateral relations and that “it is better to continue their relations in the right and rapidly growing direction.” Pointing to the depth of relations between the two countries, the Iranian foreign minister said Tehran is “waiting for an end to the problem of Iranian truck transportation” bound for Armenia through Azerbaijani territory.

“The two countries have enemies that should not be given an opportunity to strain relations between them,” Amir-Abdollahian said, underlining the need for “removing anxiety through dialogue and cooperation.”

The Azerbaijani foreign minister, for his part, described his country's relations with Tehran as “friendly” and said that “relations with friendly countries are a priority for the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

Calling for “solving problems through dialogue and in a calm and intimate atmosphere,” Peramov suggested that customs officials in the two countries hold talks to end the problems of exporting Iranian goods through Azerbaijani territory, and promised to pursue the case and release of two Iranian drivers, who were arrested last month.

The phone conversation on Tuesday came as the Iranian foreign minister has previously sounded a warning concerning certain provocations by the Israeli regime near Iran's borders in Azerbaijan.

The regime, he said, used the flare-up of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region last year to establish a presence in parts of Azerbaijan. Ambassador Abbas Mousavi said Azerbaijan's diplomatic police and Interior Ministry had “identified, arrested and interrogated four” people in connection with the case.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has criticized Iran's exercises. Tehran has hit back by saying that holding drills is part of the national sovereignty, warning that Israel's anti-Iran activities in neighboring countries will not be tolerated.

IRGC Makes Operational Quds Domestic Radar

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Quds domestic radar was put into operation for the first time by IRGC air forces in the joint Modafe'an-e Aseman-e Velayat (Defenders of Skies under Guardianship of Supreme Jurisprudence) military drill.

Quds Radar is able to monitor targets at a 500km range and altitude of over 90,000 feet.

Tactical and single-vehicle capability, domestic software, the ability to deal with electronic warfare in various techniques, friend-enemy detection system and the ability to link with defense systems are among the characteristics of Quds radar system.

The joint Modafe'an-e Aseman-e Velayat (Defenders of Skies under Guardianship of Supreme Jurisprudence) military drill started by deploying domestic missile systems, radar, reconnaissance, electronic warfare, communication systems and visual surveillance network in the Dasht-e Kavir on Tuesday morning.

Deploying IRGC Regional Command and Control (ROC) systems, Meraj, Fatah-2, Bashir and Quds indigenous radar systems, tactical information and reconnaissance systems, electro-optical systems and electronic warfare systems are among programs of the drill.

Pakistani Senator Emphasizes Deepening of Ties With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - The chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Standing Committee in Pakistan's Senate, stressing the importance of developing bilateral cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran in trade and economic sectors, said that we want to further develop relations between Tehran and Islamabad.

Senator Sherry Rehman said this during a meeting with an Iranian delegation led by Member of Parliament and President of Iran Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, Ahmad Amirabadi Farahani.

The meeting was also attended by Mohammad Sorkhabi, the deputy head of the mission at Iranian embassy in Pakistan.

Both sides discussed Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations and stressed the need for parliamentary interaction to strengthen the ties between the two countries.

Senator Rehman, from Pakistan People's Party (PPP), emphasized Pakistan's deep cultural, trade, economic, and diplomatic ties with bordering Iran and discussed ongoing issues on the Pak-Iran Gas pipeline which was initiated during PPP government.

Both sides underlined the need for building a robust bilateral relationship across the board and for collaborating on issues of common interest.

The meeting recognized the importance of connectivity in the region, along with the need for stability and peace, and concluded with discussions on further enhancement of parliamentary relations between both countries.

Amirabadi Farahani in his remarks said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is eager for more interaction with Pakistan through friendship and parliamentary groups.

Ms. Elham Azad, a member of the Iran-Pakistan Friendship Group, also stated that women are half of the Iranian society and play an important role in social, political, and commercial activities in Iran.

Azad stressed that the long and common borders of Iran and Pakistan can bring the women of the two countries closer to each other. The presence of Iranian women in the cultural, political, and social spheres can be a good model for Muslims around the world.

Tehran MP Mohsen Pirhadi also said the late Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is respected by the People in Iran, adding that Senator Rehman, as the head of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, can play an effective role in consolidating and strengthening relations between the two countries.

Enemy Seeks to Drag Iran In Security Challenges

TEHRAN (MNA) – Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said that engaging the Islamic Republic of Iran in various security cases has been one of the main objectives of enemies in the recent years.

Speaking at a meeting with the members of Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission held at the compound of Secretariat of Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) on Tuesday, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said that engaging Iran in the security cases has been one of the prime goals of enemy.

During the meeting, two sides discussed domestic and foreign issues in the field of national security comprehensively.

The main goal of enemies in recent years and within the framework of policy of maximum pressure is drag the Islamic Republic of Iran in various security cases both inside and outside the country to create national security challenges in economic, political and social fields, Shamkhani emphasized.

The SNSC secretary added that the people's support for the government can neutralize the enemies' plots and can help the government to overcome existing problems especially in economic and livelihood fields and to neutralize psychological warfare waged by enemies to frustrate people with the Establishment.

In this meeting, representatives of Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission also expressed their views on various economic, political, security and social issues and presented their solutions for effective management of the main challenges facing the country.

Iranian Prosecutor General, His Armenian Counterpart Discuss Aras River's Status

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Prosecutor generals of Iran and Armenia surveyed thoroughly the status of Aras River, the rights of the people in the river's irrigation area, and the continuation of efforts aimed at finalizing the resolving of river's pollution in Armenia.

Mohammad-Jaafar Montazeri who is on a three-day visit of Armenia on Tuesday evening met and conferred with his Armenian counterpart Artur Davtyan.

Davtyan in the meeting appreciated Montazeri for making the trip despite coronavirus conditions, considering Iran as a trustworthy and permanent neighbor of Armenia, considering the Iranian prosecutor general's visit of Yerevan a sign of the two countries' friendly relations.

Montazeri, for his part, appreciated the warm reception of his Armenian counterpart, and said that the visits of the two countries' judiciary officials have provided an appropriate opportunity for deepening and expanding comprehensive bilateral ties.

The Iranian prosecutor general praised the role played by Iranian Armenian citizens in Iran's social, political and cultural life, saying that the mutual trust between the two countries serves as a strong foundation stone for further expansion of bilateral ties.

Armed Forces Smash Medium-Altitude Targets During Drills

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The first day of major airpower drills by the various branches of Iran's Armed Forces sees the forces successfully laying into medium-altitude targets using completely indigenous military hardware.

Codenamed 'Modafean Aseman Velayat 1400' (Guardians of 'Velayat Sky' 1400), the exercise kicked off in the country's sprawling Central Desert on Tuesday, with the goal of practicing defensive maneuvers in the service of the country's “sensitive and vital” spots and testing the operational maneuverability of the Armed Forces' new-generation defensive equipment among other things.

Tehran Views Relations With Belgrade as Strategic

BELGRADE (IRNA)- Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said in a Tuesday meeting with the Serbian foreign minister that Iran views its relations with Serbia as strategic.

Safari who arrived in Belgrade on Tuesday to attend a ceremony on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) had a meeting with the Serbian Foreign Minister Nikola Selakovic.

Safari referred to the good level of cooperation between Iran and Serbia in bilateral and multilateral fields, emphasized the need for the continuation of bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy, meanwhile, in the meeting emphasized on the importance of increasing the bilateral economic ties, proposing that taking advantage of the existing capacities will help in achieving that objective.

The Serbian foreign minister, for his part, referred to the good level of the two countries' political ties based on friendship and mutual understanding.

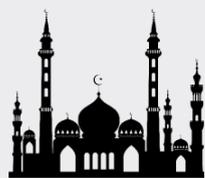
He reiterated that “we will also be celebrating the 85th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties with your country”.

