

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **141,274** With **3** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

# IRAN NEWS

Commander of the Army's Air Force Says They Have Managed to Restore an F-14 Fighter Jet, which Was Grounded for 18 Years, Using The Assistance of Domestic Experts And Knowledge-Based Companies

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Warriors Storm Back to Take 2-0 Lead in Western Conference Finals



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## Iran, Oman Agree to Revive Gas Supply Deal

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran and Oman have agreed to revive a gas supply deal that dates back to two decades ago, according to a report.

The Saturday report by IRNA said that Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji and his Omani counterpart Mohammed Al Rumhi had agreed in a meeting to start the construction of a gas pipeline that will allow exports of Iranian natural gas to the Arab Sultanate.

The report did not elaborate on further details. Iranian Oil Ministry's news service Shana said that Owji and Rumhi had discussed energy cooperation as well as joint projects between Iran and Oman during the meeting held earlier in the day in the Omani capital Muscat.

The idea for a subsea gas pipeline between Iran and Oman was first raised in 2005 when Iran committed as part of contract to start supplying 30 million cubic meters (mcm) per day of natural gas to Oman by 2008 and then increase the exports to 70 mcm per day by 2012.

Another agreement in 2013 stipulated that Iran should provide Oman with 28 mcm per day of gas over 15 years.

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## Borrell Warns of More Delay in Vienna Talks

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - European Union Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell has warned of more delay in resuming the Vienna talks over the revival of the Iran nuclear deal.

Borrell said in a tweet that he spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on the phone over urgent bilateral issues.

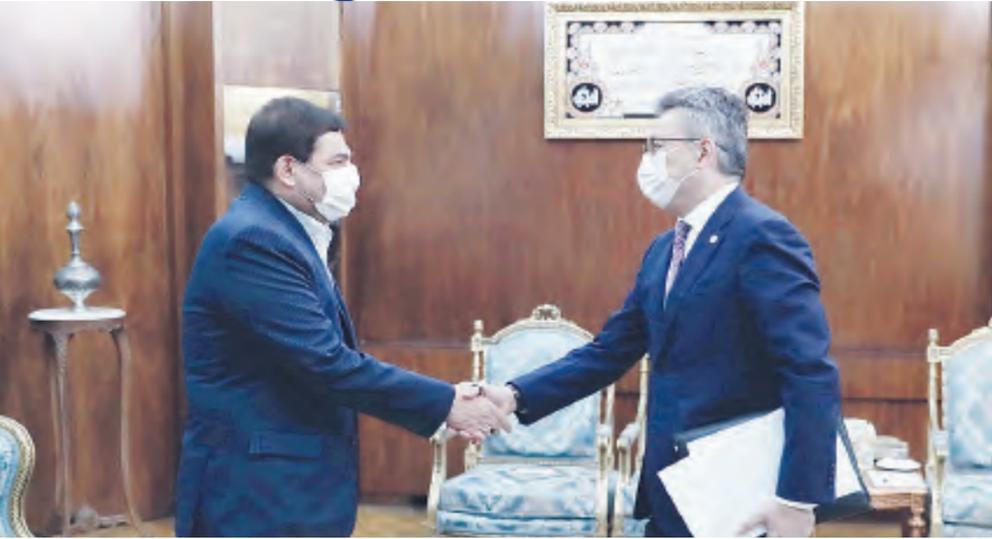
Borrell referred to the pause in the Vienna talks, saying it's important to get going. He warned, "The More we wait, the more difficult it will be to conclude negotiations".

Borrell and Amir Abdollahian spoke over the JCPOA on Friday. The Iranian Foreign Ministry quoted Amir Abdollahian as pointing to Iran's seriousness about reaching a strong and lasting deal in Vienna.

He said Tehran has the goodwill and necessary determination to reach an agreement.

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## Iran, Kazakhstan Seek Boosting Economic Ties



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber in a meeting with Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister said that the two countries of Iran and Kazakhstan have the potential to become the region's hub for food security and transportation.

Mokhber on Sunday held a meeting with the visiting Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan Bakhyt Sultanov.

Emphasizing the need for removing the existing obstacles and barriers to deepening cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Kazakhstan, Mokhber stated, "Mutual cooperation and cooperation between the private sector and businesspersons of Iran and Kazakhstan can play a key role in increasing the volume of trade and economic relations."

Iran's Vice President stressed the need for developing Iran-Kazakhstan's relations in the fields of banking, transportation, and overseas cultivation, saying that the two countries have the potential to become regional hubs in terms of food security and transportation.

"The expansion of customs cooperation and the increase in exports and imports between the two countries can be a good starting point to achieve this goal and long-term relations," he added.

He also called on opening trade fairs and introducing Iranian and Kazakh achievements and products with the aim of expanding cooperation between the private sector and businesspersons of the two countries.

Bakhyt Sultanov, for his part, stated, "The expansion of political and economic relations, as well as the significant increase in trade volume in the first quarter of this year between the governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kazakhstan, show that the goals and strategies of the two countries overlap."

"We hope that during the official visit of the President of Kazakhstan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the good decisions made in the past few months will be implemented in the form of joint cooperation agreements," he added.

The Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister also expressed his country's readiness to hold exhibitions as well as trade and economic meetings between economic activists of the two countries.

Referring to the importance of expanding Iran-Kazakhstan transportation cooperation, he stated that good negotiations have taken place on the development of rail, road and air cooperation, adding that achieving these goals could make Iran and Kazakhstan two important regional actors.

Bakhyt Sultanov, heading a delegation, arrived in Tehran on Saturday for a two-day visit.

He is set to hold several meetings with high-ranking Iranian officials to discuss a variety of issues of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Iran.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

### Don't Ply With Lion's Tail

The Islamic Republic of Iran in its fifth decade of existence is stronger than any time and it is able to give due responses to any bully or threat from any tiny or big enemy and it has warned that it does not kid anyone.

On May 20, Israel's Channel 13, reported that the U.S. had agreed to participate in Israel's large-scale drill simulating a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities later this month. The Times of Israel noted that report was unourced, but according to Axios, Israeli officials "confirmed that there will be U.S. participation," although the Pentagon did not respond to Axios' request for comment immediately.

If the report turns out to be true, it will mark the first time that U.S. refueling planes take part in such an exercise with Israeli fighter jets. This suggests that Biden is moving further than any U.S. president in signaling approval for Israel to start war with Iran, despite his promise to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal, a multilateral agreement that prevented both an Iranian bomb and a region-wide war with Iran.

Reacting indirectly to this report, a top Iranian army commander said the country has managed to reach such levels of power and dominance that it will not hesitate to give the "harsh response" to even the slightest threats.

"Wherever the interests of the Islamic [Republic] are in danger, we stand firm and defend our interests," the Iranian army's deputy chief for coordination Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said on Saturday.

The veteran commander noted that faith and unity are among the key factors behind the Iranian nation's victory over the nefarious designs of enemies, warning them of the "harsh response" should they dare make the slightest threat against the country.

Sayyari emphasized that safeguarding territorial integrity, playing an active role in the international arena, strengthening national security and deterrent power, and maintaining full readiness of the armed forces were among the achievements of the Islamic Revolution.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the admiral pointed to the presence of the Iranian Navy in international waters and said the country's naval forces have succeeded in escorting and protecting almost 5,000 oil tankers and commercial ships since 2008.

The Iranian Navy, he said, has also thwarted numerous pirate attacks to secure the safe passage of the ships in Iran's territorial waters.

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## Iran Not to Keep Oil Projects Waiting for Foreign Companies

TEHRAN (IRNA)- The CEO of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said that Iran wouldn't keep oil projects waiting for foreign companies, as President Ebrahim Raisi's administration has restored one million bpd production lost in recent years.

Mohsen Khojasteh-mehr said that Iran produced 3.838 million bpd before the United States pulled out of the nuclear deal in 2018 and had to make investments to keep producing oil wells from going offline in order to maintain the production capacity.

