

According to Official Sources, the Freight Train Service Between Pakistan and Iran Was Suspended When a Train Coming from Zahedan Was derailed in the Dalbandin Area Of Chagai District on Friday

Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani Will Reportedly Visit Iran Soon to Discuss Political and Economic Agreements Reached Between the Two Countries Curing The Iranian President's Visit to Doha

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## Indian Tea Exporters Unable To Leverage Iran Opportunity

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian tea exporters have hit the skids in attempts to make up for a shortfall in Sri Lankan tea supplies to Iran following the economic crisis in the island-nation.

The vostro account set up for the purpose of trade has now run dry after India was stopped from sourcing oil from Iran amid U.S. sanctions.

Iran is India's largest tea market, followed by Russia and the U.S.

A vostro account helps a foreign correspondent bank to act as an agent for a domestic bank. As many as four Iranian banks had opened a vostro account in India's UCO bank which helped India import oil and export rice and tea among other goods.

The payment problem in the Iran market assumes significance as tea exports to Russia are also suffering due to the ongoing Ukraine war.

Officials at the Tea Board told Mint that the decline in Sri Lanka's tea exports opened up nearly the entire Iranian market where Indian orthodox tea already enjoys strong demand. But exporters are worried about payments.

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## Kabul Denies Tehran's Claim About Wheat Trafficking

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock denied Tehran's claim that Afghanistan trafficked wheat from Iran. The ministry said Afghanistan imports its wheat and flour from the Central Asia states and that there is no need to traffic the wheat from Iran.

According to the Iranian media, Mohammad Ghorbani, Deputy Ministry of Agricultural Jihad for Economic and Planning Affairs of Iran, expressed concerns over the trafficking of wheat from Iran to neighboring countries.

"Every-year, there is wheat trafficking—it means it is being trafficked to the neighboring countries through various paths. The price of each sack of wheat is 38,000 (Iranian toman) but it is sold for 800,000 toman along the borders," he said.

But a spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Musbahuddin Mostayeen, said that Afghanistan imports the wheat legally from the Central Asian countries.

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## Gov't Determined Over Fair Distribution of Subsidies



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - First vice president Mohammad Mokhber says the administration is determined to enable a fair distribution of subsidies among the people, urging the public "not to worry" over purchases of essential items, amid a rise in prices of certain flour-based goods in the country.

In a TV interview, Mokhbar briefed Iranians on the administration's measures to pave the way for a fair distribution of the subsidies and explained the root causes of the recent increases of prices in the country and the food security challenges currently gripping the world.

He said the shortages of some essential items and their rising prices were mainly caused by drought in regions that served as the main suppliers of such items, the war between Russia and Ukraine, two of the major providers of grain to the global market, as well as hoarding in different parts of the world.

The official also provided explanations on the decision by the government to eliminate the subsidy for industrial use of flour, which has led to a sharp hike in prices of a number of wheat-based items, such as sweets, pasta, baguettes, and noodles.

The issue of eliminating the subsidies was not brought up in the budget bill for the current fiscal year, but the administration placed the measure on its agenda to prevent shortages of essential items and fight their smuggling to other countries, he said.

Meanwhile Mokhber reassured the public that the subsidies for bread and medicine would never be eliminated. "Following their defeat on the military field, the enemies of Iran have shifted the battle ground to economic war with the Iranian nation, which is even more dangerous," he added.

He went on to say that people do not need to panic over the shortage of the basic goods in the country, reiterating that the government has plans to help the public and to fight smuggling of the goods because of the subsidies.

Mokhber then pointed to some actions of the government to make sanctions ineffective, noting that when the new government started its work, the country used to sell some 600,000 barrels of oil per day and it was almost unable to take the money back but the government could increase the oil sales and find ways to get the money back.

He said some economic experts predicted the dollar price in Iran to hit 40,000 toman per dollar but the government with its measures could stabilize the economic indicators and it could lower the inflation rate from 50% to some 35% by the end of the past year.

He also criticized some companies which do not act economically and they make money and whopping profits due to the subsidies paid by the government for the raw materials or products and the companies make money by selling them based on the free market rate or exporting them. He said recent criticisms over the actions of the government come from those who lose these ran-seeking opportunities.

Mokhber invited all elites and experts to help the government to reform the current economic structure in order that all walks of the life can benefit of it.

## EU Makes Last-Ditch Effort to Save Iran Accord

LONDON (FT) - The EU is making a last-ditch attempt to save the Iran nuclear deal and break a deadlock triggered by Tehran's demand that Washington lift its terrorist designation on the Revolutionary Guards.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told the Financial Times he was seeking a "middle way" to end the impasse, which threatens to scupper more than a year of European diplomatic efforts to seal a deal that would lead to the US rejoining the 2015 accord and lifting sanctions on Iran. In return, the Islamic republic would drastically reduce its nuclear activity.

He said he wanted EU negotiator Enrique Mora to visit Tehran to discuss the issue, but added that Iran "was very much reluctant". He described the diplomatic push as "the last bullet".

Borrell is considering a scenario whereby the designation on the guards is lifted, but kept in place on other parts of the organization, which has several arms across the security apparatus and a sprawling business empire.

Analysts have suggested one compromise option for the US is to lift the terrorist designation on the guards and keep it on the Quds force, the unit responsible for the guards' overseas operations and which arms and backs militant groups throughout the Middle East. The Quds force has been designated since 2007, while former US President Donald Trump labelled the guards a terrorist organisation in 2019, a year after he abandoned the nuclear deal.

Trump imposed hundreds of sanctions on Iran as he pursued a "maximum pressure" campaign against the republic. Tehran responded by ramping up its nuclear activity and is now enriching uranium at its highest-ever levels, close to weapons-grade.

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## ViewPoint

### Sweden More Catholic Than the Pope

Nowadays Sweden has been under spotlight for the trial of a former Iranian official for the alleged charge of injustice and crimes while the country for years has been a haven for sheltering the anti-Iran terrorist group members and a center for anti-Islam activities.

Hamid Nouri was arrested at Stockholm Airport in 2019 and charges brought against him include human rights abuses against prisoners dating back to 1988. The accusation again Nouri are mostly taken from members of the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO). The MKO has been accused of fabricating atrocities multiple times. Again raising questions about the credibility of the prosecution who wish to see Nouri sentenced to life. If we have a glance at the record of MKO, we see a black record with killing of many innocent people in Iran.

Last Friday and during the 89th session of his trial, Swedish prosecutors read a summary of Nouri's indictment in court, a day after submitting a request for life imprisonment for him.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the continued detention of the former Iranian official as "totally illegal" and driven by "false allegations made by the MKO terrorist organization and the hostile smear campaign against the Islamic Republic."

Reacting to the indictment, Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi lambasted as "unlawful and unfair" the trial of a former Iranian official in Sweden over alleged rights abuses.

Gharibabadi made the remarks after Swedish prosecutors requested the maximum penalty of life imprisonment for Nouri, accusing the former Iranian judiciary official of prisoner abuse in 1988.

Nouri was arrested upon arrival in Sweden at Stockholm Airport in 2019 and was immediately imprisoned. Nouri, now 61, has been held in solitary confinement for over two years and his family has not been allowed to visit him in prison.

Gharibabadi said Nouri's trial was "sham" and in violation of justice and human rights principles, adding that he had been arrested based on false accusations and that his detention was regarded as "forced disappearance" since his family had been kept unaware of the arrest.

Meanwhile according to the reports, the family of an Iranian citizen on trial in Sweden has released shocking allegations of mistreatment as they continue to fight a lengthy legal battle for his release.

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## Iran Exported \$2.3b Worth Of Gasoline in 19 Months

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran exported nearly \$2.3 billion worth of gasoline in more than 19 months to March 2021 despite sanctions imposed by the United States.

Head of Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) Ali Naghavi said that the commodity market had started trading Iranian Oil Ministry's gasoline shipments for a first time in late August 2019.

Naghavi said gasoline shipments sold to foreign customers through IRENEX had reached more than 2 million metric tons (mt) over the year to March 2020.

He said the volume increased by over four times in the year to March 2021, adding that Iran had earned nearly \$2.3 billion for exports of more than 10 million mt of gasoline in the 19 months to March 2021.

However, Iran decided to stop gasoline exports through IRENEX in May 2021 to respond to a rising domestic demand for the fuel, said the official.

Iran was a net importer of gasoline over a decade ago when the country decided to reach self-sufficiency in the production of the fuel to neutralize foreign sanctions that hampered its access to overseas supplies.

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# Polish FM to Visit Tehran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau is going to visit Tehran for talks with Iranian officials over bilateral and international issues.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the top Polish diplomat will meet with some high-ranking Iranian officials in addition to Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian during his two-day stay in Tehran.

Participation in a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the entry of Polish refugees into Iran will be on the agenda of the visit to Iran by Poland's foreign minister

## U.S. Maximum Pressure Reason of Current Situation in Vienna Talks

IRAN NEWS POLITICALDESK

**TEHRAN – Foreign Minister in a phone talk with UN Chief referred to the continuation of exchanging messages between the U.S. and Iran through the EU and blamed the U.S.' maximum pressure campaign for the current situation in Vienna talks.**

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and UN chief Antonio Guterres have held a telephone conversation about some regional and international developments including the situation in Yemen, Afghanistan and Ukraine as well as the sanctions removal talks.

Amirabdollahian referred to the temporary ceasefire in Yemen and said the continuation of the truce is necessary but called for the fulfillment of obligations over the ceasefire agreement and the removal of the humanitarian siege of Yemen.

