

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **140,829** With **29** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

# IRAN NEWS

Iran's Minister of Defense Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Gharaei Ashtiani Has Said the Army Has Succeeded in Enhancing Domestic Capabilities in Order to Establish Security and Sovereignty

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## Finance Minister Calls Off Visit to U.S. Over Visa Delay

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has boycotted an IMF/World Bank Group Spring Meetings planned to be held in Washington next week over United States' delay in issuing visas for finance minister Ehsan Khandouzi and his accompanying delegation.

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance said in statement that Khandouzi had decided to call off his planned visit to the U.S. after authorities in the country said they would issue visas for the Iranian delegation only in the days within the start of the IMF/World Bank event.

"This is not a first time that the U.S. government is violating its obligations towards international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and is stonewalling the attendance of a delegation from our country in international summits," said the statement.

It criticized the United States for having an opportunistic approach to the presence of some international institutions on its soil by forcing them to apply political pressure on member countries. The Ministry said those pressures have deprived Iran of the ability to enjoy its rights in international organizations.

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## Gov't Diplomacy Successful in Unfreezing Foreign Assets

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Strong economic diplomacy adopted by President Ebrahim Raisi's administration has been fruitful in unfreezing Iran's assets in other states, an Iranian member of parliament said.

A member of Program and Budget Committee of Majlis (the Parliament), Mehrdad Guodarzvand Chegini, said that since the beginning of the Raisi administration, the cabinet has taken significant measures in economic diplomacy and succeeded in collecting some assets frozen overseas and that the authorities continue consultations in order to retake other assets.

The MP went on to say that unfreezing the foreign assets seems to be an appropriate opportunity for the Islamic Republic to invest the money in knowledge-based production in different provinces with the aim of implementing guidelines of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for the current Iranian year. Ayatollah Khamenei designated 1401 (March 21, 2022 to March 20, 2023) as the year of "Production: Knowledge-Based and Job-Creating."

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## Transfer of Centrifuge Machines To Natanz for Security Reasons



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian nuclear official says the country has transferred its centrifuge machines to a safe location nearly one year after an act of sabotage at TESA Karaj Complex, a centrifuge component manufacturing workshop near Tehran, damaged cameras at the site.

"Given their high significance, centrifuge machines were moved to a safer location and are now in operation," the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Behrouz Kamalvandi, said in an exclusive interview with Iran's al-Alam TV on Saturday.

He added that Iran has plans to develop and manufacture centrifuge machines and to boost their security.

"Following the terrorist operation against TESA Karaj Complex, we had to tighten security measures. We moved a significant part of these machines and transferred the rest to Natanz and Isfahan," Kamalvandi said.

He noted that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has presented two reports; one when the machines were being transferred and the other one at the time that the cameras installed at Natanz facility became operational. Given the ambiguities that have been raised in the reports, Iran explained that all the measures taken have been in line with the agreements reached with the IAEA, the AEOI spokesman noted.

He, however, emphasized that the UN nuclear agency will have no access to data recorded by its surveillance cameras until Iran and the P4+1 group of countries reach an agreement on the revival of the 2015 deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On Thursday, Iran's acting ambassador to the IAEA Mohammad Reza Ghaebi said the latest report by the agency confirms that Iran had informed the IAEA on April 4 that all the machines for centrifuge production had been transferred from Karaj to Natanz, letting the inspectors verify, on the same day, that the machines were not operating.

"The Agency will have no access to information recorded on the memory of its cameras and as long as Iran has not returned to full compliance with the JCPOA, that information would not be made available to the Agency and will be stored in Iran," Ghaebi added.

In a statement on January 31, the IAEA said Iran has informed the agency that it will move the production of centrifuge rotor tubes and bellows from TESA Karaj Complex to the central city of Isfahan.

The IAEA confirmed that Iran has informed the agency that it can adjust its surveillance and monitoring measures accordingly, noting that the production of centrifuge rotor tubes and bellows at TESA Karaj Complex has been ceased.

Under a law passed by the Iranian Parliament in December 2020, the AEOI was tasked with restricting the IAEA inspections and accelerating the development of the country's nuclear program beyond the limits set by the 2015 Iran agreement.

## More Palestinians Injured as Israeli Forces, Settlers Raid Aqsa Mosque

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - At least 17 Palestinians have been injured in clashes as Israeli settlers stormed the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of al-Quds under the protection Israeli military forces, in the latest act of provocation against the sacred site.

The settlers entered the compound on Sunday morning amid a heavy military deployment of Israeli soldiers to mark the Passover holiday and perform Talmudic prayers.

The Jewish religious occasion coincides with the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan at a time when thousands of Muslims, predominantly Palestinians, usually stay at the holy site for worship day and night.

Videos circulating online showed Palestinians throwing rocks and firecrackers and Israeli forces firing tear gas and stun grenades.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said its medics treated at least 17 injuries following the Israeli raid on the holy site, of whom three were admitted to hospital.

The official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported that the attacking Israeli forces chased the worshippers and fired stun grenades and teargas randomly to empty the holy site of its Muslim worshippers in order to allow the entry of settlers wishing to celebrate Passover inside the courtyards of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

At least three arrests were reported among the Palestinian worshippers.

In a statement, the Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement warned Israel against the repercussions of its atrocities in al-Aqsa Mosque.

"Al-Aqsa Mosque is a red line and the occupying Israeli regime is responsible for assaults on worshippers and allowing occupiers to desecrate the site. We hold Israel responsible for attacks against worshippers inside al-Aqsa Mosque and the inevitable consequences," Hamas also said in a statement.

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## ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian Muslims Need to Rise Against Zionists

The Zionist regime continues its crimes and bloodshed in the Occupied Lands while the world is busy with what is going on in Ukraine or countries are struggling with their own domestic affairs and the international bodies as usual are indifferent to the Palestinian issue.

On Friday, Israeli regime forces violently cracked down on demonstrations held by Palestinians in the occupied West Bank on Friday in solidarity with worshippers assaulted inside the al-Aqsa Mosque, leaving at least 344 injured.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), a national humanitarian organization, said in a statement that its medics attended to 344 injured people following Israeli forces' attacks in several cities on Friday.

It added that the Israeli army also targeted PRCS personnel and hindered their work in providing medical aid to the wounded Palestinians.

Reacting to these crimes, just in few countries people and some officials condemned these crimes or at least they tried to show sympathy with Palestinians but as usual, the major powers and international bodies remained silent or reacted softly to this crime.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has once again showed its true support of Palestinians and once again lashed out at the Israeli regime for desecrating al-Aqsa Mosque, urging Muslim nations to stand united behind the Palestinian cause.

In a post on his Twitter account on Saturday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed outrage over the Israeli regime's new atrocities in al-Aqsa Mosque and warned against the consequences of some Arab countries' move to normalize relations with the Tel Aviv regime.

"Reminder that normalization with apartheid regime of Israel only encourages the oppressor to double down on its brutality," Khatibzadeh said.

As Khatibzadeh said, Muslim world should be united against the Zionist crimes and should rush to the assistance of Palestinians in order to show that Palestinians are not alone.

In recent days, young Palestinians once again have shown their courage and started new intifadha to bring down the usurp regime and the new round of struggle by the Palestinians have drawn supports from the Resistant Front and it seems the countdown for the collapse of the Zionist regime has begun and it just needs unity among Palestinians and among Muslim states in full support of the Palestinians.

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## Russia Can Reportedly Use Iran Experience to Evade Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) - As Russia faces unprecedented sanctions on virtually all sectors of its economy, it may have to turn to Iran which has more than four decades of experience with Western embargoes, a report by a western media says.

The CNN has published a report on how Russia can copy or is already using Iran's experience to circumvent and neutralize the western sanctions.

The piece has conducted several interviews with commentators and Iran experts on the ways Tehran is using to sell its crude oil in the world markets with Washington can do anything.

It quotes the Russian transport minister Vitaly Savelyev as saying that his country is "studying the case of Iran" to help it deal with sanctions on maintenance and spare parts.

The report also cites different reports by Reuters and Bloomberg to say that Iran has in the past hidden millions of oil barrels off little-known ports in Asia to escape Western sanctions. Barrel transfers in the dead of night from one vessel to another allowed Iran to masquerade under different flags, selling its oil to keen Asian buyers without catching the eye of Western monitors.

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# Iran Always Supported Afghan Immigrants Even in Sanction Era

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi has slammed Britain for its plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.

In a tweet posted on his page on Saturday, the Iranian official said: "Britain plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda under human rights pretexts. That's while Iran has for years hosted Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, even when it was under sanctions and without receiving international assistance."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has also criticized the British plan. Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Britain is shirking its international obligations and responsibilities.

## President Says Retreat Is Not Allowed

**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

**TEHRAN - "We are doomed to success," President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said, noting that restoring public hope and trust is possible through action, saying, "We are not allowed to stop or retreat; but we are doomed to success".**

Speaking in a meeting with a group of clerics on Saturday evening, President Raisi said that he personally considers communication with clerics a precious opportunity for the government, adding, "The government has tried to communicate with the clergy at various levels, and take advantage of their opinions".

Pointing out that today, thanks to God, there is a positive hope and expectation from the government, which should be established and promoted through action, the President added, "Promoting this hope means turning it into participation, vitality and social".

