

Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to **140,407 With **39** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

IRAN NEWS

State Border Service (SBS) of Azerbaijan Announced Yesterday That Drug Dealers Who Tried To Cross the Iranian-Azerbaijani Border Opened Fire on the Border Guards

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Foreign Investors Can Get 5-Year Residence Permit With 90k Euros Investment

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director of Foreign Trade Office at the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technological Assistance of Iran Mr. Abolfazl Koudei says the government has reformed the regulations for granting Iran residence permit to foreign investors and according to the latest approval, any foreign investor who invests 90,000 euros in Iran can get a five-year Iran residence permit.

The previous approval just granted a three-year residence for those who had \$250,000 investment in Iran which was changed and approved by the current government.

Koudei said that the recent approval is aimed at encouraging foreign investors for investment in Iran especially investors from the neighboring countries.

He went on to say that the previous approval was amended by the government for easing foreign investment in the country. He noted that according to the new approval, the foreign investor and his managers and experts as well as the foreign staff employed in his investment in the country can get the residency and their wives or husbands as well as kids can also get the residency.

Koudei noted that those who are interested in getting more information can log on www.investiniran.ir. He reiterated that importance of foreign financial resources due to the competition in the region was the main reason for this decision.

Iran Hard Currency Supply Rises to \$57b In Year to March

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Ali Salehabadi says hard currency supply to the economy rose by more than a half in the calendar year to March 20 despite hostile sanctions imposed by the United States.

Salehabadi said that total foreign exchange resources made available by the CBI for imports into Iran and other public purposes had reached \$57 billion over the year to March. Salehabadi said the figure was an increase of 57% compared to the year to March 2021.

The announcement comes as Iran has been barred from accessing its hard currency resources in countries where it is owed tens of billions of dollars for energy exports that date back to before the American sanctions were imposed in 2018.

The U.S. sanctions have effectively banned Iran from the international banking system as Washington has directly targeted the CBI and more than dozen private and state-controlled banks in the country.

Government authorities have repeatedly stated in recent months that Iran has been enjoying higher sales of crude while being able to receive payments related to crude shipments. Media reports have confirmed that Iran's oil exports rose to around 1.5 million barrels per day in the final months of 2021 and stayed at the same levels in early 2022. **See Page 7**

Iran to Unveil Nuclear Industry Strategic Document



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran is going to release a strategic comprehensive document on its nuclear industry, a spokesperson said.

Speaking at his first press conference of the new year on Tuesday, the spokesman for the Iranian administration Ali Bahadori Jahromi unveiled plans to celebrate the National Nuclear Technology Day, which falls on April 9.

During the upcoming event, to be hosted by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and attended by President Ebrahim Raisi, the "comprehensive strategic document on development of the nuclear industry" will be unveiled, he added.

In recent years, Iranian scientists have made remarkable progress in the field of peaceful nuclear technology despite the sanctions imposed by the West.

It will be the 16th year Iran will celebrate a national day to mark its achievements in the nuclear industry.

The said that the first action of the government in the new year to fulfil the slogan of the year, was to prepare and compile the regulations of knowledge based institutes.

Bahadori Jahromi said: "At the beginning of the new year and the determination of the slogan of the year by the Leader caused hope among the people and officials, and His Eminence's statements have always been a way forward for officials and the government."

He added: "The first action of the government in the new year to fulfill the slogan of the year was to prepare and compile the regulations of knowledge based-institutes."

Referring to Nowruz trips, Bahadori Jahromi said: "After two years of travel ban in the country, we witnessed a boom in trips during Nowruz, and during these days, 23 organizations under the Ministry of Tourism were serving the dear people round the clock."

He added: "We saw more than 50 million overnight stays during the Nowruz holidays, which has increased by 60% compared to last year, and 2 million passengers have used the airlines, which has increased by 41% compared to last year."

Iraq Will Need Suitable Iranian Gas for Years

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iraqi electricity minister has described gas imports from neighboring Iran as suitable and inexpensive, saying his country "will need Iranian gas for years."

Speaking on Monday, Adel Karim acknowledged that the cost of connecting Iraq's electricity grid to those of the Persian Gulf Arab countries is very high. He also referred to three agreements with Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, saying, however, that Iraq has not yet reached a consensus with the trio, especially the Arab countries, on energy prices. "We do not agree with their price," he said, referring to the Persian Gulf Arab states. "The Iranian gas is suitable for Iraq and its price is acceptable. We will need Iranian gas for years."

Meanwhile, Iraq's Electricity Ministry spokesman Ahmad al-Abadi told Lebanon's al-Ahed news website that the country's electricity supply has improved in recent months due to the mild weather and the injection of Iranian gas into Iraqi power plants, which has increased from 8 million cubic meters per day to 25 million. Back in February, the Iranian and Iraqi oil ministers discussed cooperation in the field of energy, including ways to enhance gas exports to Iraq and the repayment of Baghdad's debt to Tehran.

Iraq is currently heavily dependent on Iran's energy for its power plants. It needs more than 35,000 megawatts of electricity a year to meet its domestic needs, but years of war following the 2003 U.S. invasion have left its power infrastructure in tatters. **See Page 7**

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Zionists Kill, World Watches on

We have a strange world with strange attitude that sometimes one cast doubt on the meaning of some words like human rights, peace, humanity and security when we see what is going in the occupied lands and how the world reacts to it.

While the world weeps crocodile tears for what is going in Ukraine, it has closed its eyes on the Zionist regime's crimes against the Palestinians and this savage regime continues its crimes in cold blood. According to reports on Monday, the Israeli occupation forces for the third consecutive night attacked Palestinians who gathered at Bab al-Amoud, also known as Damascus Gate, one of the main gates of the Old City of al-Quds, to celebrate the onset of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

The Palestinian Ma'an news agency said Israeli soldiers used tear gas and sound bombs to disperse the Palestinians who had gathered for Iftar, a meal served at the end of the fasting day during Ramadan, near Bab al-Amoud on Monday night.

Citing witnesses, the news agency said at least six Palestinian youths were arrested during the clashes, three of whom were taken into custody by undercover special Israeli forces and severely beaten.

The occupying regime has since the start of Ramadan turned the Bab al-Amoud into a military barracks by deploying a large number of its forces in the area, according to Palestinian media.

The latest violence came after Israeli police detained 10 Palestinians and injured some 20 others in the same area on Sunday.

Palestine's official Wafa news agency said the confrontations started after Israeli police had intensified their presence at Bab al-Amoud and placed barriers on both sides of it since the first day of the holy month of Ramadan.

Despite these crimes, there is no reaction from the international bodies regarding to this crime and they have remained silent while they are crying foul about what is going in Ukraine. It seems for the international bodies there is a difference between the blood of Palestinians and Ukrainians but everybody knows it well that most countries follow the big powers blindly in any international event and they do what those powers wish and in the case of Palestine the story is the same and they remain indifferent because major powers back the Zionist regime. **See Page 7**

Syria's Return to Arab League to Be Resolved As Soon as Possible

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has hoped for the restoration of Syria's membership in the Arab League, saying Arab nations would be able to reunify their positions and resolve their differences if Damascus is readmitted to the organization.

Lavrov made the remarks during a press conference with the foreign ministers of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Sudan — members of the Arab Contact Group on Ukraine — in the Russian capital city of Moscow on Monday.

"We expressed our hope for Syria's return to the Arab League. The issue will be resolved as soon as possible as it will help Arabs unify their positions in the region and the whole world," the top Russian diplomat said.

The Arab League suspended Syria's membership in November 2011, citing an alleged crackdown by Damascus on opposition protests. Syria has denounced the move as "illegal and a violation of the organization's charter."

Syria was one of the six founding members of the Arab League in 1945. In recent months, an increasing number of countries and political parties have called for the reversal of its suspension from the Arab League. **See Page 7**

AUCTION

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Iran Not to Give in to U.S. Excessive Demands

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the current stalemate in the negotiations held to revive the 2015 deal is due to excessive demands put forth by the United States, saying Tehran will never give in to such demands.

"If there is a pause in the course of the Vienna talks, it's due to the American side's excessive demands," Iran's foreign minister said in a post on his Twitter account on Monday. He emphasized that Iran's Foreign Ministry acts "with power and logic" in order to secure the highest interests of the Iranian nation while observing the country's red lines.

Steps Resumed to Kick Start Tehran-Riyadh Talks

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iraqi foreign ministry official reportedly says the country's prime ministerial office has resumed its efforts to kick start stalled negotiations between Tehran and Riyadh.

The unnamed official told The New Arab news website that three government officials have been tasked with getting a new timetable for the talks agreed by Iran and Saudi Arabia.

"So far, no timing has been proposed. Iranians are not willing to repeat the [process in the] four past rounds. They want agreements and discussions on specified issues. Iraq's mission is now conveying the viewpoints of both sides," the New Arab cited the unnamed official as saying.

"It is too early to respond to the question that whether the result of the moves and negotiations between Saudis and Iranians has been good, or to be optimistic about that, as many sticking points remain."

The Iraqi official reportedly said that the fifth round was earlier cancelled after Riyadh snubbed Tehran's demand to halt execution of Shias in the country. The official was referring to the execution of 81 of people including Shias by Saudi Arabia earlier this month.

A fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia was announced by Iraqi



Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein in a presser in Turkey's Antalya. He said the talks will be hosted by Baghdad.

However, the report says, Iran unilaterally exited the talks after the executions by Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday Tehran is ready to set a date for negotiations with Saudis and wants the talks to continue. He added that the discussions with Riyadh need a clear agenda.

Khatibzadeh said Iran conveyed its views to the Saudis in writing, stressing, "We need to normalize our ties because the whole region and the two nations will benefit from normalization of relations."

Tehran Welcomes Reduction of Narcotics Production in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IP) - The Secretary-General of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters says the country welcomes the reduction of narcotics production and cultivation in Afghanistan.

In a decree, the Head of Taliban Hibatullah Akhundzada banned the cultivation of any plant used to produce narcotics in Afghanistan.

According to the order, the use, transfer, sale, purchase, import, export, and production of any drugs (opium, hash, methamphetamine, and wine) are prohibited throughout Afghanistan.

The Secretary-General of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters Eskandar Momeni said on Monday that the Islamic Republic of Iran held all necessary consultations with the international community in the past and present to address the issue of alternative cultivation for people's livelihoods and the reduction of narcotics production in Afghanistan.

Taliban's decree comes as the production and cultivation of narcotics in Afghanistan have increased unprecedentedly during the 20 years of the US presence in the country, such that it supplies 90% of the world's opium.

According to the UN, in 2000 the production of narcotics in Afghanistan fell below 200 tons and the area under cultivation was about 7,000 hectares, but as NATO and the US invaded Afghanistan, in less than two decades the production of narcotics increased by 50 times, reaching 9,000 tons, he said.

Momeni noted that the U.S. helped develop poppy cultivation in Afghanistan with the provision of high-yielding and bred seeds, smuggling the narcotics through NATO aircraft.

As the Iranian anti-narcotics top official said, more than 90 percent of the world's opium is produced in Afghanistan, according to official figures from the UN and the Taliban, because the U.S. is far from the region and was not directly influenced by the issue, it expanded drug cultivation in Afghanistan, using it as means to insecure the region.

Majlis Ratifies Generalities of Integration Management of National Data

TEHRAN (IP) - The lawmakers ratified the general points of the "Integration Management of National Data and Information" bill.

In the open chamber of Majlis on Tuesday, the MPs approved the general points of the "Integration Management of National Data and Information with 199 votes in favor.

Before the voting process, the spokesman of the Commission of Industries and Mines stressed the significance of the plan for shoring up the power of governance and advancements in different sections of the country.

As an opponent of the bill, Mohammad Reza Sabbaghian Bafghi said the policy-making about the production, maintenance, and procession of the data and information were assigned to the Commission of Scientific Data and Information the members of which were not determined yet.

Zohreh Elahian, a proponent of the bill, emphasized the information age and the preservation of governance over national data and information.

The proponents say the bill will lead to the development of an electronic government in the country.

MPs Urge President to Secure Strong Guarantees From U.S. In Vienna Talks



TEHRAN (IFP) - Iranian lawmakers have written to President Ebrahim Raisi to demand the government get "stronger guarantees" from the United States in the Vienna talks over the revival of the nuclear talks.

190 MPs have so far signed the letter that calls for respect for Iran's previously-announced redlines and securing of national interests in the nuclear talks.

Talks in Vienna for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal were suspended last month.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian says involved parties are close to an agreement, but the ball is in the U.S.'s court to make the required political decisions.

The full removal of anti-Iran sanctions and the guarantees, Tehran has sought to ensure Washington does not unilaterally walk out of the accord again, reportedly remain the sticking points.

Iran Welcomes Any initiative Aimed at Resolving Yemen Crisis

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian official has welcomed a two-month nationwide truce between the warring sides in Yemen's seven-year conflict, stressing that the Islamic Republic welcomes any initiative aimed at the complete removal of the cruel siege against the impoverished country and political settlement of the crisis.

"Tehran seeks to make the voice of the Yemeni nation heard across the world through the United Nations and its partners in the region," the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Saeed Khatibzadeh, told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network on Monday.

He added, "We welcome the ceasefire in Yemen and creation of the atmosphere for

the complete lifting of the siege and the realization of a political settlement."

Also on Monday, Iranian lawmakers condemned the Saudi-led devastating war on Yemen, expressing their support for brave resistance of Yemenis in the face of the aggression.

The 234 lawmakers said in a statement that as the atrocious war in Yemen enters its eighth year, "we condemn this blatant aggression and call for an end to military strikes, the killing of the oppressed Yemeni people, and the lifting of the blockade on the country."

The Iranian lawmakers also expressed their support for the "brave resistance" of Ansarullah movement and the resilient Yemeni nation.

All University Students to Attend Classes in Person

TEHRAN (IP) - The Minister of Health announced that all the University students should attend the classes in person.

Despite the fact that two years have passed since the on-line university classes held due to the outbreak of COVID-19, according to the decisions made by the Ministry of Science officials and university deans, all students across the country in all undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs must be trained in person and they should attend their exams in person.

At a meeting of heads of medical universities on Tuesday, Bahram Eynollahi, the Minister of Health, emphasized the in-person classes and conferences, and the transformation of universities from virtual to face-to-face.

Bahram Eynollahi said that it is necessary to build a new path in the field of the Ministry of Health in universities in order to create more satisfaction among the people.

He also mentioned the strengthening of knowledge-based movements as one of the priorities of the Ministry of Health and added that the country should be self-sufficient in the field of science and technology, and in this case, real growth will take place.

The Minister of Health also believed that an important issue in medical universities, is scientific development, which must be prepared and planned

Eynollahi stated that another priority of the Ministry of Health is to establish a headquarters in this ministry to strengthen health networks and stressed that health networks should be strengthened in universities as well.



Payame Noor University to Open In Lebanon, Iraq, Syria

TEHRAN (IP) - Head of Iran's Payame Noor University announced the opening of its centers in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria.

The Payame Noor University of Iran was established in 1988; the university is based on the distance and part-time education method. Iran's Payame Noor University has centers in more than sixty countries.

The Head of Iran's Payame Noor University, Ebrahim Taghizadeh, announced that the university would set up its centers in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria with the permission of the university's board of trustees.

He also pointed out that seven centers of Payame Noor University in Iran are in the process of obtaining a license to attract foreign students, and right now, the Tehran center has the license. 219

Oldest Refinery In ME to Be Renovated

TEHRAN (Shana) - The operator of Abadan Refinery Development and Stabilization Project, referring to the contract of the Refinery Development and Stabilization Project with the aim of optimizing and making it profitable, announced that the standard of products and capacity consolidation of the refinery is being implemented by constructing new units and renovation of old units.

According to National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), Ahmad Farzaneh said: "With the implementation of this project, capacity will not increase in Abadan Refinery, but the goal of the project is to stabilize the capacity and improve the quality of its products."

Imam Reza shrine, Specialized Center for Publishing Quran

MASHHAD (IP) - Imam Reza (AS) Holy Shrine's Publishing Institute has now turned into one of the most specialized centers for printing and publishing Quran in the world, says the CEO of the institute.

Masoud Farzaneh noted that Imam Reza's holy shrine (in Mashhad, northeast of Iran) has been home to the most precious artworks for ages and considers reprint of Quranic exquisites as its main duty.

The CEO of Imam Reza Holy Shrine's Publishing Institute added: "Being a model, having necessary standards and quality in producing written cultural items are among most significant features that distinguish this institute from other similar bodies."

Farzaneh said: "Meeting special printing demands of pilgrims during coronavirus restrictions as well as sending more than 30 export shipments to neighboring countries are some activities of this institute during coronavirus pandemic".

Referring to the Western sanctions and the ensuing difficulties, the CEO of Imam Reza Holy Shrine's Publishing Institute said: "Increasing production efficiency by improving productivity and human interactions, reducing costs, upgrading equipment, and maintaining machinery by employing technical elements within the institute were some key strategies employed to tackle sanctions".



IME Customers Purchased 10 kg of Gold Bars

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - According to a report by the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME)'s International Affairs and PR, there were 335,720 tons of hot rolled steel sheets, 35,000 tons of sponge iron, 1,050 tons of aluminum hydroxide, 1,860 tons of copper cathodes, 1,700 tons of low-grade copper, 1,250 tons of aluminum ingots, 720 tons of zinc ingots, 200 tons of lead ingots and 50 tons of aluminum billets sold on the same floor.

It's worth noting that the IME's cement trading floor sold 136,384 tons of cement.

IME's open auction trading floor saw trade of 15,000 tons of vacuum bottom and 462 tons of PVC.

On its oil and petrochemical trading floor the IME sold 24,007 tonnes of polymeric products, 16,900 tons of lube cut, 50 tons of sulfur, 3,700 tons of bitumen, 50 tons of argon, 1,726 tons of base oil and motor oil.

In addition to that, the exchange played host to trading 4,750 tons of bitumen on its export ring.