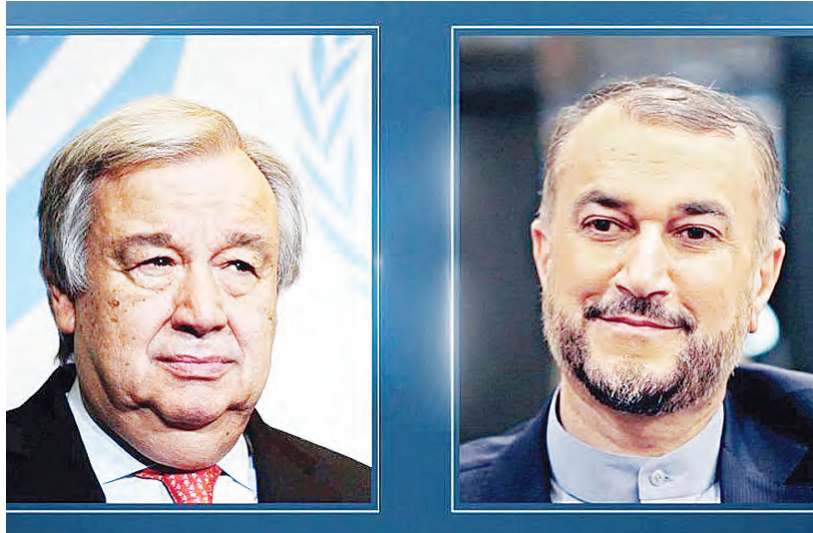
The Iranian foreign minister in other comments called the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan very worrying and underlined the need for the formation of an inclusive government there with the participation of all ethnic groups.

Amirabdollahian also referred to the Afghan refugee influx and demanded that the UN fulfill its obligations regarding the Afghan refugees.

He further spoke about the surge in terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and also the problems that stem from poverty in the country. He then underscored the necessity of releasing frozen Afghan assets.

While pointing to logical expectations from the UN, the top Iranian diplomat thanked the world body's chief for his efforts to establish peace and security.

Amirabdollahian reaffirmed Iran's opposition to the war in Ukraine and referred to Tehran's political efforts to stay away from war and focus on a political solution and attention to the humanitarian aspects of the Ukraine crisis. He said the Ukraine crisis must not prevent the attention of the international



community to the humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan.

He also criticized the recent non-binding bill approved by the U.S. Congress and said reaching a lasting, robust and fair agreement calls for adopting a realistic and brave decision by the U.S. government to redress its past mistakes.

During the conversation, the UN chief also thanked and welcomed Iran for its constructive efforts and stance to support the Yemen truce.

Guterres expressed hope that with the removal of all obstacles, "we will witness the resumption of flights from the Sana'a Airport and the reestablishment of link between Yemeni provinces and also the continuation of the ceasefire.

The UN secretary-general welcomed the continuation of talks and movement toward the normalization of diplomatic ties between Tehran and Riyadh.

The UN chief underlined the significance of the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and also appreciated the constructive role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in accepting Afghan refugees and providing them with humanitarian aid and also hosting the displaced Afghans.

In response to the Iranian foreign minister's demand that the UN fulfill its responsibility regarding the refugees, Guterres expressed hope that the UN fund will be able to give more assistance to Iran in support of the refugees.

The UN secretary-general also pointed to the importance of political initiatives in talks over the removal of sanctions known as the Vienna negotiations. He then expressed hope that the talks will continue and produce the desired results.

## Tehran Sympathizes With Cuba Over Explosion at Havana Hotel

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry expressed sympathy with Cuba over a large explosion at a historic hotel in Havana that has killed and injured scores of people.

In a statement on Saturday, Saeed Khatibzadeh offered his sympathy to the Cuban people, government, and families of victims of the deadly incident.

He also wished the injured a speedy recovery.

At least 22 people have been killed and more than 70 injured after a large explosion ripped through Hotel Saratoga in Havana.

Cuban president's office says a preliminary investigation indicated that the explosion at the five-star Hotel Saratoga in Old Havana was caused by a gas leak.

## 527k Foreign Children Study In Iranian Schools

TEHRAN (IFP) - At least 527,000 foreign children, mostly Afghans, study in Iranian schools. According to a senior Education Ministry official, others include school children from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iraq, and a few other countries.

In an interview with IRNA on Saturday, Abolfazl Kamaali, said that Iran's Ministry of Education has adopted appropriate policies for foreign national students, with 22 schools exclusively established for them.

He stated that special schools were established in popular immigration destinations like Tehran, Qom, Kashan, and Mashhad and the ministry would welcome private investment in such areas.

About 10,000 foreign national children study in these special schools, Kamali noted, adding that the students are taught in accordance with Iran education system.

No immigrant child, no matter legal or illegal, is deprived of education in Iran in line with official guidelines and in accordance with the instruction given by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, as said by the official.

## New Mineral Reserves Worth Over \$28b Discovered in 8 Years

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO)'s data shows that new mineral reserves worth over \$28.7 billion have been discovered across the country over the past eight years.

According to IMIDRO's latest exploration data, over 977 million tons of new iron ore reserves, 496 million tons of new coal reserves, and 182 tons of new gold reserves have been identified from the Iranian calendar year 1392 (started on March 21, 2013) up to the Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022).

Also, in the mentioned eight years, 14 million tons of new lead reserves and six million tons of new zinc reserves have been discovered.

Other mineral reserves including brine (363 million tons), barite (103 million tons), rare earth elements (85 million tons), bauxite (17 million tons), and antimony (six tons) have also followed the same upward trend.

Having 81 different types of minerals, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe. In this regard, the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major contributor to the country's economic growth.

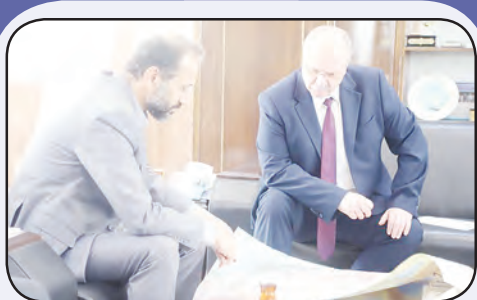
Iran's proven iron ore reserves are 2.7 billion tons, while the country's copper reserves are 2.6 billion tons. The country also has 11 million tons of zinc reserves.

The total proven reserves of Iran's mines are estimated at about 60 billion tons, which is expected to reach more than 100 billion tons with the implementation of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's exploration programs over 500,000 square kilometers of new mineral zones.

Despite the country's huge potential in this area, due to some issues like the lack of necessary machinery and equipment and the lack of access to financial resources and foreign investment because of the U.S. sanctions, the Iranian mining sector has been struggling to operate at its maximum capacity over the past few years.

So, the government programs for promoting this industry are mainly focused on relying on domestic sources for helping the mining sector overcome its current problems and hit its ideal targets.

## Iran, Belarus Enjoy Various Commonalities For Cooperation



BANDAR ABBAS (Dispatches) - Belarusian Ambassador to Tehran Dmitry Koltsov said that Iran and Belarus have various communities for cooperation.

Speaking in a meeting with managing director of Hormuzgan Ports and Maritime Organization Alireza Mohammadi Karajiran, Koltsov hailed facilities and infrastructures of Shahid Rajaie Port.

Referring to the recent developments in the region and Eastern Europe, he said that Belarus is keen on transiting goods through Iran.

He added that Belarus can use the capacity of the Iranian ports and railways for transiting various goods.

He offered Belarus readiness to raise the level of trade exchanges and to pave the way for the presence and investment of Iranian companies.

Meanwhile, Karajiran pointed to the record of 2,700,000 TEU containers in Shahid Rajaie Port, saying it is also connected to railway.

## Iran, UN to Cooperation in Holding Trade Diplomacy Training Course

TEHRAN (MNA) - The advanced training course in business diplomacy will be held at the venue of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) on May 7-8 in presence of instructors from the International Trade Center (ITC).

According to the Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Economic Diplomacy Affairs, economic and international experts of the Foreign Ministry will participate in this training course along with experts and business advisors of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade.

The purpose of this training course is to acquaint participants with the developments in the international trade system and to get enough information on the successful experiences of developing countries in promoting trade diplomacy.

In this regard, participants will also get full familiarity with the latest methods and achievements of the International Trade Center in the field of business facilities and capacity building to support Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and will also be closely acquainted with the tools and models of target market analysis.

The International Trade Center (ITC) is an international organization affiliated with the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is headquartered in Geneva and is considered as one of the leading international institutions in the field of trade capacity building in developing countries.

Increasing foreign trade, especially with neighboring countries is one of the priorities of economic diplomacy of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran so that economic experts and business advisers in embassies of the country abroad have undertaken a special role in this regard.

## Recognition of Taliban Not on Iran's Agenda for Now

TEHRAN (IFP) - A former Iranian ambassador to Afghanistan says recognition of the acting Taliban government is not on Tehran's agenda for the time being, stressing that the new rulers in Kabul must first accept international regulations and ensure Iran's share of water from the Helmand River.

Fada-Hossein Maleki told ILNA that Iran had repeatedly emphasized the need for the formation of an all-inclusive government in Kabul, but there are "serious internal divisions" among the Taliban and they do not hold unified positions in terms of receiving neighbors.

He said the recent wave of Daesh terror attacks that targeted Afghan mosques are a sign of the same internal rift, which hampers the restoration of stability, adding,

"We hold sessions of talks with the Taliban and bring up such issues with them."

"Recognition of the Taliban is not on our agenda for now, he said.

"Today, we maintain ties with the Afghan people and have stayed in the country with the goal of supporting the people. We have not shut the borders and offered assistance."

"We emphasize that the Taliban must accept international regulations, while the issue of Iran's share of water is a priority," he added.

The former envoy said, "If the Taliban accept the formation of an inclusive government, stability will return to the country and all ethnic groups will be able to participate" in running the country's affairs.

## Normalization With Israel Encouraging Violence 85% Received 2nd Dose of Covid Vaccine in Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh says the normalization of relations with the Israeli apartheid regime is one of the factors that encourage and intensify violence by Zionists in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Khatibzadeh made the comment in reaction to the fresh Israeli forces' attacks on Palestinians worshippers and the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Khatibzadeh emphasized the need for the unity of the Islamic world to defend Palestine and save al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site.