Raisi said that the transformation of hope into social capital depends on the correct narration of the actions taken and said, "Today is a war of narratives and the enemy is trying to leave its distorted narrative of the 40-year path of revolution in people's minds, but the best and fairest narrative is available in the Declaration of the Second Step of the Islamic Revolution".

Pointing out that the discourse of the Popular Government is the same as the discourse of the late Imam and the Supreme Leader, the President stated, "The government will pursue the administration of justice in all areas and at all levels".

Referring to the importance of paying attention to culture, Raisi said, "Economic and cultural policies should be pursued both side by side".

The President added, "Today, all institutions of the Islamic Republic are operating under the supervision of the Supreme Leader and with a single rhythm, and even in the field of foreign policy, the revolutionary institutions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are fully coordinated".

Raisi described the full-fledged pursuit of the full realization of the national



information network, the operation of the comprehensive trade system, the establishment of a national licensing portal and the implementation of tax reforms as part of the government's activities over the past seven months.

The President stated, "The government has also tried to activate the neglected sections and tasks of the apparatus. For example, the construction sector in the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad, the youth sector in the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and the plan sector in the Plan and Budget Organization have received more attention to be activated as they deserve".

The President called the promotion of production the most central approach of the government and said, "We believe that overcoming the problems in various areas of the country, including the banking system, growth of liquidity and job creation depends on organizing production".

Noting that the government has tried to address the concerns of the people, elites and the Leader in various areas of monetary and banking, exports and imports, taxes and the like, the President said, "The Popular Government, while trying to compensate for the backwardness faced with a large volume of accumulated demands of various sections of society, including educators and the teacher ranking bill, which we have tried to address one by one".

The President emphasized, "Despite all the existing problems and obstacles, I see a brighter and more hopeful future as we move forward".

## Army Chief Warns of Iran's Intense Response to Threats

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Commander of the Iranian Army Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi reminded the enemies that their strategic depth is within reach of Iran, warning that any threat to the Islamic Republic will be met with great force.

In a message released on Sunday on the occasion of the National Army Day, Major General Mousavi warned the enemies that any action against Iran will cost them dear.

The enemy should bear in mind that its strategic depth is within reach of Iran's military equipment and clout, the commander added.

He said the Iranian Army has gained considerable experience of real battle under all geographical conditions, stressing that it will respond to any threat with the highest degree of power.

The general also noted that the Iranian Army is prepared to counter any threat by boosting its military capabilities and updating the combat methods proportional to the modern warfare.

In comments in December 2021, President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi cautioned the enemies that any bellicose move will draw such a decisive response from the Iranian military forces that it will bring about a significant change in strategic equations.

## Navy Breaks Sanctions and Threats

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's navy chief stressed that despite sanctions, threats, and lack of access to up-to-date equipment, the navy was able to meet its needs with the help of scientists and craftsmen.

In an interview, Navy Chief Admiral Shahram Irani said: "The main missions of the Navy are in international waters; thousands of kilometers away from the borders and the first defensive line of the country's security."

On the presence of the navy in international waters, Admiral Irani noted: "At the behest of the leader, the navy has a long and continuous presence in the Indian Ocean, especially in the area where our interests are threatened."

"By naval vessels, we can be anywhere, and we have plans for this year and will try to raise the Iranian flag again in distant waters," he emphasized. Regarding the readiness and strength of the Iranian navy compared to other countries, the commander of the navy added: "Today, Iran has the ability to be in all international waters using homemade equipment."

"When you move away from your borders, you need other countries to meet your needs such as food, fuel, etc., but the Iranian navy crossed the coast of 55 countries in a 134-day mission without reaching out to them."

In another part of his speech, he pointed to the ability and will of the navy to build naval and indigenized equipment during the sanctions and said: "All our equipment are made in Iran, that is why this year in 134 days navigation, Iran-made destroyer Sahand was sent and a few days ago, destroyer Dena returned to the country from a combined exercise."

The commander of the Navy said about the Dena destroyer sent to IMAX 2022 combined exercise that the Dena multi-purpose destroyer is fully made in Iran and can detect and destroy targets in the air, surface, and underground.

Regarding the unveiling of the latest achievement, he said: "We will launch a destroyer in the southern and the northern fleet by the end of September 2022."

## Iran Strongly Condemns Desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden

TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, saying that Sweden must deal with the perpetrators of this insulting act and prevent such acts from happening again.

Khatibzadeh blamed the deliberate repetition of this insulting act during the holy month of Ramadan for hurting the feelings of Muslims in Sweden and around the world. "This insulting act is a clear example of creating sedition and contrary to freedom of speech and should be condemned."

"While holding the Swedish government accountable, it also must deal with the perpetrators of this insulting act immediately, strongly and explicitly and take clear and practical measures to prevent the recurrence of such acts," the spokesman said.

"The actions of the insulting person and his supporters increasingly necessitate the unity of Muslims and Islamic countries against the conspiracies of the enemies of Islam," he added.

The Danish leader of the far-right Stram Kurs party has burned a copy of the holy Quran in a heavily-populated Muslim area in Sweden. Rasmus Paludan, accompanied by police, went to an open public space in southern Linköping on Thursday and placed the Muslim holy book down and burned it while ignoring protests from onlookers.

About 200 demonstrators gathered in the square to protest. The group urged the police not to allow the racist leader to carry out his action. After the police ignored the calls, incidents broke out and the group closed the road to traffic, pelting stones at the police.

### Severe, Crushing Punishment Awaiting Zionist Occupiers



TEHRAN (MNA) – Condemning the deliberate killing of the oppressed people of Palestine by the Zionists, the Iranian Parliament Speaker warned occupiers that a severe and crushing punishment awaits them.

"We strongly condemn the deliberate killing of the oppressed people of Palestine by the Zionist criminals and the desecration of Al-Aqsa Mosque," said Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in Majlis open session on Sunday.

Qalibaf continued that such crimes show the Zionist regime's growing fear of the courageous resistance of the Palestinian people.

He also warned occupiers about the growing anger of Muslims, stressing that a severe and crushing punishment awaits them.

According to him, Palestinians are more awake than ever and the decline of the occupiers and the aggressors is close.

Muslim youth, especially the Palestinian youth, will take revenge on the blood of their brothers and sisters, he asserted.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will support the new intifada of the honorable people of Palestine with all its might, he also said, adding that the Resistance Front will definitely foil plots of the Zionist enemy all over the world.

During the holy month of Ramadan, the governments of the Muslim countries and their aware nations must unanimously condemn the crimes of the occupying and declining regime of Israel, Qalibaf also stressed.

Iranian Parliament Speaker concluded his remarks by saying, "Undoubtedly, the governments, who have remained silent about the killing of Palestinians, are considered accomplices of criminals in the eyes of Muslims."

## Muslims Urged to Stand United Behind Palestinian Cause

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has once again lashed out at the Israeli regime for desecrating al-Aqsa Mosque, urging Muslim nations to stand united behind the Palestinian cause.

In a post on his Twitter account on Saturday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed outrage over the Israeli regime's new atrocities in al-Aqsa Mosque and warned against the consequences of some Arab countries' move to normalize relations with the Tel Aviv regime.

"Reminder that normalization with apartheid regime of Israel only encourages the oppressor to double down on its brutality," Khatibzadeh said.

On Saturday morning, the Israeli forces' aggression extended inside al-Aqsa Mosque, as they stormed the mosque's courtyards and attacked worshipers, injuring more than 150 Palestinians and arresting 400 others.

Also on Friday, Khatibzadeh said the Israeli regime is blatantly violating human rights principles and international law through committing crimes in al-Aqsa Mosque.

He censured the Zionists' "shameless" acts of violence at holy sites in Palestine and against the fasting people and worshipers at the mosque in the month of Ramadan.

## Red Lines met in JCPOA Revival Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A member of the Iranian parliament's presiding board has hailed the stance of the country's negotiating team in the Vienna talks for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Alireza Salimi said that the Iranian team has met all the red lines, making the West stop its excessive demands.

He said that the West, including the U.S., has even reached a deadlock as the Iranian team is insisting on upholding the rights of the Iranian people.

The Iranian nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was thrown into disarray in May 2018 when the US withdrew from it and reinstated sanctions on Iran.

Tehran and the remaining parties began talks to revive the accord in April last year.

Iran says the U.S. should verifiably remove all those sanctions and give guarantees that it will not abandon the deal again.

## Iranian, Afghan Nations Inseparable Despite Plots

SHAHR-E-REY (IRNA) - Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, the head of Iran's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, has said that Iranian and Afghan nations stand by each other despite plots hatched by enemies.

Qazizadeh Hashemi made the comment on Saturday night at a ceremony honoring Afghans who were martyred during anti-terror fight in the region.

He said that the ceremony sends the message that the Iranian and Afghan nations are inseparable and "this unity is the result of Iran's Islamic Revolution."

The event was held five days after a group of Afghan protesters attacked Iran's Embassy in Kabul and its consulate general in Herat.

Two days later, Afghans gathered in their hundreds outside the embassy to condemn the assault and voice support for unity between the two countries.