Selakovic said that the orientation and relations with Iran are quite bright, emphasizing that Serbia is very eager to have political talks with Iran.

He expressed hope that in near future there will be meetings between the two countries at the highest level.

“The friendly relations between Serbia and Iran must be at the service of improving comprehensive cooperation, especially at the bilateral economic ties, such as in agricultural, energy, building construction, and tourism fields,” said the Serbian foreign minister.

Selakovic, meanwhile, appreciated Iran's fundamental stances in respecting Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity at international organizations, adding that Belgrade wishes to provide for admitting a larger number of Iranian students in the framework of the ‘world in Serbia’ program.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:50
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:48
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:47
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:11

41. "O my two companions of the prison!

As to one of you, he will pour out the wine for his lord to drink:
as for the other, he will hang from the cross, and the birds will eat from off his head.
(so) hath been decreed that matter whereof ye twain do enquire"...

Surah 12. Joseph (41)

Tehran Ready to Resume Exports to Riyadh

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director General of Business Development Services at Trade Promotion Organization says Iran is ready to resume exports to Saudi Arabia if the tension between two countries is reduced and their political ties are restored.

Farhad Nouri said that in case the political ties between Tehran and Riyadh are restored, Iranian exporters can have considerable share of Saudi Arabia's market.

He added when the two countries had good relations, Iranian exporters were active in Saudi Arabia and today in case the talks between Tehran and Riyadh bear fruits, Iranian traders will definitely be able to be active in this big market and they can have special programs.

Pointing to Saudi Arabia's whopping oil revenues, he said Saudi Arabia's market in terms of consuming goods is very vast and due to the cultural closeness and the issue of Hajj and pilgrimage and presence of veteran Iranian traders in this market, Iranian exporters are fully aware of the taste of the Saudis and they can definitely have active presence.

Noting that since expanding exports with the neighboring states is one of the priorities of the TPO in its new era, Nouri said that one of the markets which can create huge capacity for Iran's exports is the market of the Persian Gulf states and Iran should seriously pursue its presence in this market.

He said due to needs of these countries, Iranian exporters should be active in different fields and they are able to have more colorful presence.

He reiterated that using the capacities of the neighboring states and the region is the priority of the organization and the country and Iran will be active in other markets considering its economic capabilities and potentials.



Meanwhile the director-general of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization's Office of Arabian and African Countries Mr. Farzad Piltan in an interview with ILNA talked about the trade capacities between Iran and Saudi Arabia and said Saudi Arabia is one of Iran's southern neighbors in terms of sea border with population over 30m people with good financial condition and low unemployment and inflation rate, and the per capita in this country is very good.

He added that due to the cultural and religious commonalities between the nations of the two states, there are good opportunities for trade cooperation.

Piltan said that Saudi Arabia's annual imports are around \$140b and it is a good opportunity for Iranians to enter this market. He said before the ties between Tehran and Riyadh became cold and political ties were severed, their annual trade volume was around \$400b and Iran's share was 70% and in some years the trade balance used to change but usually their trade volume was between \$300m to \$400m.

He added that after their political ties were cut, the direct trade between them was also zeroed but according to some reports their indirect trade continued via the third party states like the UAE, and Iranian goods entered the Saudi market.

He expressed hope the talks between the two countries bear fruits and Iranian exporters could take advantage of it at best. He said that Iran can export iron, steel, mineral fuel, mineral oil, medical equipment, stones and plastic materials.

Iranian Ships Not Allowed To Enter China's Ports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's shipping company's fleet has been banned from entering Chinese ports since last year, the managing director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Company says.

Mohammad Reza Modarres Khiabani said on Tuesday that since last year, the ban on the shipping company's fleet to major Chinese ports began, and therefore we had been stopped for up to four months. Currently, he said, we can't travel to important Chinese ports.

Modarres Khiabani did not explain why Iranian ships were banned from entering Chinese ports, but last summer some Iranian media reported that the Islamic Republic's ships were banned from entering Chinese ports because of "non-standard fuel for ships."

According to new international maritime organization standards implemented since the beginning of last year, the fuel consumed by ships should not be more than half a percent of the sulfur composition, while the mazut produced by Iranian refineries has 3.5 percent of the sulfur composition.

Gachsaran Olefin Plan Aimed At Value Chain Completion

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said that Gachsaran Petrochemical Project is being developed to complete the value chain from associated petroleum gases to production of polymer products.



Expressing satisfaction with the progress of Gachsaran Petrochemical Olefin Project, Behzad Mohammadi said: "This project is in an important and large chain in the petrochemical industry that receives its feed from Bidboland Persian Gulf Project and polymer projects receive their feedstock from this plant."

According to the National Petrochemical Company, during a two-day field visit to Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad as well as Khuzestan provinces, Mohammadi visited the Gachsaran Petrochemical Olefin Chain Project on Monday, October 11.

While being satisfied with the progress of the project, he said: "Gachsaran Petrochemical Plant is in an important and large chain in the petrochemical industry that will feed polymer projects such as Dehdasht and Gachsaran Polymer plants."

The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company stated: "I hope this project will be put into operation by the end of the calendar year of 1400 to March 2022 with the efforts and follow-up of the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC)."

Khuzestan's Capacities Important In Iran-Armenia Ties Development

TEHRAN (IP) - Armenia's ambassador to Tehran believes that the economic capacities of Khuzestan province, southern Iran, are constructive to trade ties between the two countries.

Armenia's Ambassador to Tehran Artashes Tumanyan who is scheduled to make a trip to Khuzestan province said on Tuesday that the trip was aimed at examining the capacities of the province to elevated the economic cooperation between Iran and Armenia.

Visiting some of the province's fish farming complexes, sugarcane factories and meeting with private sector activists at the Ahvaz Chamber of Commerce will be part of the Armenian ambassador's two-day visit to Khuzestan province.

Earlier, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a joint press conference with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan that new projects were defined to revive the Iran-Armenia transit route, including trucks' commute between the two countries.

Iran wants to take part in the completion of Tatev Road in Armenia that will bypass the Republic of Azerbaijan for transit between Iran and Armenia.

The route is strategic for Iran in terms of transit and commerce as it links Iran to Russia and Europe.

Thus, Iran has declared its preparedness to complete the remaining part of Tatev Road in Armenian territory as soon as possible.

Iran, Malaysia Emphasize Expansion Of Trade Relations



TEHRAN (IP) - The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Malaysia and the Malaysian Minister of Plantation Industries met to emphasize the expansion of bilateral relations between the two countries in the fields of trade and investment.

Ali Asghar Mohammadi, Iran's ambassador to Malaysia, met with the Malaysian Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Zuraida Kamaruddin on Tuesday to discuss the development of bilateral relations, especially trade and investment in primary resources and basic goods.

During the meeting, Mohammadi also discussed the transit position of the Islamic Republic of Iran for Malaysian trade with countries in the region, including assistance to Afghanistan.

The Iranian ambassador also invited the Malaysian Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Zuraida Qamruddin to visit Iran.

Iran Exports to Turkmenistan on Growing Trend

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid Mohammadnejad says Turkmenistan is interested in cooperation with Europeans and it can sound a warning to Iran and Turkmenistan's neighboring provinces.

Speaking to ILNA and touching upon the latest development on Iran-Turkmenistan trade, Mohammadnejad said that due to the sanctions, access to precise statistics and figures of exports and imports and also the volume of trade is a very difficult job and one can only stick to the official figures which are released by the official channels.

He added that despite the border problems between Iran and Turkmenistan and due to the significance of trade with neighboring states, all Iranian state and private sectors have done their best to identify and reinforce new methods in its trend with Turkmenistan.