He condemned the Zionists' repeated attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque and the brutal attacks by Israeli forces on worshippers and defenders of Palestinian holy sites.

Khatibzadeh added occupation and the occupiers are on the decline, and the struggle against the usurpers of al-Quds and Palestine is a natural, legitimate and legal right of the Palestinian people.

The foreign ministry spokesman called on nations, governments and regional as well as international organizations to help the Palestinians defend themselves against the Zionist occupiers.

TEHRAN (IFP) - Health minister has praised the speedy inoculation campaign that greatly helped contain the spread of Covid-19 in the country, saying around 85 percent of the people have now received a second dose of vaccine against the coronavirus.

Bahram Einollahi said the health sector made a "great move" to stem the fast spread of the coronavirus across Iran through widespread vaccinations, which took place within a short period of time.

"We set a record of 1.6 million doses of vaccine administered daily and over 8 million in a week," he added.

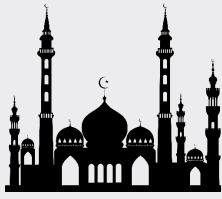
The minister said, "The key to Iran's success in bringing about a remarkable decline in coronavirus figures was the people's solidarity with the administration's plans" against the pandemic.

Across Iran, daily Covid-19 cases, deaths and hospitalizations have been on the decline, along with many other parts of the world.

Einollahi, however, cautioned the public on Thursday against taking the virus lightly since it still remains active in the world and claims lives.

He advised people to take a fourth dose of vaccine to bolster their immune system against the respiratory disease.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:16
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:28
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:04

17. The day He will gather them together as well as those whom they worship besides Allah, He will ask: "Was it ye who let these My servants astray, or did they stray from the Path themselves?"

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (17)

# Indonesians Invited to Use Chabahar Port of Iran as Regional Hub

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mr. Seyed Reza Fatemi Amin in meeting with Indonesian delegation led by Vice-Speaker of People's Representatives Council of Indonesia Mr. Rachmat Gobel called for finding ways for broadening the bilateral trade volume which is currently around \$1b.**

According to reports and during the meeting, Fatemi Amin said that Iran and Indonesia are two major powers in their own regions and they have deep bilateral political and cultural relations. He expressed hope that their economic relations would move ahead equaling their political and cultural relations.

Fatemi Amin pointed to setting target for increasing the bilateral economic relations, adding that during the visit of Indonesian president to Tehran in 2016, both sides decided to increase the trade to \$2b but their bilateral trade is currently around one billion dollars and called for setting up workgroups to prepare roadmap for increasing bilateral trade between the two states.

He expressed interest in boosting bilateral economic relations and said that economies of Iran and Indonesia are complementary and each can provide the required products of the other party.

Fatemi Amin then emphasized the necessity of joint investment between the two states, adding that joint investments will deepen and broaden the relation between the two countries.

The minister then said that Indonesia has good capacities in the fields of palm oil, paper and rubber and it can use Chabaha Port as the regional hub for its exports.

He said that Iran enjoys having very good transit capacities in the north-south corridor, adding that Russia also is interested in expansion of this corridor by Iran because this route is the cheapest one.

Fatemi Amin went on to say that there are great opportunities in Iran for joint cooperation, stipulating that Iran's steel industries and home appliances have progressed very well, adding that there are appropriate capacities for enhancing relations in some fields like medical equipment industries, auto-making and bio technology.



Then Indonesian official Mr. Gobel, for his part, said that this visit to Tehran was aimed at pursuing the previous talks and consultations with Iranian side for enhancing trade ties and following the emphasis of presidents of the two countries and announced readiness of Indonesia for deepening economic relations.

He pointed to the presence of Indonesian media representatives and private sector in his delegation to Tehran and said that the delegation had different meetings with the private sector and Iranian knowledge-based and technology companies.

Gobel went on to hail the progresses of Iran in the Nano-technology and knowledge-based fields and voiced readiness of Indonesia to take advantage of Iran's progress in those fields. He reiterated that Iran and Indonesia can have joint valuable cooperation for both countries and Muslim ummah with joint cooperation in the fields especially in the health technology.

Indonesian Ambassador to Tehran Mr. Ronny P. Yuliantoro as well as Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization Alireza Peyman Pak as well as some of the foreign ministry officials were present in this meeting.

## Iran Opens Handicraft Exhibition in Iraq

TEHRAN (IP) - An exhibition of handicrafts from different cities of Iran was opened in the Kurdish area of Halabja, Iraq.

Mehdi Shoushtari, Consul General of Iran in Sulaimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan Region, general managers and deputy handicrafts of the participating provinces, the governor of Sulaimaniyah, and the governor of Halabja were present at the ceremony.

In the exhibition, more than 80 artists from the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Ilam, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Hamedan in kilim weaving, wood products, pottery, mosaics, etc. exhibited their works.

Mehdi Shoushtari, Consul General of Iran, expressed his hope that more artists from other provinces of Iran will be present in the next exhibition.

## Over 1.2m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,291,414 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$323m on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1,181,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$229m.

On this floor, the IME's customers purchased 966,853 tons of cement, 161,048 tons of steel, 23,000 tons of sponge iron, 16,000 tons of iron ore, 9,900 tons of aluminum, 4,320 tons of copper, 450 tons of zinc, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 24 tons of precious metals concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME saw trade 103,235 tons of commodities on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor valued almost \$86m.

The exchange's customers purchased on this floor 32,292 tons of polymeric products, 22,520 tons of chemicals, 18,300 tons of vacuum bottom, 16,500 tons of lube cut, 12,455 tons of bitumen, 1,597 tons of base oil, 570 tons of sulfur and 40 tons of argon.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 6,983 tons of commodities traded on it.

## Iran-Tajikistan Annual Non-Oil Trade Stands at \$131m

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of non-oil trade between Iran and Tajikistan stood at \$131.038 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi put the weight of commodities traded between the two countries at 139,249 tons.

Iran exported 124,737 tons of goods valued at \$91.6 million to Tajikistan and imported 14,512 tons of products worth \$39.437 million from the country in the previous year, the official added.

In a message wrote in mid-January by Mohammad Taghi Saberi, the Iranian ambassador to Dushanbe, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan, the envoy said that the relations between the two countries are based on ancient and inseparable cultural, religious, civilizational, historical and linguistic ties.

"No country has as close ties and attachment to the Republic of Tajikistan as the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the reason is the racial, historical, cultural, religious and linguistic affinities of the two nations," Ambassador Saberi explained. The ambassador stated that the Republic of Tajikistan has a high status in the Iranian foreign policy, saying that Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, the Iranian president, chose this country as his first foreign trip.

According to the diplomat, the presidents of Iran have visited Tajikistan 13 times since the establishment of political relations between the two countries, and the Tajik presidents has visited Iran 17 times. The speakers of the Iranian parliament have also visited the Republic of Tajikistan three times and the speakers of the Supreme Councils of Tajikistan have visited Iran five times.

## Monthly Production by Major Automakers Surpasses 45,000

TEHRAN (MNA) - Three major Iranian carmakers, namely Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), SAIPA Group, and Pars Khodro, manufactured 45,396 vehicles during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), the data released by the Codal website showed.

According to the data, the production by the mentioned companies has fallen 29.3 percent compared to the previous year's same month in which the output stood at 64,279, IRNA reported.

During the said month, IKCO manufactured 25,041 vehicles, which was 25.9 percent less than the output in the same period of the previous year.

During this period, this industrial group was able to produce 17,368 vehicles in the Peugeot group, 3,188 vehicles in the Samand group, 1,698 Dena vehicles, 722 Rana vehicles, 534 Haima vehicles, and 477 Tara vehicles.

SAIPA manufactured 15,443 vehicles in the mentioned period. Production by this automaker fell 27.8 percent in comparison to the previous year's same time span.

Pars Khodro also manufactured 4,912 vehicles in the period under review, 45.8 percent less than the output in the first month of the past year.

Iran's major carmakers had manufactured 867,363 vehicles in the previous Iranian calendar year 1400(ended on March 20), which was 3.7 percent less than the figure of the preceding year.

## Annual Tea Exports Rise 77%

TEHRAN(MNA) - Iran exported over 27,272 tons of tea leaves valued at \$28 million in the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), registering a 77 percent rise in value and a 68 percent increase in weight, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, Iranian tea was exported to 25 countries in the previous year, IRNA reported.

The United Arab Emirate (UAE) was the top importer of Iranian tea in the mentioned year, buying 8,304 tons of tea worth over \$8.774 million. Turkey with 2,904 tons worth \$3.537 million of imports, Russia with 2,598 tons worth over \$3.092 million, India with 2,538 tons worth \$2.371 million, and Iraq with the purchase of 2,195 tons worth \$1.998 million worth of tea, were the next four export destinations for the said commodity.

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kenya, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan occupied the sixth to 11th places among Iran's top tea export destinations, followed by Germany, Ukraine, Lebanon, Georgia, United Kingdom, China, the Netherlands, Kuwait, Finland, Switzerland, Canada, Belgium, Azerbaijan, and Australia, according to Latifi.

Iran also imported some 75,379 tons of tea worth \$386,160,767 from 10 countries in 1400, among which India was the top supplier of tea for Iran exporting 34,285 tons of the product valued at \$168 million.

Sri Lanka was the second biggest exporter of tea to Iran, selling 18,326 tons of the product worth \$107 million, followed by the UAE with 14,368 tons worth \$71.572 million, Turkey with 4,593 tons worth \$23.700 million, and Kenya with 1,471 tons worth \$5.8 million.

Iraq, Vietnam, Germany, China, and Afghanistan also started selling tea to Iran in the previous year, the official said.