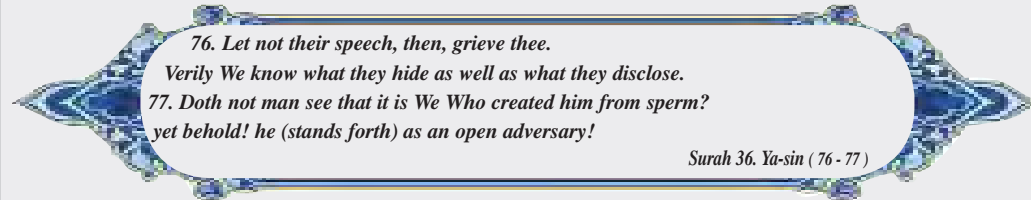
Iran has also warned against "ill-wishers' conspiracies" aimed at tarnishing bonds between the two nations.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:03
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:58
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:56
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:26



# Gov't Imposes 18% Tariff on Exports of Raw Steel, Cement

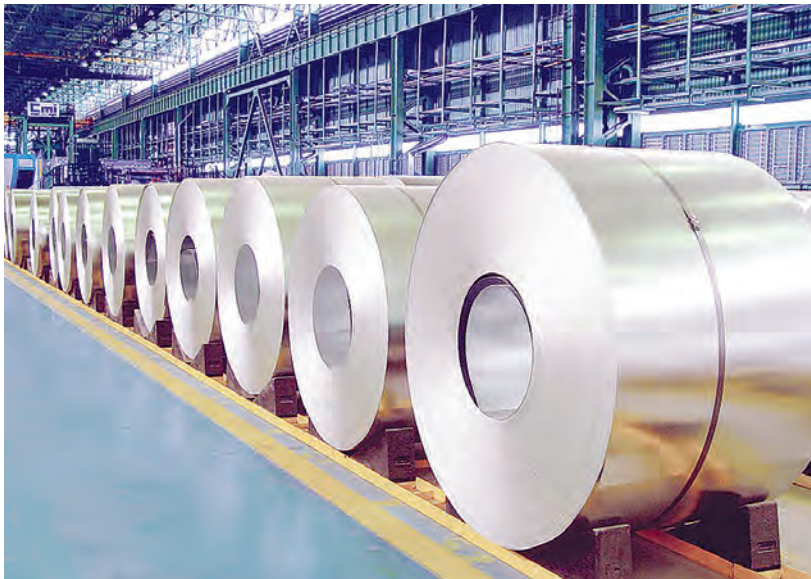
IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Ministry of industry, mine and trade has imposed a tariff of 18% on exports of raw steel, cement and some key metals to prevent supply shortages and price rises that could cause problems for local industries.**

Deputy trade minister Alireza Peymanpak said that Iran's Market Regulation Headquarters (MRH) had decided to impose the duties following a surge in overseas shipments over the winter that had been caused by a series of international developments, including the war in Ukraine.

"Given the crisis in Ukraine and the surge in oil prices since January, we witnessed a jump of prices of export commodities ... thus the MRH imposed the 18% duty on export of commodities to maintain the domestic market balance and to avoid a potential shortage," Peymanpak was quoted as saying by the IRIB News.

The official said that the tariffs have been applied mainly to exports of raw steel, cement and some key metals.



He said the tariff may increase to comply with price hikes in the international commodities market although he insisted that some tariffs may be reduced or removed to enable Iranian traders to swap commodities with foreigners.

Iran has reported successive periods of growth in exports of metals and mining products since 2019 when the country decided to provide more support to the sector to compensate for losses suffered in crude exports because of American sanctions.

Overseas shipments have increased both in value and volume terms since February when supplies from two main metals exporters Russia and Ukraine started to decline because of a military conflict between the two neighboring countries.

## Iranian Trade Delegation to Visit Qatar

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – An Iranian trade delegation is to visit Qatar in June to explore ways of boosting economic cooperation between the two states.

Head of Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce Mr. Adnan Mousa Pour told ILNA that the trade delegation including producers and exporters is to visit Qatar in June to attend the joint trade commission of Iran and Qatar.

He also said that fortunately Iran has no frozen asset in Qatar, adding that Qatar plays a pivotal role in issues related to talks between Iran and the world.

He noted that during the visit to Doha, the cooperation between the two countries regarding the Soccer World Cup will also be discussed. He reiterated that this will be the biggest and high quality trade delegation of Iran to be dispatched to Qatar.

## Chabahar Port Posts 3.5% Growth in Exports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director-General of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province Mr. Behrouz Aqaei announced loading the second ship exporting goods from Chabahar Port.



Aqaei in a report announced this achievement and said the exports of goods from this port have increased by 3.5%, and touching upon the loading of the second ship of exporting goods, he said the ship was to be loaded with 75,000 tons of exporting clinker and some 61,000 tons were loaded on April 10 and the daily average loading amount of the ship is 17,514 tons.

He added that the highest daily loading set in the port has been 21,700 tons and the number of halts has been 27 hours. He noted most of the halts in loading are for balance and trim of the ship.

## Iranians Top Property Buyers in Turkey

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A new report by the Turkish Statistical Center shows that during the first quarter of this year, Russian citizens' purchases of homes grew dramatically and Iranians remain at the top of the list of foreign home buyers.

Russian citizens bought about 1,535 housing units in Turkey in the first quarter of this year, 64 percent more than in the same period last year and more than twice as much as in 2020.

Turkey dramatically increased the amount of property investment to get citizenship on April 13, from \$250,000 to \$400,000, following an increase in demand for housing purchases by Russian and Ukrainian citizens in the country.

An estimated 300,000 Russian citizens have emigrated from their homeland in less than two months since the Ukraine war and western sanctions.

Iranian citizens continue to be the top buyers of housing in the country and bought 2,256 housing units in turkey in the first quarter of this year.

The next categories are citizens of Iraq, Russia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Ukraine, Yemen and Jordan.

The total sales of housing to foreigners in Turkey during the mentioned period were about 14,491 units, a 44 percent increase from the same period last year.



## Transport, Agriculture Ministries Sign Cooperation MoU

TEHRAN (MNA) – Roads and Urban Development Ministry and Agriculture Ministry signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in order to cooperate for facilitation of the imports of basic goods into the country.

The MOU was signed by Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi and Agriculture Minister Javad Sadatinejad on Sunday in a ceremony at the place of Transport and Urban Development Ministry in the presence of the two ministers' deputies.

Addressing the mentioned ceremony, the minister of transport and urban development underlined the high capacities of the country in the field of transportation, especially in the maritime and rail sectors, and emphasized the need to use them efficiently and effectively to supply basic goods from their countries of origin and distribute them in a balanced way.

Iran imported 30.9 million tons of basic goods in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) told ISNA.

Foroud Asgari, the deputy head of IRICA for customs affairs, said that the imported goods were in 25 commodity groups.

Putting the value of the imported basic commodities at \$19.6 billion in the past year, the official said that the imports show a 60-percent rise in worth and 32-percent growth in weight, as compared to the Iranian calendar year 1399.

## Virologist Calls for New Vaccinations

TEHRAN (IFP) – A virologist at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in the Iranian capital Tehran has called for a campaign of vaccinations, especially among students, as the new Omicron XE variant of the coronavirus takes hold globally.

The director of the university's Center for Virology Research says XE is a result of the combination of Omicron's BA1 and BA2 variants.

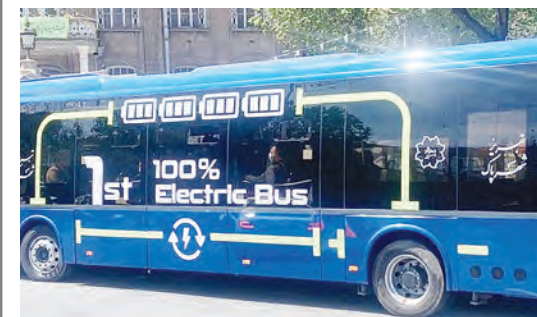
Alireza Naji told ISNA that the new variant has a higher transmissibility than BA2 variant, but there is no information yet on the severity of illness or how much immunity previous vaccinations entail against it.

Naji said the XE variant's spread might be wider than currently reported, stressing that Iran should strengthen its monitoring of new variants, which may occur but may not be traced by regular screenings.

The virologist also criticized the decision to reopen schools and universities immediately after the Nowruz holidays, which, he says, is itself expected to lead to a surge in the Covid cases.

He said the sixth wave of coronavirus is now on the decline in Iran but a surge is expected in the coming weeks, therefore time is ripe to begin administration of second booster jabs.

## Tabriz Hosting MAPNA Group's Zima Electric Bus



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The first electric bus manufactured by MAPNA Group started its work in Tabriz from Saat Square to Amin Terminal of the city on April 16 and Tabriz now is the fourth city after Mashhad, Isfahan and Tehran where special electric bus line is inaugurated.

In this event which started with the visit of the after sale service representative of Oghab Afshan Company in Tabriz, the CEO of Oghab Afshan Company Mr. Kambiz Moradi talked about the subsidiary of MAPNA Group with pointing to the significance of the after sale services of the electric bus and noted that Oghab Afshan Company's representative in Tabriz is in charge of all after sale services of electric bus in this city.