Iran lost one million bpd of its oil production, the CEO said, but President Raisi's administration managed to revive the lost capacity by investing 500 million dollars, resuming the pre-sanction levels.

Khojasteh-mehr said that Iran could double its oil exports as soon as the sanctions are lifted.

The official noted that Iran was leveraging domestic capacity, including Iranian exploration and extraction companies and banks, to develop shared oil and gas fields in southern Iran. Iran won't wait for foreign countries since this would waste oil and gas reserves and cause the underground wealth to move towards neighboring countries, according to Khojasteh-mehr.

We want to take timely decision and measures relying on domestic capability, he noted.

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## Iraq Pays Its Debts to Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce announced the start of payment of Iraq's debt to Iran.

Iraqi Minister of Electricity Adel Karim had previously traveled to Iran at the head of a delegation to discuss the gas exports to Iraqi power plants and the "payment of debts" to Iran's electricity and oil sector.

Speaking to IRNA, Yahya al-Es'haq, Head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, said that arrangements had been made for Iraq to pay its debts.

According to al-Es'haq, Iraq owes a total of \$ 10 billion to Iran's private and public sectors (\$ 1B. to the public and \$9B to the private sector) to be paid. A new agreement with Iran to supply Iraq with gas for electricity generation has been threatened by a Federal Supreme Court ruling limiting the caretaker Iraqi government's spending power. Electricity Minister Adel Karim has said recently.

"If the Iraqi government cannot pay Iran for what it supplies under the new deal, I don't know, maybe they [Iran] will cut the gas, and we would lose around 8,000 MW," the minister said in an interview in his Baghdad office with Iraq Oil Report this week.

Karim visited Tehran last month and reached an agreement with Iranian officials over future gas imports, as well as debt repayments of more than \$1.5 billion, aiming to guarantee better power generation before demand peaks in the summer.

The agreement involves Iran increasing gas exports to Iraq to 50 million cubic meters a day, which would help to boost power supply and meet the Electricity Ministry's peak supply target of 24,000 to 25,000 MW.

But Iraq's ability to pay for the gas - long hampered by U.S. sanctions on Tehran - is threatened by the Federal Supreme Court in Baghdad, which on Sunday issued a ruling limiting the current caretaker government's powers. That prevented the passage of an "Emergency Food Security and Energy Law" to govern stop-gap spending in the absence of a 2022 budget. According to Karim, the law would have allowed Iraq to pay its debts, and its absence leaves the Electricity Ministry unable to make the payments that it has just promised to Tehran.

# 128 Animal Species in Danger in Iran

Tehran (IRNA) - The deputy head of natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment (DOE) said on Sunday that some 128 animal species mostly amphibians are in danger in Iran.

Addressing a ceremony to mark the International Day for Biological Diversity, Hassan Akbari said Iran with 200 species of mammals, 500 species of birds, and 160 species of amphibians is ranking first in the Middle East with regard to biological diversity.

The number of birds in Iran is almost equal to that of Europe, more than a quarter of which are native, he noted.

## Iran Cultural Heritage Symbol of Unity

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - The Minister of Heritage, Culture, Tourism, and Handicrafts says that cultural heritage is Iran's identity and the most important factor in its unity and cohesion.**

Ezzatollah Zarghami held his first press briefing of the Ministry of Heritage, Culture, Tourism, and Handicrafts, on Sunday, at the National Museum of Iran.

Zarghami stated that many have tried to make cultural heritage a source of discord and boundary throughout history. At the same time, the works left by our ancestors are a symbol of unity and monotheism, and intangible heritage based on good speech, good thought, and good behavior.

Referring to the potential of Cyberspace in the promotion of Iran's cultural heritage, he said: "Cyberspace also has its drawbacks, especially those who have products that focus more on superficial and temporary work, and less on content and deep work. For this reason, I recommend cyberspace activists to produce content in the field of cultural heritage with more depth."

"The first thing we did in our cultural heritage management period was to conduct



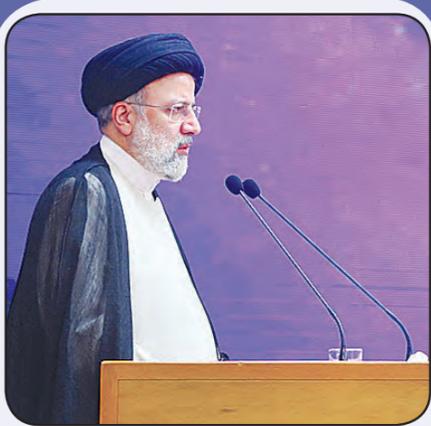
comprehensive research, count the most important cultural heritage issues and divide them into three sections, and analyze the ways to solve cultural heritage issues through various meetings with experts," added.

Regarding the situation of museums, he said: "Out of 760 museums, 500 are public museums, and the rest are for people and collectors. I often take the time to open them because people are interested".

He added that six more museums are under construction to the number.

Concerning the exploration of historical monuments, also he went on to say that a large part of the historical monuments are endowed: "The Endowment and Charity Organization is responsible in this regard, and a memorandum of understanding was signed to start restoration measures with the endowment money."

## President Calls for Fair Review of Privatization



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the destructive effects of inappropriate, irrational and illegal divestitures in the past, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi stressed, "Privatization does not mean abandonment, but the beginning of directing, supporting and monitoring performance, and helping to empower the private sector should be the most central action".

Speaking at the "First International Privatization Event in Iran" which was attended by hundreds of experts, Raisi said, "Achieving a common understanding and consensus on real privatization in the country's economy with the aim of achieving the goals of Article 44 of the Constitution as well as the economy of resistance is one of the priorities and necessities".

Emphasizing the need for a thorough, fair and critical review of the privatization process from the past to the present and the evaluation of structures and behaviors in this regard, the President added, "A review of the past is inevitable".

He then emphasized the need to avoid excesses and realistic evaluation of the privatization process in the country, adding, "These reviews must be done realistically to prevent corruption".

The President called attention to the three important principles of increasing domestic and foreign private sector investment attraction and increasing productivity and close supervision as necessary for proper privatization and mobilisation of the non-governmental economy.

Referring to the destructive effects of inappropriate, irrational and illegal divestitures in the past, the President stressed, "Privatization does not mean abandonment, but the beginning of directing, supporting and monitoring performance, and helping to empower the private sector should be the most central action".

The President noted the success of the 13th government in reviving some of the closed production units in the process of past improper divestitures and combating some abuses in this regard.

The President expressed hope that these meetings and actions would lead to the development and communication of new methods and that the behaviors would be implemented in accordance with this mission.

## Iran Slams Int'l Bodies for Failing to Help It Over Afghan Refugees

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majid Mirahmadi, a senior official at the Iranian Interior Ministry has criticized European countries and international organizations for their failure to help Iran in accepting Afghan refugees.

Mirahmadi, the deputy interior minister for security and law enforcement affairs, held talks with Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Velislava Petrova in Tehran on Saturday afternoon.

The Iranian official referred to an exodus of Afghans being displaced as a result of the Taliban takeover in August 2021, and said that his country is currently hosting more than five million Afghan migrants in its refugee camps.



He said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has accepted these refugees as a humanitarian gesture, adding that they are receiving the same services that Iranian nationals are offered.

Mirahmadi noted that Iran has not expelled these refugees and sheltered them despite food insecurity unfolding in the world.

The Iranian official criticized the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for failing to provide Iran with enough money in sheltering the Afghan refugees.

He said, that happens while countries hosting lower numbers of refugees than Iran are receiving greater budget.

## Minister Calls for Strengthening Iran-Turkey Tourism Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ezzatollah Zarghami on Saturday called for strengthening Iran-Turkey tourism cooperation.

Zarghami met and held talks with the president of Turkey's Alevi community Ali Yildirim on Saturday in Tehran. Pointing to the importance of deepening and facilitating relations and using the common interests of Iran and Alevists around the world, Zarghami said that identifying common grounds, strengthening tourism, and investing in tourism facilities to expand relations are on the agenda.