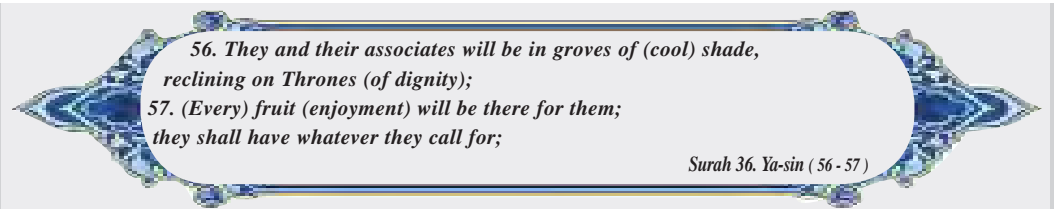
Furthermore, the exchange sold 103,000 tons of steel blooms offered by the South Kaveh Steel Company in 10 premium contracts. Last but not least was the IME's side market with 2,121 tons of dioctyl phthalate, anhydride phthalic, polyester staple fiber (PSF), aluminum oxide and butadiene traded on it.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:47
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:17
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:43



Iran Exports to Afghanistan Decline By 40% in Weight

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Customs Administration spokesman Rouollah Latifi says in last Iranian calendar year, Iran exported 4.187 tons of goods worth \$1.839b to Afghanistan which shows 40\$ decline in terms of weight and 20\$ in value comparing to the preceding year.

Speaking to ILNA, Latifi touched upon Iran's trade exchanges with Afghanistan in the last Iranian calendar year which ended on March 20 and said Iran exported 4.187m tons of goods worth \$1.839b last year which indicates 40% slump in terms of weight and 20% in terms of value comparing to the preceding year.

He then pointed to the amount of Iran's imports from Afghanistan, saying that since the government has imposed ban on imports of goods whose likes are produced in the country, imports from Afghanistan were not significant but on the whole 17,000 tons of goods worth \$19.5m have been imported from Afghanistan.

Latifi noted that in the preceding year, Iran's imports from Afghanistan were around 6,000 tons worth of \$4.173m. He drew conclusion that Iran's imports from Afghanistan rose by 200% in weight and 300% in value.

On the reasons behind decline in exports to Afghanistan, he said the decline due to the current condition in Afghanistan is something natural because in months Afghanistan have faced crisis and exporters were concerned about future of exports to Afghanistan.

Latifi added that new regime in Afghanistan came to power and new laws and regulations were set for trade and several projects which had been financed by the government and international companies came to a halt or totally changed. Therefore consumption of construction materials in Afghanistan reduced and in such a



condition it is natural that the export of construction materials decline, he added.

He said that by the way, ambiguity regarding the future of Afghanistan led to the slump in construction and some of activists in construction field have not resumed their activities.

He also pointed to the slump in the export of other items of consuming goods to Afghanistan, saying that in this period the sources of sustainable incomes in Afghanistan has completely changed and due to the closure of some businesses and earnings of the people, the public priority is the purchase of required and basic goods. So due to the sharp decline in purchase power, exports of unnecessary goods to Afghanistan from any country like Iran have declined, he noted.

Latifi reiterated that peace and stability in Afghanistan and economic boom in this country will be to the benefit of its neighboring countries especially Iran.

He went on to say that currently exports of some goods to Afghanistan have been normalized and with peace and stability, the trend of trade with Afghanistan will be normalized.

He reiterated that decrease of Iran's exports to Afghanistan does not mean that other country has replaced it and it is just because of the decline in purchase power of Afghans. He expressed hope that with arrival of Iranian companies in projects in Afghanistan, the trade between the two states would be accelerated.

Reliance on Cutting-Edge Knowledge Is Base of Production in Chadormalu Co.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company in the first working session of the company in New Year and in meeting with the personnel of the company reiterated that the base of production in the company is reliance on the state-of-the-art technologies and knowledge.

Eng. Taghizadeh first pointed to naming the year by the Supreme Leader as Year of Production, Knowledge-Based and Job Creation and said Chadormalu Company is of the leaders in entering indigenization in the process of production from mine to steel and it is of the first companies which in recent years has pursued indigenization of required parts and equipment with reliance on the creativity and capabilities of domestic craftsmen and the knowledge-based companies and it has done huge investment in this regard.

He then said the most important action of the company last year was the launch of Chadormalu Research, Development and Innovation Center which started its work at Amir Kabir Industrial University, adding that with this action the company actually opened the way for emergence of creativity of the talented and educated students in close cooperation with scientific and knowledge-based centers because the company always believed the cooperation between university and industry is a big and practical step for bringing closer the academic approach to the industrial and production issue.

Taghizadeh noted that Chadormalu as the leading company is trying to smartize production lines and expand new technologies in the process of production as its main task in the production and scientific community.

He also pointed to the agreement with Esfarayen Steel Company for indigenizing HPCR rollers in its concentrate crushing units and it has started its practical step in using the domestic knowhow despite all risks in its investment.

Taghizadeh then highlighted some other major actions of the company in the past year and reiterated that the company is focused on indigenizing the required parts and equipment.



Iran to Increase Electricity Capacity by 6 GW Before Summer

TEHRAN (PresSTV) - Iran should have enough electricity to meet rising demand over the summer months, says Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian as he promises that some 6 gigawatts (GW) will be added to the current power generation capacity in the country before the start of peak demand in July.

"We hope we can see out this year's summer with the least of problems. The power generation capacity will increase by 6,000 megawatts this year," Mehrabian was quoted as saying by the Iranian state TV.

Iran recorded a peak electricity demand of more than 57 GW last summer. Authorities say they expect the figure to increase to 60 GW in July when the country goes through a heat wave.

Energy Ministry figures say total electricity generation capacity in Iran is more than 85 GW. However, the country has been forced to impose brief power cuts in large cities in recent years as actual electricity output is less than 52 GW.

Mehrabian said that 4.5 GW of the new power capacity in Iran will come from new power plants that have opened or are planned to be launched within the next two months.

The minister added that renewables will be responsible for 0.5 GW of new capacity while another 1 GW will be made available through carrying out restructuring plans in existing power plants.

Iran's state-run electricity company Tavanir said on Sunday that power consumption in the country had increased by 4% year on year in the two weeks to the end of March to a total of 10 billion kilowatt hours (kWh).

The company said some provinces had reported a growth in consumption of up to 10% over the same period.

Iran Ready to Support Qatar On Hosting 2022 World Cup

BANDAR ABBAS (IP) - The Director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization says the country will support 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar as a great event in the region.

Holding the Qatar World Cup in 2022 has given Iran a good opportunity to generate income and progress in all cases.

The 22nd round of the FIFA World Cup will be held in Qatar from November 21 to December 18, 2022. This is the first World Cup to be held in the West Asian region, and according to the results of Iran's national team namely Team Melli, Iranians should wait for their team's participation in these competitions as well.

Iran has different climates, geographical location, rich and diverse culture, ancient rituals and customs and infrastructure and various sports and recreation centers and Kish Island in terms of close distance to Qatar and climatic similarities, the existence of various sports, recreational and accommodation facilities also can host the fans of the teams during the World Cup.

Aliakbar Safaee said that good agreements were reached during the visit of the Minister of Roads and Urban Development to Qatar's Doha and that the Qatari side stressed the utilization of Iran's Bushehr and Hormozgan provinces' facilities to support the world cup.

Safaee emphasized that the focus of Iran's support for the event is on Kish Island in Hormozgan province also referred to President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi's recent telephone conversation with the Emir of Qatar who stressed further interactions with Iran.

Before this in response to the phone call of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Tamim Al Thani, Iran's President Raisi congratulated the holy month of Ramadan and further expressed his satisfaction with the holding of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar and wished the country success in holding this important sporting event, noting, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to provide any help in Kish Island, southern Iran, in holding the World Cup games in the best and most glorious way possible

IOOC Plans to Enhance Output

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) outlined the company's significant steps to increase oil production capacity from Iran's offshore fields in the Persian Gulf and restore production capacity to before the sanctions.

According to IOOC, Alireza Mehdizadeh said: "In line with the policies of the 13th administration to increase oil production and exports, especially the emphasis of the Minister of Petroleum and CEO of the

National Iranian Oil Company on restoring production capacity, necessary planning was made at Iranian Offshore Oil Company to return the company's production capacity to the conditions before the 2018 sanctions during the 6-month period from October 2021 to March 2022.

He added: "Accordingly, in Khark and Lavan regions, which had the problem of reduced production, two major and effective measures were taken immediately."

Iran Date Export Exceeds \$255m in 11 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – The spokesman for the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said that more than \$255 million worth of high-quality dates were exported from the country overseas in the first 11 months of the previous year.

Seyed Rouhollah Latifi said that the country exported 292,504 tons of dates, valued at \$255,198,242, overseas from March 21, 2021, to Feb. 22, 2022, showing a hike as compared to the same period of last year.

Turning to the current year's motto named "Production: Knowledge-based and Job-Creating", he expressed hope that knowledge-based companies in the country would focus on scientific export and production of this product.

There are diversified dates that are produced in the country, he said, adding that dates produced in the country are of the highest quality which are welcomed by many people across the world.

