

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **140,616** With **39** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Embassy in Afghanistan in a Statement on Sunday Warned of Hostile Media hype at Harming the Relations Between Iran and Afghanistan and Reiterated on Good Neighborliness Ties

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Tehran Slams Mistreatment of Iranian Citizen in Denmark
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U.S. Imposing New Conditions For Removal of Sanctions



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign minister says the U.S. is "imposing new conditions" for removing its sanctions in order to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, stressing that Tehran will never compromise on its red lines and will seek a "strong" and "durable" agreement.

"On the issue of lifting sanctions, they (the Americans) are interested in proposing and imposing

new conditions outside the negotiations," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Sunday.

"We are definitely looking for the sanctions to be removed, but in a dignified manner and through a strong and lasting agreement. However, Mr. [President Ebrahim] Raisi has always reminded all cabinet members that not all hopes should be pinned on what would happen in Vienna. All state institutions are rather obliged to work to neutralize sanctions and promote the sustainable development of the country's economy and trade," he said.

"We continue to tread the path of diplomacy for achieving a dignified, durable and good agreement, but the Americans bring up new conditions in the field of sanctions removal outside the talks," he added.

He noted, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has naturally stood and will stand by its red lines. The Americans keep talking about the need for direct negotiations, but we have not seen any benefit direct talks with the United States, based on our surveys and the viewpoint that the Americans hold."

The Iranian foreign minister said the American side has not yet taken any positive steps toward promoting prospects for an accord.

Amir-Abdollahian went on to say that Iran, in response to repeated US calls for negotiations, has called on Americans to present one or two practical and tangible measures before any agreement, and release some of Iran's assets frozen in foreign banks, for instance, as a gesture of good faith.

"During my visit to Moscow, we agreed with the Russian side that if we reached an agreement in Vienna, Russia would not be an obstacle," Amir-Abdollahian said.

"We were close to concluding technical discussions with the three European countries, but at the same time, we faced the crisis and the war in Ukraine," he added.

He underscored that Tehran has demanded neither loans nor money from Americans, but rather asked for the release of its own public assets.

Amir-Abdollahian also questioned U.S. President Joe Biden's willingness to rejoin the 2015 Iran deal, which is officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and lift sanctions against the Islamic Republic, criticizing the several rounds of sanctions imposed by Washington against Iran over the past few months.

The Iranian foreign minister pointed out that non-paper messages are being exchanged between Tehran and Washington through European Union deputy foreign policy chief Enrique Mora.

"We plainly informed the American side not to stonewall, sabotage and delay the agreement. If our red lines are observed and we see a good, strong and lasting agreement before us, there is no doubt for the Iranian side to remain in the deal and for all parties to return to their commitments under the JCPOA," Amir-Abdollahian said.

"The path to diplomacy is still open. Of course, the three European countries (Britain, France and Germany) in addition to China and Russia have criticized the latest excessive demands of Americans, which have delayed the conclusion of an agreement. They raise some of the issues in their talks with the American side. They sometimes share our opinion and state that the US approach is inconsistent with the spirit of cooperation being pursued in Vienna talks," he said.

Negotiations have been held in the Austrian capital since April last year to restore the JCPOA, which was ditched by former U.S. President Donald Trump in May 2018.

3 DOMESTIC

Kish Island Welcomes Investors For Qatar World Cup
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Iran Reports to UN On Human Rights Improvement

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights has sent its midterm report to the United Nations about the human rights situation in Iran, citing "huge progress" in improving those rights.

The report has been prepared by secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, Kazem Gharibabadi. It was sent on Saturday to the UN's Human Rights Council in line with the Universal Periodic Review, known as UPR, a process that involves a review of the human rights records of all member states of the UN.

The report cites "huge progress" in improving the human rights situation in Iran, based on Islamic standards and the country's constitution, "In accordance with the existing conditions and with the aim of upholding social justice and establishing people's welfare, Iran has made huge investment in economic, cultural and social fields, and has guaranteed people's rights to equal participation and progress."

The report elaborates on Iran's laws and measures aimed at supporting human rights for different groups, from the disabled to religious minorities, women and children to refugees, during the Iranian year 1399 (March 2020-March 2021) and the first six months of year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022).

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ViewPoint Sleepless Nights Of Zionists

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

These days the Zionist regime is struggling with bringing peace and security to the occupied lands, Israel, as Palestinians and Arabs have increased their fight against this criminal regime and Zionists are forced to have sleepless nights.

In recent days in several brave reactions towards the Zionist regime's crimes, some brave Palestinians took retaliatory actions against Israelis in a way that panic has gripped Israel and Zionist regime security forces are on alert for more actions from the Palestinians.

On Thursday, at least two people were killed and eight others are injured during a shooting attack in the heart of Tel Aviv that is praised by several Palestinian resistance groups for its daring nature.

The incident reportedly took place in the city's Dizengoff Street on Thursday. The attacker "opened fire at short range and then fled on foot. Several people are wounded," police spokesman Eli Levy said on the Israeli regime's Channel 13 television.

"So far, 10 wounded have arrived at the trauma room of Ichilov Hospital. But unfortunately, despite the doctors' efforts, two of the wounded died," the hospital said in a statement, AFP reported.

It said four of those wounded were in "critical condition" and undergoing surgery.

Television footage showed armed officers running down the major commercial street and smaller side streets trying to track down the attacker. A police helicopter shined a spotlight on the streets from above.

No person or group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

Palestinians have, however, ramped up their retaliatory attacks against Israeli forces in recent weeks, carrying out a series of operations that have killed at least 11 Israelis since March 22. Eight Palestinians have also been killed during the same period.

Reacting to recent retaliatory actions in Israel, the top Israeli military official said the recent shooting attack in a crowded entertainment area of Tel Aviv has created fear among local people, who now dread walking the streets.

Israeli army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi, acknowledging the failure of the regime's military apparatus in thwarting the shooting attack, said it has fueled deep fear among people, suggesting that the people are feeling increasingly vulnerable.

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Iran Wins Lawsuit Against French Firm

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC) announced the €9 million ruling of the International Court of Arbitration in favor of Iran, and added that Iran has won a legal lawsuit with the French company Sofregaz.

Addressing a press conference, Reza Noshadi said: "After the return of sanctions, the French company Sofregaz did not fulfill its commitments based on a contract with Iran. That contract was signed with the Iranian Gas Storage Company and after its dissolution, it was transferred to the Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company."

He stated: "The French company, Sofregaz, claimed €26 million against Iran in the International Court of Arbitration, and while we are more familiar with losses in international arbitration and the media and press also deal with them in detail, this time we claimed the opposite."

Noshadi emphasized: "The result of the follow-up in the initial ruling of the International Court of Arbitration, which was announced in February, not only was that the claimed €26 million was not approved, but also €13 million must be paid to us."

He said that the whole case was also handled by an Iranian lawyer, adding: "They only had a 1.5-million-euro status report with us, which we had blocked to determine the fate of the lawsuit. On the other hand, the French side requested an appeal, which was overruled."

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AEOI Spokesman Stresses Importance Of Building Nuclear Plants

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman for Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi underlined the importance of building nuclear plants, saying it is an integral and essential part of the country's needs.

Hailing Iran's achievements in nuclear technology field, Kamalvandi noted that these achievements are divided into four categories: radiation, energy, fuel generation, and research and development.

He referred to using sodium iodide I-131 in radioactive iodide for treating cancer, using radiation for sterilization, seed modification and dehydration, and taking advantage of gamma ray to process bee venom for medical applications, as well as the development of heavy water-related products and detergents as examples of achievements made in this field.

Tehran Slams Mistreatment of Iranian Citizen in Denmark

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian judiciary official has condemned Danish law enforcement officers' violent mistreatment of a female citizen.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the Judiciary chief's deputy for international affairs and secretary of the country's High Council for Human Rights, objected to the deportation of the woman with two of her children, while a third child who was only one-year-old, was separated from her and remained with the children's father in Denmark.

"Posted videos and photos show four people violently nailing this Iranian citizen to the ground and holding her head against the pavement. A plain clothes officer also exits a vehicle with handcuffs and leg cuffs to restrain the woman's movement. Some reports said the violent mistreatment of the mother took place right in front of her child's eyes," Gharibabadi wrote in a letter to the Danish Minister of Immigration, Mattias Tesfaye.