He added that one of the most important advantages of developing electric transportation is the lowest dependence of equipment of this type of transportation comparing to the internal combustion engines. Moradi went on to say that in many countries electric vehicles have started their works from the public transportation and many governments pay facilities for the electric vehicles to encourage their citizens to use this type of vehicle.

He then emphasized full indigenization of this product in the country. It is worth noting that after cooperation agreement between MAPNA Group and Oghab Afshan Industrial and Manufacturing Company, Parsan Electric Bus Manufacturing Company (Shetab) as the subsidiary of MAPNA Electric and Control Engineering & Manufacturing Co. (MECO) officially started manufacture of this product.

The joint venture electric bus so far has been used tentatively in the cities of Mashhad, Isfahan and Tehran and Tabriz is now the fourth city hosting the electric vehicle.

تاریخ ۱۴۰۱/۱/۲۹ شماره ۵۵/۱/۱۳۰۸

**INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER**

وزارت جهاد کشاورزی

نوبت دوم

شناسه آگهی ۱۳۰۳۲۸۱

**AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY**

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 40000±5% MTS of Granular Potassium Chloride (GMOP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 2022/4/18 until Wednesday dated 7) 2022/4/27 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of Iranian Rial 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 358039782263500650000000000000.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Monday dated 2022/5/30 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Tuesday dated 2022/5/31 at 15:00 with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

– The bid bond value should be at € 623748 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, [www.sanarate.ir](http://www.sanarate.ir). It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 2022/4/10 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± %5 in bank guarantee.

– The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for 40000 MTS ± %5 will be IR 167274000000 which must be only submitted by the bidders.

– After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

**For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.**

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# Dozens Dead After Boat Capsizes Off Libya

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A migrant boat has capsized off the Libyan coast, leaving at least 35 people dead or presumed dead, the U.N. migration agency said Saturday.

The shipwreck took place Friday off the western Libyan city of Sabratha, a major launching point for the mainly African migrants making the dangerous voyage across the Mediterranean, said the International Organization for Migration.

The IOM said the bodies of six migrants were pulled out while 29 others were missing and presumed dead. It was not immediately clear what caused the wooden boat to capsize.



# Moscow Bars Entry to Russia For Johnson, Truss, Wallace

MOSCOW (dispatches) - Russia’s foreign ministry said on Saturday it had barred entry to the country for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace and 10 other British government members and politicians.

The move was taken “in view of the unprecedented hostile action by the British Government, in particular the imposition of sanctions against senior Russian officials,” the ministry said in a statement, adding that it would expand the list soon.

The Kremlin has described Johnson, who has been one of Ukraine’s staunchest backers, as “the most active participant in the race to be anti-Russian”.



# Russia Claims Its Forces Clear Most of Mariupol



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian missile strikes hit Ukraine’s capital Kyiv and other cities on Saturday, as Moscow said its troops had cleared the urban area of Mariupol and only a small contingent of Ukrainian fighters remained inside a steelworks in the besieged southern port.

Russia’s claim to have all but taken control of Mariupol, scene of the war’s heaviest fighting and worst humanitarian catastrophe, could not be independently verified. It would be the first major city to have fallen to Russian forces since the Feb. 24 invasion.

“The situation is very difficult” in Mariupol, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told the Ukrainska Pravda news portal. “Our soldiers are blocked, the wounded are blocked. There is a humanitarian crisis ... Nevertheless, the guys are defending themselves.”

As Russia launched more long-range attacks following the sinking of its Black Sea fleet’s flagship, Moscow said its warplanes had struck a tank repair factory in Kyiv. An explosion was heard and smoke rose over the southeastern Darnytskyi district. The mayor said at least one person was killed and medics were fighting to save others.

The Ukrainian military said Russian warplanes that took off from Belarus had fired missiles at the Lviv region near the Polish border and four cruise missiles were shot down by Ukrainian air defenses.

The western city has been relatively unscathed so far and serves as a haven for refugees and international aid agencies.

In the port city of Mariupol, Reuters journalists in Russian-held districts reached the Ilyich steelworks, one of two metals plants where defenders have held out in underground tunnels and bunkers. Moscow claimed to have captured it on Friday.

The factory was reduced to a ruin of twisted steel and blasted concrete, with no sign of defenders present. Several bodies of civilians lay scattered on nearby streets, including a woman in a pink parka and white shoes.

Someone had spraypainted “mined” on a fence by an obliterated filling station. In a rare sign of life, one red car drove slowly down an otherwise empty street, the word “children” scrawled on a card taped to the windshield.

The Russian defense ministry said its troops had “completely cleared” Mariupol’s urban area of Ukrainian forces and blockaded the “remnants” in the Azovstal steelworks, RIA news agency said. It said that as of Saturday, Ukrainian forces in the city had lost more than 4,000 people, RIA added.

There was no immediate reaction from Kyiv to the Russian claims.

The governor of Kharkiv province in the east said at least one person had been killed and 18 were injured in a missile strike.

# Opponents of French Far-Right Protest

PARIS (Dispatches) - Thousands of anti-far right protesters marched across France as opponents of presidential candidate Marine Le Pen seek to form a united front to prevent her from winning an election runoff against incumbent Emmanuel Macron on April 24.

Macron, a pro-European Union centrist, won the presidency in 2017 after easily beating Le Pen when voters rallied behind him in the runoff to keep her far-right party out of power.

This year, the first round of voting last Sunday set up the same battle, but Macron is facing a much tougher challenge.

In central Paris, thousands of people gathered chanting anti-far right slogans and warning of democratic upheaval if Le Pen were to win. One banner read: “Against the far-right. For justice and equality, not Le Pen at the Elysee,” referring to the French president’s official residence.

“If the far-right is in power we will see a major collapse of the democratic, anti-racism and progressive camps,” Dominique Sopo, president of SOS Racism, which along with dozens of rights groups, unions and associations called for the protests, told Reuters.

“People need to realize that despite their anger towards Emmanuel Macron and his policies, there is no equivalence between a liberal, conservative candidate and a far-right candidate.” Police had warned of possible incidents as demonstrators convened in some 30 cities, but the protests ended peacefully.

Macron, who held a rally in Marseille as he tries to convince left-wing voters to pick him on April 24, is slightly ahead in opinion polls.

“The far-right is a risk to our country,” he told supporters overlooking the Mediterranean port city, which put far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon first on April 10. “Don’t heckle them! Beat them!” he said.

Prior to the first round of the election Le Pen successfully tapped into anger over the cost of living and a perception that Macron is disconnected from everyday hardships. That saw her finish with 23.1% of votes compared to 27.85% for Macron.

However, she has appeared more rattled this week as the focus has turned to her manifesto and opinion polls have shown Macron extend his lead. An IPSOS-Sopra-Steria poll on Saturday showed the president winning the runoff with 55.5% of votes.



## Fuel-Laden Ship Sinks Off Tunisia Coast

TUNIS (Dispatches) - A tanker carrying 750 tons of diesel fuel from Egypt to Malta sank today in the Gulf of Gabes off Tunisia’s southeast coast, sparking a rush to avoid a spill.

“The ship sank this morning in Tunisian territorial waters. For the moment, there is no leak,” local court spokesman Mohamed Karray said.

A disaster prevention committee would meet in the coming hours “to decide on the measures to be taken”, he added.

The Equatorial Guinea-flagged Xelo was headed from the Egyptian port of Damietta to the European island of Malta when it requested entry to Tunisian waters on Friday evening due to bad weather.

The tanker is 58 metres long and nine metres wide, according to ship monitoring website vesseltracker.com.

It began taking water around seven kilometres (over four miles) offshore in the Gulf of Gabes and the engine room was engulfed, according to a Tunisian environment ministry statement.

It said Tunisian authorities evacuated the seven-member crew.

Environment Minister Leila Chikhaoui was travelling to Gabes “to evaluate the situation... and to take necessary preventive decisions in coordination with the regional authorities”, a ministry statement said.

Authorities have activated “the national emergency plan for the prevention of marine pollution with the aim of bringing the situation under control and avoiding the spread of pollutants”.

Court spokesman Karray said the Georgian captain, four Turks and two Azerbaijanis were briefly hospitalised for checks and were now in a hotel. The defense, interior, transport and customs ministries were working to avoid

“a marine environmental disaster in the region and limit its impact”, the environment ministry said.

Before the ship sank, the ministry had described the situation as “alarming” but “under control”.

The Gulf of Gabes was traditionally a fishing area but activists say it has suffered from pollution due to phosphate processing industries based near the city of Gabes.

# Clashes Erupt in New Delhi During Hindu Procession

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Clashes broke out during a Hindu religious procession in the Indian capital New Delhi on Saturday, injuring several people, including policemen, police said, days after similar religious violence in three states.

Eyewitnesses told Reuters that the violence erupted between Muslims and Hindus during the procession in Jahangirpuri, a suburb of New Delhi. Police said they were still investigating.

“We are still assessing how many people are injured... some policemen have also been hurt,” said Deependra Pathak, a police official in Jahangirpuri, wearing riot gear.

The violence broke out during a procession to mark the Hindu festival of Hanuman Jayanti, police said without giving more details.

Earlier on Saturday, protesters in New Delhi shouted slogans against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government saying Muslims were violently targeted by authorities in the aftermath of Hindu-Muslim clashes in parts of three states ruled by Modi’s Hindu nationalist party.