Meat Prices Rise, Consumption Down 50%

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The chairman of the country's livestock supply council, Mansour Pourian, told ILNA that a rise in red meat prices had accelerated despite an oversupply in the market.

Consumption of meat has decreased by as much as 50 percent in the past year due to higher prices.

Pourian said that red meat production was higher than consumption, with a surplus of 4 million sheep. He attributed this to stagflation and predicted that drought and water shortages in coming months would raise production costs. But he called on the government to allow the export of live cattle, which was banned last year as means to regulate the market and hold down domestic prices.

Aftab News website in Tehran reported on Sunday that one kilo of average fresh lamb meat has reached \$8, which is not so high in comparison with Western countries, but is unaffordable for many Iranians who make around \$200 a month.

IDRO Ready for Participation With Knowledge-Based Companies

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) emphasized readiness of the organization for participation with knowledge-based companies and highlighted mission of the organization for maximum efforts for materialization of the slogan of the current year.

Mohsen Salehinia pointed to naming of the year by the Supreme Leader as the year of production, knowledge-based and job creation and to the special attention of the Supreme Leader to the knowledge-based companies, and said that expansion of knowledge-based life in the national industries is of the main priorities of the IDRO.

Stating that earlier IDRO has provided the ground for connecting the knowledge-based and technological companies to the units requiring their assistance in the production unit and industry in line with its developmental and facilitating tasks, Salehinia stipulated that implementation of this project has both led to the development of indigenization of technological and knowledge-based products and to the decrease of imports of such items of goods which have boosted the market of knowledge-based companies' products as well as rise in revenues and job creation of those companies which are actually startup.

He then pointed to the cooperation of the IDRO with Science and Technology Vice-Presidency, National Innovation Fund and other supportive centers for financing and supporting the knowledge-based companies and expressed hope this trend of support would be accelerated and expanded in New Year.

Salehinia also pointed to the provision of required infrastructures in the IDRO Kavosh Research Park and called the park an appropriate ground for deployment of the elite knowledge-based companies.



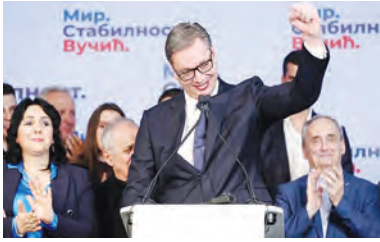
Vucic Wins Nearly 60% of Votes In Serbia Presidential Election

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Serbia's incumbent president, Aleksandar Vucic, has secured 59.5% of votes in a presidential election, the State Election Commission said on Monday after counting 87.67% of ballots.

The commission also said Vucic's ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won 43.4% of votes in a parliamentary election.

Opposition presidential candidate Zdravko Ponos, a retired army general, garnered 17.5%, while his United for Victory alliance obtained 13.1%.

The Socialist Party of Serbia, a long time SNS coalition partner, came third with 11.7%.



Court Upholds 25-Year Sentence For Hotel Rwanda Hero

CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - Rwanda's Court of Appeal on Monday upheld a 25-year prison term against "Hotel Rwanda" hero Paul Rusesabagina, who was convicted last year on charges of "terrorism", rejecting a prosecution appeal to increase the penalty to life.

"Since he is a first-time offender, the court finds that his sentence should not be increased, because the 25 years he was given is in accordance with the weight of his crimes, and the court maintains his sentence," said Judge Francois Regis Rukundakuvuga. The case has had a high profile since Rusesabagina, 67, was arrested in August 2020 after what he described as a kidnapping from Dubai by Rwandan authorities.



Hungary PM Tightens Hold On Power After Poll Victory



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Viktor Orban's fourth-term victory threatens to erode democracy further in Hungary, but he needs to tread a careful path with Brussels to secure much-needed EU funds, analysts said.

His ruling Fidesz party extended its parliamentary majority by two seats in Sunday's general election with turnout at near record levels, trouncing a united opposition in an election overshadowed by Russia's war in neighbouring Ukraine.

This success, on top of 12 consecutive years in power, will make Orban "extremely confident", said analyst Patrik Szicherle of Political Capital.

"This victory shows Fidesz that they need not change course, he can continue constructing his illiberal political system," he told AFP.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, increasingly isolated over the war in Ukraine, congratulated Orban on Monday and said he hoped to develop further Moscow's ties with Budapest. The Hungarian nationalist has been a rare Putin ally in Europe and in NATO, even if diplomatically he has fallen broadly into line with EU support for Kyiv over the war.

Orban, 58, has ruled the EU nation in central Europe with a tight grip since 2010, taking control of the judiciary and other institutions and cracking down on civil liberties, raising alarm in Brussels.

"We have won a great victory -- a victory so great you can perhaps see it from the moon and certainly from Brussels," Orban told jubilant supporters in a victory speech late Sunday that needed the European Union.

"Conservative politics has won, this is not the past, this is the Europe of the future."

Orban has presided over repeated confrontations with the European Union, including over the neutering of the press and judiciary, and measures targeting the LGBTQ community.

With almost all the votes counted, Fidesz won 53 percent of the vote compared to 35 percent for the opposition coalition, according to the national election office.

As a result, Fidesz and its Christian democratic partner KDNP retains its two-thirds majority in parliament with 135 seats -- two more than in the outgoing legislature.

"I'm still savoring this victory," Fidesz MEP Balazs Hidveghi told AFP. "We didn't expect such a big win," he conceded.

The far-right Mi Hazank party also surpassed expectations and will now enter parliament for the first time, after crossing the five-percent minimum threshold.

International observers, who monitored the election, are set to address the media later Monday.

Merkel Defends 2008 Decision To Block Ukraine From NATO

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Former German chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday defended her 2008 decision to block Ukraine from immediately joining NATO, rejecting President Volodymyr Zelensky's criticism as Russia's invasion clouds her 16-year legacy.

Zelensky in a night-late address had described as a "miscalculation" a Franco-German-led decision at the NATO summit in Bucharest to not admit his country to the alliance despite a push from the United States.

"I invite Ms Merkel and Mr (Nicolas) Sarkozy to visit Bucha and see what the policy of concessions to Russia has led to in 14 years," he said, referring to the alleged atrocities against Ukrainian civilians by Russian troops that world powers have described as "war crimes".

The Ukrainian president also accused the European leaders of seeking to appease Russia with their stance then.

But Merkel in a short statement issued by her spokeswoman said she "stands by her decisions in relation to the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest". "In view of the atrocities uncovered in Bucha and other places in Ukraine, all efforts by the government



Sri Lanka Gets New Finance Minister, Central Bank Governor

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa dropped his brother as finance minister and sought a new central bank governor on Monday, as crowds angry over the country's deepening economic crisis surrounded the homes of several lawmakers.

The debt-laden country, run by Rajapaksa and members of his family since 2019, is struggling to pay for imports of fuel and other goods due to a scarcity of foreign exchange, leading to hours-long power cuts and a shortage of essentials.

Police used tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters who gathered outside Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's private residence in Tangalle, in southern Sri Lanka. Mahinda, the president's elder brother, was away at the time in Colombo, the country's commercial capital, where peaceful protests continued into the night.

"Protesters broke through two barricades that had been placed near the residence and police had to use tear gas to move the protesters away," police spokesperson Nihal Thalduma said.

Crowds also gathered outside the homes of six lawmakers and the party office of a former state minister spread across the country, he said.

"Police continue to provide security to the houses of parliamentarians," Thalduma said.

After many protesters demanded the total ouster of the Rajapaksas, the president's media office said in a statement that four new ministers had been appointed "to ensure parliament and other tasks can be conducted in a lawful manner until a full Cabinet can be sworn in."

The president's nephew resigned as sports minister in the government that was disbanded while the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) governor offered to quit. The CBSL delayed its monetary policy announcement scheduled for Tuesday.

Former CBSL official P. Nandalal Weerasinghe said on Monday that he had accepted an offer from Rajapaksa to become the central bank's next governor.

Macron and Le Pen Spar Over Pension Reform

PARIS (Dispatches) - With France's presidential race tightening ahead of Sunday's first round vote, favorites President Emmanuel Macron and far-right challenger Marine Le Pen battled over pension reform on Monday.

Opinion polls have long predicted Macron will win a second term but Le Pen has tightened the gap, with polls showing the 44-year old president with only a six-point advantage in a likely run-off on April 24.

Le Pen has benefited from a campaign focused on purchasing power on which she doubled down on Monday. "Do you realize what retirement at 65 is? It's simply completely unfair," she told BFM TV, lambasting Macron's plan to increase the legal age at which one gets a full pension from 62 to 65.

Le Pen wants to keep the 62-year-old threshold, and bring it down to 60 for those who started working before age 20. Pushing back the retirement age would hurt workers, she said, arguing that many would not manage to find a job at that age and would see their pension hit as a consequence.

Macron, asked about criticism of his pension reform plans, told France Inter radio: "Those who tell you we can keep (the pension system) as it is now are lying to you."

Raising the retirement age - with exceptions for those who have tough jobs or worked longer than others - was needed to make the system viable and increase low pensions, he said.