He described the Danish officers' behavior as a violation of the European country's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the prohibition of violence against women, and the violation of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Gharibabadi urged Tesfaye and other relevant Danish officials to stop such inhumane practices and stop treating nationals of other countries with double standards.

He also called for measures to compensate for the material and moral damage sustained by the victim of violence, asking Tesfaye to prevent the woman's compulsory deportation from the Scandinavian country.

Yazd Province, Ghana to Develop Health Tourism



YAZD (IP) - The governor-general of Iran's Yazd Province welcomed the expansion of trade relations with a focus on tourism with Ghana.

In a meeting with the Ghanaian Ambassador to Iran, Eric Owusu-Boateng on Saturday, the Governor-general of Yazd Mehran Fatemi pointed to the industrial and tourism capacity of Yazd Province and stated that as the largest brick city in the world and the second most historic city in the world as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Yazd has the necessary infrastructure to host foreign tourists.

He announced Yazd's readiness for economic partnership with the provinces of Ghana, adding that Yazd Province is fully prepared to receive Ghanaian business delegations.

Fatemi also pointed out that in the field of health tourism, the necessary grounds are provided and the existing obstacles regarding visas waver will be removed.

Bulgaria Donates 2.8m Doses of Covid-19 Vaccines to Iran



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Bulgaria has donated 2 830 440 doses of vaccines against Covid-19 to Iran, according to the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry.

The doses were delivered on April 9 and were welcomed at a ceremony attended by Bulgaria's ambassador to Iran, Nikolina Kuneva.

"During a global pandemic the joint efforts and cooperation are the only way to recovery and resilience," Bulgaria's Foreign Ministry said.

Health Minister Assena Serbezova told Parliament in February that Bulgaria was looking to re-sell or donate vaccines, given the low uptake of vaccination against Covid-19 in Bulgaria.

At the time, Serbezova said that Bulgaria was in negotiations to donate vaccines to Iran and Uganda.

The Foreign Ministry did not say which brand of Covid-19 vaccine had been donated to Iran. Vaccines approved for use in Iran include the AstraZeneca and single-dose Janssen.

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's (ECDC) online vaccine tracker, as of April 7 the uptake among the total population of Bulgaria of at least one dose of vaccine was 30 per cent, of completed vaccination 29.5 per cent and of a booster dose, 10.4 per cent.

In contrast, across the EU-EEA area, the uptake of at least one dose is 75.2 per cent, of completed vaccination 72.5 per cent and of a booster, 52.8 per cent.

Bulgarian Health Ministry statistics show that about nine out of 10 patients who died after testing positive for Covid-19 had not been vaccinated.

Israel Root Cause of Regional Insecurity, Poses Threat to All

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says Israel is the root cause of insecurity in the region, warning regional countries that the presence of the Tel Aviv regime poses a threat to all.

"Efforts should be made to prevent those who create crisis from gaining a foothold in the region," Amir-Abdollahian said in a Saturday phone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

He expressed Iran's good intention and push for security and progress of its neighboring states in the region, including the UAE, and emphasized, "The Zionists have been and are the root cause of insecurity in the region."

The top Iranian diplomat further reiterated the country's support for a two-month UN-brokered ceasefire between the warring sides in Yemen and expressed hope that the siege of the impoverished country would be lifted completely and political negotiations among the Yemeni parties would be launched.

The UN announced on April 1 that the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia, which has been bombarding the country since 2015, and Yemen's National Salvation Government had agreed on a two-month ceasefire that would come into effect one day later and could be renewed with the consent of the parties.

The Iranian foreign minister said the blockade imposed by the Saudi-led coalition on Yemen has to be lifted completely.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian hailed growing relations between Tehran and Abu Dhabi and good meetings and consultations among the two sides' officials and said, "There is no limitation to the expansion of all-out relations."

Al Nahyan, for his part, said the UAE would not allow any act of sabotage against the neighboring states from its soil.

Pointing to the recent developing situation in region, the Emirati foreign minister added that the UN-brokered truce in Yemen has provided an opportunity for development, progress and de-escalation of tensions.

He expressed hope that Tehran and Abu Dhabi would further bolster relations given their common interests in various fields.

No Justification for Presence of Hostile States in Regional Waters

TEHRAN (PressTV) - In a new warning to hostile naval forces of extra-regional countries, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani says there is no justification for their presence in regional waters and Iran does not accept such presence.

"Our message to non-regional, non-friendly countries is that enough power exists in our region, and there is no justification for their presence in the waters of this region," Irani said.

He added, however, that there is no problem if extra-regional countries come to the region in order to visit and exchange knowledge.

"But if they want to enter the field of security, we must say that today the Islamic Republic of Iran does not accept such a thing," he cautioned.

Iranian commanders have repeatedly warned against the presence of hostile, extra-regional navies in the region, asserting that neither the region nor the countries that host them would become more secure by their presence.

Navy dispatches indigenous destroyer Dena to international maritime exercises.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rear Admiral Irani pointed to the latest maritime drills held by the Indian Ocean

Naval Symposium (IONS), saying the Iranian Navy's fully-homegrown destroyer Dena had a powerful presence in the exercise.

He said the operational capability of the Iranian Navy was assessed during the exercise.

"Our goal was to prove ourselves and our country's defense capability and to introduce the humanitarian culture of the Iranians and the ... Islamic Republic establishment to the world," Irani said.

He explained that providing humanitarian aid was part of the exercise, adding, "We want to tell neighboring countries to be sure that the establishment of security in [regional waters], especially in the northern region of the Indian Ocean, can be done by ourselves, and we just need to get closer to each other and our hearts should come together."

The IONS drills kicked off on March 29 off the Indian port city of Goa. The biennial drills featured 24 Indian Ocean littoral states.

According to Captain Farhad Fattahi, commander of the Iranian team, the country's navy joined the event with the aim of partaking in training cooperation and exchanging experiences in the field of maritime practices.

Iran, Qatar Make Arrangements for World Cup 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Rostam Qasemi met and held talks with his Qatari counterpart, Jassim bin Saif Al Sulaiti, on Kish Island on Sunday.

Qasemi, along with the Qatari ambassador to Iran, Mohammed bin Hamad Al Hajri, who arrived on Kish Island on Saturday night meet with the Qatar Minister of Transport and Communications, Jassim bin Saif Al Sulaiti, and his delegations to make arrangements for the World Cup 2022.

Upon President Raiis's decree, the Iranian transport minister is responsible for arranging the accommodation, air transport, and maritime transport of the passengers and tourists who are coming for the World Cup 2022 within the period of November 21 to December 18.

This is part of Iran's plan for cooperating with Qatar and for taking advantage of this international event.

The arrangements include launching regular shipping lines between the ports of the two countries and making more use of Qatari commercial airlines along with the Iranian airlines during the event.

"Kish is the focal location for these arrangements, although other coastal and non-coastal provinces in Hormozgan and Bushehr close to the Persian Gulf can play role in supporting the event", Qasemi added.

The FIFA World Cup 2022 is to be held in Qatar and Iran's cooperation with Qatar has been previously initiated in February 2021 when Kish Free Zone Organization put the issue high on the agenda. Accordingly, 520 billion IRR was allocated to equip and develop the infrastructures of Kish Island.

Iran's southern islands have huge potentials and facilities that can support Qatar hosting of the tournament in terms of transport, infrastructures, logistics, accommodations, etc. Moreover, it can attract spectators willing to visit nearby touristic locations during the intervals of their favorite matches.

Kish Island with an area of 92 km2 and a population of 42000 is located in Bandar Lengeh County, Hormozgan Province, off the southern coast of Iran in the Persian Gulf. The distance between Kish Island and Qatar is 270 km, and Kish to Doha route lasts for 40 minutes by plane and 5 to 6 hours by ship.

Nuclear Talks Should Guarantee Economic Interests

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said here on Sunday that the nuclear talks have to lead to the guaranteed, sustainable and tangible economic interests for the Iranian nation.

Qalibaf made the remarks at the Majlis (Parliament) open session in Tehran this morning.

The speaker also congratulated the Iranian people over the National Nuclear Technology Day, April 9.

He went on to say that the 11th Majlis has broken the locks on country's nuclear industry.

As he stressed, the Majlis broke those locks by approving the Strategic Action Plan to Lift Sanctions and Protect Iranian Nation's Interests and removed the obstacles to scientific achievements.