The clashes last Sunday during a religious festival prompted police to impose a curfew in one town and ban gatherings of more than four people in parts of the states.

Local authorities tore down the homes and shops of suspected Muslim rioters in central Madhya Pradesh

state in the aftermath of violence that broke out during the Hindu festival of Ram Navami, according to a police official who did not want to be named.

In Modi’s home state, Gujarat, authorities demolished makeshift shops belonging to those they said were involved in the riots in which one man was killed, said an official in Anand district in Gujarat, where the clashes erupted.

Police and local authorities told Reuters after the clashes that they were free from bias and acting within the law.

Opposition politicians have accused Modi’s right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party of stoking tensions between majority Hindus and Muslims in states that it rules.

Leaders of 13 opposition parties have issued a joint statement calling for peace and harmony and after the religious clashes.

“We are extremely anguished at the manner in which issues related to food, dress, faith, festivals and language are being deliberately used by sections of the ruling establishment to polarize our society,” the leaders said.

Police in India’s most populous state of Uttar Pradesh on Friday arrested nine people from a hardline Hindu group suspected of torching the home of a Muslim man who married a Hindu woman.



# Pakistan’s New Ruling Alliance Takes Control of Parliament

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan’s new ruling alliance took control of the lower house of parliament with the election of a new speaker, cementing control of the assembly after former premier Imran Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote.

The previous speaker and his deputy, both Khan allies, had attempted to block and then delay the vote, only for the country’s top court to deem their actions illegal.

The lower house of parliament eventually voted in favor of removing Khan from office tomorrow.

The new ruling alliance has already elected their candidate, Shehbaz Sharif as the new prime minister.

The new speaker is Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, a former prime minister who belongs to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), part of the new ruling alliance. He was elected unopposed in the absence of Khan’s party, which resigned en masse from the house on Monday.

“Raja Pervaiz Ashraf took oath as the 22nd Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan,” said a Twitter account run by the staff of Pakistan’s National Assembly, the lower house of parliament.

The resignations are yet to be fully processed. If accepted, Pakistan faces the prospect of close to 100 by-elections within two months, a major distraction for Sharif and his coalition partners and a potential platform for Khan to mobilise support.

Sharif is expected to name his cabinet in the coming days with a number of policy challenges facing the new government, in particular dealing with an economy in deep trouble.





*Miss*  
**SHANON**  
Contract manager  
**Shanon\_tari@yahoo.com**  
**+989121907875**  
Tel : 88510081  
FAX : 88506474

**Parsian**

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L.balcony  
marble fl  
Fully Furn

**Farmanieh Apt (\$5000)**  
1000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p  
S, J, balcony  
pkg, balcony  
Fully Furn

**Zaferanieh (\$2300)** 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F  
**Gheitarieh (\$2100)** 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F

**(\$3000)**  
**Kamranieh**  
240sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, S, J, pkg  
L.balcony  
F.F

**Sa`adat abad Apt (\$2000)**  
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

**(\$8000)**  
**Velenjak bldg**  
5storey, 20bdrs  
S/p, S, J, pkg  
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F.F

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## Russia Wants Rouble Rate To Be Determined by Market

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian central bank has imposed foreign exchange controls to support liquidity but aims to preserve market pricing principles and a rouble exchange rate determined by the market, the bank's first deputy governor said.

Ksenia Yudayeva said the Russian economy and its financial sector were in good shape before Feb. 24, and now many companies were experiencing the need to find new suppliers and logistics. The Russian financial sector and economy have taken a hit from sweeping western sanctions imposed over what Moscow calls a "special military operation" in Ukraine.



## Pakistan New Gov't Not to Roll Back Fuel, Power Subsidies

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's new government decided not to roll back billions in fuel subsidies for the time being despite the strain on public funds, citing the possible backlash if it were to raise fuel prices just days after taking power.

Former premier Imran Khan, who was ousted in a confidence vote earlier this week, announced a cut in petrol and electricity tariffs in February, despite soaring global prices, in a bid to win back popular support.

That measure, estimated at 373 billion Pakistani rupees, has stretched government finances in a way that cannot be sustained, the finance ministry's top civil servant said. It has also endangered an ongoing International Monetary Fund rescue program.

"I have ... decided not to hike fuel prices in the public interest," Shehbaz Sharif, the new prime minister, said at a dinner in Islamabad last night.

People would curse the new government just three days after it came to office if it took such a step, he said.

Earlier, officials had warned of the fiscal fallout of continuing the subsidies.

"The relief package will add to the fiscal deficit which we cannot afford at the moment," Finance Secretary Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh told Reuters.

"Either it has to be rolled back or compensating reductions in other expenditures would be required to ensure that the primary balance agreed with the IMF is achieved."

The primary budget balance excludes debt repayment obligations.

The fiscal deficit could go as high as 10 per cent of gross domestic product, according to new Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's top economic adviser Miftah Ismail, widely expected to be named finance minister.

"We have been discussing this before (with the previous government) and are discussing it again with the new government as well," a finance ministry official told Reuters, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The officials are proposing spreading the rollback of the subsidies over two to three months to soften its impact, he said, adding that the decision was now with the new political leadership.

Pakistan is in the midst of a US\$6 billion IMF bailout program and has yet to clear its seventh review, which would release over US\$900 million and unlock other funding that depends on the fund's clearance.

The seventh review started in early March, but no agreement had been reached before the collapse of Khan's government.

A reversal of the fuel subsidies will be politically sensitive for a new government trying to shore up popular support at a time when inflation is running at 12.7 per cent.

"Either the new government can raise prices, which will be politically costly, or they could cover the deficit by reducing other non-development expenditure, which will prove politically difficult," said Kaiser Bengali, a Pakistani economist who has previously held a number of government advisory roles.

## S. Korea Decides to Join CPTPP Trade Agreement

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea decided Friday to join a mega free trade agreement involving 11 Asia-Pacific nations as the country seeks to diversify its export portfolio amid heightened economic uncertainty.

Late last year, the country launched the process to accede to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

The plan to join the CPTPP was approved at an economy-related ministers' meeting Friday, and the government will submit an official application after completing domestic procedures, including a report to the National Assembly, officials said.

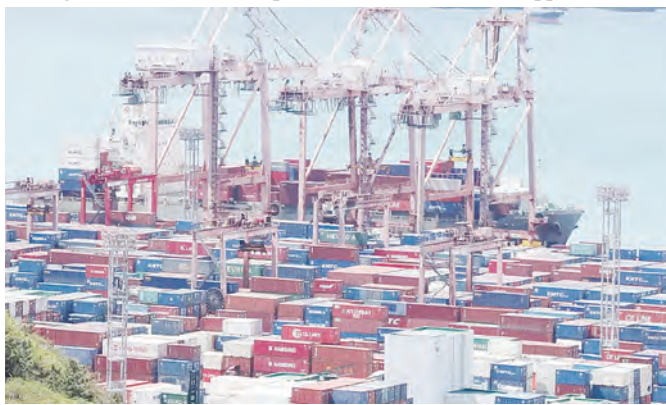
"The envisioned entry carries significance, as it would help us better respond to fast-changing global circumstances and ensure stable supply chains in the Asia-Pacific region," Trade Minister Yeo Han-woo said.

The CPTPP, launched in December 2018, has been signed by 11 countries, including Japan, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Mexico.

The member nations had accounted for around 15 percent of the world's total trade volume of US\$5.2 trillion as of 2020, according to government data.

The CPTPP is the renegotiated version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) led by the former U.S. President Barack Obama administration.

In 2017, then U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the TPP, widely seen as a key counterweight to China's growing economic clout. The government has said it plans to submit the CPTPP application before President Moon Jae-in's five-year term ends on May 9.



The incoming government of President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol is expected to take on negotiations for the country's membership, which is expected to take at least one year.

"The government has carefully reviewed joining the CPTPP over the past eight years, and the entry decision was made after considering its economic and strategic values," the trade ministry said.

The CPTPP accession would boost trade and investment for South Korea, increasing its gross domestic product by 0.33-0.35 percent, the state-run Korea Institute for International Economic Policy estimated.

Farmers and fishermen, however, have opposed the move, citing its potential damage to the agricultural and fishery sectors.

## Russia Asks Brazil To Help Keep Sway At IMF, World Bank

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Russia has asked Brazil for support in the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G20 group of top economies to help it counter crippling sanctions imposed by the West since it invaded Ukraine, according to a letter seen by Reuters.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov wrote to Economy Minister Paulo Guedes asking for Brazil's "support to prevent political accusations and discrimination attempts in international financial institutions and multilateral fora."

"Behind the scenes work is underway in the IMF and World Bank to limit or even expel Russia from the decision-making process," Siluanov wrote. He did not elaborate on obstacles to Russian participation in those institutions, and his allegations could not be independently verified.

The letter, which made no mention of the war in Ukraine, was dated March 30 and relayed to the Brazilian minister by Russia's ambassador in Brasilia on Wednesday.

"As you know, Russia is going through a challenging period of economic and financial turbulence caused by sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies," the Russian minister said.