Describing one of the most important missions of the ministry as supporting investors in the field of tourism, he noted that removing barriers and facilitating the issuance of investment permits is one of the most important priorities of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism in Iran.

Yildirim, for his part, said that identifying and introducing Iran more and better to Turkish Alevists around the world is one of their important missions.

## Tehran, Bratislava Highlight Expansion of Bilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari and visiting First State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic Jan Oravec, in a meeting in Tehran on Saturday, urged the need for enhancement of cooperation between the two countries.

Oravec has travelled to Iran to attend meeting of Iran-Slovakia Joint Economic Commission.

Speaking during the meeting, he appreciated Iran's high economic potentials and said that there are good grounds for mutual cooperation on industry, agriculture, machinery, and modern technologies.

He also said that the two countries can cooperate on SMEs.

The Iranian official, for his part, referred to longstanding industrial cooperation between Iran and Slovakia, and said that holding the meeting of the economic commission in Tehran is a significant measure for promotion of trade cooperation.



## World Health Assembly to Address Iran experience in COVID Management

TEHRAN (IP) - An official at Iran's health ministry announced that at the meeting of the World Health Assembly, issues of health priority in the world, including Iran's successful experience in controlling the COVID-19 and vaccination will be discussed.

Statistics by the Iranian ministry of health show that the number of COVID-19 death cases in Iran has been reported in single digits in recent days.

As of Saturday, nearly 65 million Iranians have received the first dose, over 57 million the second dose and 27.5 million people the third dose of the coronavirus vaccine. The total number of vaccines injected in Iran has neared 150 million doses.

Mohammad Hossein Niknam, Director General of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Health

announced that Bahram Einollahi, Minister of Health of Iran will be present at the World Health Assembly.

"This summit is a good opportunity to exchange views on health achievements, and Iran, as an independent country, is present at the summit," he said. Niknam added that the World Health Assembly is held every year in Geneva, Switzerland to review the health priorities of member countries.

The Director-General of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Health also said: "Experiences and achievements in the field of health will be discussed in the World Health Assembly, and the achievement of Iran as a country that has reduced the number of coronavirus deaths from 700 to single digits per day, will be in the center of attention at this meeting."

## Iran Inks Confidential Oil Contract With Foreign Firm

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Manager of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for Investment and Business Affairs announced the conclusion of a confidential contract, valued at €500 million, with a foreign company.

Fereydoun Kord-Zanganeh made the remarks on Sunday in an interview with the Iran newspaper and stated that the company signed oil contracts and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with foreign companies in the past eight months.

Conclusion of oil contracts with foreign firms will help boom oil industry of the country optimally, Kord-Zanganeh emphasized.

The aforementioned contract, €500 million, concluded with a foreign company at the end of the previous Iranian calendar year in 1400 (ended March 20, 2022) but it was not covered by the media due to the sanctions imposed against the country.

The contract was inked for the development of oil layers at South Pars oil field which took place for the first time in the country.

At the same time, "We are pursuing the exploration of oil layers in the oil field as well."

## Tehran, Baku Discuss Prospects For Cooperation in Railway Sector

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - As part of the visit of the Azerbaijani delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev to Iran, a meeting was held between the heads of Azerbaijan Railways (ADY) CJSC and Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAD) in Tehran.

The sides discussed prospects for the development of the International North-South Transport Corridor and the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway line, which is an integral part of the corridor.

The sides also exchanged views on the current situation of the construction of a cargo terminal in the Iranian city of Astara, as well as the acceleration of work in this area.

## IRGC Will Never Tolerate Israeli Bases Around Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman for Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has said that the Islamic Republic will never tolerate the presence of any bases belonging to the Zionist regime of Israel around Iran.

Zionists have officially announced everywhere that they are against Islamic Republic's interests, Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif has stated.

They've said that they seriously follow assassination of "our figures" and identification of "our bases", adding that in order to preserve its security and national interests, Iran does not stand their bases near "our land," the spokesman underlined.

If assured of any evil act by the Zionists anywhere, the Islamic Republic of Iran will repeat its previous crushing responses, he stressed.

"We'll never budge an inch on people's rights."

## Many Foreigners Interested In Razi Institute's Products

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute Ali Eshaqi said that many people abroad are interested in Razi institute's products such as vaccines, therapeutic serums and biological items.

Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute have two main missions which is the production of biological products such as vaccines and therapeutic serums, and doing research in the field of veterinary medicine, Eshaqi said.

In the field of medicine, the institute produces seven vaccines from 11 types of human vaccines, two of which are supplied by the Pasteur Institute through imports and the other two vaccines are made inside the country, he added.

Eshaqi noted that scorpion antivenom produced by this institute abroad have been exported especially to Iraq.

The medical products of the institute have a good capacity for export, so that in recent years, measles and rubella vaccines as well as oral polio have been in requested for export.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eshaqi said that Razi Institute has always been under sanctions.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:28
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:11
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:53

38. As also 'Ad and Thamud, and the Companions of the Rass, and many a generation between them.  
39. To each one We set forth Parables and examples; and each one We broke to utter annihilation (for their sins).

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (38 - 39)

# Iran Frozen Assets in Japan Seems to Be Released

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

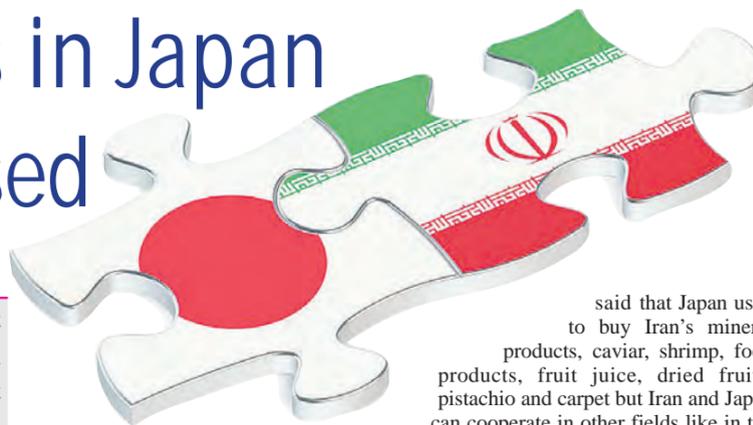
**TEHRAN – Chairman of Iran-Japan Joint Committee says it seems some openings are happening regarding Iran's frozen assets in Japan but since no detail is revealed, he just talks about it based on his assumption.**

Speaking to ILNA, Bahram Shakouri talked about the current trade level between Iran and Japan and said that the trade between the two countries has not changed, adding that since the Japanese are major trade partners of the U.S., they are affected by the U.S. sanctions against Iran and therefore the trade between Iran and Japan is almost zero but the Japanese hope that the JCPOA talks would bear fruit and their trade relation with Iran can broaden.

He went on to say that before the new Iranian year begins in March, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) had some talks with Iran Chamber of Commerce where it showed Japan's interests for cooperation and JETRO called for determining the grounds for cooperation.

Shakouri went on to say that Iran and Japan should start paving the ground for cooperation now in order to operationalize it after the removal of the sanctions. He expressed hope these talks would resume from next week.

He then pointed to the types of trade exchanges between Iran and Japan and



said that Japan used to buy Iran's mineral products, caviar, shrimp, food products, fruit juice, dried fruits, pistachio and carpet but Iran and Japan can cooperate in other fields like in the tourism industry. He said the Japanese are interested in Iran's history and if we provide a condition for easy arrival of the Japanese tourists, then we can have good earning. He noted Iranians are also interested in visiting Japan but due to expenses Iran is a cheaper destination for tourists.

Shakouri went on to say that exhibitions in Japan can be another ground for cooperation between the two countries and Iran can replace Europe with Japan in using the knowhow and technology in many fields. He said Iran can bring famous Japanese car brands to replace low quality cars in the country.