He added that after a webinar held in April, 2021, between the two countries, the trade between Iran and Turkmenistan has faced a growth and setting record like in the volume of exports via railway comparing to the preceding year, adding that the loading during this year's New Year holidays hit 25,000 tons while the figure was only 112 tons in the same period in the preceding year.

Mohammadnejad went on to say that in the marine transportation, Turkmenistan has been the top destination for goods for exports from Mazandaran. He



added that Golestan Province is one of the neighboring provinces of Turkmenistan whose foreign transit of goods in the first five months of the current year has been around 3.5m tons worth over \$8m. He reiterated that all statistics show a growing trend in trade with Turkmenistan and only political problems have been creating hurdle in way of considerable progress for exports to Turkmenistan.

Mohammadnejad stated that Turkmenistan is mostly interested in cooperating with European countries and it can be a warning to Iran's economy and the neighboring states. He then pointed to the amount of imports by Turkmenistan in 2015 which was \$6.8b and declined to \$2.7b in 2018 and it shows Turkmenistan has reconsidered its imports policies seriously.

He said during the meetings of presidents of the two countries it had been predicted Iran's exports to Turkmenistan to hit \$2b, adding that due to the change in the policies of Turkmenistan, Iran's one-billion-exports to Turkmenistan will be satisfactory.

Mohammadnejad went on to say that Iran and Turkmenistan have been historically trade partners and above all they have many cultural and religious commonalities which can boost their ties but there are some stonewalling in way of their trade which is expected to be resolved soon.

90% of Iran's Trade Is Done by Sea

TEHRAN (IP) - Navy commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran said that 90% of Tehran's trade with countries is done through a maritime economy.

Speaking on the sidelines of the parliament's economic commission, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani added that a report on Iran's marine capabilities was submitted to the commission.

Iran's navy commander called security and economy by seas two main issues.

Iran was present with authority in all its territorial waters and will continue to be present with determination, he highlighted.

Tehran has proved its readiness by sending battleships to three oceans covering 45000 km, the official noted.

The navy commander said that today, Iran relies on indigenous capacities and technologies to produce and support all needed equipment in seas.

CBI Full Support Needed for Oil Barter Deals

TEHRAN (Shana) - The former director of international affairs of the National Iranian Oil Company said that the success of selling oil through barter depends on the cooperation between the Oil Ministry and the Central Bank of Iran.

"The Central Bank must be convinced that this method is in the country's interest, said Seyed Mohsen Ghamsari said. Barter is an act of trading goods or services between two or more parties without the use of money — or a monetary medium, such as a credit card. In essence, bartering involves the provision of one good or service by one party in return for another good or service from another party, explained Mr. Ghamsari.

He said: "When there is a problem in the transfer of funds, or when the parties want to remove the funds based on their preferences and interests, the method of bartering is used, which fortunately we have had a lot of operational experience in this field."

The former director of international affairs of the National Iranian Oil Company said that the most important challenge in selling oil in recent years is banking issues and the most important challenge in the issue of bartering is domestic laws and regulations. "For example, if domestic contractors are given full authority to barter deals, it could cause market turmoil. Barter deals would be good when the focus is on the Central Bank. The entry of contractors into the (oil) market, if unplanned, will lead to turmoil, which is more harmful than beneficial."

Ghamsari said: "To prevent a possible mess in the oil barter deals with domestic contractors, the formation of an independent, centralized, competent, powerful and agile organization that can make decisions at the moment is helpful. Market turmoil and ill-considered competition are certainly to the detriment of national interests."

He reminded: "One of the reasons for the success of the Ministry of Petroleum in 2015 and 2016 and its ability to take back the market in a short period of 3 to 4 months was that they decided and implemented the contracts themselves and the five-member board approved the decisions; of course, that period was the beginning of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) implementation and JCPOA helped and we were able to increase our oil exports to 2.5 million barrels per day, but we will not reach this figure in the face of sanctions, although an independent organization can improve the status quo."

11 Dead in Philippines Storm

MANILA (AFP) - At least 11 people were killed and seven others were missing after heavy rain across the Philippines flooded villages and triggered landslides, authorities said Tuesday.

Severe Tropical Storm Kompasu drenched swathes of the most populous island of Luzon on Monday as it swept across the archipelago nation towards the South China Sea.

Six people were killed and two missing in landslides in the landlocked mountainous province of Benguet, and one person drowned in the province of Cagayan, the national disaster agency said.



Kuwait Allows Women To Join Military

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) - Kuwaiti women will be allowed to enlist in the military in combat roles for the first time after years of having been restricted to civilian roles, the army said Tuesday.

Defense Minister Hamad Jaber al-Ali al-Sabah said the door had been opened for women to join various combat ranks, including as officers, the Kuwait Armed Forces tweeted.

"The time has come for Kuwaiti women to be given the opportunity to enter the Kuwaiti military side by side with their brothers," the minister said in remarks carried by state news agency KUNA.



Ukraine Demands Greater Support From EU



KIEV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday demanded more support from European leaders against Russia but came away from talks with few practical measures.

Zelensky hosted European Council leader Charles Michel and European Commission leader Ursula von der Leyen in Kiev as Europe faces a gas crisis after a surge in prices and drop in reserves.

The Ukrainian leader, who fiercely opposes a new gas pipeline that is set to bypass his country and increase Europe's energy reliance on Russia, put the crisis front and centre on Tuesday.

"It is necessary to develop a common long-term vision of Europe's energy security," Zelensky told a news conference after the talks.

Ukraine -- in conflict with Russia since Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea -- wants to ensure it will remain a key transit country even after gas begins flowing through Nord Stream 2, a Baltic Sea pipeline set to double natural gas supplies from Russia to Germany. The pipeline, which is still awaiting approval from a German regulator, diverts supplies from an existing route through Ukraine and is expected to deprive Europe's ally of an estimated one billion euros (\$1.1 billion) annually in transit fees from Russia.

Von der Leyen on Tuesday sought to reassure Zelensky. "Ukraine remains and must remain a reliable transit country," she said.

Critics have accused Moscow of intentionally limiting gas supplies to Europe and driving up prices in an effort to hasten Nord Stream 2's launch, a claim Russia has denied.

Given the unfolding crisis, Michel told Zelensky: "It is very important and urgent to intensify our cooperation."

"We can all see what are the geopolitical consequences, what are the geopolitical games, also, that are possible," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed last week that his priority was not to put Ukraine "in a difficult position", but to be an "absolutely reliable partner" of Europe in the energy market.

At the same time, the Kremlin chief said that Ukrainian gas pipelines had not been repaired "for decades" and ramping up supplies via the post-Soviet country could lead to "negative consequences."

"Something can burst there at any moment," Putin said.

Moscow has not booked additional gas transit capacity via Ukraine to Europe for October, raising concerns.

Russia denies any pressure, saying it needs to fill its own reserves for the winter before sending supplies on to Europe.

Ukraine accuses Europe of timidity when it comes to Russia, whether on gas, military cooperation or Ukraine's prospects for integration into NATO and the European Union. It has long been frustrated in its efforts to join the EU, with the 27-nation bloc saying Ukraine must first improve reforms.

Iraqi Political Groups Reject Early Iraq Election Results

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Some political parties and armed groups have denounced early results from Iraq's elections as "manipulation" and a "scam".

Sunday's parliamentary election - the fifth in the war-scarred country since the US-led invasion and overthrow of ruler Saddam Hussein in 2003 - was marked by a record low turnout of 41 percent. According to preliminary results from the electoral commission, the biggest winner appeared to be the movement of religious scholar and political maverick Muqtada al-Sadr, which increased its share to 73 of the assembly's 329 seats. Losses were booked by pro-Iranian parties with links to the armed groups that make up the fighter network known as Hashd al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF).

The Fateh (Conquest) Alliance, previously the second largest bloc in parliament, suffered a sharp decline from 48 to about a dozen seats, according to observers and results compiled by AFP.