Asked about the letter, Erivaldo Gomes, the Brazilian Economy Ministry's secretary of international economic affairs, indicated that Brasilia would like Russia to remain part of discussions at multilateral organizations.

"From Brazil's point of view ... keeping open dialogue is essential," he said. "Our bridges are the international bodies and our assessment is that these bridges have to be preserved."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said last week that the United States would not participate in any G20 meetings if Russia was present, citing the invasion.



## Turkey to Provide Loan Relief to Export, Tourism Sectors

ANKARA (Dispatches) - President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that Turkey would provide cheaper loans for export and tourism sector investments that earn foreign revenues.

Addressing a gathering of small business owners in the capital Ankara, Erdoğan said that export-related loans would have rates as low as 9%. Funding of TL 100 billion (\$6.8 billion) would be freed up for exporters and TL 50 billion for the tourism sector.

The industry welcomed the announcement, saying it would make a positive contribution at such a challenging time.

"If we want to bring Turkey to a good point, if we want to increase exports, financing costs had to be reduced," said Mustafa Gültepe, head of the Istanbul Apparel Exporters' Association (IHKIB).

"This incentive will have a very positive impact on investment," Gültepe told private broadcaster Bloomberg HT. He added that making such incentives long-term and continuous will be positive for all companies that want to invest and will definitely make a positive contribution to the investment.

For his part, Dalaman, Ortaca and Köyceğiz Tourist Hoteliers and Tourism Business Association (DOKTOB) Head Yücel Okutur stressed the importance of the package that comes just as the tourism season is entering a new season.

"I find the loan support very positive, it will provide a serious and important opening," Okutur said.

Erdoğan has supported monetary easing to boost credit and exports and to reverse current account deficits. In September, the Turkish central bank embarked on an easing cycle, which saw its policy rate being slashed by 5 percentage points to 14%.

The easing had come as the government endorsed a new economic program that prioritizes low borrowing costs, a current account surplus, growth, exports, credit and employment.

Erdoğan pointed to the recent price developments, saying "exorbitant" price rises were due mostly to energy and commodity markets and currency instability.

He reiterated that those who unfairly raise prices would be punished.

Led by energy costs and food prices, Turkey's annual inflation rose to 61.14% in March, a new 20-year high.

## FDI Inflow to India May Touch \$100b in 2022-23

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow to India is expected to reach \$100 billion in FY2022/23 supported by various economic reforms and increased

ease of doing business, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) said in a report Friday. The industry body also said it expected India's FY22/23 economic growth to be among the highest in the world.

PHDCCI president Pradeep Multani said he expected FY22/23 real GDP growth of over 8 per cent, which is nearly a full notch above the 7.2 per cent projected by the Reserve Bank of India.

It is, however, in line with the World Bank, which this week cut for India forecast citing worsening supply bottlenecks and rising inflation risks caused by the Ukraine crisis.

The PHDCCI report also suggested a ten-pronged strategy to strengthen national economic growth and achieve the target of becoming a \$5 trillion economy in the next five years.

The suggestions include speedy infrastructure investments, inclusion of more sectors under the PLI scheme, increase in public investments in agriculture sector, addressing the high commodity prices and shortages of raw materials, news agency PTI reported.

Last month finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said FDI inflow had crossed \$500 billion under prime minister Narendra Modi, and that it was more than the sum received in the 10 years of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government.

FDI inflow in 2020/21 was a record \$81.71 billion and it was \$74.9 billion the previous year.

The government told parliament last month that these figures are an endorsement of the country's status as a preferred investment destination amongst global investors.

## BOJ Poised to Predict Strongest Inflation in 30 Years



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Bank of Japan Gov. Haruhiko Kuroda faces another awkward communications challenge later this month when the central bank updates forecasts widely expected to predict the strongest annual inflation since 1992 outside years with a tax hike.

With global central banks accelerating interest rate hikes to tackle inflation, Kuroda will have the task of explaining why he is insisting on staying wedded to stimulus when the BOJ itself sees price growth at the fastest pace in decades.

Surveyed economists see key consumer prices rising 1.8% in the year that started in April, compared with the BOJ's current forecast of 1.1%. SMBC Nikko Securities economists go further, forecasting inflation of about 2.5% for this fiscal year in a report earlier this week.

Those views are fueling expectations that the central bank will have to bump up its quarterly economic projection well beyond the 1.2% level that marks the strongest price gains in 30 years after excluding the impact of sales tax increases in 1997, 2014 and 2019. The bank will release the forecasts on April 28 after a two-day policy meeting.

The governor, now in his 10th and final year at the helm of the central bank, will need to calibrate his messaging to minimize giving the impression that the BOJ is close to accomplishing its inflation mission, a view that could fuel speculation the BOJ will adjust policy this year.

"The BOJ will try to make it clear that it won't pivot even with an upgrade of its inflation forecast," said Eiji Kitada, chief economist at Hamagin Research Institute. "It's just natural to upgrade the inflation outlook after energy prices have soared. What's important is how they judge its sustainability."



## Police Busts 1.4 Tons of Illicit Drugs in Isfahan

TEHRAN (MNA) – The police commander of Isfahan province announced that during an operation, members of two smuggling groups were detained and 1.4 tons of narcotics were busted.

A total of 1,400 kg of narcotics, including 1,230 kg of opium and 170 kg of hashish were seized from the smugglers, according to the report.

5 vehicles, including a truck and 4 cars were confiscated during the operation as well.

Three of the eight arrested smugglers were shot by the police officers who are currently being treated in the hospital, and the rest were handed over to the judicial authority after filing a case.



## China's Space Dream: A Long March to the Moon and Beyond

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The return to Earth of three astronauts on Saturday after six months at China's new space station marks a landmark step in the country's space ambitions, ending its longest crewed mission ever.

The world's second-largest economy has put billions into its military-run space program, with hopes of eventually sending humans to the Moon.

China has come a long way in catching up with the United States and Russia, whose astronauts and cosmonauts have decades of experience in space exploration.

Here is a look at the country's space program, and where it is headed:

Soon after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, Chairman Mao Zedong pronounced: "We too will make satellites."

It took more than a decade, but in 1970, China launched its first satellite on a Long March rocket.

Human spaceflight took decades longer, with Yang Liwei becoming the first Chinese "taikonaut" in 2003.

As the launch approached, concerns over the viability of the mission caused Beijing to cancel a live television broadcast at the last minute.

But it went smoothly, with Yang orbiting the Earth 14 times during a 21-hour flight aboard the Shenzhou 5.

China has launched seven crewed missions since.

Following in the footsteps of the United States and Russia, China began planning to build its own space station circling the planet.

The Tiangong-1 lab was launched in 2011.

In 2013, the second Chinese woman in space, Wang Yaping, gave a video class from inside the space module to children across the world's most populous country.

The craft was also used for medical experiments and, most importantly, tests intended to prepare for the construction of a space station.

That was followed by the "Jade Rabbit" lunar rover in 2013, which initially appeared a dud when it turned dormant and stopped sending signals back to Earth.

It made a dramatic recovery, however, ultimately surveying the Moon's surface for 31 months -- well beyond its expected lifespan.

In 2016, China launched its second orbital lab, the Tiangong-2. Astronauts who visited the station have run experiments on growing rice and other plants.

Under President Xi Jinping, plans for China's "space dream" have been put into overdrive.

Beijing is looking to finally catch up with the United States and Russia after years of belatedly matching their milestones.

China has been carrying out experiments in a lab simulating a lunar-like environment in preparation for its long-term goal of putting humans on the moon.

Besides a space station, China is also planning to build a base on the Moon, and the country's National Space Administration said it aims to launch a crewed lunar mission by 2029.

But lunar work was dealt a setback in 2017 when the Long March-5 Y2, a powerful heavy-lift rocket, failed to launch on a mission to send communication satellites into orbit.



That forced the postponement of the Chang'e-5 launch, originally scheduled to collect Moon samples in the second half of 2017.

Another robot, the Chang'e-4, landed on the far side of the Moon in January 2019 -- a historic first.

This was followed by one that landed on the near side of the Moon last year, raising a Chinese flag on the lunar surface.

The unmanned spacecraft returned to Earth in December with rocks and soil -- the first lunar samples collected in four decades.

And in February 2021, the first images of Mars were sent back by the five-tonne Tianwen-1, which then landed a rover on the Martian surface in May that has since started to explore the surface of the Red Planet.

A trio of astronauts docked successfully in October with the core Tianhe module of the Chinese space station, which was placed in orbit in April 2021.

The astronauts stayed at the station for six months before returning safely to Earth on Saturday, ending China's longest crewed mission to date.

The Chinese space station Tiangong -- meaning "heavenly palace" -- will need a total of around 11 missions to bring more parts and assemble them in orbit.

Once completed, it is expected to remain in low Earth orbit at between 400 and 450 kilometres (250 and 280 miles) above our planet for at least 10 years -- realising an ambition to maintain a long-term human presence in space.

While China does not plan to use its space station for global cooperation on the scale of the International Space Station, Beijing said it is open to foreign collaboration.

It is not yet clear how extensive that cooperation will be.

## Greek Real Estate Rivalling Italy, Spain For Foreign Investors



ATHENS (Dispatches) - Greece is at the center of interest among European buyers looking to acquire a second home in the country.