On the fate of Iran's frozen assets in Japan, he said it seems some openings are happening but since no detail is revealed, he can talk only based on his assumption but it seems the U.S. has signaled greenlight to Japan for the release of Iran's assets. Shakouri reiterated Japan's government and people are both keen to cooperate with Iran and even both countries celebrated their 90 years of economic and political ties before the pandemic. He once again reiterated that the Japanese really want the JCPOA talks to bear fruit as they want to buy oil from Iran and even they tried to get some waiver from the U.S. but they failed.

## Weekly Commodities Trade On IME Exceeds 2.1m Tons

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,167,485 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$679m 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 1,748,000 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$374m.

On this floor, the IME's customers purchased 1,187,798 tons of cement, 170,000 tons of iron ore, 215,565 tons of steel, 83,000 tons of sponge iron, 11,925 tons of aluminum, 9,550 tons of copper, 140 tons of lead, 70,900 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 10 kg of gold bars.

Next was the IME's automobile trading floor with trades of 103 Cara Sedan automobiles.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 412,363 tons of commodities worth more than \$296m.

The exchange's customers purchased on this floor 114,185 tons of bitumen, 96,580 tons of polymeric products, 23,000 tons of lube cut, 121,650 tons of vacuum bottom, 41,125 tons of chemicals, 10,560 tons of sulfur, 4,330 tons of base oil, 110 tons of insulation and 70 tons of argon.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 6,236 tons of commodities traded on it.

# Dezful People Still Standing for Their Values

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Managing Director of 4 Khordad Foundation in a press conference which was held on the occasion of Resistance Day (Day of Dezful) yesterday hailed the resistance of Dezful people during the eight-year Iraqi imposed war.

Brigadier Gholamhossein Sardar Kolooli Dezfuli in the press conference pointed to coward invasion of the enemy in 1980 and said despite destructions and damages, the war had its blessings for the country and one of the most beautiful scenes of the Sacred Defense was people's resistance. He added that the enemy had two major goals by waging war that one was to break the determination of the people in order to increase political pressure on the rulers and the second goal was to occupy some cities which were strategic.

Kolooli Dezful stated therefore Dezful was one of the



examples for the savage and deadly attacks and city of Dezful was witnessed first airstrike on September 22, 1980. He went on to say that during the war, 186

missiles hit Dezful that half of them were enough to destroy a big city, adding that 850 bombs and rockets also were dropped on Dezful by the planes of the enemies and over 2500 bullets in less than one year were fired to this city. He went on to say that over 19,000 housing units, shops and administrative offices were destroyed during the war but despite these challenges, people of Dezful continued their resistance and they did not let enemies' wish come true.

He reiterated that the city had 2600 martyrs and over 4200 people were disabled during their resistance in the war front.

He added that despite all challenges and hardships, people of Dezful have stood firmly on their values.

He noted that National Resistance Day is commemorated every year on 4 Khordad (May 25) and Dezful is one of five cities which commemorates this day. He went on to say that ceremonies for marking the day will be held in Ahvaz, Qom, Mashhad and Tehran.

## MoU Signed for Supply of Feed For Ilam Petrochemical Complex

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN – Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company and Iranian Central Oil Fields Company signed a memorandum of understanding for supply of feed for Ilam Petrochemical Complex which will boost sustainability of the western country's gas network especially in Ilam and resumption of activities of the idle capacity of the complex due to the shortage of feed.

According to reports, the MoU was signed by CEO of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company Mr. Ali Askari and the CEO of Iranian Central Oil Fields Company Eng. Heydari and it is considered a long stride towards increasing the production in Ilam Petrochemical Complex which has been constructed in 17 years and with a budget over \$1.5b while its second phase was inaugurated last year but due to the shortage of the feed it faced with serious challenges.

With signing the deal, gas production will increase from 7m to 11m cubic meters and sustainable feed for the gas refinery of Ilam as the main source of feeding of the complex will be provided.

Currently Ilam Petrochemical Company works below its nominal capacity and the deal can also boost the nominal capacity and it will make sustainable gas supply in Ilam Province or other western provinces.

## Iran Iron Ore Concentrate Output up 4% In Year to March

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran recorded a slight increase in production of iron ore concentrate in the year to late March, show figures by the state-run metals conglomerate IMIDRO.

The figures published showed that total production of iron ore concentrate in Iran had reached over 51.5 million metric tons (mt) over the past calendar year, an increase of around 4% from the year to March 2021.

Iron ore concentrate output rose by 16% year on year in the month to March 20 to stand at 4.98 million mt, showed the figures.

The figures showed that total supply of iron ore concentrate to domestic steelmakers reached more than 16.94 million mt over the same period, a decline of 10% compared to the previous calendar year.

The Golgozar Mining & Industrial Company, which runs mines in southeastern province of Kerman, was responsible for nearly a third of total iron ore concentrate output in Iran over the year to March with a production that amounted to over 16.45 million mt, said IMIDRO.

It said that the Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, the largest producer of iron ore concentrate by direct reduction in the Middle East, was the second largest producer in Iran over the past calendar year with nearly 12.187 million mt of output.

Iron ore fine production at Iranian mines more than doubled over the year to late March to reach over 1.947 million mt, showed IMIDRO figures.

They showed that Iron ore fine supply to domestic customers rose 26% year on year to reach more than 2.25 million tons, showed the figures.

## MSC Honored as One of Top Companies on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – In a conference held by Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) to honor the top companies on the IME, Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) was ranked first in terms of volume and value of the offered products on the IME last year and was honored and awarded with the statue.

In the ceremony which was held in the presence of Finance Minister Seyed Ehsan Khandouzi, the CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company Mr. Mohammad Yaser Tayebnia received the award of the top company on the IME. Registering the highest amount of credit sales to support the downstream industries especially the automakers and producers of the home appliances as well as its presence as the biggest combined offer have been the reasons for selection of MSC as the top company on the IME.

Addressing the conference, Tayebnia said that following



the policies of the government regarding control of the prices in the market and on the IME, the policy of MSC is to offer more steel products on the IME and covering all balances and control of the prices.

Pointing to the profitability of shares of the company, he said that the value of MSC is estimated at around 360,000 billion tomans and if the profitability of shares of this company is compared with other ones, one can see that the profit of shares of MSC has been more than parallel markets like housing, gold and forex.

He reiterated that to keep the current condition, the company needs trust building among the public, positive performance and supporting the positive performance of groups like MSC.

Tayebnia went on to say that it is expected that decision makers move towards a direction that industries like MSC do not face contradiction in the decisions.

## Goharzamin Co. Among Top Companies In Observing Social Responsibilities

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Goharzamin Iron Ore Company during the fourth Social Responsibilities and Sustainability of Economic Enterprises Award was chosen as one of the top companies.

The award ceremony was held on Saturday at IRIB Press Conference Hall and Goharzamin Iron Ore Company achieved another success by being chosen among the top companies in observing its social responsibilities obligation.

The company has done great valuable actions in Kerman Province especially in the southern part of the province and in Sirjan in line with observing its social responsibilities.



## "Rostan" Exhibition Opens at Ragadid in Season of Growth

IRAN NEWS ART DESK

TEHRAN – The collective exhibition of water color technique paintings under the title of "Rostan" (Growth) was inaugurated on Sunday under the curatorship of Behdad Najafi Asadollahi at the Ragadid Complex at Tehran's Enghelab Club.

According to the reports, in this art event, works of over 60 masters and artists of this field have been put on display. According to the curator of the exhibition Mr. Behdad Najafi, water color technique has unique properties which has led to defining a certain and different place for it in the imaginary arts and for this reason this exhibition has been held independently for the water color works.

The art manager of the exhibition Ms. Saideh Arian also said that water color technique is one of the most beautiful techniques of painting which has been under attention by artists due to the challenges of natural behaviors of water.