"We will appeal against the results and we reject them," said a joint statement by several parties, including the Fateh Alliance, on Tuesday.

Lavrov Slams Allegation Russian Spies Stole AstraZeneca Formula

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Claims in the British press that Russian spies stole the blueprint for the British-made Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine are unfounded, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

An October 10 article in The Sun newspaper, a popular daily tabloid, recently alleged that Russian spies "stole" the formula of the vaccine, developed by UK-Swedish company AstraZeneca, to create Russia's

The paper cited anonymous security sources in its brief, 339-word, story.

Speaking at a news conference in the Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan on Tuesday, Lavrov said, "As for our British and other Western partners, I don't think someone will take these unfounded statements seriously."

"There have already been many baseless accusations," he said.

While there have been reports of rare side-effects with AstraZeneca's shots, with a tiny minority of people experiencing blood-clotting after receiving the jab, "no such cases have occurred with Sputnik V", Lavrov said, according to Russia's TASS news agency.

"I think that everyone who is interested will draw conclusions for themselves."

The row comes as the United Kingdom and Russia are at opposite ends of their vaccination campaigns.

About 85 percent of people over 12 have had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in the UK, while almost 80 percent have had both jabs.

But while Russia was fast to develop and launch its Sputnik vaccine when the pandemic struck last year, take-up has been slow, with many citing distrust of the authorities and fear of new medical products.

Just 33 percent in Russia are fully vaccinated.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Russia needed to speed up its vaccination campaign against COVID-19 as the country recorded 973 coronavirus-related deaths, its highest single-day toll since the start of the pandemic. In total, Russia has recorded 426,361 coronavirus-related deaths, while the UK's death toll stands at 137,763.



Qatar Says Recognizing Taliban Gov't Not a Priority

DOHA (Reuters) - Qatar believes that recognising the Taliban government in Afghanistan is not a priority now, and that the focus should be on engaging with the new administration and addressing humanitarian issues, a senior Qatari official said.

Mutlaq Al-Qahtani, special envoy of the Qatari foreign minister, urged other countries to engage more deeply with the Taliban as Afghanistan's de facto authority, while urging the Islamist movement to act as a "responsible" administration and respect the right of women to work and girls to attend school. "We think this (recognition) is not a priority. What's more a priority as we speak now is the humanitarian, is the education, is free passage of passengers," Qahtani said at a global security forum in Doha.

Qatar, which is hosting talks between Taliban and Western officials in which Mutlaq said he was participating, is seen as one of the countries with influence over the movement.

Mutlaq said the only way forward was to offer the caretaker administration "more collaboration, cooperation and assistance" but that Afghanistan should

move towards an inclusive government in an internal process whereby Afghans "decide their future".

Almost two months after the former Western-backed government collapsed and insurgent forces swept into Kabul, the Taliban administration has pushed to build relations with other countries to help stave off a catastrophic economic crisis.

But the Taliban have so far refused to give ground on allowing girls to return to high school, one of the key demands of the international community after a decision last month that schools above the sixth grade would only reopen for boys.

Qahtani said barring girls from study was "not acceptable from a (Islamic) religious perspective".

Girls' education was one of the limited number of unambiguously positive gains from the West's two decades of involvement in Afghanistan.

Doha hosted the Taliban's political office which oversaw the negotiations with the United States that eventually led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in August. It has played a pivotal role in evacuation efforts.



North Korean Leader Says U.S. and South Korea Threaten Peace

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Standing beside North Korea's largest missiles, leader Kim Jong Un said his country's weapons development is necessary in the face of hostile policies from the United States and a military buildup in South Korea, state media said.

Pyeongyang was only increasing its military in self-defense and not to start a war, Kim said in a speech at the Defense Development Exhibition on Monday, according to a report by state news agency KCNA.

Kim made the remarks standing next to a variety of weapons, including the country's intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), the ruling party newspaper Rodong Sinmun showed. Among them was the Hwasong-16, North Korea's largest ICBM, unveiled at a military parade in October 2020, but not yet test-fired.

"We are not discussing war with anyone, but rather to prevent war itself and to literally increase war deterrence for the protection of national sovereignty," he said, adding that North Korea's main enemy is "war itself".

State television footage showed a smiling Kim clapping as shirtless soldiers use their hands to smash bricks placed on colleagues' chests, as others cut chains wrapped around their bodies in a show of strength.

Kim also saluted jets leaving colored trails during an air show, while strolling through missiles on display.

A spokesperson for South Korea's defense ministry told a briefing that South Korean and the U.S. intelligence agencies were analyzing the equipment displayed at the exhibition.

The two Koreas have been in an accelerating arms race, with both sides testing increasingly advanced short-range ballistic missiles and other hardware.

South Korea recently test fired its first submarine-launched ballistic missile, plans to build major new weapons include aircraft carriers and has bought American-made F-35 stealth fighters.

North Korea has pushed ahead with its missile program, and analysts say it has begun a major expansion of its main nuclear reactor, used to produce fuel for nuclear bombs.

Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

Velenjak Apt (\$2500)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Fereshteh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green yard
Nicely Furn

(\$1400)
Zaferanieh Apt
140sq.m, 2bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1600) 2bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$2000) 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$2600) 4bdrs, S/p, F.F

(\$20000)
Andarzgoo bldg
5storey, 30bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkgs
balcony, & yard

Jordan (\$1200) 2bdrs, S/p
Jordan (\$1800) 3bdrs, S/p
Jordan (\$2300) 4bdrs, S/p

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Tesla Sold Record 56,006 China-Made Vehicles in September

BEIJING (Reuters) - U.S. electric vehicle (EV) maker Tesla Inc sold 56,006 China-made vehicles in September, the highest since it started production in Shanghai about two years ago, data from the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA) showed on Tuesday.

The September sales included 3,853 that were exported, the data showed. Tesla, which is making Model 3 sedans and Model Y sport-utility vehicles in Shanghai, sold 44,264 China-made vehicles in August, including 31,379 that were exported.



IMF Warns Pandemic Darkening Prospects in Developing Countries

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The ongoing hit from the Covid-19 pandemic and the failure to distribute vaccines worldwide is worsening the economic divide and darkening prospects for developing nations, the IMF said Tuesday.

Global economic growth this year and next is expected to continue as the recovery solidifies broadly, but the overall figures mask large downgrades and ongoing struggles for some countries.

"The outlook for the low-income developing country group has darkened considerably due to worsening pandemic dynamics," IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said.

The setbacks, which she blamed on the "great vaccine divide," will impact the restoration of living standards, and a prolonged pandemic downturn "could reduce global GDP by a cumulative \$5.3 trillion over the next five years," she warned. Meanwhile, advanced economies face "more difficult near-term prospects... in part due to supply disruptions."

That threatens to drive prices higher, especially in the United States, where growth this year will be slower than previously anticipated, even taking into consideration massive spending bills, according to the International Monetary Fund's latest World Economic Outlook.

Output worldwide is expected to grow 5.9 percent this year, only slightly lower than projected in July, before slowing to 4.9 percent in 2022, the report said. But the wave of infections from the Delta variant of Covid-19 and the drastically lower vaccination rate in developing nations, along with supply bottlenecks, have slowed or pushed back the recovery in many economies. "The dangerous divergence in economic prospects across countries remains a major concern," Gopinath said in a blog post on the new forecasts.

Advanced economies are expected to regain "pre-pandemic trend path in 2022 and exceed it by 0.9 percent in 2024," she said.

However, in emerging market and developing economies, excluding China, output "is expected to remain 5.5 percent below the pre-pandemic forecast in 2024."

Amid the danger of long-term scarring, "The foremost policy priority is therefore to vaccinate at least 40 percent of the population in every country by end-2021 and 70 percent by mid-2022," she said.