The Majlis strategic measure stresses the lifting of the sanctions and the preservation of interests of the nation.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf hoped that the country's modern nuclear technology and knowledge along with good talks would lead to serving economic interests of the Iranian nation.

Gov't Reconsidering Miankaleh Petrochemical Plant

TEHRAN (IFP) - The government is reportedly taking steps to end the construction of a controversial petrochemical plant in Miankaleh Peninsula, amid criticism that it will have a destructive effect on local environment.

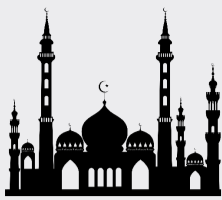
IRNA cited its own sources as saying that President Ebrahim Raisi has ordered the Department of Environment to examine the issue and prevent the implementation of the parts of the project that harm the environment.

The project was approved by the previous government, but was halted after opposition by environmental activists.

Ground was broken for the project under the current government. But that triggered a new wave of concerns by environmental activists.

In response, the government spokesman announced that officials "will not back down on the implementation of the project", but will make sure all environmental authorizations are secured before going ahead.

Miankaleh in Iran's Mazandaran Province is home to many species of birds and environmental activists believe it's highly vital to the ecosystem of the region



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:52
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:07
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:34

64. "Embrace ye the (fire) this Day, for that ye (persistently) rejected (Truth)."
65. That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to us,
and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.

Surah 36. Ya-sin (64- 65)

Kish Island Welcomes Investors For Qatar World Cup

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of High Council of Iran's Free Trade and Special Economic Zones Mr. Saeed Mohammad said that the 2022 Qatar World Cup could be a good opportunity to restart development of these zones, reiterating that the island is ready to serve Qatar World Cup visitors and welcomes investment for it.

In a joint meeting with Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mr. Rostam Qasemi, Mr. Mohammad announced readiness of Kish Island for investment for the Qatar World Cup and serving the visitors of this big soccer event.

Mohammad said that free trade and special economic zones in Iran seek to leverage their economic and tourism capacities to host fans and teams participating in World Cup 2022.

He said that development of free zones in sectors like tourism, economic investment, and health tourism is among top priorities of the secretariat and the World Cup could be a new beginning for the objective.

The official also said that the construction of several hotels, airport terminals and runways, maritime passenger ports and terminals, sports fields and bodybuilding gyms is in progress to ensure Iran's contribution to the international event.

He then pointed to the huge number of tourists to Kish Island during Nowruz



holidays and said the island hosted the visitors with no certain problem but he reiterated that the island should resolve all problems and some of the structural projects are ready to come on stream.

Roads and Urban Development Minister also said that Iran would offer support to Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup in residence and air and maritime transportation.

Qasemi said that Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi had the issue on agenda during his visit to Qatar earlier this year.

Iran's support will include providing residence and air and maritime transportation for passengers and tourists destined for Qatar according to agreements between Raisi and Qatar's Emir, Qasemi said.

He added that he would have meetings with Qatari officials next week and Kish Island would play a pivotal role in Iran's support of the major international event, but Iran's southern coastal cities could also participate.

Kish Island will host a meeting between Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Qatar's Minister of Transport and Communications.

Output up by 600k bpd at Iran's Largest Crude Producer

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), which is the largest oil and gas company in the country in terms of output, says it has increased its production by nearly 600,000 barrels per day (bpd) compared to figures recorded in August.

NISOC's CEO Alireza Daneshi said that company's output is currently near levels seen before the United States imposed its sanctions on Iran in 2018. The official did not elaborate on more details.

The NISOC is a subsidiary of the state-run National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). It controls many key onshore oilfields in southwest Iran. The company pumped more than 3 million bpd of oil before the US sanctions were imposed.

An Iranian administration that came to office in August has boasted about its ability to increase production and exports of crude despite continued US pressure on traditional customers of Iranian crude.

Oil Ministry authorities said recently that crude production capacity had reached the pre-sanctions figure of more than 3.8 million bpd.

That comes as reports suggest that Iran's crude exports reached a three-year high of 1.5 million bpd late last year and stayed at that level in early 2022.

Experts say Iran could immediately add another 1 million bpd of oil to the global oil supply if US sanctions are removed from the country.

NISOC's Daneshi said that the company will be able to increase its output to beyond levels seen before the sanctions.

"As soon as the government orders us we will be able to swiftly return to pre-sanctions output figures and even go beyond that," Daneshi was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency.

Domestically Built Refinery Begins Exporting Different Products

TEHRAN (IFP) - The head of Iran's Qeshm Free zone has announced the loading of the first shipment of products from Behin Palayesh Qeshm Ultra-heavy Refinery this year amid U.S. sanctions.

Afshar Fathollahi said the export shipment included 35,000 tons of light hydrocarbons. He added that following the export of the first consignment, the second shipment will be ready for export next week that will also include light hydrocarbons and bitumen.

The first phase of the refinery was launched two months ago in the presence of President Ebrahim Raisi.

Behin Palayesh Qeshm Refinery has been built completely by Iranian engineers.

Iran's Qeshm Island located in the Persian Gulf is of high strategic significance. Iran has made huge economic achievements while it's been under very heavy US sanctions by relying on its own scientists and human workforce

Iran to Open Business Center in Armenia

TEHRAN (MNA) - Hamed Forouzan the Director-General of the Ministry of Labor and Cooperatives for International Affairs of Iran announced that Iran will open a business center in Armenia as a permanent exhibition.

In a webinar meeting with the Director of International Affairs of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia, Hamed Forouzan stated that a memorandum of cooperation will be concluded between Iran and Armenia to determine the capacities of the two sides in the fields of production and trade of products and services.

The valuable potential will be inaugurated during the visit of the Iranian Minister of Labor to Yerevan, according to Forouzan.

The Iranian official also stressed the readiness of Iranian professors to provide technical and vocational skills training centers, insurance consulting and services for retirees and the disabled.

Welcoming the establishment of the Iranian business trade in Armenia, the Armenian official, for his part, said, "Given the size of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare in Iran, cooperation between the parties can be very effective and positive."

He welcomed the proposal to establish welfare-oriented groups to provide services to women and the homeless, and the disabled, as well as to set up a central technical and vocational training center for young people in Armenia.

66% Growth in Trade With EAEU in 12 Months

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's trade with the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) stood at \$5.643 billion in the last fiscal year's 12months (March 21, 2022-Mar. 21), registering a 66% growth compared with the corresponding period of last year, said the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

According to Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) website, Rouhollah Latifi said here on Saturday that Iran's exports hit \$1.170 billion, registering a 12% year-on-year rise.

Russia with \$583.658 million topped the list of Iran's export destinations in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), followed by Armenia with \$302.343 million, Kazakhstan with \$188.866 million, Kyrgyzstan with \$78.900 million and Belarus with \$16.813 million, added Latifi in his remarks.

The spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) noted that these member states exported \$4.472 billion worth of goods to Iran during the same period, registering a 90% YOY rise.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

Iran and the EEU have listed 862 types of commodities in their three-year provisional trade agreement. As per the deal, Iran will enjoy easier export terms and lower customs duties on 502 items and the same goes for 360 items from the EEU member countries.

Khorramshahr-Kuwait Maritime Passenger Line Resumes Operation

KHORRAMSHAHR (IP) - The director-general of Ports and Maritime Affairs of Khorramshahr city of Khuzestan Province says the operation of the Khorramshahr-Kuwait maritime passenger line resumed after a two-year hiatus.

Noorollah As'adi noted that the Khorramshahr-Kuwait maritime passenger line had a weekly operation before the COVID outbreak and was suspended for two years due to the pandemic.

He stated that according to the agreement and coordination between the Khorramshahr port and

Kuwait, the commute would be carried out by the passenger ship 'Berelian' on a regular and weekly basis.

The director-general of Ports and Maritime Affairs of Khorramshahr said the trip requires three doses of vaccination and a negative PCR test; he added that travelers must observe health protocols during the trip.

The Persian Gulf Passenger Terminal in Khorramshahr, as one of the largest and most modern maritime terminals in Iran and the region, has a capacity to commute 1,200 people a day.

Aluminum Ingot Production Up 20% in a Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production of aluminum ingot in Iran rose 20 percent during the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), as compared to its preceding year, according to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The IMIDRO's data put the annual production of aluminum ingot at 538,633 tons in 1400, while the figure was 446,836 tons in 1399, and 278,318 tons in 1398.