This exhibition is being held for delicate aesthetic artists of Iranian watercolor painters in the spring. This art event which is held by the Khanesh Cultural Institute in collaboration with Faradid Honar Cultural Institute will be open to the public at Ragadid Complex from 08:00 a.m. to 08:00 p.m. until June 10.



## Thousands Protest Turkish Opposition Politician's Conviction



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Thousands gathered for a rally in Istanbul on Saturday to protest the conviction of leading Turkish opposition politician Canan Kaftancıoğlu for insulting the president and the state.

Demonstrators in the central district of Maltepe chanted songs and waved the opposition and national flags. Kaftancıoğlu, who was sentenced to just under five years in jail, heads Republican People's Party's (CHP) Istanbul branch and is one of the strongest voices in it.

In 2019, she played a significant role in municipal elections in the city that saw the CHP take over the mayoralty, which had been held by President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party and its Islamist predecessors for the last 25 years.

## Palestinian Teen Killed By Israelis in West Bank



RAMALLAH (Dispatches) - A Palestinian teenager was shot dead by Israeli forces as clashes erupted during an army raid on Saturday in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

"A 17-year-old boy was killed and an 18-year-old was critically wounded by the Israeli occupation's bullets during its aggression on Jenin," the ministry said in a statement.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa identified the teenager as Amjad al-Fayed.

The Israeli army said that during "operational activity" near Kafr Dan, a village northwest of Jenin, "a number of suspects shot live fire at... soldiers from a passing vehicle."

## Australia Ousts Conservatives After Nine Years, Albanese to Be PM



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's Labor Party was set to end almost a decade of conservative rule as the government was swept away in Saturday's election by a wave of support for candidates who campaigned for more action on climate change and may hold the balance of power.

Partial results showed that while Labor had made small gains, Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Liberal-National coalition had been punished by voters in Western Australia and affluent urban seats in particular.

The Greens and a group of so-called "teal independents", who campaigned on policies of gender equality and tackling climate change, put on a strong showing, tapping voter anger over inaction on the environment after some of the worst floods and fires to hit Australia.

"Tonight, I have spoken to the leader of the opposition and the incoming prime minister, Anthony Albanese. And I've congratulated him on his election victory this evening," said Morrison.

Albanese, speaking as he headed to his party celebrations, said he wanted to unite the country and "end the climate wars".

"I think people want to come together, look for our common interest, look towards that sense of common purpose. I think people have had enough of division, what they want is to come together as a nation and I intend to lead that."

Albanese said he aimed to be sworn in swiftly so he could attend a meeting of the Quad security grouping in Tokyo on Tuesday. He promised constitutional recognition and parliamentary representation for Indigenous Aboriginals, as well as the establishment of an anti-corruption commission.

In results so far, Labor had yet to reach the 76 of the 151 lower house seats required to form a government alone. Final results could take time as counting of a record number of postal votes is completed.

With 60% of the vote counted, Labor had 72 seats and Morrison's coalition 55. Independents and the Greens held 11, the Australian Broadcasting Corp projected. A further 13 seats remained in doubt.

The center-left Labor had held a decent lead in opinion polls before the election, although surveys showed the Liberal-National government narrowing the gap in the final stretch of a six-week campaign.

In one of the biggest hits to the government, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said it would be "difficult" for him to hold the long-held Liberal seat of Kooyong in Melbourne against an independent newcomer.

Three volunteers working for teal independent Monique Ryan, who was challenging Frydenberg, said they joined Ryan's campaign because they were concerned about the climate for the sake of their children and grandchildren.

## Biden, Yoon Vow to Deter North Korea and Offer COVID Aid



SEOUL (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden and his new South Korean counterpart agreed on Saturday to hold bigger military drills and deploy more U.S. weapons if necessary to deter North Korea, while offering to send COVID-19 vaccines and potentially meet Kim Jong Un.

Biden and Yoon Suk-yeol said their countries' decades-old alliance needed to develop not only to face North Korean threats but to keep the Indo-Pacific region "free and open" and protect global supply chains.

The two leaders are meeting in Seoul for their first diplomatic engagement since the South Korean president's inauguration 11 days ago. The encounter between allies was clouded by intelligence showing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is prepared to conduct nuclear or missile tests.

Yoon had sought more assurances that the United States would boost its deterrence against North Korean threats. In a joint statement, Biden reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defend South Korea with nuclear weapons if necessary.

The two sides agreed to consider expanding their combined military drills, which had been scaled back in recent years over COVID-19 and efforts to lower tensions with the North.

The United States also promised to deploy "strategic assets" - which typically include long-range bomber aircraft, missile submarines, or aircraft carriers - if necessary to deter North Korea, according to the statement. Both leaders said they were committed to denuclearizing North Korea and were open to diplomacy with Pyongyang.

"With regard to whether I would meet with the leader of North Korea, it would depend on whether he was sincere and whether he was serious," Biden told a joint news conference. He said Washington had offered COVID-19 vaccines to China and North Korea, which is combating its first acknowledged outbreak. "We've got no response," Biden said. North Korea reported more than 200,000 new patients suffering from fever for a fifth consecutive day on Saturday, but the country has little in the way of vaccines or modern treatment for the pandemic.

"My impression is that this is an attempt to cover up the obvious lack of political will to take decisive decisions on granting candidate status," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said last week.

"This is the influence and political and diplomatic pressure of Russian officials and lobbyists on the decision of a European country to support Ukraine or not," he continued.

Macron's "European political community" initiative will be debated at an EU summit in late June. The French leader has suggested that Britain, which left the EU after a referendum, could also join such a grouping.

But some European leaders have already criticised the idea.

## Ukraine Needs Full EU Candidacy Not "Compromise"

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine needs to become a full candidate to join the EU, rather than signing up to the kind of broader "European political community" antechamber proposed by France, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

"We don't need any alternatives to the application of Ukraine to join the European Union, we don't need such compromises," Zelensky told reporters in Kyiv during a joint press conference with visiting Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa.

French President Emmanuel Macron raised hackles in Ukraine on May 9 by suggesting that the country could take "decades" to become a full EU member and should aspire instead to join a "European political community," a sort of antechamber for the European Union.

Ukraine would notably have to meet rigorous standards in governance, fight corruption and apply the rule of law before it could be admitted as an EU member. Russia invaded Ukraine in February, in part to thwart Kyiv's tilt towards integration with the EU and NATO.

But Zelensky was adamant on Saturday that his country should be allowed to start the process towards full EU membership.

"Because, believe me, it will not be compromise with Ukraine in Europe, it will be another compromise between Europe and Russia. I am absolutely sure of that," he said.

"This is the influence and political and diplomatic pressure of Russian officials and lobbyists on the decision of a European country to support Ukraine or not," he continued.

Macron's "European political community" initiative will be debated at an EU summit in late June. The French leader has suggested that Britain, which left the EU after a referendum, could also join such a grouping.

But some European leaders have already criticised the idea.

## Tunisian Parties Vow to Fight President's Autocratic Rule

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Tunisia's political parties pledged to fight President Kais Saied's decision to exclude them from key political reforms including the drafting of a new constitution, accusing him of seeking to consolidate autocratic rule.

Saied, who took executive power last summer and dissolved parliament to rule by decree, has since said he will replace the democratic 2014 constitution with a new constitution via a July 25 referendum and hold new parliamentary elections in December.

On Friday, he named a law professor to head an advisory committee of legal and political science experts to draft the new constitution for a "new republic", excluding political parties from the process.

The National Salvation Front, an umbrella for several parties and activists including Ennahda, Heart of Tunisia, Karama and the Citizens Against the Coup coalition, decried the move as another dangerous step towards entrenching one-man rule.

"We will face the new step of his autocratic rule with protests in streets and by uniting the opposition



front to overthrow the coup," Ennahda official Riadh Chaïbi told Reuters.

Saied denies his opponents' accusations that he staged a coup to seize power, saying his intervention was legal and necessary to save Tunisia from years of political paralysis and economic stagnation at the hands of a corrupt, self-serving elite who had taken control of government.