The world's largest economy has benefitted from massive fiscal stimulus, but the Delta wave has undermined progress, and the IMF slashed the US growth forecast for this year to six percent, a full percentage point off the July figure.

US growth is expected to slow to 5.2 percent next year, slightly faster than previously expected, but policymakers will face a delicate balancing act amid risks of rising inflation and lagging employment, the fund noted.

Production was slow to rebound once the recovery began, creating bottlenecks, notably in semiconductors, and pushing prices higher, while wages also threaten to rise as employers compete for scarce workers.

Gopinath told reporters that while inflation is expected to return to "more normal levels" by mid-2022 in most countries, it could take longer in the United States.

Liquidity Needed to Stem Afghanistan Economic, Humanitarian Crises

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The international community must find ways to inject cash directly into Afghanistan's economy to avert its total collapse as a growing humanitarian crisis impacts half the population, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.

Guterres, speaking to reporters at U.N. headquarters, also accused the Taliban of breaking promises they made after seizing power in August to uphold the rights of women and girls, including allowing girls to attend school.

"Broken promises lead to broken dreams for the women and girls of Afghanistan," Guterres said, asserting there "is no way" to heal the economy if the Taliban continue barring women from working.

His comments underscored the urgent need for steps to ease the economic and humanitarian crises that have grown since the Taliban took power as the 20-year U.S. military intervention ended.

The Islamists' takeover saw billions in central bank assets frozen and international financial institutions suspend access to funds, although humanitarian aid has continued.

Banks are running out of money, civil servants have not been paid and food prices have soared.

"The crisis is affecting at least 18 million people - half the country's population," said Guterres, adding that a massive U.N. humanitarian aid operation is underway in a "race against time" as winter approaches. Guterres noted that the Afghan economy - kept afloat by foreign aid for two decades - was being buffeted by drought and COVID-19 before the Taliban seized power.

"I urge the world to take action and inject liquidity into the Afghan economy to avoid collapse," he said, explaining that any measures should avoid channeling cash through the Taliban.



They also should be taken independent of diplomatic decisions to recognize the Islamists' government, he said.

One way to inject liquidity into the economy, he said, is for U.N. agencies and humanitarian groups to make cash payments directly to people, he said, adding the World Bank could create a special trust fund from which money could be drawn.

But, he said, "The main responsibility for finding a way back from the abyss lies" with the Taliban.

The group not only promised to uphold the rights of women and girls, but those of minorities and former government employees, Guterres said. "This is a make or break moment," he said, warning that without action, the world will "pay a heavy price" as increasing numbers of Afghans flee their country "in search of a better life."

China Pledges \$230m To Protect Biodiversity In Developing States

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China on Tuesday pledged to inject \$233 million into a new fund to protect biodiversity in developing countries during a key UN conservation summit, despite disagreements among major donors on the initiative.

Beijing -- the world's biggest polluter -- has sought to play a more prominent role internationally on biodiversity conservation in recent years.

Its pledge came as delegates from about 195 countries gathered in the southern Chinese city of Kunming for the first of a two-part summit on safeguarding plants, animals and ecosystems.

The summit aims to establish a new accord setting out targets for 2030 and 2050.

"China will take the lead in establishing the Kunming biodiversity fund with a capital contribution of 1.5 billion yuan (\$233 million) to support the cause of biodiversity conservation in developing countries," Chinese President Xi Jinping said during a speech delivered via video link at the COP15 leaders' summit.

"China calls on... all parties to contribute to the fund."

A key proposal being debated at the conference is the "30 by 30" agenda that would afford 30 percent of the Earth's land and oceans protected status by 2030.

Global spending to protect and restore nature needs to triple this decade to about \$350 billion annually by 2030 and \$536 billion by 2050 to meet this target, a UN report said in May.

But some rich country donors say a new fund for conservation is unnecessary because the United Nations' Global Environment Facility already helps developing nations finance green projects.

"It is... important to mobilize all sources, including existing funds such as the global environment facility and the climate fund, to protect... and restore biodiversity," French President Emmanuel Macron said.



EU Seeking to Ensure Gas Supply to Ukraine

KYIV (Dispatches) - The European Union is looking at different ways to ensure Ukraine has a steady supply of natural gas this winter and is not exposed to any reduction in Russian output, the bloc's chief executive said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said reverse flows could come from Slovakia, which since September 2014 has had an interconnector with Ukraine.

"The Commission, together with Ukrainian experts, is exploring, right now, different scenarios to secure sufficient supply for Ukraine," von der Leyen said in a statement alongside Ukraine's president.

"We will also work closely with you ... to increase gas supply capacity coming from member states of the European Union. And this also includes the option of working on arrangements to reverse the flow of an additional gas pipeline from Slovakia," she said.

Ukraine was hosting EU leaders at a summit in Kyiv where the two parties also signed an aviation agreement.

The summit took place at a time when Ukraine is lobbying its Western allies to punish Russia for what it says is Moscow's attempt to use gas supplies as a weapon against Europe.

Energy concerns also sparked a bilateral row between Ukraine and its EU neighbour Hungary last month, after Budapest signed a new long term energy deal with Russia that sidelined Ukraine as a transit country. The deal also brings into question Ukraine's ability to take reverse flows of Russian gas from Hungary.

Macron Announces 30-Billion-Euro Plan to Re-Industrialize France

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday announced a plan worth 30 billion euros (\$35 billion) to re-industrialize France, saying the country should reclaim its crown as a global leader in innovation.

Speaking at the Elysee Palace six months before a presidential election and one month ahead of a UN climate summit, Macron said France had taken key decisions "15-20 years later than some of our European neighbors" and now needed "to become a nation of innovation and research again".

The spending was to address "a kind of growth deficit" for France brought on by insufficient investment in the past, he told an audience of company leaders and university students.

France, he said, needed to return to "a virtuous cycle" which consisted of "innovating, producing and exporting and in that way finance our social model" as part of a new "France 2030" plan.

Over the next decade, France would aim to become a global leader in green hydrogen, which companies and governments are increasingly putting at the center of efforts to de-carbonize economic sectors that rely most on fossil fuels for their energy needs.

Macron singled out steel production, cement and the chemical sector, as well as truck, bus, rail and air transport.

He said that following the Covid-19 pandemic, "which put us face to face with our vulnerabilities", France had to work towards French and European productive autonomy.

France also needed to invest heavily in medical research, Macron said.

After the global Covid outbreak, French pharma giants were unable to come up with a vaccine, unlike biotech startups BioNTech and Moderna.

The aim was now for France to develop "at least 20" biotech drugs against cancers, as well as against emerging and chronic illnesses, including those associated with ageing, Macron said.

"We need to concentrate all our efforts on this objective," he said.

A French presidential official, who asked not to be named, said Macron had laid out the plan in the wake of the Covid crisis "which showed our vulnerability and our dependence on foreign countries in some key sectors but also the importance of innovation which can change everything."

French officials believe that France needs to act rapidly to close the gap and not surrender more ground to emerging powers, notably China.

French carmakers, which Macron said had suffered "cruelly" over the past 30 years, should redirect their efforts towards cleaner vehicles, with a target of putting two million electric or hybrid cars on the roads.

Gazprom Begun Using Gas Stockpiles to Stabilize Market



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian energy giant Gazprom has started using its inventories to pump more natural gas into the pipeline network to stabilize surging prices, a Russian official said.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, in a BBC interview, rejected any suggestion that Russia was withholding gas from the European market, where electricity and gas prices have rocketed this year as tight gas supplies have collided with strong demand in economies recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We favor energy security of Europe; we want to work collaboratively ... Gazprom has in fact started pumping out from its reserves into the pipelines to stabilize the market," Ryabkov told the BBC's Hard Talk program without elaborating.