Among the country's four major producers, Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) had the best performance in the previous year producing 177,058 tons of aluminum ingots, although the figure was 185,000 tons in its preceding year.

South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) produced 173,594 tons, production by Almahdi Aluminum Company stood at 150,738 tons, and Iran Alumina Company produced 37,243 tons of aluminum ingots in the Iranian calendar year 1400, the IMIDRO's data indicated.

Spanish Manufacturers To Meet Iranians

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A group of Spanish manufacturers of boilers, heating equipment and industrial heating systems is to meet with Iranian companies online on April 18 and 20.



According to the Iran-Spain Joint Chamber of Commerce, the Spanish manufacturers in the heating system are to exchange views and boost trades with Iranian companies and the chamber has arranged the online meeting between the two sides which will be held on April 18 and 20.

Mehdiabad Complex Sets Record for Sales

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Mehdiabad Lead, Zinc and Barite Complex set a new record for sales of mineral materials in the last Iranian calendar year which ended on March 20.



The CEO of the complex Mr. Hamid Reza Hemayat announced the achievement and said the complex sold 343,000 tons of mineral materials last year. He added that the record of sale includes sale of 298,000 tons of zinc oxide and 45,000 tons of barite which were accompanied with 50% rise in the sales in weight.

He noted that sales last year faced 124% growth, adding that the operation in the unit of using waste and preparing the mine was around 85m tons by the end of last year. He went on to say that access to the zinc oxide in Mehdiabad mines has been provided. He then pointed to the agreement for investment in construction and exploitation of the processing plant of the complex and said that the project has progressed 75% physically and they will witness the inauguration of the biggest processing plant of the country in Mehdiabad Lead, Zinc and Barite.

Hemayat added that the goal behind construction of this processing plant is to have annual production of 800,000 tons of zinc concentrate with at least 35% crat or its equal and 80,000 metric tons of silver-lead concentrate with the cat of 60% lead.

He also pointed to the devise of comprehensive plan of zinc and lead in the country. He then highlighted some activities of the complex last year and some future plans this year, adding that the project for electricity supply to the plants of the complex has progressed by 80%.

Mehdiabad Lead, Zinc and Barite with having considerable reserves is considered as one of the biggest mines of the world.

Isfahan ABFA Gets Certificate For Water Safety Program

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Manager of Center for Refining and Water Quality Control of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) says that the company in last days of the last Iranian calendar year received the certificate for its water safety program.



Ms. Fahimeh Amir said that the company started its water safety program in 2012 and put on agenda identifying and removing perilous acts in all phases of providing drinking water and finally received the certificate for water safety program from the Health Ministry.

She added that by implementing the water safety program as the most important action for guaranteeing the quality of drinking water in the city of Isfahan, the company put on agenda comprehensive appraisal of risk and its management in the ponds, water treatment system, transfer system, storage, distribution network, identifying the consumers and types of water consumption.

Amiri then elaborated some actions of the company for implementing the project. She noted that the project was aimed at improving the quality of drinking water, primary and secondary evaluation of the perilous factors in the quality of water and ultimately development and improving the system of refining and exploiting the water resources.

The project was implemented in collaboration with Isfahan Medical University, Health Center of the Province, Isfahan Governor General and district water company, agro jihad organization, Department of Environment Office, Trade, Mine and Trade Organization and ABFA of Isfahan.

One Dead as Israel Army Raids W. Bank

JENIN (Dispatches) - Israeli security forces raided the flashpoint West Bank district of Jenin on Saturday killing a Palestinian and wounding others, after vowing there will “not be limits” to curb surging violence.

The ongoing operation came after an alleged gunman from Jenin went on a shooting rampage in a popular Tel Aviv nightlife area on Thursday evening, killing three Israelis and wounding more than a dozen others.

After that attack, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said he had given security agencies “full freedom” to end a surge in deadly violence since March 22 “in order to defeat terror”.



Ukraine Faces Hard Battle In Eastern Regions



KYIV (Dispatches) - (Reuters) - Ukraine is ready for a tough battle with Russian forces amassing in the east of the country, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, a day after a missile attack in the east that officials said killed more than 50 civilians trying to evacuate.

Air-raid sirens sounded in cities across eastern Ukraine, which has become the focus of Russian military action following a withdrawal from areas close to the capital, Kyiv.

After Friday’s strike on a train station crowded with women, children and the elderly in the Donetsk region city of Kramatorsk, officials urged civilians in the neighboring Luhansk region to flee.

“Yes, (Russian) forces are gathering in the east (of Ukraine),” Zelenskyy told a joint news conference with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer in Kyiv. “This will be a hard battle, we believe in this fight and our victory. We are ready to simultaneously fight and look for diplomatic ways to put an end to this war,” Zelenskyy added.

Russia’s invasion, which began on Feb. 24, has forced more than 4 million people to flee abroad, killed or injured thousands, left a quarter of the population homeless, and turned cities into rubble.

The civilian casualties have triggered a wave of international condemnation, in particular over the deaths in the town of Bucha, a town to the northwest of Kyiv that until last week was occupied by Russian forces.

Russia has denied targeting civilians in what it calls a “special operation” to demilitarize and “denazify” its southern neighbor. Ukraine and Western nations have dismissed this as a baseless pretext for war.

Nehammer visited Ukraine a day after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen - visits aimed at underlining the West’s support for Zelenskyy. In another such move, Italy said it would re-open its embassy in Kyiv after Easter.

Friday’s missile attack on the train station in Kramatorsk, a hub for civilians fleeing the east, left shreds of blood-stained clothes, toys and damaged luggage strewn across the station’s platform.

City Mayor Oleksander Honcharenko, who estimated 4,000 people were gathered there at the time, said on Saturday that the death toll had risen to least 52.

Russia’s defense ministry denied responsibility, saying in a statement the missiles that struck the station were used only by Ukraine’s military and that Russia’s armed forces had no targets assigned in Kramatorsk on Friday.

Russian state television described the attack as a “bloody provocation” by Ukraine.

In Washington, a senior defense official said the United States did not accept the Russian denial and believed Russian forces had fired a short-range ballistic missile in the attack.

Saudi Arabia Expands Haj To 1m Pilgrims

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia will let up to 1 million people join the Haj pilgrimage this year, greatly expanding the key event to participants from outside the kingdom after two years of tight COVID restrictions, state media said.

Pilgrims to Mecca this year must be under age 65 and fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, the ministry of Hajj and Umrah said in a statement carried by the SPA news agency.

Participants from abroad will be allowed this year but must present a recent negative COVID PCR test, and health precautions will be observed, it said.



Pakistan PM Ousted In No-Confidence Vote

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted on Sunday when he lost a vote of confidence in parliament, after being deserted by coalition partners who blame him for a crumbling economy and failure to deliver on his campaign promises.

The result of the vote, which was the culmination of a 13-hour session that included repeated delays, was announced just before 0100 (2000 GMT on Saturday) by the presiding speaker of parliament’s lower house, Ayaz Sadiq.

Khan, 69 was ousted after 3-1/2 years as leader of the nuclear-armed country of 220 million, where the military has ruled for nearly half its nearly 75-year history.

Sunday’s vote followed multiple adjournments in the chamber, called due to lengthy speeches by members of Khan’s party, who said there was a U.S. conspiracy to oust the cricket star-turned-politician.

Opposition parties were able to secure 174 votes in the 342-member house in support of the no-confidence motion, Sadiq said, making it a majority vote.

“Consequently the motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan has been passed,” he said to the thumping of desks in the chamber. Khan, who was not present for the vote, had no immediate comment.

Just a few legislators of Khan’s ruling party – Tehreek-i-Insaf, or Pakistan Movement for Justice – were present for the vote.

The house voted after the country’s powerful army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa met Khan, said two sources who spoke on condition of anonymity, as criticism mounted over the delay in the parliamentary process.

The front-runner to become Pakistan’s next prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, said Khan’s ouster was a chance for a new beginning.

“A new dawn has started... This alliance will rebuild Pakistan,” Sharif, 70, said in parliament. Sharif, the younger brother of three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, has a reputation as an effective administrator.

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S, J, & yard
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

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Pasdaran (\$1600) 140sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
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Canada Unemployment Drops to Record Low 5.3%

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Canada's unemployment rate fell to the lowest on record in March as job gains continued throughout the economy, Statistics Canada announced.