The president has nonetheless attracted broad opposition across Tunisia's political spectrum.

The Free Constitutional Party, whose leader Abir Moussi is a supporter of the late autocratic president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and a bitter foe of Ennahda, also rejected the move to exclude parties from the drafting of a new constitution and other reforms. It called for a mass protest on June 18.

"What is happening is a dictatorship but we will not leave Tunisia hostage in Saied hands," Moussi said.

In a joint statement, the Attayar, Republican and Ettakatol parties called on parties, civil society and national leaders to confront "this farce and overthrow the coup".

## Italian Family, Togolese National Taken Hostage in Mali

KOUTIALA (Dispatches) - Armed men have kidnapped an Italian couple and their child as well as a Togolese national in southeastern Mali, a local official and a Malian security source told AFP.

They said the abductions occurred late Thursday about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the border with Burkina Faso, part of a West African region hit by turmoil, kidnappings as well as conflict blamed on armed jihadists.

"Armed men in a vehicle kidnapped three Italians and a Togolese about 10 kilometers (six miles) from Koutiala," late Thursday, an official from the Koutiala region who asked not to be named said.

He said the victims were two Italian adults and their child as well as a Togolese, adding they were all Jehovah's Witnesses.

A Malian security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said two Italian adults and their child, along with a Togolese, were kidnapped.

He described the abductees as "religious people".

He said the abductions took place in the southeastern town of Sincina, around 100 kilometers from the Burkina Faso border. "We are doing everything to obtain their release," the person said, adding that diplomatic lines of communication were open.

## U.S. Officials Consider Inviting Cuban Representative to Americas Summit

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Biden administration officials are considering inviting a Cuban representative to the U.S.-hosted Summit of the Americas, a person familiar with the matter said, as Washington scrambled to head off a potentially embarrassing boycott by some regional leaders.

Discussion has focused on allowing a Cuban presence at the next month's Los Angeles summit below the level of the country's president or foreign minister, but it is at an early stage and no decision has been made, the source told Reuters.

President Joe Biden's aides were weighing the idea as his administration began sending out invitations for the summit. But for now U.S. officials declined to say what countries were on the list or whether the leaders of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua would be excluded.

A growing number of leaders, including Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, have threatened to skip the summit unless all countries in the region are allowed to attend.

The prospect for summit no-shows risks diplomatic failure for Biden, whose aides have hoped the summit, held every three or four years, would be a chance to reassert Washington's commitment to a region it is often accused of neglecting.

It was unclear whether Communist-ruled Cuba, which participated at the head of state level in the last two summits in 2015 and 2018 and has blasted Washington for its handling of the June 6-10 gathering, would even accept an invitation for lower-level observer status. The Associated Press first reported that the idea was under consideration.

The White House and the Cuban embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"We're still considering additional invites, and we'll share the final list of invites once all invitations have gone out," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

The Biden administration has signaled for weeks that it could exclude the governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, saying they did not have respect for democracy.



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## Coffee Demand up But Not Yet Percolating at Pre-Pandemic Levels

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Demand for coffee in non-producing countries showed a healthy recovery in the first quarter, although there are signs of possible slowdowns in demand in Russia and China for the coming quarters, analysts from Rabobank said in a report on Friday.

It said "coffee disappearance," a term indicating the amount of coffee nonproducing countries are actually consuming and not

packing for re-export, rose 6.9% in the first quarter compared to the same period a year earlier. The European Union plus United Kingdom area saw a larger increase, at 9%, while the United States jumped 4.6% and Japan, 5.1%.

Rabobank said the numbers are still not great compared to pre-pandemic levels. The result in the first quarter was only 0.6% higher than two years ago (Q1 2020).



## China Quietly Increases Purchases of Low-Priced Russian Oil

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - China is quietly ramping up purchases of oil from Russia at bargain prices, according to shipping data and oil traders who spoke to Reuters, filling the vacuum left by Western buyers backing away from business with Russia after its invasion of Ukraine in February.

The move by the world's biggest oil importer comes a month after it initially cut back on Russian supplies, for fear of appearing to openly support Moscow and potentially expose its state oil giants to sanctions. China's seaborne Russian oil imports will jump to a near-record 1.1 million barrels per day (bpd) in May, up from 750,000 bpd in the first quarter and 800,000 bpd in 2021, according to an estimate by Vortexa Analytics.

Unipeac, the trading arm of Asia's top refiner Sinopec Corp (600028.SS), is leading the purchases, along with Zhenhua Oil, a unit of China's defense conglomerate Norinco, according to shipping data, a shipbroker report seen by Reuters and five traders. Livna Shipping Ltd, a Hong Kong-registered firm, has also recently emerged as a major shipper of Russian oil into China, the traders said.

Sinopec declined comment. Zhenhua and Livna did not respond to requests for comment.

The firms are filling the hole left by western buyers after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which Russia calls a "special military operation."

The United States, Britain and some other key oil buyers banned imports of Russian oil shortly after the invasion. The European Union is finalizing a further round of sanctions, including a ban on Russian oil purchases. Many European refiners have already stopped buying from Russia for fear of running afoul of sanctions or drawing negative publicity.

Vitol and Trafigura, two of the world's biggest commodity traders, phased out purchases from Rosneft, Russia's biggest oil producer, ahead of an EU rule that came into effect on May 15 barring purchases unless "strictly necessary" to secure the EU's energy needs.

"The situation began taking a drastic turn after the exit of Vitol and Trafigura that created a vacuum, which could only be filled by companies that can provide value and are trusted by their Russian counterparts," one Chinese trader, who asked not to be named, told Reuters.

The low price of Russia's oil - spot differentials are about \$29 less per barrel compared with before the invasion, according to traders - is a boon for China's refiners as they face shrinking margins in a slowing economy. The price is well below competing barrels from the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the United States.

China separately receives some 800,000 bpd of Russian oil via pipelines under government deals. That would bring May imports to nearly 2 million bpd, 15% of China's overall demand. For Russia, oil sales are helping to cushion the blow to its economy from sanctions.

State-owned Chinese companies, led by Sinopec and Zhenhua, are set to buy two thirds of Russia's flagship Far Eastern export grade ESPO (Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline) blend in May, up from a third before the invasion of Ukraine, traders who closely monitor the flows told Reuters. Russia exported about 24 million barrels in May, 6% higher than April.

## Canada to Ban Huawei/ZTE 5G Equipment

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Canada on Thursday said it plans to ban the use of China's Huawei Technologies Co Ltd and ZTE Corp 5G gear to protect national security, joining the rest of the so-called Five Eyes intelligence-sharing network.

"We intend to exclude Huawei and ZTE from our 5G networks," Industry Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne told reporters in Ottawa. "Providers who already have this equipment installed will be required to cease its use and remove it under the plans we're announcing today."

Champagne added that companies will be required to remove their 5G gear by June, 2024, would not be reimbursed. Companies using their 4G equipment must be removed by the end of 2027.

The decision - widely expected - had been delayed amid diplomatic tensions with China. The rest of the Five Eyes network - which consists of Canada, the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand - has already banned the equipment.

In September 2018, Canada first announced it would review the possible threats to national security in adopting Huawei equipment.

Then in December of the same year, Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou was arrested in Canada on a U.S. warrant, creating a long-running dispute with China that finally ended last September with Meng's release.

After Meng's arrest, two Canadians were arrested by Beijing and accused of espionage. The two men were released the same day as Meng.

Now diplomatic tensions between China and Canada have eased somewhat. On Wednesday, China removed a three-year restriction on imports of Canadian canola seed, reversing what was considered a retaliatory move for Meng's arrest.

Thursday's decision comes after telecom companies in Canada already opted to use other companies' 5G hardware.

China expressed opposition to this decision. "We will take all necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate interests of Chinese firms," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters in Beijing.

A spokesperson for China's embassy in Canada said the alleged security concerns were a "pretext for political manipulation" and accused Canada of working with the United States to suppress Chinese companies.