Macron, when he belatedly entered the election campaign last month, said he would increase the retirement age, cut taxes and further loosen labor market rules, seeking a mandate to press on with pro-business reforms.

Stressing his pro-business credentials was not without risk as households feel the squeeze from rising prices and could put off a number of leftwing voters from backing him against Le Pen in a likely run-off on April 24.

On Saturday, in his only campaign rally before the first round, Macron tried to convince voters of the risk of a Brexit-style election upset that could see Le Pen take the far-right to power in France.

"Look at what happened with Brexit, and so many other elections: what looked improbable actually happened," he said. "Nothing is impossible."

Even if Macron does win a second mandate, as polls still expect, the issue of pension reform, which dogged his first term, could be a problem, considering how widespread the opposition is.



Killings Near Kyiv Raise Int'l Outcry, As Frontline Shifts



BUCHA (Dispatches) - International outrage spread over civilian killings in northern Ukraine, where a mass grave and tied bodies of people shot at close range were found in a town taken back from Russian forces, as Moscow shifted the focus of the fighting elsewhere.

The deaths in Bucha, outside Kyiv, are likely to galvanise the United States and Europe into additional sanctions against Moscow, possibly including some restrictions on the billions of dollars in energy that Europe still imports from Russia.

The discoveries overshadowed peace talks between Russia and Ukraine that were due to resume on Monday against a backdrop of artillery barrages in Ukraine's south and east, where Moscow says it is now focusing its operations after it fell short in attempts to take any major cities in the heart of the country.

"These are war crimes and will be recognised by the world as genocide," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on a visit to Bucha. It had become harder, he said, for Ukraine to negotiate with Russia since the scale of alleged atrocities emerged.

Taras Shapiravskyi, deputy mayor of the town some 40 km (25 miles) northwest of the capital Kyiv, said around 50 victims of extra-judicial killings by Russian troops had been found there after Kremlin forces withdrew late last week.

Reuters saw one man sprawled by the roadside, his hands bound behind his back and a bullet wound to his head. Hands and feet poked through red clay at a mass grave by a church where satellite images showed a 45-foot-long trench.

The Kremlin categorically denied any accusations related to the murder of civilians, including in Bucha. "This information must be seriously questioned," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "From what we have seen, our experts have identified signs of video falsification and other fakes."

Ukrainian authorities said they had found 421 civilian casualties near Kyiv by Sunday and were investigating possible war crimes in Bucha, a description also used by French President Emmanuel Macron and, in reference to Russia's broader offensive, by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

Jordan (\$1900)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apts (\$1800) 2bdrs, F.F (\$2300) 3bdrs, F.F (\$3000) 4bdrs, F.F
All with S/p, S, & J

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China Books Biggest Deal for U.S. Corn Since May 2021

CHICAGO (Dispatches) - Chinese buyers bought 1.084 million tons of U.S. corn, their biggest purchase of U.S. grain since May 2021, the U.S. government said on Monday.

The deal comes as shipments from Ukraine, the world's fourth biggest exporter of corn, are snarled following Russia's invasion. China had been a big buyer of Ukrainian corn and the fighting, which also has disrupted spring planting season, has created uncertainty about their reliability as a supplier.

The U.S. Agriculture Department said that the deal was for 676,000 tons of corn to be delivered in the 2021/22 marketing year that ends Aug. 31 and for 408,000 tons to be delivered in 2022/23.



Russia Maintains Gas Deliveries as Europe Mulls Tighter Sanctions

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia maintained gas flows through key pipeline routes into Europe, despite uncertainty over payment terms and as the EU said it would "significantly tighten" further sanctions against Moscow amid allegations of war crimes in Ukraine.

Physical gas flows through the Yamal-Europe pipeline, at Germany's Mallnow border point see-sawed over the weekend and last stood at zero, data from operator Gascade showed.

Auction results showed gas giant Gazprom (GAZP.MM) booked some upcoming westbound gas transit capacity via Yamal. It booked 4.9 million kilowatt-hours per hour (kWh/h) for Monday night and 1.4 million kWh/h for Tuesday.

The actual flows are not guaranteed because Gazprom does not always use booked capacity.

Nominations, or requests, for Russian gas deliveries via Slovakia's Velke Kapusany entry point from Ukraine were steady on Monday at 967,954 MWh/day, as were flows through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany at 73,426,240 kWh/h.

Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom said it was continuing to supply natural gas to Europe via Ukraine in line with requests from European consumers.

However, questions remained over future deliveries in light of the Kremlin's demand that buyers start paying Gazprom in roubles.

Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger confirmed over the weekend that his country would act in unison with the European Union against such payment demands.

The discovery of a mass grave and civilians shot dead at close range in the Ukrainian city of Bucha outside Kyiv, from which Russian forces recently withdrew, has spurred calls for tougher sanctions on Russia. Russia has previously denied targeting civilians and has rejected allegations of war crimes in what it calls a "special military operation". Moscow claims the killings near Kyiv were "staged" to sully Russia's name.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said on Monday the European Union will "significantly tighten" its sanctions against Russia.

Christian Lindner, German Finance Minister said, the EU must work towards cutting all economic ties with Russia over its "criminal" war in Ukraine but said an encompassing ban on all Russian energy imports would inflict more economic damage on EU member states than on Russia.

He said the EU must look separately at the possibility of banning oil, coal or gas, which can be replaced at varying speeds.

Germany also on Monday placed Gazprom's German subsidiary Gazprom Germania under state control, a move it said was necessary to ensure security of supply in the country after Gazprom last week said it was exiting the business.

Germany will face a steep recession if there is a stop to imports or delivery of Russian gas and oil, a top German bank lobby warned.

France's economic analysis council said a hefty EU-wide tariff on Russian energy imports could prove more efficient than an outright ban, although even a full embargo would have a limited impact on most countries.

Lebanon Is Bankrupt

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon as a state and its central bank have gone bankrupt, according to Deputy Prime Minister Saadeh al-Shami.

"The state has gone bankrupt as did the Banque du Liban, and the loss has occurred, and we will seek to reduce losses for the people," al-Shami told the local Al-Jadeed channel.

He said the losses will be distributed among the state, the Banque du Liban, banks and depositors.

"There is no conflict of views about the distribution of losses," he added.

Lebanon's economic meltdown, which began in October 2019, was the culmination of the country's post-war era. The war's militia leaders became the political leadership and have kept a lock on power ever since. They ran an economy that at times boomed but was effectively a Ponzi scheme riddled with corruption and mismanagement.

The scheme finally collapsed in what the World Bank calls one of the world's worst economic and financial crises since the mid-1800s.

Al-Shami said the country's situation "cannot be ignored," hence bank withdrawals cannot be open to all people.

"I wish we were in a normal situation," he added.

The Lebanese currency has lost 90% of its value, eroding people's ability to access basic goods, including food, water, health care and education, while widespread power outages are common due to fuel shortages.

Also, salaries lost their buying power, dollars in banks became inaccessible and prices skyrocketed in a country where nearly everything is imported. As much as 82% of the population now lives in poverty, according to the United Nations. Unemployment is estimated at 40%.

The crisis was made worse by the coronavirus pandemic and a massive explosion at Beirut's port in 2020 that killed 216 people, wounded thousands and destroyed parts of the capital.

While the economic system collapsed, the political one hasn't. The same leadership, entrenched in power, has done virtually nothing to address the crisis. Refusing basic reforms, they have made no progress in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



Kazakhstan Oil Output Down in March

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Kazakh oil production excluding condensate fell to 1.55 million barrels per day (bpd) in March, down 3% from February, amid export problems from the Black Sea Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) terminal, Reuters calculations based on output data from two industry sources showed.

The fall in Kazakh oil output was because of lower intake in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) system in the second half of March owing to storm damage to loading facilities at its Black Sea terminal situated in the south of Russia.

More than 80% of Kazakhstan's crude is exported via the CPC pipeline to the port of Yuzhnaya Ozerneyevka, close to Novorossiisk, supplying around 1.2% of global oil demand.

CPC terminal damage affected operations of Kazakhstan's giant Tengiz and Kashagan oilfields led by Western oil majors including Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Total, Eni and Shell.

Chevron-led Tengizchevroil, operator of the giant Tengiz oilfield, decreased its March oil output the most among other Kazakh producers, by 6% from February to 622,209 bpd, the sources said.

"Due to unscheduled repair works at the Caspian Pipeline Consortium's (CPC) marine terminal, Tengizchevroil (TCO) is adjusting its production accordingly and is currently exporting its crude oil in line with what has been allocated by CPC," a Chevron representative said.

TCO is the biggest exporter of oil via CPC pipeline and relies on the pipeline as its main route for oil deliveries. Lower oil intake in the CPC system hit its output almost immediately.

Baltic States Stop Russian Gas Imports



RIGA (Dispatches) - The head of Latvia's natural gas storage operator said yesterday the Baltic states were no longer importing Russian natural gas.

"If there were still any doubts about whether there may be any trust in deliveries from Russia, current events clearly show us that there is no more trust," said Uldis Bariss, CEO of Conexus Baltic Grid.

"Since April 1st Russian natural gas is no longer flowing to Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania," he told Latvian radio.