The jobless rate fell to 5.3 per cent, two-tenths lower than the prior month, and "the lowest rate on record since comparable data became available in 1976," the report said.

"With the exception of an increase in January 2022, the unemployment rate has fallen consistently in recent months," the agency said. The decline came as the economy added 73,000 jobs last month, a 0.4 per cent increase driven by gains among women over 55 years old, and "core aged" men 25 to 54, according to the report.



IEA Details Plan to Release 120m Barrels of Oil to Cool Prices

LONDON (Dispatches) - The International Energy Agency (IEA) has listed members' contributions to a 120-million-barrel release of crude and oil products from emergency stockpiles aimed at cooling global oil prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The release of stocks by the U.S.-allied members of the IEA - which is made up of 31 mostly industrialized countries, but does not include Russia - would be their second coordinated release in a month and the fifth in the agency's history.

It is the largest release from non-U.S. IEA countries, and the biggest by the United States.

The United States will match the 60 million barrels tapped by other IEA countries as part of its 180-million-barrel draw from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve announced in March. The total release of 240 million barrels will be made available to the global market within six months, the IEA said.

"The decision of IEA countries on 1 April was to collectively release 120 million barrels, and the U.S. share in this is 60 million barrels. This is based on a specific methodology for attributing country shares in the action, using oil consumption," the IEA told Reuters.

"The U.S. decided to release more than their share, in total they announced '1 million barrels per day over the next 6 months', which equates to 180 million barrels, over the period of May to October."

Global oil prices, are headed for their second weekly drop since the United States announced its largest ever oil reserve release in late March, with Brent falling about \$10 to briefly edge below \$100 a barrel.

Prices hit 14-year highs last month as Western sanctions on Russia disrupted crude and oil product exports from the world's number two crude exporter.

The total U.S. and IEA releases this year, including a March 1 coordinated release of 60 million barrels, reduces by nearly 15% the nearly 2.1 billion barrels in storage the group controlled before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Japan, the second-biggest contributor, said it would release a record 15 million barrels.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters late on Thursday Russia's invasion of Ukraine was "unforgivable" and that the release would help curb oil prices.

"We must not forgive its invasion and war crimes. We will demonstrate our will with severe action," he said.

Russia says its forces are conducting a "special operation" in Ukraine and denies targeting civilians.

New Zealand said it would contribute crude and diesel to the IEA release.

"Our release is made up of around 184,000 barrels of crude oil held in Spain and close to 299,000 barrels of diesel held in the United Kingdom," New Zealand's Minister of Energy and Resources Megan Woods said in a statement.

Other major contributors include South Korea, Germany, France, Italy and Britain.

Russia Calls for Integrating BRICS Payment Systems

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia, hit by Western sanctions, has called on the BRICS group of emerging economies to extend the use of national currencies and integrate payment systems, the finance ministry said.

Sanctions have cut Russia off from the global financial system and from nearly half of its gold and foreign exchange reserves, which stood at \$606.5 billion in early April.

On Friday, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told a ministerial meeting with BRICS, which consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, that the global economic situation had worsened substantially due to the sanctions, the ministry's statement said.

The new sanctions also destroy the foundation of the existing international monetary and financial system based on the U.S. dollar, Siluanov said.

"This pushes us to the need to speed up work in the following areas: the use of national currencies for export-import operations, the integration of payment systems and cards, our own financial messaging system and the creation of an independent BRICS rating agency," Siluanov said.

International payment cards Visa and MasterCard suspended operations in Russia in early March and Russia's biggest banks have lost access to the SWIFT global banking messaging system.

Russia set up its own banking messaging system, known as SPFS, as an alternative to SWIFT. Its own card payment system MIR began operating in 2015. They were part of Moscow's efforts to develop homegrown financial tools to mirror Western ones, to protect the country in case penalties against Moscow were broadened.

Germany Unveils Relief Package for Companies

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German government unveiled a multi-billion euro support package yesterday to help companies in Europe's biggest economy weather the fallout from the Ukraine war and sanctions against Russia.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner described the measures as a "shock absorber" to cushion the blow from soaring energy costs and disrupted supply chains.

The package includes €100 billion (RM459.1 billion) in state-guaranteed loans

and €7 billion in cheap loans by public lender KfW, the finance and economy ministries said in a joint statement.

It also includes direct financial aid for some companies when their energy costs have more than doubled, and for companies deemed systematically relevant such as those supplying gas and electricity.

The measures are likely to help energy-hungry sectors like Germany's steel, manufacturing and chemical industries.

Although Germany is traditionally a fiscally frugal nation, the government broke its own debt rules at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and unleashed vast financial aid to steer the economy through the crisis.

The relief package to counter the Ukraine war impact is much smaller by comparison.

It comes after Berlin already announced separate measures to help German citizens facing soaring household bills at a time of record-high inflation.

That package included heating subsidies and extra child benefits for low-income families, as well as a tax fuel cut and a pledge to slash public transport costs for three months.

But Economy Minister Robert Habeck warned that the government could not fully shield citizens and firms from the Ukraine war repercussions.

"We must all in these times carry a part of the burden, and the question is how big this part will be and how we can achieve it in a just way," said Habeck.

Lindner, from the liberal FDP party, said the government could not deplete itself financially and had to "act responsibly with taxpayer money".

The government, which already announced €99.7 billion in new debt for 2022 in part to fund a massive shift towards renewable energy, will unveil an additional budget shortly that will take into account new borrowing plans since the war in Ukraine.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz has also announced a special fund of €100 billion to modernize the German military.

World Food Prices Hit Record High Over Ukraine War

PARIS (Dispatches) - World food prices hit an all-time high in March as Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent "shocks" through markets for staple grains and vegetable oils, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said.

The disruption in export flows resulting from the February 24 invasion and international sanctions against Russia has spurred fears of a global hunger crisis, especially across the Middle East and Africa, where the knock-on effects are already playing out.

Russia and Ukraine, whose vast grain-growing regions are among the world's main breadbaskets, account for a huge share of the globe's exports in several major commodities, including wheat, vegetable oil and corn.

"World food commodity prices made a significant leap in March to reach their highest levels ever, as war in the Black Sea region spread shocks through markets for staple grains and vegetable oils," the FAO said in a statement.

The FAO's food price index, which had already reported a record in February, surged by 12.6 per cent last month, "making a giant leap to a new highest level since its inception in 1990", the UN agency said.

The index, a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, averaged 159.3 points in March.

The jump includes new all-time highs for vegetable oils, cereals and meats, the FAO said, adding that prices of sugar and dairy products "also rose significantly".

Russia and Ukraine together accounted for around 30 per cent and 20 per cent of global wheat and maize exports respectively, over the past three years, the FAO said.

The war continues to rage as sowing season has started in Ukraine.

Wheat prices rose by almost 20 per cent, with the problem exacerbated by concerns over crop conditions in the United States, the organization said.

The FAO's vegetable oil price index surged by 23.2 per cent, driven by higher quotations for sunflower seed oil, of which Ukraine is the world's leading exporter.

Spanish supermarkets have rationed the sale of sunflower oil to stop customers stockpiling over shortage fears due to the war.

The United States has accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of creating "this global food crisis".

France has warned that the war has increased the risk of famine around the world.

The conflict has also sent oil and gas prices through the roof, causing inflation to rise further across the world and raising concerns that it could derail global economic growth.

Sri Lanka's Minister Says No Alternative To Debt Restructuring



COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka's finance minister said that the crisis-hit country must urgently restructure its debt and seek external help, while the main opposition threatened a no-confidence motion and business leaders warned that exports could plummet.

The heavily indebted country has little money left to pay for imports, leading to crippling shortages of fuel, power, food and, increasingly, medicine. Street protests have been held nearly non-stop for more than a month, despite a five-day state of emergency and a two-day curfew.

"We cannot step away from repaying debt because the consequences are terrifying. There is no alternative, we must restructure our debt," Ali Sabry told parliament.

A repayment of \$1 billion is due in July. JP Morgan analysts estimate that Sri Lanka's gross debt servicing costs will amount to \$7 billion this year in total.

"We have to go for a debt moratorium," said Sabry, who offered to quit a day after he was appointed on Monday but later confirmed that he was still the finance minister.

"We have to suspend debt repayment for some time and get bilateral and multilateral support to manage our balance of payments."