### Abshar Atefeha Int'l Charity Foundation Deprivation, Headquarters of Commemorating Martyrs of the Bazi Deraz Operation Theater in Kermanshah Province

## True Mysticism's Is Bazi Deraz



**A visual narrative of the rendezvous of love and mysticism with the presence of state officials and officials May 6, 1401**

- Dear Director of Sarkar Deprivation Camp, Ms. Fatemeh Choupani
- Dear Secretary of the Central Headquarters of the Path of Light, Mr. Sardar Dibi
- Dear Friday Imam, Haj Agha Fatemi Nasab
- Dear Governor, Mr. Farzadipour
- Dear Commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Mr. Akbari
- Dear Mayor, Mr. Babakhani
- Dear Welfare Officer, Mr. Bojani
- Distinguished members of the city council, Mr. Akbari, Mr. Safari, Mr. Karimi, Mr. Moradian and Mr. Amini
- Dear Director of Education, Mr. Safari
- Dear Governor of Paveh, Dr. Ardeshir Rostami
- Dear families of martyrs and martyrs
- Honorable head of the relief committee, Mr. Yavarinejad
- Dear President of the Red Crescent, Mr. Kamri
- Dear Representative of Sarpol-e Zahab - Qasr Shirin • West Gilan Dear Dr. Shahriar Heidari

The International Charity Foundation of the Waterfall of Emotions, which has been active since 2001, has tried to provide conditions for serving and helping the deprived in the community with an expert and research-oriented view of social and cultural issues from the very beginning. This foundation has 830 agencies in the whole country and 160 agencies in Tehran province and also supports 450 thousand Mehrijoos in the whole country. Also, more than 11,000 families in Tehran province are supported by the deprivation camp. Ilam, Hamedan, Qazvin, Alborz, Kermanshah, Tehran) on the occasion of the memorial of the martyrs of Bazi Deraz operation area and Mersad Strait, holding six processions and distributing cakes, juice, mineral water and receiving pilgrims from the tombs of these honorable martyrs and baking more than 30 thousand Hot food has been mystified for distribution among Noro lovers. For the dear families under the support of this foundation, which has planned to donate a basket of goods, the deprivation camp of the International Charity Foundation of Atefeha Waterfall by our dear benefactors and benefactors in Tehran province costs more. From 2000 packages of baskets including rice, tea, paste, pasta, soy, beans, etc. have been collected from donors in Tehran province and have been prepared for the needy in Kermanshah province. The rial value of each pack is 400 thousand tomans and the total value is 800 million tomans. The meeting was held. They wished God good health and good prayers for the virtuous.





## Japan to Communicate Closely With S. Korea for Better Ties

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said he intended to communicate closely with South Korea's incoming government to help bring bilateral ties to an even keel.

Relations between Japan and South Korea have been plagued with a territorial row and the legacy of Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean peninsula.

Hayashi made the comment to reporters ahead of his trip to South Korea next week to attend the inauguration of President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol.



## Lebanese Expatriates Vote In Parliamentary Elections

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanese expatriates have begun casting their votes in Lebanon's parliamentary elections, almost three years into a crippling economic crisis that has decimated the Lebanese pound, sparked unprecedented inflation, and pushed thousands of people to leave the country. Lebanese expats living in 10 countries - including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, and Iraq - will vote on Friday, while the diaspora living in 48 other countries will vote on Sunday.

Lebanese citizens at home will vote on May 15.

A total of 244,442 Lebanese abroad have registered to cast their ballots in the election, more than double the number of expats who signed up to vote in the previous polls in 2018.



## Johnson Loses London Strongholds



LONDON (Dispatches) - British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party lost control of traditional strongholds in London and suffered setbacks elsewhere in local elections, with voters punishing his government over a series of scandals.

As early results suggested Johnson, a former London mayor, was losing support in southeastern England, his supporters moved in quickly on Friday to say it was not time to oust a leader they said could still "get things done" to help the economy.

Johnson's party was ousted in Wandsworth, a low-tax Conservative stronghold since 1978, part of a trend in the British capital where voters used the elections to express anger over a cost-of-living crisis and fines imposed on the prime minister for breaking his own COVID-19 lockdown rules.

For the first time, the opposition Labor Party won the council of Westminster, a district where most government institutions are located. The Conservatives also lost control of the borough of Barnet, which has been held by the party in all but two elections since 1964.

"Fantastic result, absolutely fantastic. Believe you me, this is a big turning point for us from the depths of 2019 general election," said Labour leader Keir Starmer.

Johnson, speaking in west London, said it had been a "tough night" in some parts of the country and his government had heard the demands from people for more help with the cost of living.

"We've had a tough night in some parts of the country, but on the other hand, in other parts of the country, you're still seeing Conservatives going forward and making quite remarkable gains," he told reporters.

"The big lesson that I take from this is that this is a message from voters that what they want us to do ... is focus on the big issues that matter to them: taking the country forward, making sure that we fix the post COVID economic aftershock."

The overall tally due later on Friday will offer the most important snapshot of public opinion since Johnson won the Conservative Party's biggest majority in more than 30 years in the 2019 national vote.

Johnson became the first British leader in living memory to have broken the law while in power when he was fined last month for attending a birthday gathering in his office in 2020, breaking pandemic social distancing rules then in place.

The loss of key councils in London, where the Conservatives were almost wiped out, will increase pressure on Johnson, who faces the possibility of more police fines over his attendance at other lockdown-breaking gatherings.

But with indications support for his party held up in areas of central and northern England that backed leaving the European Union in 2016, some Conservatives said Johnson's critics were unlikely to have the numbers to trigger a coup, for now.

The elections held on Thursday will decide almost 7,000 council seats, including all those in London, Scotland and Wales, and a third of the seats in most of the rest of England.

## Ukraine Says New Mariupol Evacuation Has Begun

KYIV (Dispatches) - (Reuters) - Ukraine said a new attempt had begun on Friday to evacuate scores of civilians trapped in a ruined steel works in the city of Mariupol, after bloody fighting with Russian forces thwarted efforts to bring them to safety the previous day.

Mariupol, a strategic southern port on the Azov Sea, has endured the most destructive siege of the 10-week-old war and the sprawling Soviet-era Azovstal steel plant is the last part of the city still in the hands of holdout Ukrainian fighters.

U.N.-brokered evacuations of some of the hundreds of civilians who had taken shelter in the plant's network of tunnels and bunkers began last weekend, but were halted in recent days by renewed fighting.

"The next stage of rescuing our people from Azovstal is under way at the moment. Information about the results will be provided later," said Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian presidential staff. He gave no more details.

Russia has turned its heaviest firepower on Ukraine's east and south, after failing to take the capital Kyiv in the early weeks following its Feb. 24 invasion. The new front is aimed at limiting Ukraine's access to the Black Sea,



vital for its grain and metals exports, and linking Russian-controlled territory in the east to the Crimea Peninsula, seized by Moscow in 2014.

Moscow calls its actions a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and rid it of anti-Russian nationalism fomented by the West. Ukraine and the West say Russia launched an unprovoked war of aggression. More than 5 million Ukrainians have fled abroad since the start of the invasion.

Ukraine's general staff said on Friday that Russian forces were continuing their "attempts to fully take over the Donetsk and Luhansk regions", areas in the east partially seized by Moscow-backed separatists in 2014.

Russia's defence ministry said it had destroyed a large ammunition depot in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk in a missile strike. It also said its air defenses shot down two Ukrainian warplanes in the Luhansk region.

It was not possible to independently verify either side's statements about events on the battlefield.

## National Strike in Sri Lanka to Demand Gov't Step Down

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka's bus and train networks ground to a halt while offices and factories were empty Friday in a nationwide strike demanding the government's resignation over the island's worsening economic crisis.

Months of blackouts and acute shortages of food, fuel and pharmaceuticals have seen widespread suffering across the South Asian island nation.

Public anger has sparked sustained protests demanding the government step down over its mismanagement of the crisis, Sri Lanka's worst since independence in 1948. Millions of workers stayed off the job on Friday in a strike organised by the country's trade union movement, with all but one scheduled train service cancelled. Privately owned buses were off the roads while industrial workers demonstrated outside their factories and black flags were hung across the country in an expression of anger against the government.

"We can pinpoint the policy blunders of the president that led to this very sorry state of our economy," said trade union leader Ravi Kumudesh.

"He must go."

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has insisted he will not step down despite escalating demonstrations across the island, including a protest that has been camped outside his seaford office for nearly a month.

Police fired tear gas on thousands of students attempting to storm the national parliament on Thursday evening after the assembly had adjourned for the day.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis took hold after the coronavirus pandemic hammered income from tourism and remittances.

Unable to pay for fuel imports, utilities have imposed daily blackouts to ration electricity, while long lines of people snake around service stations for petrol and kerosene.

Hospitals are short of vital medicines and the government has appealed to citizens abroad for donations. Last month Sri Lanka announced it was defaulting on its \$51 billion foreign debt, and finance minister Ali Sabry warned this week that the country will have to endure its unprecedented economic hardships for at least two more years.

## Taiwan Jets Scramble as China Air Force Enters Air Defense Zone

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's air force scrambled on Friday to warn away 18 Chinese aircraft that entered its air defense zone, Taiwan's defense ministry said, part of what is a regular pattern of incursions that has angered the government in Taipei.

Taiwan, claimed by China as its own territory, has complained of repeated such missions by Chinese aircraft, which have become a common occurrence over the past two years or so.

Taiwan is currently in a heightened state of alert due to fears China could use Russia's invasion of Ukraine to make a similar military move on the island, though Taipei's government has not reported any signs Beijing is about to attack.

The number of aircraft involved was well off the last large-scale incursion, 39 Chinese aircraft on Jan. 23, and since then, such fly-bys have been with far fewer aircraft.