Interfax news agency, citing data from Gas Infrastructure Europe, has said that Gazprom pumped gas from a storage facility at Haidach in Austria for one day on Oct. 7 after a spike in gas prices to a record high.

"We work deliberately, quietly, soberly towards stabilization. It's not in our interest to rock the boat further," Ryabkov said.

A group of European Parliament lawmakers has asked the European Commission to investigate Gazprom's role in the rising prices, saying its behavior has made them suspect market manipulation and an "effort to pressure" Europe to agree a fast launch of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline between Russia and Germany.

Both Gazprom and the Kremlin have dismissed the accusations.

"We would prefer to have here a bear market. Russia is about bears now, it's not about bullies," Ryabkov said.

Iranian Films Shine in Asia Pacific Screen Awards

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Several movies representing Iranian cinema in the 14th Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) shined by being nominated for awards in various categories.

Nominations for APSA awards were announced on Wednesday and 38 films made their way to compete for best awards in various categories. Iranian films shined with seven nominations in different categories, including "A Hero" directed by Asghar Farhadi for Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Screenplay awards. "Careless Crime" directed by Shahram Mokri was another Iranian film nominated for best screenplay.



2021 Mustafa Prize Laureates Announced

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The laureates of the 4th edition of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize were announced during a press conference on Tuesday.

The 2021 Mustafa (PBUH) Prize Press Conference was held on October 12, 2021, with the presence of the organizers of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize in order to announce the 2021 Mustafa (PBUH) Prize laureates, Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF) Media reported.

Hossein Naderimanesh, a member of the scientific committee of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize, introduced the award winners. He said Muslims used to be the pioneers of science and technology, following the guidance of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

"This prize emphasizes the importance of science in Islam and recognizes Muslims who play a key role in the development of science and technology around the world," he added. He referred to Ugur Sahin, one of the laureates of the previous rounds, who contributed extensively to the wellbeing of humanity by developing the first COVID-19 vaccine almost a year ago.

He said there are two ways through which the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize laureates are selected. One way is that elites nominate scientists. The nominee must have scientific work which can be in the form of a theory. The second way is that we discover the prominent scientists ourselves. For this round of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize, "515 works were received on the whole, out of which 484 works entered the primary evaluation and 213 were selected in the secondary evaluation. In the final evaluation, 41 works were chosen. Finally, 5 laureates were selected," he announced.

"The national jury consisted of more than 100 members. In the final evaluation, 150 international members joined the jury. On the whole, about 250 national and international experts evaluated the received scientific works," Naderimanesh continued.

"The evaluation process took 20,000 hours," he added.

The first laureate in the field of All Areas of Science and Technology is Harvard University professor, Cumrun Vafa, for his work "F-Theory."

"Cumrun Vafa was a candidate of the Fields Prize years ago," he added.

The second laureate is Zahid Hasan for "Weyl fermion semimetals."

"Zahid Hasan is originally from Bangladesh who is currently a professor at Princeton University," he said. Cumrun Vafa and Zahid Hasan share The Mustafa (PBUH) Prize in the field of Physics from All Areas of Science and Technology.

The next laureate is Mohamed H. Sayegh for "Novel Therapies to Improve Renal and Cardiac Allograft Outcomes" from Lebanon.

Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary for "Discovery of fascinating molecules with therapeutic applications," is another laureate of this round.

"His expertise is organic chemistry. He has received Khwarizmi Prize from Iran years ago," Naderimanesh added.

Yahya Tayalati for "Observation of the Light by Light Scattering and the Search for Magnetic Monopoles," is the next laureate. "Tayalati's research has contributed extensively to the realm of dark matter and dark energy," he highlighted.

Mohamed H. Sayegh, Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, and Yahya Tayalati are the 2021 Mustafa (PBUH) Prize laureates from Islamic countries. Naderimanesh said the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize seeks to elevate the position of Muslims in the world.



Mahdi Saffarinia, CEO of the Mustafa (PBUH) Science and Technology Foundation, was another speaker at the Press Conference. He talked about the previous rounds of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize and then the upcoming round. He emphasized the importance of "the impact of the laureates' works on the wellbeing of all humanity."

He announced that the 2021 Mustafa (PBUH) Prize laureates will be awarded next week on Thursday, October 21st.

Saffarinia stated that due to the COVID-19 situation, we had limitations in inviting guests for this round of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize; however, "About 50 scientists and scholars from 15 countries will attend the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize week this year."

These guests will attend the different scientific meetings organized to be held during the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize week. They will give speeches at different universities, and some will present their scientific achievements in the 4 Science Cafes, he noted.

He said the guests will also attend the meeting of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize Policy-Making Council which will revolve around the discussion of the development of science in Islamic countries.

Saffarinia also talked about the Mustafa (PBUH) Science and Technology Foundation's programs other than Mustafa (PBUH) Prize: Noor Student Competition, Knowledge Application, and Notion for Society (KANS) Competition, Exposure of Industries to Scientists' Achievements (EISA), and Science and Technology Exchange Program (STEP).

He said that the cash prize which is about a million USD on the whole, is from the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize Investment and Endowment Fund (MPIEF), adding that "around 500 individual and legal entities have contributed to the MPIEF so far."

"This year for the first time, 20% of the cash prize is awarded in the form of scientific collaborations of laureates with the world," he added.

Top Iran, Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 1

He will meet with Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza before travelling to Karachi in the second leg of his Pakistan tour where he will visit military and naval installations.

The Iranian and Pakistani military officials are expected to discuss boosting joint cooperation against terrorism, exchanging training delegates, strengthening border management, exchanging information and expanding defense consultations.

Iran Wheat...

FROM PAGE 1

Currently, the USDA is expecting wheat production to reach 15 million mt, down 10% year-on-year, but data for the U.S. agency is difficult to gather amid an escalation in political tensions between the two countries in recent years.

However, with domestic demand put at 12 million mt, the gap needing to be covered by stocks and imports could stand at 7.5 million mt.

Analysis of line-up data and evidence from trade sources points to Russia already selling a huge volume of wheat to Iran through this marketing year, with available information suggesting up to 4 million mt has already been loaded already out of Russian ports between July through to September.

That comes alongside around 1 million mt of wheat that has been sold to Iran from Germany for delivery in the 2021/22 marketing year.

During the 2020/21 marketing year, Iran imported 1.5 million mt of wheat, according to custom's data compared to USDA's estimate at 2.2 million mt.

Meanwhile, for the 2021/22 marketing year, the USDA has increased Iran's wheat imports to 2.5 million mt as the crop stands at 15 million mt, down only 10% year-on-year.

Tehran Blasts Israel...

FROM PAGE 1

The envoy went on to say, "The Israeli regime, in flagrant violation of international law and in total disregard for all relevant United Nations resolutions, continues to violate the fundamental rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. As a result, Palestinians are deprived of their lands and properties, forcibly evicted while being subjected to violence, terror and intimidation. Meanwhile, any right of the Palestinians to self-determination has been negated under the title of 'one Jewish State'."

"Worse still, under the current challenging circumstances and as the international community focuses on mitigating the severe effects and consequences of COVID-19, the Israeli regime continues to exploit this period to accelerate its illegal settlement activities as well as annexation schemes in order to further entrench its military occupation. Simultaneously, the inhumane and suffocating blockade on the Gaza Strip continues to deepen the severity of the humanitarian crisis and inflict misery on the Palestinian civilian population there," Balouji noted.

"At the regional level, the continued occupation of territories of other countries and frequent encroachments against the countries of the region have seriously endangered peace and security in the region and beyond. The Israeli regime's entire history is full of aggression against its neighbors and other countries in the Middle East region," the diplomat said.

Iran UN envoy highlighted, "Given such a dark track record, the Israeli regime's hysteric attempts in order to seek international sympathy and favor by claiming that it is under threat are nothing but manipulative attempts to spread propaganda. The Israeli regime continues to defy all international regimes governing weapons of mass destruction by refusing to adhere to the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention."