According to Giorgos Gavriilidis, CEO and founder of Elxis – At Home in Greece, demand for a second home in Greece from foreign buyers looks to be stable.

"Investor interest from countries, such as the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, remains strong, focusing on Crete and the Ionian islands. This is keeping prices high as inflationary pressures drive construction costs upwards in a trend seen continuing this year. We expect prices to advance by about 10 percent in 2022 despite the uncertain conditions," Gavriilidis told the Athens-Macedonian News Agency (ANA).

At the same time, he added, we are seeing a significant shift to quality as investors want to reduce risks, encouraged by Greece's improved economic profile. Indicative of this is that in 2019, a typical three-bedroom villa at the Ionian coast would be offered at 265,000 euros, whereas this figure jumped to 330,000 euros in 2021.

Buyers increasingly view Greek real estate as a safe haven investment with improving prospects, he highlights.

Key infrastructure projects are improving accessibility in a market where prices are rising but remain lower than elsewhere in Europe. Investors have shown a vote of confidence in Greek real estate, which is now rivalling countries like Spain and Italy, points out the CEO.

At a second home fair in which Elxis participated last month in Utrecht, Netherlands, it was evident that Greece has become a 'hot' destination for home buyers, highlighted Gavriilidis, who added that Elxis is moving ahead by investing heavily in human resources, new technologies, innovation and sustainable properties.

## Scholz Under Pressure to Speed up Weapons Exports to Ukraine

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is under growing pressure to speed up weapons exports to Ukraine amid impatience from Kyiv at what it sees as a slow response while the Russian onslaught continues.

Although Mr Scholz has spoken of a historic shift in German policy after years of conciliation towards

Russia, critics say this has been half-hearted in practice, with Berlin accused of lagging behind allies in offering practical support.

The cool atmosphere was underlined this week by a row over a potential visit to Ukraine by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who said he had pulled out after learning he was not welcome in Kyiv.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba played down that dispute but said Germany's decision to supply arms had come too late, and that it had since made excuses for not sending heavy weaponry such as tanks.

While there are growing calls from within Mr Scholz's ruling coalition to start supplying such weapons, Mr Kuleba said Ukrainians could not wait patiently for such a consensus to emerge.



"We pay the price in human lives for German politicians to have time to make decisions," he told ARD television in Germany.

There are also signs of dissent within Mr Scholz's three-party coalition, made up of the Social Democrats, the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP), which took office in December.

Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, an FDP politician and the chairwoman of a parliamentary defence committee, has gone public with her criticism of what she sees as weak leadership by Mr Scholz.

"The chancellor needs to finally lead the way and sort out what is to be done. He's not really doing that," she said.

Anton Hofreiter, a leading Green MP who joined Ms Strack-Zimmermann on the first German delegation to Kyiv since the war began, said Mr Scholz was "standing on the brakes" and damaging his country's reputation in Europe.

Mr Scholz took another blow from a group of 96 policy experts and former politicians who accused Germany of "short-sighted egoism" that had hindered Europe's response to Russia's war.

### Russia...

FROM PAGE 1

CNN further claims that Russia is already taking a similar route, its oil now rebranded as "Latvian blend" — a 49.99%-Russian mix that is blended with other oil and labelled Latvian. The crude has been bought by UK-based oil and gas company Shell, Bloomberg reported.

It went on to cite analysts' remarks to bear witness to its claim that financially, Iran has built a shadowy network that uses front companies and circuitous transactions to launder money and dodge sanctions, which some believe may be offered for Russian use.

Front companies are a tactic that Russia would be keen to learn from, it concluded.

Iran's economy is recovering from the sanctions and the World Bank has recently predicted that the inflation rate will drop in Iran next year while the economy will witness a growth of more than 3.5%

Iran has been holding negotiations with the Western powers and Russia and China in Vienna known as the Vienna talks to revive the JCPOA and make the other parties remove the illegitimate sanctions that the previous US administration Donald Trump imposed after its unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal.

The Vienna talks have been paused for the time being at the suggestion of the EU foreign policy chief, and the negotiators have returned to their respective capitals for political consultations.

Almost all countries participating in the talks want the talks to be concluded more quickly, but reaching a final agreement awaits US political decisions on a few remaining key issues which are related to the removal of the sanctions on Iran.

### Muslims Need to...

FROM PAGE 1

On Thursday, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned the Islamic Republic would harshly confront the Israeli regime wherever it deems necessary.

"If an act of aggression is carried out against the interests of the Islamic establishment anywhere in the world, we will respond with seriousness," Brigadier General Esmail Qa'ani said.

The senior commander reminded the regime of the IRGC's forceful missile attack on secret bases of Israel's Mossad spy agency in Iraq's Kurdistan region.

These remarks once again proved Tehran's strong determination against the usurp Zionist regime and this can be a strong and promising point for Palestinians that Tehran will never leave them alone in their fight against the Zionists and now it is all Muslim nations' duty to support their Palestinian brothers in struggle against the Zionists.

As it has been repeatedly said before, the international bodies just remain passive and continue watching the Zionists' crimes and instead of taking action they put pressure on countries like Iran and Russia and condemning them for violation of the human rights while the Zionists are the human rights violator No. 1 and the UN human rights body passes it indifferently without taking a serious action against Israel or they are just content with issuing a toothless statement or even resolution which is mainly vetoed by the U.S.

The holy month of Ramadhan is dear for Muslims as they stop war in this month but the Zionists taking advantage of this attitude and they are trying to enrage Muslims but they should know this fact that the era of the hit-and-run has passed and Zionists should wait for due responses when Ramadhan ends and they should know this fact that tyranny does not last and soon Palestinians will get back their lands and expel the occupiers. But it is matter of time and unity among the Palestinians and Muslim nations for punishing this cancerous tumor of the region and the world.

### Finance Minister...

FROM PAGE 1

It also said that U.S. authorities have repeatedly blocked Iran's presence in IMF and World Bank Group meetings despite the fact that the country is a founding member of those international institutions.

Reports have suggested that the IMF has delayed processing an Iranian request for a \$5 million loan that the country needs to tackle the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

### Gov't Diplomacy...

FROM PAGE 1

Goodarzvand Chegini underlined that such a strategy will promote investment, which will end up in expansion of turnover in order to resolve economic problems, increase production, and revitalize knowledge-based companies.

The 13th administration in Tehran also follows up promoting foreign investors to strengthen their active presence in Iran's economy, he said, adding that to this end, Iran is expected to facilitate presence of Iranian expatriates or foreign investors.

The next element to improve economic diplomacy of Iran is omission of bureaucratic obstacles in Iranian ministries and other entities in a bid to stop dissuading investors, the legislator noted.

Despite the fact that investors do not usually require loans to kick off a project, Iran has a mechanism to provide investors with loans, he said, adding that all entities in the country should try to facilitate foreign investors' presence and venture.

According to the lawmaker, the Islamic Republic's health, tourism, and industrial sectors are prepared to play a key role in pursuing objectives of the economic diplomacy.

### More Palestinians Injured...

FROM PAGE 1

The statement noted that the Tel Aviv regime's decision to give Israeli settlers a free hand to attack the al-Aqsa Mosque and desecrate its shrines will unavoidably hurt the feelings of all Palestinians, Arabs as well as Muslims, and will provoke their wrath.

"The continuation of attacks on Muslim worshippers and desecration of al-Quds will have adverse effects for both the occupying regime and settlers. Our people will stand firm against the occupier and its crimes. Their finger will remain on the trigger to defend al-Quds and the al-Aqsa Mosque. They will thwart the sinister plans of the occupiers at any cost," Hamas said.



## Late Surge Lifts Cantlay To Harbor Town Lead

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Patrick Cantlay birdied his last four holes to break out of a crowd and take a two-shot lead over Robert Streb in the US PGA Tour's RBC Heritage at Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Cantlay defied winds gusting up to 30 miles per hour (48.28 Km/h) to finish strong at Harbour Town Golf Links, punctuating his round with a 20-foot birdie putt at the last.

The FedEx Cup champion's seven birdies on the day also included a 30-footer at the fourth.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

#### Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

#### Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

#### Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

#### Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

#### Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

#### E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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## Kim Hyo-joo Maintains LPGA Lotte Championship Lead

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - South Korea's Kim Hyo-joo had two late birdies to maintain her three-shot lead in the third round of the LPGA Lotte Championship in Hawaii.

Kim, 26, posted an even-par 72 at Hoakalei Country Club for a 10-under-par total of 206 going into Saturday's final round.

She was three strokes clear of American Brianna Do and Japan's Hinako Shibuno. Do matched the low round of the day with a five-under-par 67 while Shibuno signed for a 68.

# Young Scores 38 as Hawks Beat Cavs

CLEVELAND (Dispatches) - Trae Young scored 32 of his 38 points in the second half and the Atlanta Hawks overcame losing center Clint Capela to a knee injury to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 107-101 in the play-in, earning the Eastern Conference's No. 8 playoff seed.

Young started slowly for the second straight game, but "Ice Trae," as he fancies himself, heated up when it mattered most.

The All-Star guard scored 16 points in third quarter to rally the Hawks from a 10-point halftime deficit, and added another 16 in the fourth to finish off the Cavs, whose inexperience showed throughout the second half.