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is running his administration with only a handful of ministers after his entire cabinet resigned this week, while the opposition and even some coalition partners rejected calls for a unity government to deal with the worst crisis in decades.

At least 41 lawmakers have walked out of the ruling coalition to become independents, though the government says it still has a majority in parliament.

"The government needs to address the financial crisis and work to improve governance, or we will move a no-confidence motion," Sajith Premadasa, leader of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya opposition group, said in parliament.

Russian Shoppers Feel Pinch as Inflation Tops 16%

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's inflation rate reached 16.7 percent year-on-year in March, the state statistics agency said, a level not seen since 2015, while food prices have risen even more steeply.

Prices in March — the first full month since Moscow began its military campaign in Ukraine in late February — were up 7.5 per cent on the previous month, according to Rosstat statistics agency.

The Russian central bank sets a target for inflation of four per cent, but as the economy has been hit by unprecedented Western sanctions, the latest year-on-year figure is more than four times higher.

Renaissance Capital analysts predict that inflation will peak at 24 per cent this summer.

Inflation of food prices, a huge concern for Russians on low incomes, has reached 19.5 per cent year-on-year, according to Rosstat.

Pasta has gone up by 25 per cent, butter by 22 per cent, sugar by 70 per cent and fruit and vegetables by 35 per cent.

Other items that have soared in price are building materials (up 32 per cent) and home electronics (up 40 per cent).

Inflation has been speeding up for months due to factors including the post-pandemic recovery and high prices for raw materials.

President Vladimir Putin's decision to send troops to Ukraine has added sanctions and the resulting logistical difficulties as factors.

This undermines Russians' purchasing power and is a major headache for Russian authorities, whose measures to attempt to control prices have had the opposite effect for items such as sugar.

At a market in the second largest city of Saint Petersburg in the northwest, shoppers this week said they were feeling the pinch.

"This happened due to politics, it seems. I don't understand that, to be honest," said 42-year-old Olesya Ogiyeva, a factory worker.

Leonid Kabalin, a 40-year-old production operator, said he was not ready for soaring inflation.

"The prices have gone up, but pay isn't going up," he said.

One retired shopper, 58-year-old Yulia Ryabinina, was philosophical about rising prices, however.

"Since the top management and our president think that there have to be price rises, I calmly accepted it. What else can you do?"



“Black or White” to Go on Screen in France

TEHRAN (MNA) - Directed by Mohammad-Ali Soleimanzadeh, the animated piece ‘Black or White’ will go on screen at the Wonderland cultural event in France.

Organized by André Malraux Cultural Centre and Nancy International Film Festival, the Iranian animation ‘Black or White’ will be screened at the Wonderland event on April 6, 9, and 10, 2022 in Nancy, France.

‘Black or White’ is a production of the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. The 12-minute animation is about the relationship between a zebra and a butterfly.



Japan Economy Watchers' Sentiment Up for First Time in Three Months

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Sentiment among so-called economy watchers in Japan, or people working in industries sensitive to economic swings, improved for the first time in three months in March, a government survey showed.

The seasonally adjusted index on economy watchers' sentiment about current economic conditions soared 10.1 points from the previous month to 47.8, reflecting the full lifting of the government's COVID-19 pre-emergency measures March 21.

Based on the survey, conducted from March 25 to 31, the Cabinet Office revised up its basic assessment, citing signs of recovery. In the February survey, it pointed to some weakness in the pickup of the economy.

In March, the current sentiment index improved 13.1 points for household activities, 7.4 points for employment and 2.4 points for corporate activities.

The index improved in all surveyed regions. The best performer was Hokkaido, which saw an improvement of 16.8 points.

The index on economy watchers' outlook for the economy two to three months ahead grew 5.7 points. But concerns are growing over soaring energy prices, worsened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

“Consumers will be even more budget-minded following a series of prices hikes for electricity, gasoline and others,” an employee of a supermarket in central Japan was quoted as saying in the latest survey.

Backing up that sentiment, a government survey showed Japanese consumer sentiment dropped for the third straight month in March, dampened by higher prices exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

The seasonally adjusted consumer confidence index fell by 2.4 points from the preceding month to 32.8, logging the fourth-biggest decline under the current survey format, which began in April 2014, the Cabinet Office said.

The government agency revised down its assessment for the third straight month, saying that weakness is seen in consumer sentiment. In the previous month, the agency noted signs of weakness.



“Sentiment was pushed down as prices of daily necessities continued to increase amid elevated uncertainty from the Ukrainian crisis,” a senior official said.

The index, covering households with two or more members, measures consumer sentiment over the coming six months based on indicators on overall livelihood, income growth, employment and willingness to buy durable goods. All four component indicators fell in the latest survey, conducted March 8-22.

The share of households expecting prices to be higher in a year's time rose 1.1 percentage points to 92.8%, renewing its record high for the second straight month.

India Central Bank Holds Rates



MUMBAI (Dispatches) - The Reserve Bank of India said it is starting to move away from its ultra-loose monetary policy even as it kept its key lending rate at a record low, as its priorities shifted to fighting surging inflation in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war.

In a surprise move, the central bank said it would restore its liquidity adjustment facility corridor to pre-crisis levels, which was seen as a first step to moving away from emergency measures embraced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analysts and traders are now broadly expecting the RBI to change its ‘accommodative’ stance to neutral at its next policy meeting in June, with interest rate increases starting sooner rather than later.

But with global growth risks also rising, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das sought to reassure financial markets that the process of returning policy settings to more normal levels would be gradual.

“The conflict in Europe has the potential to derail the global economy caught in the crosscurrent of multiple headwinds. Our approach needs to be cautious, but proactive in mitigating the adverse impact on India's growth and inflation,” Das said after the policy decision.

The RBI's monetary policy committee held the lending rate, or the repo rate, at 4%. The reverse repo rate, or the key borrowing rate, was also kept unchanged at 3.35%.

However, the central bank said it would restore the width of the liquidity adjustment facility corridor to 50 basis points.

RBI said the floor of the corridor would be the standing deposit facility rate, which was set at 3.75%, and the marginal standing facility rate at 4.25% will be the upper bound with the repo rate in between the two.

“This raises the probability of rate hike cycle commencing in August, while not fully precluding the case for a June hike itself along with a stance change if macro realities worsen for the inflation outlook,” said Madhavi Arora, lead economist at Emkay Global.

All but six of 50 respondents polled by Reuters between March 29-April 5 had forecast no change in the repo rate on Friday. Thirty-two had expected rates to still be unchanged by end-June.

Reflecting growing uncertainties, the RBI raised its inflation forecast for the current fiscal year to 5.7%, 120 basis points above its forecast in February, while cutting its economic growth forecast to 7.2% for 2022/23 from 7.8%.

“We have now put inflation before growth. So that is the sequence of our priorities - first is inflation followed by growth,” Das said, adding that this was the first time in three years that the RBI was putting inflation in the forefront.

Indonesia Braces for Higher Inflation and Slowdown in Economic Recovery

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - The Indonesian government has said the country is preparing to face a spike in inflation in the coming months caused by high global commodity prices, which may lead to a slowdown in the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said Friday at the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Finance Ministers and Central

Bank Governors Meeting (AFMGM) session that the surge in the global commodity prices was believed to happen as the spillover effect of the Ukraine crisis.

“This is a serious challenge for all policy makers, maybe not only in Indonesia, but all ASEAN countries,” the minister said.

Indonesia's Consumer Price Index in March rose by 2.64 percent year-on-year, the highest increase since April 2020, according to the country's Statistics Indonesia (BPS).

The Indonesian people have seen a surge in cooking oil prices up to 6 percent in the domestic market since the government removed the price cap on cooking oil in February following an increase in international crude palm oil (CPO) prices.

In the Southeast Asia's largest economy, most of the cooking oil used by the people is sourced from palm oil.

Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil producer, experienced the impact of the high prices of global CPO last month amid the supply bottleneck of sunflower oil due to the Ukraine crisis, BPS head Margo Yuwono said.

Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas company Pertamina also raised the price of its high-octane gasoline product, named Pertamax, by 40 per cent starting on Friday.

Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan said



recently that the government might soon raise the price of the three-kilogram liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) canisters, the most popular brand used by the people in the country.

Economic and energy observer Fahmy Radhi from Gadjah Mada University warned the government that the plan to raise the LPG price could create panic buying from the public.