"Further, it continues to seriously hamper the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East proposed by Iran in 1974. Indeed, nuclear weapons in the hands of this regime pose the most serious threat to the security of all States in the Middle East and the non-proliferation regime," he added.

"Nevertheless, it attempts to portray Iran's conventional weapon capabilities or its exclusively peaceful nuclear program, which is under the most robust verification of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as a challenge to regional stability. This is but a hypocritical move to distract attention away from the real danger posed to regional peace and security by Israel, particularly its nuclear-weapon arsenals as well as clandestine and un-safeguarded nuclear installations and activities," he said.

AstraZeneca Antibody Cocktail Study Shows Success Treating COVID-19



LONDON (Dispatches) - AstraZeneca's antibody cocktail against COVID-19, which has proven to work as a preventative shot in the non-infected, was also shown to save lives and prevent severe disease when given as treatment within a week of first symptoms.

The drug, a combination of two antibodies called AZD7442, reduced the risk of severe COVID-19 or death by 50% in non-hospitalized patients who have had symptoms for seven days or less, the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker said on Monday.

The risk reduction was even better in patients who started therapy within just five days of initial symptoms, but AstraZeneca joins an already crowded field of medicines that were shown to prevent deterioration in patients with mild disease when given soon after diagnosis.

AstraZeneca executive Mene Pangalos said in a media call that the treatment results would mainly underscore the potential future use as a non-vaccine prevention.

"If and when this is approved it will be used in the treatment setting as well. But the real differentiator for this antibody is going to be in the prophylactic setting," he said.

Similar therapies made with a class of drugs called monoclonal antibodies are being developed by Regeneron, Eli Lilly and GlaxoSmithKline with partner Vir. These therapies are approved for emergency use in the United States for treating mild-to-moderate COVID-19.

Regeneron's therapy showed 72% protection against symptomatic infection in the first week, and 93% after that.

GSK-Vir's showed a 79% reduction in the risk of hospitalization or death due to any cause, while Eli Lilly's therapy showed a 70% reduction in viral load at day seven compared to a placebo.

Elimination of Terrorism Duty of Current Afghanistan Rulers

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chairman of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations Kamal Kharrazi has urged the current Afghanistan rulers - the Taliban - to try to eliminate terrorists in the country Afghanistan as their first and foremost duty.

The current Afghanistan rulers are duty-bound to fight against terrorism and prevent the terrorist group of Daesh (ISIS) from carrying out massacres and killing innocent people in schools and Shia mosques, Kharrazi said according to news released by the Council's information center on Wednesday.

Main duty of any government is to fulfill people's rights one of which is security, the official noted.

He went on to say that the current Afghanistan rulers should eliminate terrorism while paying attention to the fact that the oppressed Shia people in Afghanistan have a natural right to defend themselves.

Whether the current Taliban - after taking power over Afghanistan - is different from the past, is yet to be judged based on their treatment of ethnic groups and different Afghan religions, Kharrazi said.

They should also take due measures to establish [good] relations with neighbors and serve the neighboring countries' legitimate interests, he underlined. So, the Islamic Republic of Iran carefully and closely observes Taliban's policies and behavior in Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan, he stated.

To serve their interests, Taliban should change their behavior in order to bring about peace to Afghanistan and establish good ties with neighbors, he added. As the official stressed, Islamic Republic of Iran is not after interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs; though Tehran has legitimate interests in Kabul that should be served.

He further elaborated on Iran's legitimate interests which include border security, prevention of terrorist activities and terrorists' entry to Islamic Republic's soil, prevention of transit of illicit drugs to Iran, respect for rights of Shia and other Afghan groups, preservation and expansion of Persian Language as part of Afghans' heritage, development of trade cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan and preparing the ground for return of Afghan refugees residing in Iran to their homes. Afghanistan's political independence should be preserved; and this is not just a national interest but a necessity to regional peace and stability, Kharrazi stressed. And this is Taliban's duty to insist on Afghanistan's political independence and prevent presence and influence of any foreign powers, he noted.

India Proposes...

FROM PAGE 1

Jaishankar said that about the regional security situation in light of the developments in the Caucasus regions since last year, India's position has been consistent.

"Since the beginning of the hostilities, we have been calling for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in diplomatic means. We have expressed support for the resolution of dispute under the USC Ministry. We have supported the bilateral ceasefire of November 9-10, 2020. India has always been in favour of peace and stability in this region," he said.

He said that connectivity today is a very important subject of international collaboration.

"Now, we saw just a little while ago what happened at the Suez Canal and how much it disrupted trade between Europe and Asia. So for us, the International North South Transport Corridor is a very, very important initiative. We have invested a lot of energy, given it a lot of priority and we, I think, all our participation (member countries) will add more options and more possibilities to an initiative which has been under discussion," he said.

Qatar Calls on...

FROM PAGE 1

"We have fulfilled the role of an impartial mediator and seek to make Afghanistan a stable and inclusive country. We are in touch with all Afghans and we preserve a good relationship with them. An approach based on international cooperation must be adopted on Afghanistan." Elsewhere in his remarks, Qatari foreign minister pointed to Iran's nuclear deal, JCPOA, and added, "It is in our interest to restore the nuclear deal and we will provide any kind of necessary support to make it happen."

He once again stipulated that Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC)'s member states should establish relations with Iran away from any interference. "The PGCC countries should communicate with Iran away from any interference."

Barcelona Center-Back Araujo Suffers Hamstring Injury

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona center-back Ronald Araujo has been sidelined with a hamstring injury sustained on international duty with Uruguay, the La Liga giants said.

Ronald Koeman's men have been badly hit by injuries this season and losing Araujo, who has played every game this term, will be another blow.

The 22-year-old Araujo was injured during Uruguay's 3-0 World Cup qualifying loss to Argentina on Sunday.

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Britain to Host Extreme E Season Finale

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Extreme E electric off-road racing series will visit Britain in December for the final race of its inaugural season, organizers announced.

The Jurassic X Prix will take place on a military base in Dorset, southwest England, on December 18 and 19, replacing a race originally scheduled to take place in Argentina that was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Portugal Rout Luxembourg; England Held in Hungary

LONDON (Dispatches) - A 58th career hat-trick from Cristiano Ronaldo helped Portugal stroll to a 5-0 home win over Luxembourg in Group A of World Cup qualifying on Tuesday.

The treble, which meant Ronaldo became the first man to net 10 international hat-tricks, takes his tally to 115 international goals from 182 caps as he continues to pull away as the top men's international goalscorer of all-time.

Victory ensures Portugal remain a point behind leaders Serbia, who moved onto 17 points with a 3-1 home win over Azerbaijan, with a game in hand and superior goal difference.

Portugal had the game all but won within the first 18 minutes.

Ronaldo struck twice from the penalty spot before his Manchester United team mate Bruno Fernandes made it three as he fired in following good work from Bernardo Silva.

The forward then missed two gilt-edged chances either side of the break as he sought a third, before being denied a spectacular hat-trick goal when Anthony Moris kept out his acrobatic overhead kick.

Meanwhile England took another, somewhat faltering, step towards 2022 World Cup qualification when they drew 1-1 with Hungary at Wembley and are now three points clear at the top of Group I with two matches remaining.

The game was marred by fighting in the stands between Hungary fans and baton-wielding police just after kickoff, with riot police entering the fray as visiting supporters forced stewards and police back down a tunnel.

On the pitch, the visitors went ahead with a Roland Sallai penalty in the 24th minute after England's Luke Shaw caught a stooping Loci Nego in the head as he attempted a clearance.

England equalized after 37 minutes when a Phil Foden free kick was flicked on by



Tyrone Mings and the ball was turned in by John Stones from close range.