The ministry said the latest mission included six Chinese J-11 and six J-16 fighters as well as two H-6 bombers.

There was no immediate comment from China's Defense Ministry. China has described previous such missions as to defend the country's sovereignty and to counter "collusion" with foreign forces - a veiled reference to U.S. support for Taiwan.

The bombers, accompanied by a Y-8 anti-submarine aircraft, flew to the south of Taiwan through the Bashi Channel which separates the island from the Philippines.

The other aircraft flew over an area to the northeast of the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands at the top end of the South China Sea, according to a ministry map.

Taiwanese fighters were sent up to warn the Chinese aircraft and air defense missiles were deployed to "monitor the activities", the ministry said, using standard wording for how Taiwan describes its response.

No shots have been fired and the Chinese aircraft have not been flying in Taiwan's air space, but in its Air Defense Identification Zone, a broader area Taiwan monitors and patrols that acts to give it more time to respond to any threats.

Japan this week reported eight Chinese naval vessels, including an aircraft carrier, passed between islands in Japan's southern Okinawa chain, to the northeast of Taiwan.

China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control, and the Taiwan Strait remains a potentially dangerous military flashpoint.



## Nicaragua Quietly Seeks To Re-Engage With U.S.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's son Laureano, an influential figure in the country's leftist government, has reached out quietly to the Biden administration in recent months seeking to re-engage with the United States, according to people familiar with the matter.

Laureano Ortega's overture comes as he, other family members and those in his father's inner circle face U.S. sanctions, and Managua's ally Russia is increasingly isolated by Washington and other Western powers over President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine.

The United States and Nicaragua have been at odds for years but relations took an especially hard hit when Daniel Ortega, 76, a former Marxist guerrilla, won a fourth consecutive term in November after jailing rivals and cracking down on critical media. U.S. President Joe Biden dismissed the election as a sham and imposed sanctions on more Nicaraguan officials.

Laureano Ortega, 40, one of the president's most politically powerful offspring, communicated via an unnamed third party that the Nicaraguan government was interested in restarting a high-level dialogue with the United States, two people in Washington familiar with the matter told Reuters on Thursday.

The New York Times first reported the outreach.

Laureano Ortega, an investment and trade adviser to his father, is believed to be seeking sanctions relief and may be willing to discuss releasing political prisoners in exchange, one of the sources said.

A senior U.S. official traveled secretly to Managua in March for a meeting with him, but the Ortegas decided not to go ahead with the talks, the source said.

However, the source added, the Biden administration has concluded that Nicaragua "at some point may be ready to have a real conversation," especially if it has to revise geopolitical calculations about its relationship with Russia.

Despite the contact, Nicaragua has been informed it will be excluded from the U.S.-hosted Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June, according to the source.





**Shanon**  
(adviser)

**Fereshteh Apt (\$2200)**  
200sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, Sauna  
J, balcony  
marble fl  
Fully Furn

**Niavaran Villa (\$5000)**  
1000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p  
S, J, balcony  
green yard  
Fully Furn

Parsian

**Kamranieh (\$2700) 300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden**  
**Gheitarieh (\$2000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden**  
**Zaferanieh (\$2500) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden**  
**Ajoudanieh (\$2200) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden**

**Jordan (\$1200) 2bdrs, F.F**  
**Jordan (\$1600) 3bdrs, F.F**  
**Jordan (\$2200) 4bdrs, F.F**

Cell: +989121907875  
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## Petrobras Posts \$9b Profit

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Brazil's Petrobras posted a first-quarter net income that beat forecasts on Thursday, just minutes after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro railed against the state-run oil company's profitability, saying its executives had no sympathy for ordinary people. In a securities filing, Petroleo Brasileiro SA (PETR4.SA), as the company is formally known, posted a quarterly net income of 44.56 billion reais (\$8.86 billion), above a Refinitiv consensus estimate of 43.5

billion reais and almost 40 times greater than the same quarter last year. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, or EBITDA, came in at 77.71 billion reais, slightly above the Refinitiv estimate of 76.3 billion reais. In comments accompanying the results, Petrobras attributed the profit jump to factors including high Brent crude oil prices, wider margins in its diesel business and reduced liquefied natural gas imports. It noted that its divestment program had slowed from the previous quarter.



## Turkish Inflation Climbs to Almost 70% in April

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's annual inflation rate rose more than expected to nearly 70% in April, a fresh 20-year high, official data showed, fuelled by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and rising energy and commodity prices.

The consumer price index (CPI) surged an annual 69.97% last month, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said, up from 61.1% in March. The annual consumer price inflation was forecast to be around 68%.

Month-on-month, consumer prices rose 7.25%, the institute said, compared to a Reuters poll forecast of 6%.

The surge in consumer prices was driven by a 105.9% leap in the transportation sector, which includes energy prices, and an 89.1% jump in food and non-alcoholic drinks prices, the data showed.

Month-on-month, food and non-alcoholic drink prices rose the most with 13.38% and house prices rose 7.43%.

The government has said inflation will fall under its new economic program, which prioritizes low interest rates to boost production and exports with the goal of achieving a current account surplus.

Inflation has continued to rise despite tax cuts on basic goods and government subsidies for some electricity bills to ease the burden on household budgets.

Last week the central bank forecast annual inflation will peak at around 70% by June before declining to near 43% by year-end and single digits by end-2024.

The central bank held its key policy rate steady at 14% in four meetings this year and said measures and policy steps will prioritize so-called liraization in the market.

The domestic producer price index climbed 7.67% month-on-month in April for an annual rise of 121.82%.

Meanwhile manufacturing activity in Turkey slowed down slightly more in April due to fragile demand, supply pressures and the impacts of the war in Ukraine, a closely watched survey showed on Thursday.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing declined to 49.2 in April from 49.4 in March, said a panel from the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO) and S&P Global.

The reading thus moved below the 50-point threshold that separates expansion from contraction for the second consecutive month.

Manufacturing production slowed for the fifth month running, albeit to a lesser extent than in March owing to a lack of demand, price pressures and the war in Ukraine.

Firms reported difficulties in securing new business leading to scaling back of output, the survey showed, mainly due to Turkish lira weakness and the Ukraine war.

A combination of rising prices and the war resulted in a slowdown in new export orders during April, the first time since January, the panel showed.

Input costs continued to increase markedly, according to the panel, which in turn reflected onto manufacturers' output prices.

## Japan to Use Nuclear to Cut Dependence on Russian Energy

LONDON (Dispatches) - Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that it would use nuclear reactors to help reduce its own and other countries' dependence on Russian energy.

Japan has become more reliant on Russian gas since shutting down nuclear reactors after the 2011 Fukushima disaster in which an earthquake and tsunami triggered a meltdown, devastating its north-eastern region.

But facing elections in July and rising energy prices that are squeezing voters' budgets, Kishida said nuclear would be part of the country's future energy policy.

He said Japan would address the "vulnerability of our own energy self-sufficiency" by broadening where it buys energy from, promoting renewables and using nuclear power to diversify its sources of generation.

"We will utilize nuclear reactors with safety assurances to contribute to worldwide reduction of dependence on Russian energy," Kishida told an audience in London's financial district.

"Restarting just one existing nuclear reactor would have the same effect as supplying 1 million tonnes of new LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) per year to the global market."

More than a decade after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami triggered the worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl, nuclear power remains a difficult issue in Japan, where only a handful of its 30-odd plants are currently operating.

But a majority of the public and businesses want the government to restart nuclear reactors to address energy security, with the Ukraine crisis and higher energy costs having added momentum to that shift in opinion.

Kishida addressed the City of London with the pro-investment messages: "Japan is a buy".

He said 150 trillion yen (\$1.16 trillion) in investment would be raised in the next decade to meet its goals of carbon neutrality by 2050 and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 46% by 2030.

He outlined a roadmap to 2030 focused on maximizing use of "pro-growth carbon pricing" and promotion of long-term projects.



## China's Trade Seen Faltering in April

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's export growth is expected to have slowed to a crawl in April as strict COVID-19 curbs hit production while imports likely extended declines, creating heavy headwinds for the world's second-largest economy in the second quarter.

The trade sector, which accounts for about a third of gross domestic product and employed 180 million people in 2020, is losing momentum as widening anti-virus curbs ensnared supply chains.

Exports likely grew 3.2% from a year earlier, according to a median forecast in a Reuters poll of 18 economists, slowing sharply from a 14.7% gain in March. The forecast is the slowest growth since June 2020.

The uncertainty over the Ukraine war and recovering production capacity overseas also squeezed China's share of global trade. The new export orders component of the official manufacturing purchasing managers' index hit a two-year low in April.

Imports were expected to have fallen 3% year-on-year in April, the poll showed, worsening from a 0.1% fall in March and marking the steepest decline since May 2020.

Sixteen economists in the poll forecast a \$50.65 billion trade surplus in April, wider than the \$47.38 billion in March, mostly due to the decline in imports.

The trade data will be released on Monday.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs said in a note on Friday that COVID related restrictions disrupted domestic supply chains and port operations in the month. Trading partners such as South Korea reported weaker trade data with China.

Data from the China Port Association showed throughput of foreign goods at eight major container ports in China declined 4.1% year-on-year in the April 11-20 period.

Premier Li Keqiang this week urged support for production, logistics and employment at key trade firms.

However, investors and markets want even more support as the country's leaders urge citizens to stick with the dynamic zero-COVID policy.

Chinese capital Beijing is reporting dozens of daily infections while Shanghai said on Friday it has brought the virus under control following a month-long lockdown of nearly 25 million people. Elsewhere, some Chinese cities now require PCR test results from people in order to enter public places.

Nomura analysts estimate that it would cost 1.8% of China's GDP if 70% of the 814 million population came under a 48-hour testing mandate.