## Taiwan Export Orders Fall for First Time in 2 Years

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's export orders -- a bellwether for global technology demand -- fell for the first time in 25 months in April, taking a larger-than-expected hit from COVID lockdowns in China and broader global supply chain disruptions.

Export orders unexpectedly fell 5.5% from a year earlier to \$51.9 billion last month, data from the Ministry of Economic Affairs showed on Friday.

The decline was the first in more than two years, since the COVID-19 pandemic began sweeping the world in 2020, and up-ended analysts' forecasts for 8.3% growth.

Orders for telecommunications products dropped 21.5% on year, mainly due to government measures to control the spread of COVID-19 in China, the ministry said.

Orders for electronic products edged up 4.3%, with China's lockdowns "deepening the supply and demand imbalance", the ministry said.

Growth in the past two years or so had been supported by booming tech demand fuelled by the work and study from home trend during the COVID pandemic, as well as a global semiconductor shortage that has filled Taiwanese chip makers' order books.

The ministry said it expects export orders in May to be in a range of a fall of 1.1% and an expansion of 1.7% from a year earlier.

Huang Yu-ling, director of the ministry's statistics agency, said orders could return to growth in June or July, depending on how quickly China can restore output levels and resolve supply chain bottlenecks.

"The lockdown has had a much bigger impact than we expected," she said.

In March, export orders rose 16.8% from a year earlier to \$62.69 billion, the highest figure for the month on record.



## Germany, Qatar Sign Energy Partnership Agreement

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany and Qatar signed on Friday a declaration to deepen their energy partnership, with a focus on trade in hydrogen and liquefied natural gas (LNG), as Europe's biggest economy looks for alternative supplies amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The partnership deal foresees regular meetings between authorities from both countries and creates a working group focused on developing trade relations in LNG and hydrogen, as well as one devoted to renewable energy.

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was in Germany for the signing of the deal with German Economy Minister Robert Habeck, who travelled to Qatar in March, along with officials from German utilities RWE and Uniper, for talks on long-term LNG supply deals.

The agreement does not mean long-term LNG deals will be concluded, three people familiar with the supply deal talks told Reuters earlier this month.

Those talks face challenges, they said, with Berlin reluctant to commit to Qatar's conditions to sign deals of at least 20 years to secure the massive LNG volumes Germany needs to reduce its dependence on Russian gas.

Russia is currently the largest supplier of gas to Germany, and Habeck has launched several initiatives to lessen Berlin's energy dependence on Moscow since the invasion of Ukraine.

## Russia Makes Early Debt Payment Dash to Dodge Default

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russia rushed forward two payments on its international debt in its latest attempt to stave off a default that has looked on cards since its invasion of Ukraine.

A week before the interest payments are due and just five days before a key U.S. waiver allowing such transfers expires, Russia's finance ministry said it had wired \$71.25 million for a dollar-denominated bond and 26.5 million euros (\$28 million) for euro-denominated notes.

Russia has faced the prospect of sovereign default since Western capitals imposed sweeping sanctions in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. The country has been all but cut off from the global financial

system and has seen roughly half of its \$640 billion reserves abroad frozen.

Russia, which has retaliated with some countermeasures of its own, has been able to keep paying until now because of a special licence from the U.S. Treasury, which allows international bond holders to receive these kinds of payments.

That exemption is due to run out on May 25, however, and U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen signalled this week that it won't be extended.

"They are kicking the can down the road," said Kaan Nazli at asset managers Neuberger Berman, who holds some Russian sovereign bonds.

The country's \$40 billion of international bonds, around half of which are held by foreign investors, have emerged as a flashpoint in recent months.

While Russia initially seemed keen to withhold payments to foreign investors unless it was allowed to make use of its frozen reserves abroad, this seems to have changed.

"The strategy turned into Russia not wanting to be the party to blame for the default," said Nazli.

According to the finance ministry, Russia's national settlement depository - which acts as a payment agent on the two bonds - had received the funds.

It was unclear if the funds would reach foreign holders of the two Russian Eurobonds, a multistep process that usually involves international banks and clearing houses.

JPMorgan, which previously acted as a correspondent bank on such payments, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The U.S. Treasury declined to comment.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said on Wednesday that Moscow would service its external debt obligations in roubles if the United States blocks other options and would not call itself in default as it had the means to pay.

Despite the plethora of curbs, Russia has managed to make payments on seven bonds since its invasion of Ukraine before the latest interest payments.

But it seems increasingly unlikely that the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) will extend the license Russia needs to make the payments. Treasury Secretary Yellen said on Wednesday that while no final decision had been taken, it was "unlikely that it would continue." read more

## Inflation Crimps Indian Firms as Rural Millions Cut Spending



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Surging inflation is forcing many poor Indians to rein in spending, threatening a slowdown for companies such as Godrej Appliances which saw bumper sales as recently as March and April after a brutal heatwave spiked demand for its cooling products.

The Ukraine crisis and global supply chain disruptions have stoked prices worldwide, but people in developing countries such as India are more vulnerable to even small cost increases that can wreck their meagre budgets. "From May we started seeing a drop in demand," Kamal Nandi, the business head of Godrej Appliances, one of India's largest makers of home appliances, told Reuters. "These are early signs of inflationary impact on discretionary spends."

The fall came swiftly after demand from the mass segment had "zoomed up" in March, and stayed good in April, he added.

April saw India's wholesale and consumer prices accelerate at their fastest in years, prompting the central bank to hike interest rates at an unscheduled policy meeting this month, with another likely next month.

Godrej, which made India's first domestic refrigerator in 1958, aims to raise prices when possible to offset commodity costs, but worries that could erode demand in the countryside home to two-thirds of India's population of nearly 1.4 billion.

"Going forward, every quarter there has to be a price hike and that will impact demand down the line," added Nandi, who said hikes in the prices of commodities had far outstripped sticker prices.

Godrej's dilemma is familiar to many Indian companies trying to strike a balance between margins and demand, a worrying sign for the economy that had recovered in recent quarters after being hammered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Iranian Ports Have Great Capacity for Goods Transit

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Jalil Eslami said that transit of goods through Iran will lead to a significant reduction in costs for the country which transits, that is why Iranian ports have a great capacity for transit of goods.

Eslami in a meeting with transit and port officials of Kazakhstan said that five Iranian ports near the Caspian Sea

have the capacity of 30 million tons of goods transit and in the southern part of Iran, Shahid Rajaei port itself has a capacity of 120 million tons of goods transit.

Referring to the point that in the southern ports of Iran, except Shahid Rajaei port, Deputy Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) said, "We have the capacity of 250 million tons of goods transit."



## Russia Cuts Off Gas Exports to Finland in Symbolic Move

HELSINKI (AP) - Russia halted gas exports to neighboring Finland on Saturday, a highly symbolic move that came just days after the Nordic country announced it wanted to join NATO and marked a likely end to Finland's nearly 50 years of importing natural gas from Russia.

The measure taken by the Russian energy giant Gazprom was in line with an earlier announcement following Helsinki's refusal to pay for the gas in rubles as Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded European countries do since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

The Finnish state-owned gas company Gasum said that "natural gas supplies to Finland under Gasum's supply contract have been cut off" by Russia on Saturday morning at 7 a.m. local time (0400 GMT).

The announcement follows Moscow's decision to cut off electricity exports to Finland earlier this month and an earlier decision by the Finnish state-controlled oil company Neste to replace imports of Russian crude oil with crude oil from elsewhere.

After decades of energy cooperation that was seen beneficial for both Helsinki — particularly in the case of inexpensive Russian crude oil — and Moscow, Finland's energy ties with Russia are now all but gone.

Such a break was easier for Finland than it will be for other European Union nations. Natural gas accounts for just some 5% of total energy consumption in Finland, a country of 5.5 million. Almost all of that gas comes from Russia, and is used mainly by industrial and other companies with only an estimated 4,000 households relying on gas heating.