The center back came close to a second when he headed a corner just wide after an hour while Harry Kane miskicked when well placed in front of goal - the captain's last contribution before being replaced by Tammy Abraham for the last 15 minutes.

That, and other changes, failed to swing the game England's way as Gareth Southgate's experiment of playing Foden, Jack Grealish and Mason Mount together in a miniature midfield proved something of a failure.

Meanwhile Denmark became the second European nation to reach the 2022 World Cup after a 1-0 home win over Austria left them top of qualifying Group F with an unassailable seven-point lead over second-placed Scotland.

After Germany advanced to the 32-nation tournament in Qatar on Monday, the Danes secured their own berth with two games to spare as a 53rd-minute goal from Joakim Maehle helped them to an eighth successive qualifying victory.

Denmark and Germany joined Qatar, who gained an automatic spot in the finals as the host nation. Only the group winners from European qualifying advance directly while the runners-up enter the playoffs.

Denmark have scored 27 goals and conceded none so far in World Cup qualifying, with their run to the finals underpinned by some impressive free-flowing football.

Following joyous scenes as the Danes mobbed each other after the final whistle, captain Simon Kjaer stressed they now wanted to make an impact in Qatar after romping through qualifying.

Pliskova Ousted In Third Round At Indian Wells



INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - Top seed Karolina Pliskova crashed out of the WTA Indian Wells tournament, losing in straight sets to unseeded Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-3, 7-5 in a third round match.

Playing in windy conditions on one of the outer courts at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, Brazil's Haddad Maia jumped out to a 3-1 lead in the second set before the Czech picked up her game.

Haddad Maia fought back, clinching the match on her second set point when Pliskova flubbed a backhand off the top of her racquet sending the ball skyward to end the contest which took over two hours to complete.

World number three Pliskova hammered five aces but had 12 double faults. She won just 25 per cent of her second serve points and had her serve broken eight times.

Lucky loser Haddad Maia moves on to face Estonia's Anett Kontaveit in the fourth round.

The red-hot Kontaveit continued her fine run of form by ousting defending champion Bianca Andreescu 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in the third round.

Kontaveit, who is seeded 18th, stretched her 2021 win streak to eight straight matches and continued her domination over Andreescu, winning all three career matches over the Canadian.

Wilder Has No Plans to Retire

LONDON (Dispatches) - Deontay Wilder has no plans to retire, the American boxer's trainer Malik Scott said, after he was knocked out by Briton Tyson Fury in their WBC heavyweight world championship fight on Saturday.

Fury (31-0-1) weathered the early storm to outbox Wilder and landed the decisive blow in the 11th round to close out their trilogy and remain the undefeated lineal champion.

"Deontay has set his family financially secure so he doesn't have to fight to make a living," Scott told iFL TV.

"But retiring is not in his plans at all and not something we've discussed."

Scott said Wilder (42-2-1) deserved to have more high-level fights and be involved in main events. "Deontay was great on Saturday, but Fury was even greater -- it was a great night of boxing for the heavyweight division," he added.

"You have to give Fury credit for having a good chin and getting up. Fury is a legend, one of the best in the heavyweight division in any era, and it's the same about Deontay."

COVID-19 Stance Could Rule F1 Medical Car Driver Out of Races

LONDON (Dispatches) - Formula One medical car driver Alan van der Merwe risks missing more races, after his absence from Sunday's Turkish Grand Prix, due to his decision not to get vaccinated for COVID-19.

Van der Merwe, 41, and F1 doctor Ian Roberts tested positive independently for the coronavirus ahead of the race and did not travel to Istanbul, with the FIA's Formula E crew standing in.

Both had been in the medical car at the previous Russian Grand Prix in Sochi.

The South African said on Twitter it was the second time he had contracted COVID-19 and he had not been vaccinated for personal reasons.

"From what we understand, there are a couple of countries that you probably won't be allowed to enter ... unless you're vaccinated," Formula One's race director Michael Masi told reporters on Sunday.

UEFA Announces Bidding Process for Euro 2028 Hosts



LONDON (Dispatches) - Countries interested in hosting the 2028 European Championship must confirm their bid by March next year, Europe's soccer governing body UEFA said as it announced the bidding process for the quadrennial tournament.

UEFA said joint bids from member associations would be permitted as long as the two countries are "geographically

compact" while automatic qualification as hosts would not be guaranteed if more than two countries submit a joint bid.

The bidders will be announced in April while the hosts will be appointed in September 2023. Minimum requirements include having 10 stadiums available, with one having a capacity of at least 60,000 and two venues with at least 50,000 seats.

Euro 2020, postponed by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was held across 11 cities in Europe in June-July, with Italy beating England in the final at Wembley Stadium.

The 2024 edition will be hosted by Germany, who beat Turkey in a vote by Uefa's Executive Committee in 2018.

Kenya Dominates Boston Marathon

BOSTON (Dispatches) - Kenya's Benson Kipruto won the men's race and Diana Kipyogei led a Kenyan sweep of the women's podium at the Boston Marathon today, each picking up their first-ever major title.

American CJ Albertson set an aggressive early pace to lead the men's field by two minutes and 13 seconds through the first half but saw his head start disintegrate over hilly terrain after the 20-mile mark, as a tight pack overtook him.

Kipruto, who won the Prague Marathon in May, pulled away with less than 10 kilometers to go and had secured a commanding 41-second lead heading into the last mile, absorbing the cheers along Boylston Street as he broke the tape in two hours, nine minutes and 51 seconds.

Ethiopians Lemi Berhanu and Jemal Yimer finished second and third, respectively.

In the women's race, a crowded pack stuck together through the first 25 kilometers before Kipyogei, who won the Istanbul Marathon in 2020, made her move, securing a 10-second lead over the rest of the field by the 30-kilometre mark.

Ethiopia's Netsanet Gudeta quickly challenged her but Kipyogei proved too powerful, again pulling away to win the race in two hours, 24 minutes and 45 seconds.

Edna Kiplagat, who won in 2017, and Mary Ngugi finished second and third, respectively, to complete a podium sweep for Kenya.

Swiss athletes won the men's and women's wheelchair events, with Paralympic champion Marcel Hug picking up his fifth title in Boston in 1:18:11 despite missing a turn in the final moments of the race, an error he told officials may have cost him 20 seconds.

Manuela Schar picked up her third Boston Marathon win in 1:35:21.



Medvedev Powers Through at Rain-Hit Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev "put the pressure on" to earn his 50th win of the season at the weather-hit ATP/WTA Indian Wells, defeating Filip Krajinovic 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) in the third round.

The 25-year-old Russian delivered a dynamic performance in a second-set tiebreaker to pull away from the Serb and increase his match record to 50-10 this season.

"It was a really tough match," Medvedev told AFP. "The first set I got lucky in a few moments. The second set I started well, but he raised his level."

"I am happy I managed to fight on every point and get it to a tiebreak. I was super solid in the tiebreak and really put the pressure on."

World No. 2 Medvedev moves on to the round of 16 where he will face Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov, who cruised past American Reilly Opelka 6-3, 6-4 during a windy day session.

Medvedev has been ranked second in the world since early in the year and says his goal is to one day be No. 1, which is held by Novak Djokovic. Medvedev defeated him in the US Open final.

"Since I was six I dreamed about being number one," Medvedev said. "But he is the real No. 1 this year. He won three Grand Slams. That is the reality."

"It is one of my goals. I just need to win a hell of a lot of matches and Grand Slams."

Play was delayed for about an hour in the night session before the start of Medvedev's match after heavy rain and gusting winds swept through the Palm Springs, California area.

The worst of the bad weather arrived in the middle of the first evening match between Coco Gauff and Paula Badosa. Action resumed after a small army of volunteers helped dry the main stadium court at the Tennis Garden.