Bogdan Bogdanovic added 19 points for Atlanta, which will play No. 1 seed Miami in the first round. Game 1 is Sunday in South Florida.

The Hawks, who made it to the conference finals a year ago, may have to go forward without Capela. The 6-foot-10 center hyperextended his right knee late in the first half, had to be helped from the floor and couldn't return.

Lauri Markkanen scored 26 points and Darius Garland had 21 for the young Cavaliers, whose unexpected season fell just shy of a playoff berth.

Cleveland hasn't been to the playoffs since 2018, and the Cavs haven't been to the postseason without LeBron James on their roster since 1998.

Lifted by a rowdy, towel-waving crowd in Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse, the Cavs were in position to advance and played well in long stretches. However, Cleveland's offense bogged down in the third quarter, and the



Cavs had no answer defensively for Young.

As the final seconds ticked off, Young waved goodbye as the Cleveland crowd thinned out and headed to the exits.

Those who stayed saluted the Cavs, who weren't expected to get this far after winning just 22 games last season. While they've been relegated to lottery picks and losing since James left after a four-year run to the NBA finals four years ago, the future in Cleveland is bright.

With the season on the line, Cleveland got a huge emotional and defensive lift by the return of All-Star center Jarrett Allen, who missed the previous 19 games because of a broken finger on his left hand. Allen finished with 11 points.

The Hawks were in big trouble late in the third quarter before Young finally heated up. Ignoring some vulgar chants by Cleveland fans, the dazzling guard made a pair of 3-pointers and scored Atlanta's final 12 points in the quarter as the Hawks closed with a 17-8 run over the final 3:48 to tie it 84-all going into to the final 12 minutes.

Markkanen made four 3-pointers and Cleveland hit six shots from long range in the first 12 minutes to open an 11-point lead.

Atlanta helped with some sloppy play and committed seven turnovers, four by Young. But once he started taking care of the ball and making shots, there was no stopping him.



## Matic Wants to Leave Man United

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) -

Manchester United midfielder Nemanja Matic said y he will leave the Premier League club at the end of the season, bringing an end to his five-year spell at Old Trafford.

Serbian international Matic, who is under contract at United until 2023, has made 26 appearances across all competitions for the club this season.

"I have informed the board, the manager and the players of my decision," the 33-year-old wrote on Instagram.

"It has been a huge honor and a privilege to play for this great club. A big thank you to the fans for their unwavering support.

"I will now give everything until the end of the season to help my team mates finish as strongly as possible."

Matic joined United from Chelsea in 2017 when Jose Mourinho was in charge at Old Trafford, having previously been an influential player for the Portuguese manager during the London club's title-winning 2014-15 campaign.

## Poland, Italy, Spain And Kazakhstan

### Cruise Into BJK Finals

PARIS (Dispatches) - Poland, Italy, Spain and Kazakhstan booked their places in the Billie Jean King Cup finals as they took unassailable 3-0 leads in their ties.

World No. 1 Iga Swiatek, crushed Romania's 324th-ranked Andreia Prisacariu 6-0 6-0 in 45 minutes to seal victory for hosts Poland in Radom.

In Sardinia, Italian Camila Giorgi also won 12 successive games as she dispatched Harmony Tan of France 6-2, 6-0 to give Italy a 3-0 advantage.

Spain were the only away team to win as Sara Sorribes Tormo sealed their place in the finals by beating Arantxa Rus 6-0, 6-4 in s-Hertogenbosch in The Netherlands.

Elena Rybakina had to work harder to clinch Kazakhstan's surprising victory over Germany, winning 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 in Nur-Sultan

"Really proud of us," Swiatek told the competition web site. "It's been a long journey. It took us a few years, step by step to progress and qualify finally.

"It just shows how strong a team we are. Hopefully in the Finals we are going to show even more progress, and we're going to succeed."

Tan, ranked 107th in the world, played ahead of 34th ranked Alize Cornet and jumped into a 2-0 lead before the hard-hitting Giorgi took complete control.

In Prague, the Czechs took a 2-1 lead over Great Britain as Marketa Vondrousova beat U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu 6-1, 6-1.

"The score looks easy but it was a tough match and she was a bit injured," said Vondrousova

Raducanu had dragged Britain back into the match in her first professional match on clay on Friday with a hard-fought victory over Tereza Martincova, but she paid a price on Saturday.

"I have a blister on my foot, it kind of showed up after yesterday's match," she told the BBC.

"It completely stopped me from moving, it's tough to not even be able to chase the ball."

"In some sort of twisted way it gives me a sense of confidence and relief that I don't think it's my tennis that's the issue."

# Swiatek Stretches Win Streak to 18



PARIS (Dispatches) - Iga Swiatek marked her first match as world number one with an 18th straight victory as she steered Poland closer to the Billie Jean King Cup Finals.

The 20-year-old swept past 123rd-ranked Mihaela Buzarnescu 6-1, 6-0 in just 55 minutes on the back of five service breaks as the Poles opened a 2-0 lead over Romania in their qualifier in Radom.

Swiatek went into the qualifier on a hot streak, putting together 17 successive wins on her way to titles in Doha, Indian Wells and Miami.

Magda Linette earlier fought off the challenge of experienced Irina-Camelia Begu 6-1, 4-6, 6-2.

US Open champion Emma Raducanu

helped Britain level their tie against 11-time champions Czech Republic 1-1 with a 7-5, 7-5 win against Tereza Martincova.

Raducanu, playing on a clay court for the first time as a professional, wrapped up victory in just over two hours.

The 19-year-old showed no ill effects from losing her toenails in training on the demanding surface earlier in the week.

The Czechs, playing without two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova and former world number one Karolina Pliskova, had taken a 1-0 lead thanks to Marketa Vondrousova who defeated Harriet Dart 6-1, 6-0.

Kazakhstan also have one foot in the finals after opening a surprise 2-0 lead over Germany in Nur-Sultan.

Yulia Putintseva recorded a national record 15th singles win in the rebranded Fed Cup tournament by defeating Angelique Kerber 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. "For me, it's always tough to play the first matches of the clay court season. It's not my favourite surface," said three-time major winner Kerber.

"I played well in the first set but then she came back and was playing better and better."

## Tsitsipas to Face Davidovich Fokina In Monte Carlo Final

MONTE CARLO (Dispatches) - Defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas brushed aside Alexander Zverev to set up a Monte Carlo Masters final against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, the conqueror of world number one Novak Djokovic.

Greek world number five Tsitsipas beat third-ranked Zverev 6-4, 6-2, showing no ill effects of a marathon quarter-final win over Diego Schwartzman which finished at 11:00pm Friday.

"It was hard to resume today after a difficult match last night," said 23-year-old Tsitsipas.

"My body was not at 100%, but I am very happy with the tennis I produced.

"I don't know whether the long match gave me some rhythm, but I was able to play good tennis today. I'm happy with the level I was able to execute and come up with some good ideas on the court."

He appeared fresher than Olympic champion Zverev who had also drawn deep on his reserves on Friday to beat Jannik Sinner in a 3hr 07min quarter-final.

Zverev was the more under-powered of the two.

Tsitsipas broke in the ninth game of the opener before reeling off four games in a row from 2-2 in the second set. The contest was over inside 75 minutes.

Davidovich Fokina, ranked at 46, reached his first career ATP final with a 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 6-3 win over Grigor Dimitrov.

"It was a difficult match. I had my chances in the second set, but Grigor played well and I was tired," said the 22-year-old Spaniard, who knocked out Djokovic on Tuesday.

"I kept fighting, I wanted to see where my limits were."

It was a roller-coaster afternoon for Davidovich Fokina who was a set and then 4-2 and 5-3 ahead in the second.

But he won just three of the next 12 points with two double faults as Dimitrov hit back.



## Liverpool Reach FA Cup Final, Ending Man City's Treble Bid

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool reached the FA Cup final as Sadio Mane's double inspired a 3-2 win over Manchester City that kept alive their quadruple bid and shattered their rivals' treble hopes.

Jurgen Klopp's side are chasing an unprecedented clean-sweep of the four major trophies in a single season.

They remain on course to achieve that incredible target after a scintillating first half display in Saturday's semi-final at Wembley.

Ibrahima Konte put Liverpool ahead and Mane doubled their lead thanks to a blunder from City keeper Zack Steffen.

Senegal forward Mane struck again before half-time and, although Jack Grealish and Bernardo Silva netted after the interval, City were unable to complete a remarkable revival.

Liverpool will make their first FA Cup final appearance since 2012 on May 14 when they face Chelsea or Crystal Palace, who meet in Sunday's semi-final.

The Reds, into the FA Cup final for the 15th time, haven't won the competition since 2006, while Klopp has yet to lead them to a domestic knockout trophy.

Trailing Premier League leaders City by just one point with seven games left, Liverpool have already won the League Cup and have also reached the Champions League semi-finals, where they will play Villarreal.

Despite Klopp's protestations that the quadruple is an impossible dream, this was another step towards football immortality.

For City, fatigued physically and mentally, it was a game too far as Liverpool handed them a first defeat in 11 games.

Both league meetings this season had ended in 2-2 draws, including a pulsating clash at the Etihad Stadium last weekend.