He added that the Baltic market was currently being served by gas reserves stored underground in Latvia.

The move comes as Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought to leverage Russia's status as an energy power.

With his economy crippled by unprecedented international sanctions, Putin warned EU members that they would need to set up ruble accounts to pay for Russian gas.

He said Thursday that existing contracts would be halted if the payments were not made.

While the United States banned the import of Russian oil and gas, the European Union — which received around 40 per cent of its gas supplies from Russia in 2021 — has retained deliveries from Moscow.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda called on the rest of the EU to follow the Baltic example.

"From this month on — no more Russian gas in Lithuania," he said on Twitter.

"Years ago my country made decisions that today allow us with no pain to break energy ties with the aggressor," he added.

"If we can do it, the rest of Europe can do it too!"

Turkey's Inflation At 61% in March, Surpassing Estimations

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Yearly inflation in Turkey hit 61.14% in March, the country's statistical authority said on Monday, climbing to a new 20-year high.

The figure was 54.4% in the previous month and 16.19% in March 2021, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).

The highest annual price increase last month was seen in transportation with 99.12%, followed by food and nonalcoholic beverages at 70.33% and furnishing and household equipment at 69.26%.

The lowest annual increases were posted by communication with 15.08%, education with 26.73%, and clothing and footwear with 26.95%.

Rising prices are part of an economic crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has seen a surge in gas, oil and grain prices.

Turkey's runaway inflation also follows a series of interest rate cuts late last year.

The central bank cut rates by 5 percentage points between September and December, but they have remained unchanged at 14% this year.

The lira, which lost 44% of its value against the U.S. dollar last year, plunged to a record low of 18.41 against the greenback in December before the government revealed a currency protection scheme to boost national assets.

In an effort to soften the blow on households, the government has also implemented tax cuts on basic goods and has adjusted electricity tariffs.

Meanwhile, Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati on Monday said that they are taking decisive steps to "permanently reduce inflation, which rose to 61.1% as of March, and to maintain price stability in a sustainable way."

The minister was speaking at a business meeting in the northwestern Turkish city of Bursa.

The country's monthly inflation rate was 5.46% in March, up from 4.81% in February.

The highest monthly increase was 13.29% in transportation among the main groups, while clothing and footwear posted the lowest inflation with 1.78%, according to TurkStat.

A group of 15 economists projected an average annual rise of 60.95% in consumer prices in March, an Anadolu Agency (AA) survey found last week.

Stating that the world economy, which has been facing an extraordinary period due to the pandemic over the last two years, has been shaken once again by the Russia-Ukraine war, the finance minister noted that the economic effects of the war, as well as its tragic individual and social effects, have affected the whole world.

India's Wheat Exports Hit Record 7.85m Tons in 2021-22



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's wheat exports hit 7.85 million tons in the fiscal year to March, an all-time high and a sharp increase from 2.1 million tons in the previous year, traders said, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine cuts off rival Black Sea supplies.

Earlier this month, a top government official said India would export a record 7 million tonnes of wheat in the 2021-22 fiscal year as a rally in global prices gave the world's second biggest producer of the grain an opportunity to gain market share.

India achieved its target of exporting 7 million tons of wheat on March 21, according to the Indian government, which is yet to issue wheat shipment data for the last 10 days of March.

Traders said wheat shipments, including cargoes sold to neighboring Bangladesh by land, totalled 7.85 million tons in 2021-22, surpassing the target of 7 million and indicating robust exports in the 2022-23 fiscal year that began on April 1.

Other than Bangladesh, India exported wheat to South Korea, Sri Lanka, Oman and Qatar, among others, traders said. Most export deals were signed at between \$225 and \$335 a ton free on board, they said.

"Business has been very brisk, and both Mundra and Kandla ports have been very busy handling outbound wheat cargoes," said Rajesh Paharia Jain, a leading New Delhi-based trader.

As war raged across the Black Sea region, global wheat prices have surged, and supplies from both Russia and Ukraine, which together account for about 29% of global wheat exports, have dropped substantially.

Russia calls its actions in Ukraine a "special military operation" to demilitarize the country. Western countries call it an unprovoked war of aggression.

India's new season wheat harvest is underway, and this year's production is pegged at a record 111.32 million tons - the sixth straight surplus output - encouraging traders to clinch more export deals.

Psaki Claims U.S., Allies Ready to Conclude Agreement With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - White House spokesperson Jen Psaki claimed that the U.S. and its allies in Vienna negotiations are ready to conclude a strong agreement with Iran.

Answering a question in her weekly press conference on Monday on the Vienna talks, Psaki claimed, “Both ourselves and our allies are prepared to conclude a strong

agreement if Iran is prepared to do the same.”

“Together with our European allies, the United States has negotiated the roadmap for a mutual return to compliance through the Vienna talks,” she further claimed, adding, “The President will reenter the deal if it’s in our national security interests.”



UN Releases Handbook of Climate Change Solutions

PARIS (Dispatches) - UN climate experts released what is expected to be the definitive guide to halting global warming, in a report that lays out how societies and economies must transform to ensure a “liveable” future.

With war in Ukraine spurring an urgent energy rethink in the West, analysts say the latest report from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will also be an important resource for nations seeking a rapid transition away from Russian oil and gas.

In recent months the IPCC has published the first two instalments in a trilogy of mammoth scientific assessments covering how greenhouse gas pollution is heating the planet and what that means for life on Earth.

This third report will outline what to do about it.

But that answer has sweeping political ramifications as climate solutions touch on virtually all aspects of modern life -- and require significant investment.

Two weeks of gruelling negotiations have seen nearly 200 nations struggling to thrash out line-by-line a high-level “summary for policymakers” that distils the hundreds of pages of underlying assessment.

That meeting was supposed to wrap up on Friday, but dragged on through the weekend. The IPCC assessment was originally due to be published publicly on Monday at 0900 GMT, but that is now likely to be delayed until later in the day.

“Everybody has something to lose and everybody has something to gain,” said one person close to the process.

Easy answers are unlikely, with the IPCC expected to detail the need for transformational changes to energy generation and industry, as well as to cities, transportation and food systems.

To save the world from the worst ravages of climate change, the report is also expected to warn that slashing carbon dioxide pollution is no longer enough.

And technologies that are not yet operating to scale will need to be ramped up enormously to suck CO2 out of the atmosphere.

A 1.5C cap on global warming -- the aspirational goal of the 2015 Paris climate accord -- has been embraced as a target by most of the world’s nations.

Barely 1.1C of warming so far has ushered in a devastating surge of deadly extreme weather across the globe.

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned last month that major economies are allowing carbon pollution to increase when drastic cuts are needed.

“We are sleepwalking to climate catastrophe,” he said.

In February, the IPCC report on past, present and future climate change impacts and vulnerabilities detailed what Guterres called an “atlas of human suffering”.

The report concluded that further delays in cutting carbon pollution and preparing for impacts already in the pipeline “will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of



opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all”.

Current national carbon-cutting commitments still put the world on a catastrophic path toward 2.7C of warming by 2100.

“How much more destruction must we witness, and how many more scientific reports will it take, before governments finally acknowledge fossil fuels as the real culprits behind the human suffering being felt across the globe?”, said Namrata Chowdhary of 350.org.

The main focus of the report is on weaning the global economy off fossil fuels and moving to low- or zero-carbon sources of energy, from solar and wind to nuclear, hydro and hydrogen.

Helping that transition is the fact that renewable energy is now cheaper than energy generated by fossil fuels in most markets.

The IPCC also details ways to reduce demand for oil, gas and coal, whether by making buildings more energy-efficient or encouraging shifts in lifestyle, such as eating less beef and not flying half-way around the world for a holiday or business meeting.

With intense political wrangling over the high level policy summary, some fear the message will have been watered down.

“The climate crisis is accelerating and fossil fuels are the overwhelming cause. Any report on mitigation that fails to emphasise that fact is denying the very science to which the IPCC is committed,” said Nikki Reisch of the Center for International Environmental Law.

The report’s finding will feed into UN political negotiations, which resume in November in Egypt at COP 27.

Nearly Entire Global Population Breathing Polluted Air



GENEVA (Dispatches) - A full 99 percent of people on Earth breathe air containing too many pollutants, the World Health Organization said Monday, blaming poor air quality for millions of deaths each year.

Fresh data from the UN health agency showed that every corner of the globe is dealing with air pollution, although the problem is much worse in poorer countries.

“Almost the entire global population (99 percent) breathes air that exceeds WHO air quality limits, and threatens their health,” the agency said in a statement.

In its previous report four years ago, WHO had already found that over 90 percent of the global population was affected, but it has since tightened its limits, it said.

“The evidence base for the harm caused by air pollution has been growing rapidly and points to significant harm caused by even low levels of many air pollutants,” WHO said.

While UN data last year indicated that pandemic lockdowns and travel restrictions caused short-lived improvements in air quality, WHO said air pollution remains a towering problem.

“After surviving a pandemic, it is unacceptable to still have seven million preventable deaths and countless preventable lost years of good health due to air pollution,” Maria Neira, the head of the WHO’s department of public health and environment, said in a statement.