Margo Yuwono said that inflation would likely be higher in April due to several reasons that are related to each other such as a surge in global commodity prices amid the Ukraine crisis, high demands in many goods amid easing Covid-19 curbs, high demands in staple foods during the holy month of Ramadan ahead of Eid al-Fitr holiday, and the government's policy to raise the value-added tax from 10 percent to 11 percent which took effect on Friday.

President Joko Widodo told his ministers to monitor the soaring domestic prices and to convey the policy changes more clearly to the public, including any plans related to raising prices of other commodities.

Deputy Governor of Bank Indonesia Dody Budi Waluyo was confident that until the end of the year, the inflation will remain between 2 percent and 4 percent.

Economic expert Yusuf Rendy from the Jakarta-based think tank Center of Reform on Economics (Core) said that higher prices and inflation would burden the middle-lower class of people and weaken their purchasing power.

“For the middle-upper class, the inflation may not bring significant impact, but the middle-lower class would suffer, given that their economic situations haven't yet fully recovered,” Rendy noted.

He suggested that the government distribute more aid to the people and take more subsidy policies to support the purchasing power of the middle-lower class. - Xinhua

Space Tourism: The Arguments in Favor

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - To its many detractors, space tourism amounts to nothing more than joy-rides for the global super rich that will worsen the planet's climate crisis.

But the nascent sector also has supporters, who, while not rejecting the criticism outright, argue the industry can bring humanity benefits too.

The first argument is that private spaceflights, in addition to their customers, can send to space scientific experiments that require microgravity environments.

In the past, national agencies “it used to take quite a long time to work within government grant channels, get approval, get the funding, get picked to be among the very select few that could go,” Ariel Ekblaw, of the MIT Space Exploration Initiative told AFP.

By contrast, it took Ekblaw just six months from signing a contract to sending her research project to the International Space Station on board the private Ax-1 mission, which blasted off yesterday thanks to the private entrepreneurs paying for the trip.

Her experiment, called TESSERAE, involves smart tiles that form a floating robotic swarm that can self-assemble into space architecture — which might be how future space stations are built.

An earlier prototype was flown to space for a few minutes aboard a Blue Origin suborbital spaceflight, paving the way for the new test.

“The proliferation of these commercial launch providers does allow us to do riskier, faster and more innovative projects,” said Ekblaw.

Virgin Galactic, for its part, has announced plans to take scientists on future flights.

Space tourism, and the private space sector overall, also acts as an innovation driver for getting better at doing all things related to space.

Sleepless Nights...

FROM PAGE 1

“We used to worry about getting on the bus, but now we are afraid to walk the street. There is a possibility that those who performed the operation will knock on our doors,” he said on Saturday.

He further said that the Israeli security forces, who were unable to control the situation, “suffered a defeat and the perpetrator escaped the scene easily.”

“The security of settlers has been damaged and this situation will continue for a long time,” he added.

On Saturday, The Israeli regime's military forces have shot dead a young Palestinian in the West Bank refugee camp of Jenin who they blame for the recent killing of Israeli soldiers in Tel Aviv, Palestinian authorities said.

The Palestine Health Ministry further reported on Saturday that one Palestinian was martyred and 13 were wounded during clashes between local residents in Jenin and the armed forces of the occupying regime.

Saturday's raid comes a day after the occupying regime announced the killing of the 28-year-old Palestinian, identified as Raad Hazem, blaming him for the shooting death of three Israeli occupiers on Thursday and wounding more than a dozen others at a popular Israeli nightlife district in Tel Aviv.

Although Israelis continue their brutalities against the Palestinians, they admit that they have sleepless nights because they fear any moment they face any attack from Palestinians even by Arabs living in Israel.

Zionists' crimes happen while the world and international bodies are busy with what is going in Ukraine and they have totally forgotten Zionists' crimes against Palestinians. The strange thing is that there is even no major reaction from Muslim states in condemning these crimes and even some states have condemned Palestinians' retaliatory action and they encouraged the occupier regime to continue its slaughter in cold blood.

On Saturday, the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, lashed out at Turkey and Bahrain for condemning the heroic resistance operation in Tel Aviv, stressing that resistance to Israeli terrorism is a right recognized under international law.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the group deplores the statements made by the Turkish embassy and the Bahraini foreign ministry condemning the resistance operation in Tel Aviv.

“The resistance of the Palestinian nation is aimed at defending themselves and their sanctities, which is a right guaranteed in international law,” he asserted in a statement on Friday.

The Israeli regime's aggressive policy against the Palestinian people and their sanctities, he added, was a “form of terrorism and racism in the world.”

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been the first and even the only country which reacted to the Zionists' crimes in Jenin and the occupied lands and it has defended the very rights of Palestinians in defending their lands and lives.

The Palestinians have re-ignited their intifada once again and it has ruined sleep and tranquility of the Zionists and every moment one can see a retaliatory action from Palestinians because they have realized that they should fight for their lands and freedom and they should not wait for the assistance of other states and especially the international bodies because they have their own concerns that Palestinians' issue is worthless for them.

Iran Reports to UN...

FROM PAGE 1

Gharibabadi has written that Iran has made significant achievements in improving its human rights situation despite restrictions in place as a result of “cruel and inhumane” sanctions imposed by the US over the past 43 years.

“The unilateral coercive measures by the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past four decades have extensively and discriminately violated the basic rights of the Iranian people and left irreparable harms,” he wrote. “Those measures are in clear violation of the UN Charter, international law regulations as well as international human rights laws,” Gharibabadi noted.

His report names some of the U.S.'s measures including sanctions on medicine imports and equipment to Iran, saying that such sanctions had an adverse effect on hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“To lower the effect of the unilateral US sanctions, which have been tightened in the past two years, Iran has taken into consideration the impacts of the coercive measures in all processes involving the formulation of laws and policy-making, and has implemented plans supporting vulnerable classes of the society, particularly during the Covid pandemic.”

The report has stressed that there is always place for further improving the human rights situation.

It has also stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran is among the countries that actively implements the UPR, and “the country's basic policy is to support this balanced and non-selective mechanism.”



Veteran English Football Manager Warnock Retires

LONDON (Dispatches) - Neil Warnock called time on a 42-year career in English football management by announcing his retirement.

The 73-year-old was in charge for an English league club record 1,603 matches spanning 16 teams.

Warnock left second-tier Championship club Middlesbrough by mutual consent in November and he has now decided against a return to the pressures of management.

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Osorio Advances In Bogota

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Top-seeded Camila Osorio overcame her serving struggles to advance to the quarterfinals of the Copa Colsanitas in Bogota, Colombia.

Osorio, playing in her home country, beat Turkey's Ipek Oz 6-3, 7-6 (4) despite recording seven double faults and no aces. Oz also had 14 break points but took advantage of just four of them. Meanwhile, Osorio converted five of her eight break chances.

Everton Beat Toothless Man Utd As Chelsea Run Riot

LONDON (Dispatches) - Relegation-threatened Everton earned a priceless win against misfiring Manchester United as Chelsea hammered Southampton 6-0 on a potentially decisive day in the race for the Premier League top four.

Arsenal stumbled again, losing 2-1 against Brighton while Leeds pulled further away from the drop zone with an emphatic 3-0 win against struggling Watford.

Frank Lampard has struggled to inspire Everton since taking over from the sacked Rafael Benitez in late January, winning just two of his nine league games before United's visit.

A 3-2 defeat in midweek against Burnley left the club just one point above their relegation rivals and desperately short of confidence.

But goalkeeper Jordan Pickford made two fine saves to deny Marcus Rashford in the early stages in the spring sunshine at Goodison Park.

The decisive moment in the 1-0 win came midway through the first half when young forward Anthony Gordon hit a shot that took a huge deflection off England defender Harry Maguire and wrong-footed David de Gea in the United goal.

The visitors -- with top-scorer Cristiano Ronaldo back in the team -- huffed and puffed but looked toothless in attack and slipped to an eighth league defeat of the season.

Lampard said he was proud of his battling side, who are trying to maintain Everton's proud record of being ever-present in the English top flight since 1954.

"Beautiful football can come later on," the former Chelsea boss told BT Sport. "I have ambitions for this club to stay up, play well, but in the position we are in, fighting comes first and foremost."

Interim United manager Ralf Rangnick was glum after his side's latest reverse -- they remain in seventh place, three points behind fourth-placed Tottenham before the late game between Spurs and Aston Villa.