## U.S. Fed Raises Interest Rates to Tackle Inflation



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The U.S. Federal Reserve raised its benchmark short-term interest rate by a half-percentage point, the most aggressive of its kind since 2000, to tackle the worst inflation in four decades.

The increase in the Fed's key rate raised it to a range of 0.75% to 1%, the highest point since the pandemic struck two years ago.

The Fed also announced that it will start reducing its huge \$9 trillion balance sheet, which consists mainly of Treasury and mortgage bonds. Those holdings more than doubled after the pandemic recession hit as the Fed bought trillions in bonds to try to hold down long-term borrowing rates. Reducing the Fed's holdings will have the effect of further raising loan costs throughout the economy.

All told, the Fed's credit tightening will likely mean higher loan rates for many consumers and businesses over time, including for mortgages, credit cards and auto loans. With prices for food, energy and consumer goods accelerating, the Fed's goal is to cool spending — and economic growth — by making it more expensive for individuals and businesses to borrow. The central bank hopes that higher borrowing costs will slow spending enough to tame inflation yet not so much as to cause a recession.

It will be a delicate balancing act. The Fed has endured widespread criticism that it was too slow to start tightening credit, and many economists are skeptical that it can avoid causing a recession.

Inflation, according to the Fed's preferred gauge, reached 6.6% last month, the highest point in four decades. Inflation has been accelerated by a combination of robust consumer spending, chronic supply bottlenecks and sharply higher gas and food prices, exacerbated by Russia's war against Ukraine.

Starting June 1, the Fed said it would allow up to \$48 billion in bonds to mature without replacing them, a pace that would reach \$95 billion by September. At September's pace, its balance sheet would shrink by about \$1 trillion a year.

## Norway Keeps Rates on Hold, Remains on Track for June Hike

OSLO (Dispatches) - Norway's central bank kept interest rates on hold as widely expected and restated its plan to raise the cost of borrowing in June amid rapidly rising inflation.

Norges Bank's monetary policy committee unanimously agreed to keep the rate steady at 0.75%, as predicted by a Reuters poll of economists.

"Based on the committee's current assessment of the outlook and balance of risks, the policy rate will most likely be raised in June," Governor Ida Wolden Bache said in a statement.

Norges Bank in March raised rates for the third time since September and said it aims to hike three more times this year and a further four times in 2023, which would lift the benchmark rate to 2.5% by the end of next year. For June, it pencilled in a hike to 1.0%.

The crown currency weakened to 9.84 against the euro at 0835 GMT from 9.79 just before Norges Bank's announcement. Norges Bank noted it had discussed the potential impact of the war in Ukraine on the Norwegian economy and how there was "substantial uncertainty" around it. It also discussed the risk global inflation will accelerate further even as growth slows.

The bank was also "concerned" about the risk of faster price and wage inflation in Norway.

"If there are prospects of persistently high inflation, the policy rate may be raised more quickly than indicated by the policy rate forecast in the March Report," it said. The U.S. Federal Reserve on Wednesday raised its benchmark overnight interest rate by half a percentage point, the biggest jump in 22 years, to try to rein in inflation.

## German Exports Dive More Than Expected

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German exports dropped more than expected in March, official data showed Wednesday, as outgoing trade with Russia tumbled in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine.

Exports dropped by 3.3% on the previous month to a value of 120.6 billion euros (\$126.8 billion), the Federal Statistical Office said, having risen by a revised figure of 6.2% in February.

A Reuters poll had predicted a month-over-month fall in exports of 2%.

Sales to Russia plunged by 62.3% in March compared with February to 0.9 billion euros partly because of sanctions imposed as a result of the war in Ukraine, the office said in a statement.

A wave of companies shut their operations and halted exports to Russia, with which German business has traditionally maintained strong business ties.

Following the invasion, Russia dropped to 26th place among Germany's export partners, having sat in the 15th spot just a month ago.

In addition to direct losses in business with Russia and Ukraine, economists believe that worsening supply bottlenecks and shortages of intermediate products are likely to have a braking effect on the economy.

Meanwhile, exports to China, among Germany's most important trading partners, suffered a considerable 4.3% drop, as the Asian giant managed a series of punishing lockdowns as it battles to control the spread of the coronavirus.

The release was the "first hard data on the economic impact from the war in Ukraine," said Carsten Brzeski, head of macro at the ING bank, adding that the outlook for exports "doesn't look encouraging."

New lockdowns in China and the aggravation of supply bottlenecks caused by the war in Ukraine "will leave significant marks on German industry," Brzeski said.

Overall, exports to non-European Union countries were down by 5.1%, while inside the bloc the figure fell by 1.7%.

At the same time, imports to Germany rose by 3.4% on the previous month, up to a value of 117.4 billion euros.

Germany had a seasonally adjusted trade surplus of 3.2 billion euros, the office reported, versus a forecast of 9.8 billion euros.

Year-over-year, export growth eased to 8.1% from 14.5% in February. Likewise, imports rose 20.1%, following February's 25% increase.



## COVID-19 kills 8 More Iranians Over Past 24 Hours

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The number of deaths from the coronavirus pandemic in Iran increased to 141,165 with eight more Iranians killed by the deadly disease over the past 24 hours, Iran's Health Ministry announced on Saturday.

Some eight more Iranians have died from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours bringing the total

deaths to 141,165, Iran's Health Ministry said on Saturday.

270 new cases of infection with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, 63 of whom were hospitalized, it said.

The Iranian Health Ministry noted that 7,002,258 patients out of a total of 7,224,701 infected people have recovered or been discharged from hospitals.



## Online Media Fuelling Divisions, Global Tensions

LONDON (AFP) - Unregulated online content has spread disinformation and propaganda that have amplified political divisions worldwide, fanned international tensions and even contributed to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a media watchdog warned.

Reporters Without Borders said democratic societies are increasingly fractured by social media spreading disinformation and more opinion media pursuing a so-called "Fox News model", referring to the controversial right-wing television network in the United States.

At the same time, despotic and autocratic regimes that tightly control information in their societies are using their "asymmetric" position to wage "propaganda wars" against democracies and fuel divisions within them, the watchdog said in the 2022 edition of its annual World Press Freedom Index.

"Polarization on these two levels is fuelling increased tension," Reporters Without Borders, widely known by its French acronym RSF, said in a five-page summary.

It noted Russia, where state-run media overwhelmingly dominate and independent outlets are increasingly stifled, invaded Ukraine following a propaganda war.

"The creation of media weaponry in authoritarian countries eliminates their citizens' right to information but is also linked to the rise in international tension, which can lead to the worst kind of wars," RSF Secretary-General Christophe Deloire said.

He added the "Fox News-isation" of Western media also poses a "fatal danger for democracies because it undermines the basis of civil harmony and tolerant public debate".

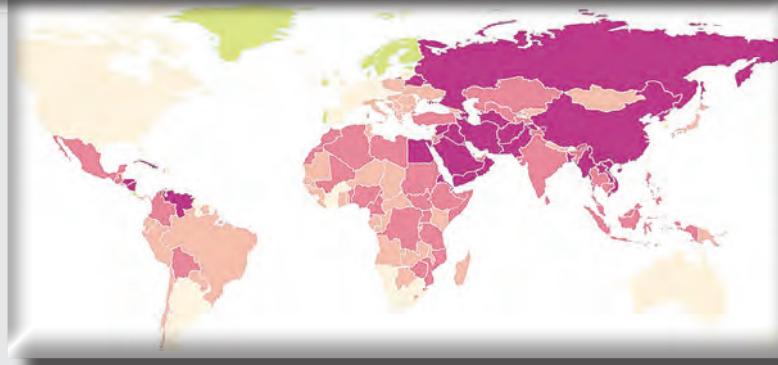
Deloire urged countries to adopt appropriate legal frameworks to protect democratic online information spaces.

The situation is "very bad" in a record 28 countries, according to this year's ranking of 180 countries and regions based on the degree of freedom enjoyed by journalists.

The lowest ranked were North Korea (180th), Eritrea (179th) with Myanmar (176th) and China (175th) close behind.

Russia (155th) and ally Belarus (153rd) were also on its red list of the most repressive.

Hong Kong's position plummeted dozens of places to 148th, reflecting Beijing's



efforts to use "its legislative arsenal to confine its population and cut it off from the rest of the world", RSF said.

Nordic countries Norway, Denmark and Sweden again topped the index, serving as a democratic models "where freedom of expression flourishes".

The NGO commended Moldova (40th) and Bulgaria (91st) this year due to government changes and "the hope it has brought for improvement in the situation for journalists".

But it noted "oligarchs still own or control the media" in both.

Media polarization was "feeding and reinforcing internal social divisions in democratic societies" such as the United States (42nd).

That trend was even starker in "illiberal democracies" such as Poland (66th), a European Union country where suppression of independent media was also noted by RSF.

The NGO, launched in 1985 and which has published the yearly index since 2002, has become a thorn in the side of autocratic and despotic regimes around the world.

This year's listing was developed with a new methodology redefining press freedom and using five new indicators -- political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context, and security -- to reflect its "complexity".

## Turkey's Foreign Arrivals Leap But Outlook Still Uncertain Over Ukraine War



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey is seeing a significant rebound in its crucial industry as foreign arrivals continue to gain pace and income continues to surge, as traces of the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic continue to fade.

Still, Moscow's invasion of Ukraine is expected to impact the arrivals from Turkey's top tourist sources, just as the sector continued to recover from the impact of measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 since 2020.

The number of foreign visitors arriving in Turkey jumped over 151% from January through March from a year earlier to around 4.9 million, data showed last week.

The figure well topped around 1.95 million arrivals in the January-March of last year and 4.24 million in 2020.

The arrivals still came in below 5.44 million foreign tourists who had arrived in the first quarter of 2019 prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

Combined with Turkish citizens residing abroad, arrivals in the January-March quarter reached 6.3 million, Culture and Tourism Ministry said Friday, a 148.1% year-over-year increase.