WHO’s study provides air quality data from more than 6,000 cities and towns across 117 countries.

The findings were alarming, the organization said, and highlighted the importance of rapidly curbing fossil fuel use.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed that worries over soaring energy prices, due in part to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, should help propel change.

“Current energy concerns highlight the importance of speeding up the transition to cleaner, healthier energy systems,” he said in a statement.

“High fossil fuel prices, energy security, and the urgency of addressing the twin health challenges of air pollution and climate change, underscore the pressing need to move faster towards a world that is much less dependent on fossil fuels.”

Players with disabilities score in video game world

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - Carlos Vasquez is a master of video fighting game “Mortal Kombat” despite being unable to see the action on screen because he is blind.

The Texas resident -- who relies on sound to time punches, kicks and dodges -- is among a chorus of voices calling for better access to gaming for people with disabilities.

“You have two characters across the screen fighting each other, left and right, and you just have to memorize the buttons,” said Vasquez, explaining what drew him to “Mortal Kombat”.

Long neglected by the industry, the issue of accessibility is increasingly front of mind for game makers.

There are financial as well as ethical reasons for opening doors to even more players in the multi-billion dollar industry.

According to the World Health Organization, more than a billion people live with some form of disability.

Microsoft, the tech powerhouse behind Xbox and its cloud game streaming service, estimates that there are some 400 million players with disabilities.

Vasquez’s prowess caught the attention of “Mortal Kombat” maker NetherRealm Studios owned by Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment.

At his suggestion, the studio added audio cues to help blind gamers identify objects that they can interact with in the game.

Game makers are keeping accessibility in mind when designing software, adding settings intended to level the field for players with disabilities.

Games can be tweaked to let artificial intelligence or other human players lend assistance when needed.

Options can be built in to bypass obstacles insurmountable due to a disability.

“The approach we have is to try to make accessibility part of the DNA of everyone in the company,” said David Tisserand, head of the initiative at French video game giant Ubisoft.

Game makers are keeping accessibility in mind when designing software, adding settings intended to level the field for players with disabilities

“We really want to make sure that everyone understands that accessibility is part of their mandate.”

In March, the second annual Video Game Accessibility



Awards were handed out to titles best adapted to people with disabilities.

Games that won honors included car racing title “Forza Horizon 5,” which was the first to ever support American and British sign language.

“Things are a lot better than they

were decades ago because games can somewhat be fixed with update patches,” noted Chris Robinson, a Chicago-based gamer who was born deaf and hosts DeafGamersTV channel on video game streaming site Twitch.

Helpful visual or audio features in recent releases such as “Last of Us Part II”, Marvel’s “Guardians of the Galaxy”, and “Far Cry 6” have gotten kudos from players with disabilities.

Despite the progress, players interviewed by AFP were adamant that more needs to be done and wanted to be heard in the process.

For example, larger type in subtitles and visual cues on screen make a world of difference to deaf players, said Robinson.

“The other challenge is communication with other players who can hear,” said Soleil Wheeler, a 16-year-old deaf gamer who uses the handle “Ewok”.

Thousands of people tune into to watch Wheeler playing battle-royale games “Fortnite” and “Apex Legends” online.

The teenager eagerly awaits a time when conversations in online multiplayer games are displayed as captions in real-time during play.

Hardware accessories are rare for players with limited use of their hands, said David Combarieu, chief of Hitclac, a French startup that designs gear enabling people with motor disabilities to game at a competitive level.

Microsoft makes a special adaptive controller for Xbox games, at a price of \$100, before adding in costs for customization.

Yet, there is no controller equivalent offered by Xbox’s console market rivals Sony and Nintendo, said Combarieu.

Online platforms have a diverse range of players, but they can still be badgered with insulting or abusive comments by “trolls” and “haters,” said teen gamer Wheeler.

“I am not letting them waste my time,” Wheeler said. “I pick my battles wisely as I navigate through life.”

Iraq Will Need...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S., which is unhappy with the close relationship and trade between Baghdad and Tehran, has put pressure on Iraq to make itself less dependent on Iran’s gas and electricity. It has also been enlisting its companies and allies to replace Iran as Iraq’s source of energy.

However, Iraqi officials have said there is no easy substitute for imports from Iran

because it would take years to adequately build up Iraq’s energy infrastructure.

Iran has kept exporting energy to Iraq despite illegal U.S. sanctions, but it has faced numerous problems with the repatriation of its money from those sales.

The exact amount of the Iraqi debt is not known. In the past, Iranian officials have said between \$6 billion and \$7 billion of Iranian funds are held in the Arab country.

Zionists Kill...

FROM PAGE 1

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the only country which has always supported Palestinians and support of Palestine liberation has been of its doctrine. Last week Iran once again reiterated the significance of Palestine for all Muslim nations, rejecting any compromise with the apartheid regime of Israel on the Palestinian cause.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh made the comment in a post on his official twitter account last Tuesday after taking part in the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Islamabad, Pakistan.

“Palestine is & will remain top priority of Muslim world & no one can compromise on the cause w the apartheid regime of Israel,” the Iranian official tweeted.

He also stressed the importance of reinforcing unity among Muslim nations in the face of crises in countries like Afghanistan and Yemen.

“From Yemen to Afghanistan the Islamic world’s unity is the key to address the crises,” Khatibzadeh said.

The two-day high-level meeting of the OIC opened in Islamabad on Tuesday under the theme of “Building Partnerships for Unity, Justice, and Development”.

Iran has always emphasized that Palestine should be the foremost issue of the Muslim world and that all Muslim nations should strengthen their unity and establish stronger relations to counter the occupying regime of Israel.

When the international bodies keep quiet regarding the Zionist regime’s crimes, it is up to the Muslim nations rush to the help of the brother Palestinians and Palestinians themselves should take the arms and continue their intifada till the liberation of their lands from the claw of the Zionist regime.

And we can just regret about the attitude of the international bodies which have been apparently set up to defend human rights and international peace but act biasedly and sometimes indifferently when the rights of a Muslim nation are trampled. So they are recommended to keep being silent when Palestinians retaliate and take revenge on the Zionists’ savage crimes because Palestinians cannot seat and wait for continuation of these atrocities which are continued in cold blood with big powers’ support.

Iran Hard Currency...

FROM PAGE 1

Salehabadi said that a bulk of the hard currency earmarked for imports and other purposes in the year to March had been supplied by exporters who are required to sell their proceeds to private importers via a CBI-controlled foreign exchange system known as NIMA.

He said exports proceeds supplied to NIMA had increased by 66% in the previous calendar year to reach a total of \$29.3 billion.

Syria's Return to...

FROM PAGE 1

Early this year, the secretary general of the central committee of the Palestinian Fatah political party denounced the suspension as “disgraceful” for the entire Arab world, especially as the war-ravaged country is a founding member of the regional organization.

Speaking at a press conference in the Syrian capital of Damascus on January 10, Jibril Rajoub added that Syria must return to the Arab League.

He said that his visit to Damascus at the head of a high-ranking Palestinian delegation is a turning point in light of the Israeli regime’s stepped-up aggression and attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause.

Rajoub noted that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas plans to visit Syria in the near future, extending his gratitude to the Syrian people and leadership for their hospitality towards Palestinians living there and for their firm stances vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause despite all the difficulties they have gone through over the past years.

Last December, the speaker of the Jordanian House of Representatives, Abdul Karim al-Daghmi, called for Syria to be fully reinstated to the Arab League when Algeria hosts the next Arab summit in March.

Masters Decision Will Be Game-Time

AUGUSTA (Dispatches) - Tiger Woods said Sunday he will make a “game-time decision” over whether to make a comeback at next week’s Masters as he headed to Augusta for more practice. The 46-year-old former world number one has stoked intrigue ahead of the year’s first Major after playing a practice round at Augusta last week to test his fitness. Woods, who suffered severe leg injuries in an automobile accident in California 13 months ago, is on the entry list for the Masters but has not definitively confirmed if he will play.

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Roglic Wins Basque Country Opening Stage

MADRID (Dispatches) - Olympic champion Primoz Roglic won the opening day time trial around the coastal town of Hondarribia in the Tour of the Basque Country. Wearing the gold helmet and riding a gold-trimmed bike he is entitled to as Olympic champion, Roglic took just 9min 48sec to complete the hilly 7.5km circuit, with the crowds cheering him up the final stretch on a cobbled hill as the clock ticked down. Belgian rider Remco Evenepoel of Quick-Step was second at just 5sec and his teammate Remi Cavagna third, another 11sec off the pace.

Thunder Hand Suns One of Worst Losses of Season

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Aleksej Pokusevski had 17 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists for his first career triple-double as the lowly Oklahoma City Thunder sent the NBA-best Phoenix Suns to one of their worst losses of the season, 117-96. The win tied for the largest margin of victory this season for the host Thunder and was just the Suns’ fourth loss of 20 or more points. Phoenix’s worst loss of the season came by 29 against Portland in October. The Suns have lost back-to-back games for just the fourth time this season. Playing without Devin Booker and Deandre Ayton - both of whom were rested - the Suns didn’t have enough firepower to beat the team that has the fourth-worst record in the NBA. Suns star Chris Paul played in his first game in Oklahoma City with fans present since the Thunder traded him to Phoenix before last season, and he was greeted by a loud ovation during introductions. He finished with 11 points and nine assists.