United, who finished second last season, have won just 47 percent of their Premier League

games under the German, their lowest win rate under any manager in the competition.

Rangnick, who has a two-year contract to remain as a consultant at United beyond this season, was asked whether speculation over the club's next manager was creating a state of limbo.

"I don't think this should be an excuse for anybody," he said, with Ajax boss Erik ten Hag a strong favourite to be the next permanent boss.

Golovkin Stops Murata

SAITAMA (Dispatches) - Gennady Golovkin stopped Japan's Ryota Murata to add the WBA middleweight title to his IBF belt and home in on a potentially career-defining third fight against Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez.

Kazakh star "GGG" Golovkin, who turned 40 on Friday, downed Murata in the ninth round in Saitama, north of Tokyo, to claim a technical knockout win in his first fight in 16 months and take his record to 42-1-1, with 37 KOs.

The hard-hitting Golovkin had been hailed as the biggest name to enter a ring in Japan since heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, who was knocked out in Tokyo by 40-1 underdog James "Buster" Douglas in one of boxing's biggest upsets in 1990.

But 2012 London Olympics gold-medallist Murata could not pull off the same trick against Golovkin, who proved his punches have not lost any of their ferocious power even past his 40th birthday.

Golovkin will now turn his attention towards a potential third crack at pound-for-pound king Alvarez in a blockbuster trilogy fight later this year, having pushed the Mexican all the way in two previous epic encounters.

Murata made an aggressive start to the fight and rocked Golovkin with several big body shots in the early rounds.

The Kazakh looked in trouble but he steadied the ship and gradually took control as the match wore on.

Golovkin sent Murata's mouthpiece flying early in the sixth round and the Japanese fighter showed heart as he hung on in the face of a fierce attack.

There was no way back when Golovkin finally sent him to the canvass in the ninth round, however, as Murata's corner threw in the towel to end the fight.

The all-conquering Alvarez, having last year unified the four super-middleweight belts in just 11 months, will move up to light-heavyweight to challenge undefeated WBA champion Dmitry Bivol on May 7.

If he wins, a September trilogy fight with Golovkin could smash box office and pay-per-view records.



"We're Manchester United, we've got a lot of international players. This cannot be an alibi for anybody. If the next manager is announced in 10, 14, 21 days, this should not affect a game like today." Third-placed Chelsea suffered a shock 4-1 defeat at the hands of Brentford last week before losing 3-1 against Real Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final.

But they restored confidence on Saturday by putting Southampton to the sword, racing into a 4-0 lead with just half an hour played.

Goals from Marcos Alonso, Mason Mount, Timo Werner and Kai Havertz put the game beyond the home side's reach by half-time.

Mikel Arteta's Arsenal have suffered three defeats in four Premier League matches

Mikel Arteta's Arsenal have suffered three defeats in four Premier League matches JUSTIN TALLIS AFP

Werner and Mount both scored again early in the second half as the match became an embarrassing rout.

Arsenal are having a wobble at the wrong time after putting themselves in a strong position to qualify to play in the Champions League for the first time since 2016/17.

The home defeat against Brighton means Mikel Arteta's men have now lost three of their past four league games and they are now level with fierce rivals Tottenham, having played the same number of games.

Brighton took the lead at the Emirates Stadium when Leandro Trossard turned home a low cross from Enock Mwepu while the Zambian midfielder himself added a second. Martin Odegaard scored a late consolation. Raphinha, Rodrigo and Jack Harrison all found the net to give Leeds a third win in four matches and take them nine points clear of the relegation zone.

Vettel Fined 5,000 Euros for Australian GP Moped Ride

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Sebastian Vettel was fined €5,000 after riding a moped on the track at the Australian Grand Prix in violation of the rules, as his season went from bad to worse.

The four-time world champion jumped on a scooter to make his way back to the paddock after abandoning his broken down Aston Martin, which had smoke belching from the rear, in the first practice session at Albert Park.

The 34-year-old German was seen casually driving around the track, smiling and waving to fans, after the other cars had returned to the pits. At one point he took his hands off the handlebars.

"This is the most iconic end to a practice session we can remember," Formula One's official Twitter account posted.

However, governing body the FIA took a dim view and found him in breach of sporting regulations "which prohibit anyone from being on the track in the five-minute period after the end of a session, with the exception of specifically identified personnel."

It was not the start to the weekend that Vettel wanted after missing the opening two races of the season with Covid-19.

Vettel then failed to appear for the second practice, with his team tweeting that his "car will not be ready to run", in a fresh setback for the three-time Melbourne champion.



Becker Facing Jail Following Cash Transfers

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Wimbledon champion Boris Becker could be jailed after being found guilty of four charges relating to his 2017 bankruptcy by a London court today.

The 54-year-old German was accused of hiding millions of pounds worth of assets, including two Wimbledon trophies, to avoid paying his debts.

Becker, who has lived in Britain since 2012, said he had cooperated with trustees trying to secure his assets, even offering his wedding ring, and relied on the advisers who managed his life away from tennis.

But a jury at Southwark Crown Court found him guilty of removal of property, two counts of failing to disclose estate and concealing debt and acquitted him on a further 20 counts.

Judge Deborah Taylor released the six-time Grand Slam singles champion on conditional bail ahead of sentencing at the same court on April 29, when he could face a jail sentence of up to seven years.

Former world number one Becker, who was supported in court by his partner Lilian de Carvalho Monteiro and eldest son Noah, said he was "shocked" and "embarrassed" when declared bankrupt on June 21, 2017 over an unpaid loan of more than £3 million on his estate in Mallorca, Spain.

The court was told Becker received €1.13 million from the sale of a Mercedes car dealership he owned in Germany, which was paid into a business account used as his "piggy bank" for personal expenses.

Late Lewandowski Penalty Saves Bayern Munich

BERLIN (Dispatches) - A late Robert Lewandowski penalty spared Bayern Munich after a below-par performance in a 1-0 home win over Augsburg on Saturday, three days before their crucial Champions League tie against Villarreal.

Bayern struggled at the Allianz Arena until a handball by Augsburg defender Reece Oxford resulted in the penalty which Lewandowski tucked away eight minutes from time.

Bayern host Villarreal on Tuesday in their Champions League quarter-final second leg, having lost the first match 1-0 away last Wednesday.

"The first half was not good from us," said Bayern midfielder Leon Goretzka. "The intensity was missing.

"We will have to improve on Tuesday -- and that's what we will do."

The win edged Bayern closer to a 10th straight league title, extending their runaway lead to nine points over second-placed Borussia Dortmund who beat Stuttgart 2-0 on Friday.

Lewandowski has netted 32 league goals this season, leaving him poised to be the Bundesliga top-scorer for the fifth consecutive campaign.

Thomas Mueller reached the milestone of 300 Bundesliga wins, a record for a player at a single club. Joshua Kimmich chalked up his 150th Bundesliga victory in just 196 games, equalling Arjen Robben's record.

Yet the milestone stats failed to disguise Bayern's poor display.

In the wake of Wednesday's first-leg defeat at Villarreal, Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann said he had no more "tolerance for wobbles and slip-ups".



Djokovic Returns To Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic will return to action at the Monte Carlo Masters next week where Carlos Alcaraz, the teenager seen as his likely long-term successor as world number one and multiple Grand Slam winner, lies in wait.

Djokovic, who on Monday starts his 365th week on top of the rankings, has played just one tournament in four months. His now infamous deportation from Melbourne prevented him from an assault on a 10th Australian Open title.

Djokovic's only appearances on court were in Dubai in February where he played just three matches. His reluctance to get vaccinated then meant withdrawing from the Indian Wells and Miami tournaments.

While he took a back seat, 18-year-old Alcaraz stunned the tennis world by storming to the Miami title, becoming the third youngest winner of a Masters event.

Djokovic, 34, a two-time champion in Monte Carlo, was Friday drawn to face Alcaraz in what would be a blockbuster quarter-final in the principality.

Alcaraz, unlike the great Serb star, has hardly been off a tennis court in 2022, playing 20 matches on the tour with a win-loss record of 18-2.

He has rocketed from 133rd in the world to 11 in one year.

As well as his Miami triumph, the 18-year-old pushed Rafael Nadal all the way at Indian Wells before succumbing in a three-set semi-final.

"I have always looked up to Rafa. I always watched his big moments and matches and learned a lot from that," said Alcaraz.