Foreign arrivals in March leaped by 129.7% to nearly 2.1 million, the data showed.

Iranians topped the list among nations with a share of 13.22%, followed by Germans with a 9% share and Bulgaria with 8.2%.

Arrivals from Russia dipped 48% year-over-year to 114,384. In contrast, the number of Ukrainians arriving in Turkey jumped nearly 30% to 66,233, the data showed.

Tourists coming in from the U.K., another crucial market for Turkey, boomed by 947% on annual basis in March to 87,349.

Russian banks have been isolated from the global financial system after payment firms suspended their operations over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Yet, Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati this week said holidaymakers arriving from Russia will not face difficulties in making payments in Turkey, as the Russian payment system continues to grow in the country.

Turkey is one of the few countries still operating direct flights with Russia.

Russians and Ukrainians were the country's first and third biggest sources of visitors, respectively, in 2021. Russians accounted for 19% of foreign visitors, with 4.7 million people, while Ukraine was the third-largest at 8.3% with 2.1 million people.

Officials had hoped that with pandemic restrictions easing, tourism could replicate or exceed the numbers from 2019 when some 52 million visitors -- including about 7 million Russians and 1.6 million Ukrainians -- brought \$34 billion (TL 504.83 billion) in revenue.

## WHO Warns of Obesity Epidemic in Europe

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The WHO said that "epidemic" overweight and obesity rates are linked to over 1.2 million deaths annually across Europe, calling for swift policy changes to reverse the dangerous trend.

Obesity rates in the region have ballooned by 138 percent in the past five decades, the World Health Organization said in a new report, and are linked to a series of cancers and cardiovascular diseases.

Nearly a quarter of adults are now obese in Europe, higher than in any other region except the Americas, the WHO said. "Overweight and obesity rates have reached epidemic proportions across the region and are still escalating," the health body's European office said.

"Raised body mass index is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases, including cancers and cardiovascular diseases," WHO regional director Hans Kluge was quoted saying in the report.

Obesity causes at least 13 different types of cancer and is likely responsible for at least 200,000 new cases of cancer per year, it said. "This figure is set to rise further in the coming years," the organization said in the new report.

## Kabul Denies...

FROM PAGE 1

"There is no need for us to bring wheat from a neighboring country. We import it legally to the country," he said.

This comes amid a drought in Afghanistan and a predicted drop in crop yield.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that imports of wheat will increase from the Central Asia nations to meet the demands in the market.

According to the ACCI, more than 10,000 tons of wheat are imported on a daily basis through Aqina and Hairatan ports.

"The traders and investors have made preparations

and we will purchase 95 to 99 percent of our wheat from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia," said Khanjan Alokozai, a member of the ACCI.

Russia and Ukraine are considered the main producers of wheat in the world. Economists believe that the ongoing tensions between the two countries will severely affect the price of wheat in the world.

Based on available figures, Afghanistan produces between four to five million tons of wheat annually, but last year the products dropped by one million tons, and a further drop in wheat is expected in the country this year as well.

## Iran Exported...

FROM PAGE 1

Lucrative exports of gasoline from Iran over the past few years came when the country's oil and gas sector was grappling with a new round of American sanctions.

Demand for gasoline dropped to historic lows in Iran in late 2019 when the country imposed price hikes and quotas to battle the economic impacts of the sanctions.

Recent government figures suggest demand for gasoline has bounced back to above 100 million liters per day amid more easing of coronavirus restrictions in Iran.

## EU Makes...

FROM PAGE 1

U.S. President Joe Biden promised to rejoin the deal if Iran fell back into compliance with it, and the EU spent months brokering indirect talks between Washington and Tehran in Vienna.

Western officials insist an agreement is ready to be signed. But there have been no negotiations in Vienna since March. Tehran repeatedly says it is ready to sign if Washington meets its demands.

Analysts said the Biden administration was reluctant to lift the guards' designation because it would face a backlash domestically, as well as from U.S. allies in the Middle East.

"At a certain moment, I will have to say, as co-ordinator [of the Vienna talks] I make this proposal on the table, formally... the only equilibrium point possible would be this one," Borrell said. "We cannot continue like this forever, because in the meantime Iran continues developing their nuclear program."

He added that "the file is on the table of President Biden himself, my discussions with [Antony] Blinken have reached the limit".

A senior U.S. administration official said Washington did not agree with Iran that the terrorist designation should be linked to the nuclear talks.

"If it matters to the Iranians that we lift it, we are going to need something that addresses our non-nuclear concerns in exchange," the official said. "If Iran insists the designation has to be lifted and rejects all of the ideas that we put forward, there will be a collapse of the talks."

However, in a sign of the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the talks, Borrell said negotiators would not give Iran an ultimatum. Analysts say they are wary about sparking a separate crisis with Iran, and keen to secure a deal that will enable Tehran to ramp up its oil exports to help stem rising energy prices and replace Russian crude.

Borrell said the U.S. and Iran wanted a deal. "We Europeans will be very much beneficiaries from this deal, the situation has changed now. For us it was something... 'well we don't need it', now it would be very much interesting for us to have another [crude] supplier," he added. "And the Americans need a diplomatic success."

## Sweden More...

FROM PAGE 1

Shocking footage of Nouri's family being harassed by anti-Iran dissidents has deepened Iranian outrage at the Swedish authorities handling of the case.

Nouri's family have been in and out of court all week. Every time they arrive supporters of a notorious anti-Iranian terror group, the Peoples Mujahedinof Iran, or MKO, harass and threaten them.

The Swedish authorities are slow to respond.

This is not the first time the Western countries and especially Europeans are resorting to such dramatic accusations and trials to paint a negative picture of the Islamic Republic of Iran while those countries are first better to have a look at their own pictures and records regarding justice and human rights.

Sweden for years has turned into a haven for terrorists especially anti-Iran terrorist groups. The country claims of defending human rights and freedom of speech but it cannot stand anything pro-Islam remarks but when it comes to blasphemy against Islam, Swedish officials defend it as freedom of expression.

This country in recent weeks has been the scene of the violent clashes which have been ignited by blasphemy of anti-Islam groups. Swedish officials have emboldened anti-Islamist groups and radicals although they claim of equality.

Now they have arrested Mr. Nouri and putting him on trial based on charges of MKO group members who have been the worst criminal group in Iran as they have killed many innocent people through bomb blast under pretext of fighting with the establishment and they need to be brought to justice and it seems the place of plaintiff and defendant has been reverse.

Sweden or any European country should realize this fact that they cannot stop the Islamic Republic of Iran achieving progress and its ideals and such accusations and trials are good just for entertaining the opposition groups and media. If Swedish judiciary is right, it is better to bring to the justice those who were behind recent blasphemy in Sweden and burning the Holy Quran which led to the unrests and violence.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will defend the rights of its national with strong determination and will not let the so-called pro human rights countries to label Iranian nationals with false accusations.

Sweden is also recommended to stop continuing its belligerent approach towards the Islamic Republic and not to turn into a dreamy haven for terrorist groups for implementing their ill intentions, and release of Mr. Nouri will be a major and sincere step for a better relation with Tehran. The way currently Sweden judiciary and even statesmen have behaved reminds us of this saying that they are more Catholic than Pope as they trust the words of the terrorists than reliable sources.

## Indian Tea...

FROM PAGE 1

As per data available with the department of commerce the value of tea exports has slipped from \$785 million in 2017-18 to \$700 million in 2020-21.

"Everyone has a working capital problem. We can't keep exporting without payments or clarity from the government. Exporters have already taken a hit in Russia, one of our largest markets.

The U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) had imposed sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program for the past several years but it started hurting us from 2019 onwards when product-specific sanctions were imposed that dried up the vostro account. We have already lost Pakistan, a reliable tea importer due to worsening bilateral relations," the official said.

A commerce ministry official also said that ever since product-specific sanctions were imposed by the U.S., the vostro account has dried up and there is no money against which Indian exporters can get paid.

"As long as sanctions are in place, trade is not possible. But I have a suspicion that a lot of third party transactions are going on. A lot of Iranian products may be being routed through Iraq to other countries. Dubai-based merchants could be involved too," the ministry official said.

Sri Lanka is the world's largest tea exporter: data collated by the Tea Board of India showed that in 2019, the island nation exported tea worth \$75 million to Iran and \$132 million to Russia. Indian exporters are also receiving queries from other major export markets such as Turkey, Iraq and China.

Sri Lanka has seen a sharp decline in tea production amid 12-14 hour long power cuts after the economic crisis hit the indebted nation, which has announced a default on all of its external debt worth \$51 billion.

Indian tea exporters are also looking for more opportunities in the U.S., Canada, Iraq, Germany and China some of which are untapped markets with tremendous potential.

Turkey could be a new market for Indian tea but a high import tariff is an impediment.





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## Jacobs Makes 100m Return In Nairobi Sprint Field

**NAIROBI (Dispatches)** - Olympic champion Lamont Marcell Jacobs runs his first 100 meters since his shock win at the Tokyo Games last year in the Kip Keino Classic meet in the Kenyan capital. Jacobs and silver medallist Fred Kerley will go head-to-head for the first time since the Olympics. Their clash comes six weeks since Jacobs stormed to victory to take the world indoor 60m gold in Belgrade when the Italian chased down the American world 100m champion Christian Coleman in the final.

## Mickelson Had \$40m in Gambling Losses in 4 Years

**LOS ANGELES (Dispatches)** - U.S. federal auditors probing Phil Mickelson's role in an insider trading case found he had gambling losses of more than \$40 million from 2010 to 2014, according to an excerpt from Alan Shipnuck's forthcoming biography of the U.S. golfer. Shipnuck posted the excerpt from the unauthorized biography on the Firepit Collective website on Thursday. The book, "Phil: The Rip-Roaring (and Unauthorized!) Biography of Golf's Most Colorful Superstar," is due to be released on May 17.