Nuggets 129, Lakers 118

Nikola Jokic had 38 points and 18 rebounds, Will Barton scored 25 points, and visiting Denver beat Los Angeles, which was without LeBron James due to a sore ankle. The Lakers have lost six straight games. Aaron Gordon had 24 points, DeMarcus Cousins scored 14 and Bones Hyland and Davon Reed added 10 apiece for the Nuggets. Denver moved into first place in the Northwest Division by a half-game over Utah and is currently the fifth seed in the Western Conference. Anthony Davis had 28 points, nine rebounds and eight assists, Russell Westbrook added 27 points and 10 rebounds, Carmelo Anthony scored 17, Malik Monk had 11 and Avery Bradley finished with 10 for the Lakers, who are in 11th place in the West and are in jeopardy of missing the play-in round.

Warriors 109, Kings 90

Andrew Wiggins scored a game-high 25 points, and Golden State retained the No. 3 playoff position in the Western Conference with a victory that formally eliminated host Sacramento from postseason contention. Electing to rest veterans Klay Thompson, Andre Iguodala and Otto Porter Jr. on the second night of a back-to-back, the Warriors also got 22 points from Jordan Poole, 19 from Nemanja Bjelica and 17



from Jonathan Kuminga in winnin their second straight. Bjelica grabbed 12 rebounds for a double-double and added a team-high six assists off the bench.

Former Warriors Harrison Barnes and Damian Jones had 18 and 17 points, respectively, to pace the Kings, who needed to win its last four games to have a shot at ending what is now a 16-year playoff drought.

Timberwolves 139, Rockets 132

Anthony Edwards recorded his first 30-point game in seven weeks, and Karl-Anthony Towns and D’Angelo Russell combined for 50 points as Minnesota claimed a road win over Houston, completing the season series sweep. Edwards finished with 33 points on 12-for-21 shooting from the field while Towns notched his 38th double-double with 28 points and 11 rebounds.

Mavericks 118, Bucks 112

Luka Doncic recorded his third double-double in the last four games as visiting Dallas held on to beat Milwaukee and avoid getting swept in the two-game season series. Doncic scored 32 points, matched his season high of 15 assists and collected eight rebounds on 9-of-22 shooting to lead the Mavericks. Dwight Powell supplied 22 points and 13 rebounds and Reggie Bullock chipped in 16 points. Giannis Antetokounmpo paced Milwaukee with 28 points and 10 rebounds on 12-of-22 shooting to post his seventh consecutive double-double. Jrue Holiday notched 20 points and nine assists, and reserve Bobby Portis finished with 17 points.

Messi Signs \$20m Deal To Promote Crypto Fan Token Firm Socios

DOHA (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi has signed an agreement worth more than \$20 million to promote digital fan token company Socios.com, a source close to the deal told Reuters. Messi becomes the latest global sports personality to enter the crypto world following NFL quarterback Tom Brady and NBA star LeBron James and the deal is part of a growing wave of tie-ups between crypto firms and soccer. Socios said in a news release that Paris St Germain and Argentina forward Messi, whose move from Barcelona in August included a cryptocurrency payment, will be involved in a publicity and promotion campaign for Socios in the build-up to the Qatar World Cup, which starts in November. The ‘ambassador’ deal for Messi does not include crypto payments and is a three-year agreement, the source said. Socios have signed deals, including creating tokens, for over 130 sports organisations including a number of top soccer clubs such as PSG, Barcelona, Juventus and Manchester City. Fan tokens are a type of cryptocurrency that allow holders to vote on mostly minor decisions related to their clubs. “Fans deserve to be recognised for their support. They deserve opportunities to influence the teams they love,” Messi said in the statement.

Espargaro Wins First MotoGP Race At 200th Attempt

TERMAS DE RÍO HONDO (Dispatches) - Spain’s Aleix Espargaro won his first MotoGP race at the 200th attempt in Argentina on Sunday and tearfully admitted: “It’s really special”. The 32-year-old also gave Aprilia a maiden triumph in the sport’s premier class while he took over the lead of the world championship after three rounds. Jorge Martin, on a Ducati-Pramac, and Suzuki’s Alex Rins made it an all-Spanish podium. “I am really happy, I have waited a very long time,” said a tearful Esparago who joined Aprilia in 2017. “It’s particularly special as it was my 200th race in MotoGP.” In all, Espargaro has taken part in 283 grand prix across the sport’s three classes since his 2004 debut in the now defunct 125cc class.

“Everything was in place, we were solid on the pace, but it was double pressure because everyone was telling me it was going to be easy, but it wasn’t. The last laps were my strongest. I thank everyone at Aprilia, I think we really deserve it, and the other incredible thing is that we are leading the championship. “Six years ago, nobody believed in Aprilia.” Espargaro started from pole, his first since his Suzuki days seven years ago at the Catalunya Grand Prix in Barcelona, but Martin immediately roared past. The 24-year-old Martin, chasing his second MotoGP win after the 2021 Styrian Grand Prix, held off his compatriot for large parts of the 25-lap race.

Mercedes to Reel in Rivals This Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ferrari have cracked the code to set the pace in the new era of Formula One regulations but fans can expect the struggling Mercedes team to eventually find the right setup to compete this season, F1’s Technical Consultant Rob Snedley told Reuters. Ferrari, who have not won a title in over a decade, lead both the drivers and constructors standings after impressing in the first two races of the season.



Van Gaal Diagnosed With Prostate Cancer

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) – The Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal revealed he has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, but he still plans to lead his team at the World Cup in Qatar in seven months’ time. The players “don’t know it”, the 70-year-old told RTL television, adding that he has already undergone 25 bouts of radiotherapy, including in the evening during training camps with the Dutch team. The players “think I’m in good health but I’m not”, said Van Gaal, who began treatment last year after his diagnosis in 2020. “It’s part of my life,” he added, in an interview marking the upcoming release of a film about his life, entitled LOUIS. “I’ve been through so much in my life, sickness and death, I’ve probably become richer as a person because of all those experiences.” Van Gaal, in his third term as head coach of the Dutch national side, sparked controversy

last month when he described the decision to hold the World Cup in Qatar “ridiculous”, accusing FIFA of having been motivated solely by “money and commercial interests”. Last week, it was announced that Van Gaal had tested positive for Covid. In 2021, the former Barcelona and Manchester United boss broke his hip when he fell off his bike. The Netherlands were placed in Group A with hosts Qatar, Ecuador and Senegal in Friday’s draw for the 2022 World Cup in Doha. Van Gaal’s former club Manchester United, who he coached from 2014-2016, were amongst those wishing the veteran a speedy recovery. “Everybody at Manchester United is fully behind our former manager, Louis van Gaal, in his battle against cancer. Sending you strength and courage, Louis,” the English giants tweeted. Former England striker Gary Lineker tweeted: “Sending best wishes and hopes for a full recovery to Louis Van Gaal, who announced on Dutch television tonight that he’s battling prostate cancer.”

United Not Favorites For Top Four Spot

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester United interim manager Ralf Rangnick said they are “not favourites” to finish in the Premier League’s top four after slipping to seventh with a 1-1 draw against Leicester City. The Old Trafford club are three points outside the top four with eight games left. “It doesn’t help at all to look at the table every weekend and speculate and anticipate what might happen, how many points might we need,” Rangnick told reporters. “Right now we are not the favorites, for sure, for number four. “I’m not a fortune teller, so I don’t know where Manchester United will be next season. For us, it’s my job, our job ... to finish the season on the highest and best possible note.” United play at Everton on Saturday and Rangnick said getting the three points was their only focus. “The season is not over. We still have another eight games to play and I think then it’s time to draw the right conclusions and take the right decisions for next season,” he added. “Right now, it’s about how can we possibly get three points against Everton.”



Alcaraz Becomes Youngest Miami Open Men’s Champion

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Spanish 14th seed Carlos Alcaraz capped a dream run at the Miami Open with a 7-5 6-4 win over Norwegian world number eight Casper Ruud in the final to secure the biggest win of his young career. The 18-year-old Alcaraz earned his first ATP Masters 1000 crown and is the first Spanish man to triumph in Miami after eight previous final appearances by his compatriots, including five by Rafa Nadal. “I have no words to describe how I feel,” Alcaraz said after he replaced Novak Djokovic as the youngest champion in the 37-year-old tournament’s history. “But it’s so special to win my Masters 1000 here in Miami.” Alcaraz was roughed up by Ruud in the early stages of the match between the two up-and-coming players but roared back from a 4-1 deficit to take the opener with an overhead smash on his third set point. From there, the Spaniard refused to relinquish control as he went up a double-break for an early 3-0 lead in the second set where Ruud managed to get one back but ultimately had no answer as Alcaraz kept up the pressure in a match that featured two first-time ATP Masters 1000 finalists. With victory within his grasp, Alcaraz dropped just two points in his final three service games and coolly served out the one hour, 52 minute match to love in the final game.