# Heat Blow Past 76ers For 2-0 Series Lead

**MIAMI (Dispatches)** - Bam Adebayo scored 23 points, Jimmy Butler had 22 points and 12 assists, and the Miami Heat beat the Philadelphia 76ers 119-103 for a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

Victor Oladipo scored 19 points on his 30th birthday and Tyler Herro added 18 for the Heat, the East's No. 1 seed. Oladipo had 10 of those points in the fourth quarter.

Tyrese Maxey scored 34 points for Philadelphia, which got 21 from Tobias Harris and 20 from James Harden.

A 10-0 run in the fourth turned an eight-point Miami lead into an 18-point edge, sealing the win and ensuring the Heat would hold home court before the series shifts north. Game 3 is Friday in Philadelphia.

And now, the Heat will hope history holds - and the 76ers will hope it doesn't.

Miami has taken a 2-0 lead in 18 previous series, including the first round this season against Atlanta, and won the matchup every time. The 76ers' franchise has dropped the first two games of a matchup on 19 other occasions, never recovering to win the series.

The question going into tonight will revolve around whether Philadelphia's Joel Embiid could be ready for Game 3. The league's scoring champion and MVP finalist has, not surprisingly, been big-time missed by the 76ers.

"We don't have a big man right now," Philadelphia Coach Doc Rivers lamented.

Adebayo surely isn't complaining. He was 8 for 10 from the field and 8 for 8 from the line in Game 1; he followed that up with a 7-for-11 night from the floor on Wednesday.

It wasn't just the absence of Embiid, though, that hurt Philadelphia. The 76ers were awful again from 3-point range, shooting 8 for 30.

Meanwhile Golden State Coach Steve Kerr accused Grizzlies forward Dillon Brooks of breaking "the code" after he injured Gary Payton II by attacking him from behind as the Warriors guard attempted a layup Wednesday night during Game 2 of the Western Conference semifinals.



Payton suffered a fracture to his left elbow and was scheduled to undergo an MRI today to determine the severity of the injury, the Warriors said after the Grizzlies beat them 106-101 in what was the most intense and physical battles of the post-season so far.

Early into the first quarter, Brooks wound up and hit Payton in the head as the guard soared through the air. The contact caused Payton to crash onto his left (shooting) arm.

As Payton laid on the court in severe pain, the Warriors were fuming and demanded the officials take another look at the play. Stephen Curry went over to check on Payton.

"GP's tough so when you see him in pain like that, you know that it's not something light," Curry said after the game. "So it's a tough situation."

Brooks ultimately was assessed a Flagrant 2 foul and ejected. Payton split a pair of free throws before exiting the game with 9:08 left in the opening quarter and heading to the locker room. He underwent an X-ray, which confirmed the fracture, and never returned.

Kerr wasn't sure if it was intentional, but said he thought it was a dirty play.



## Arteta Signs New Contract at Arsenal

**LONDON (Dispatches)** - Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has signed a new three-year contract that will keep him at the Emirates until 2025.

The 40-year-old took over at the Emirates Stadium in December 2019 following the dismissal of Unai Emery.

The Spaniard is close to taking the Gunners back into the Champions League after a five-year absence, with the side currently fourth in the Premier League as the season enters its final stages.

"I'm excited, grateful and really, really happy today," Arteta said.

"When I spoke to Josh (Kroenke, son of owner Stan Kroenke) he could see the club at the same point and he wanted to take the club the way I wanted to do it. So everything that he's said, and that Stan has said when I've been together with both of them, they've always delivered.

"We want to take the club to the next level and to compete really with the top teams. In order to do that, we have to be playing in the Champions League.

## Nadal Into Madrid Quarters

**MADRID (Dispatches)** - Rafael Nadal said he drew inspiration from Real Madrid's heroic comeback against Manchester City less than 24 hours previously as he survived a scare from David Goffin, saving four match points en route to a tight 6-3, 5-7, 7-6 (11/9) victory in the Madrid Open.

The win kept alive Nadal's quest for a record-extending sixth title in the Spanish capital and earned him a spot in the quarter-finals, where he faces his compatriot Carlos Alcaraz.

Seventh seed Alcaraz celebrated his 19th birthday with a battling 6-4, 6-7(4/7), 6-3 over British world number 11 Cameron Norrie.

On Wednesday, Real scored in extra time to stun City 3-1 to set up a Champions League final with Liverpool later this month.

Nadal, a 21-time major champion, was contesting just his second match after a six-week break due to a rib injury and rebounded from tricky moments during his showdown with Goffin, who has a career-high ranking of seventh but is currently down to 60 in the world. Nadal had to recover from an early break before clinching a 46-minute opening set.

The Spanish third seed held two match points and served for the second set but was stretched to a third by Goffin.

In the deciding-set tie-break, Nadal saved four match points, hitting clutch drop shots on two of them, before he finally moved into a record-extending 99th ATP Masters 1000 quarter-final and his 16th in Madrid.

"Wednesday has been an unforgettable night. The spirit that the Real Madrid team have is just incredible and for me today in some way has been an inspiration," said the 35-year-old, who attended the game at the Santiago Bernabeu.

## Chile Calls for FIFA Ruling On Ecuador Player

**SANTIAGO (Dispatches)** - The Chilean Football Federation asked FIFA to rule on the eligibility of an Ecuador player, alleging he used a false passport and birth certificate and throwing into question the Andean side's participation in this year's World Cup.

Chile said it had proof that Barcelona of Guayaquil full back Byron Castillo was born in Tumaco, Colombia, in 1995 and not in the Ecuadorean city of General Villamil Playas in 1998 as stated on his official papers.

# Vettel Mulls Life After F1



**MIAMI (Dispatches)** - Sebastian Vettel isn't prepared to settle for second best as he contemplates the final chapter of his storied career.

The German legend, speaking to AFP ahead of this weekend's Miami Grand Prix, is contemplating his future, with his Aston Martin car failing to challenge the likes of Ferrari and former team Red Bull

after a disappointing start to the 2022 campaign.

Four-time world champion Vettel last won a race in Singapore in 2019 and has just four points after missing the first two races of this season after contracting Covid-19.

He didn't finish in Australia but came eighth in Imola two weeks ago.

Vettel, who joined Aston Martin in 2021, has a deal which expires at the end of the

current campaign and with the 34-year-old taking an ever increasing interest in environmental and social issues, life after racing is being considered.

The Aston Martin racer, however, isn't prone to panic and certainly won't worry about what lies ahead, both on and off the track.

"I'm interested in winning," Vettel told AFP.

"I haven't made a decision yet about my future, but I have been spoiled because I was at the front and I know how it is, and it feels amazing.

"As a team, it's not a secret, we wanted to be at the front, but are now at the back. We're working very, very hard.

"It's just at the back of the field, you have no reward.

"I didn't mind when I started but finishing outside of the top 10 isn't what I am here for. I want to win."

Vettel, speaking at Aston Martin Residences in downtown Miami, smiles awkwardly when asked what he expects his legacy will be.

## Asian Games Postponed as China Battles Covid

**BEIJING (Dispatches)** - The Asian Games due to take place in Hangzhou in September have been postponed indefinitely, organisers said Friday, as China battles a resurgence of Covid cases.

No reason was given for the delay, but China is racing to extinguish its largest outbreak of Covid-19 since the early days of the pandemic.

"The Olympic Council of Asia has announced that the 19th Asian Games, originally scheduled to be held in Hangzhou, China from September 10 to 25, 2022, will be postponed," said a statement on the official Games website, first posted on Chinese state media.

The new dates for the sporting contest "will be announced at a later date", the statement added.

The host city of Hangzhou lies less than 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the country's biggest city, Shanghai, which has endured a weeks-long lockdown as part of the ruling Communist Party's zero-tolerance approach to the virus.

Organizers said last month that Hangzhou, a city of 12 million in eastern China, had finished constructing some 56 competition venues for the Asian Games and Asian Para Games.

At the time, they indicated that they planned to hold the events under a virus control plan that "learns from the successful experience" of the Beijing Winter Olympics, which were held in February in a strict Covid-secure bubble.

Hangzhou was poised to become the third city in China to host the continental competition after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010. Some events were due to be held in other provincial cities including Ningbo, Wenzhou, Huzhou, Shaoxing and Jinhua.

Almost all international sport has grind to a halt in China since Covid emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.



## Ratcliffe Still Pursuing Chelsea Bid Despite Rejection

**LONDON (Dispatches)** - British businessman Jim Ratcliffe remains interested in buying Chelsea despite having his late bid for the London club dismissed, according to a director of his petrochemicals company Ineos.

Ratcliffe, reportedly Britain's richest man, revealed he was putting forward an offer for the Blues totalling £4.25 billion.

Of those funds, £1.75 billion of investment would go into the Chelsea squad and stadium redevelopment over the next 10 years, while a further £2.5 billion would be committed to a charitable trust to support victims of the war in Ukraine.

However, Ratcliffe's offer came weeks after the deadline for interested parties to submit their bids to American bank Raine, who are overseeing the sale process.

The 69-year-old explored a potential bid for Chelsea in 2019, but instead purchased French club Nice.

Ineos also owns Swiss side FC Lausanne, the former Team Sky cycling franchise and sponsors Formula One constructors' world champions Mercedes.

Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich put the club up for sale on March 2 before being sanctioned the following week by the British government over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We've been rejected out of hand by Raine, but we will keep reminding people we are still here," Ineos director Tom Crotty told Bloomberg on Wednesday.

The bid fronted by Los Angeles Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly has received preferred bidder status from Raine.

Boehly has united with fellow Dodgers co-owner Mark Walter, British businessman Jonathan Goldstein, Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss and US investment firm Clearlake Capital.