Gasum said it would now supply natural gas to its customers from other sources through the undersea Balticconnector gas pipeline running between Finland and Estonia and connecting the Finnish and Baltic gas grids.

Matti Vanhanen, the former Finnish prime minister and current speaker of Parliament, said the effect of Moscow's decision to cut off gas after nearly 50 years since the first deliveries from the Soviet Union began is above all symbolic.

In an interview Saturday with the Finnish public broadcaster YLE, Vanhanen said the decision marks an end of "a hugely important period between Finland, the Soviet Union and Russia, not only in energy terms but symbolically."

"That pipeline is unlikely to ever open again," Vanhanen told YLE, referring to the two parallel Russia-Finland natural gas pipelines that were launched in 1974.



The first connections from Finland's power grid to the Soviet transmission system were also constructed in the 1970s, allowing electricity imports to Finland in case additional capacity was needed.

Vanhanen didn't see Moscow's gas stoppage as a retaliatory step from Russia to Finland's bid to join NATO but rather a countermove to Western sanctions imposed on Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine.

"Russia did the same thing with Finland it has done earlier with some other countries to maintain its own credibility," Vanhanen said, referring to the Kremlin's demands to buy its gas in rubles.

Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) with Russia, the longest of any of the EU's 27 members, and has a conflict-ridden history with its huge eastern neighbor.

After losing two wars to Soviet Union, in World War II, Finland opted for neutrality with stable and pragmatic political and economic ties with Moscow. Large-scale energy cooperation, also including nuclear power, between the two countries was one of the most visible signs of friendly bilateral ties between former enemies.

## China Seeks "Whistleblowers" to Plug Aviation Safety Loopholes



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's aviation regulator is seeking "whistleblowers" from the industry's frontline workers to plug any safety loopholes, part of the government's efforts to ensure safety after two recent major accidents including the deadly China Eastern crash.

In a document issued on May 19, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) urged frontline workers and grass root management officials, who are usually the first to spot weak links, to report their findings to airlines to prevent any safety hazards.

"It is of great necessity that we fully mobilise the vast number of frontline personnel - for them to be willing and dare to be a safety 'whistle blower', which would also be crucial in reversing the current unfavorable situation and maintain the stable operations of the industry safety," the CAAC said in a statement on Friday.

On March 21, China Eastern flight MU5735 plunged into the mountains of Guangxi and killed 132 people on board in mainland China's deadliest aviation disaster for 28 years. It led the CAAC to launch sector-wide inspections to find potential safety lapses.

However, less than two months later, a Tibet Airlines plane caught fire on the ground after pilots aborted a take-off in the southwestern city of Chongqing. All passengers were evacuated in time but dozens of passengers suffered minor injuries.

China is a stickler for aviation safety, after maintaining its strong safety record for more than a decade. The CAAC was the first regulator globally to ground the Boeing 737 MAX after two fatal crashes.

The CAAC on Friday said the whistleblowers would be rewarded and their identity protected through confidentiality agreements.

## African Scientists Baffled by Monkeypox Cases in Europe, U.S.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Scientists who have monitored numerous outbreaks of monkeypox in Africa say they are baffled by the disease's recent spread in Europe and North America.

Cases of the smallpox-related disease have previously been seen only among people with links to central and West Africa. But in the past week, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Italy, U.S., Sweden and Canada all reported infections, mostly in young men who hadn't previously traveled to Africa.

There are about 80 confirmed cases worldwide and 50 more suspected ones, the World Health Organization said. France, Germany, Belgium and Australia reported their first cases Friday.

"I'm stunned by this. Every day I wake up and there are more countries infected," said Oyewale Tomori, a virologist who formerly headed the Nigerian Academy of Science and who sits on several WHO advisory boards.

"This is not the kind of spread we've seen in West Africa, so there may be something new happening in the West," he said.

To date, no one has died in the outbreak. Monkeypox typically causes fever, chills, rash and lesions on the face or genitals. WHO estimates the disease is fatal for up to one in 10 people, but smallpox vaccines are protective and some antiviral drugs are being developed.

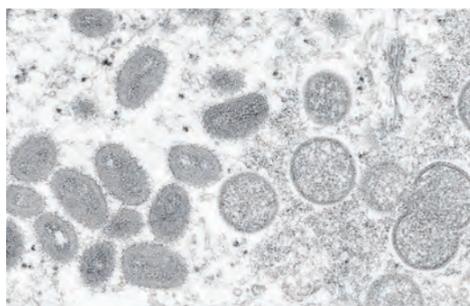
British health officials are exploring whether the disease is being sexually transmitted. Health officials have asked doctors and nurses to be on alert for potential cases, but said the risk to the general population is low. The European Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommended all suspected cases be isolated and that high-risk contacts be offered smallpox vaccine.

Nigeria reports about 3,000 monkeypox cases a year, WHO said. Outbreaks are usually in rural areas, when people have close contact with infected rats and squirrels, Tomori said. He said many cases are likely missed.

Dr. Ifedayo Adetifa, head of the country's Center for Disease Control, said none of the Nigerian contacts of the British patients have developed symptoms and that investigations were ongoing.

WHO's Europe director, Dr. Hans Kluge, described the outbreak as "atypical," saying the disease's appearance in so many countries across the continent suggested that "transmission has been ongoing for some time." He said most of the European cases are mild.

On Friday, Britain's Health Security Agency reported 11 new monkeypox cases, saying "a notable proportion"



of the infections in the U.K. and Europe have been in young men with no history of travel to Africa and who were gay, bisexual or had sex with men.

Authorities in Spain and Portugal also said their cases were in young men who mostly had sex with other men and said those cases were picked up when the men turned up with lesions at sexual health clinics.

Experts have stressed they do not know if the disease is being spread through sex or other close contact related to sex.

Nigeria hasn't seen sexual transmission, Tomori said, but he noted that viruses that hadn't initially been known to transmit via sex, like Ebola, were later proven to do so after bigger epidemics showed different patterns of spread.

The same could be true of monkeypox, Tomori said.

In Germany, Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said the government was confident the outbreak could be contained. He said the virus was being sequenced to see if there were any genetic changes that might have made it more infectious.

Rolf Gustafson, an infectious diseases professor, told Swedish broadcaster SVT that it was "very difficult" to imagine the situation might worsen.

"We will certainly find some further cases in Sweden, but I do not think there will be an epidemic in any way," Gustafson said. "There is nothing to suggest that at present."

Scientists said that while it's possible the outbreak's first patient caught the disease while in Africa, what's happening now is exceptional.

"We've never seen anything like what's happening in Europe," said Christian Happi, director of the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases. "We haven't seen anything to say that the transmission patterns of monkeypox have been changing in Africa. So if something different is happening in Europe, then Europe needs to investigate that."

Happi also pointed out that the suspension of smallpox vaccination campaigns after the disease was eradicated in 1980 might inadvertently be helping monkeypox spread. Smallpox vaccines also protect against monkeypox, but mass immunization was stopped decades ago.

"Aside from people in west and Central Africa who may have some immunity to monkeypox from past exposure, not having any smallpox vaccination means nobody has any kind of immunity to monkeypox," Happi said.

### Don't Ply...

FROM PAGE 1

The advanced capabilities of Iran's armed forces show the country's great and exemplary power, he stressed, adding that the country's armed forces are "able to defend the interests of the Islamic Republic [even] at a distance of 2,500 km off Iran's coasts."



In line with international efforts against piracy, the Iranian Navy has been conducting patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008, safeguarding merchant containers and oil tankers owned or leased by Iran or other countries.

This is not the first time that Israel boasts of attacking at Iran, and everybody and even the U.S officials are well aware that the Israeli forces do not dare to have any direct attack at Iran because of its deadly consequences.

Israel has always resorted to coward terrorist acts against the Islamic Republic of Iran and it has not shown any guts for direct attack and recent show that Israeli TV channel has talked about is just a laughing stuff.

The Zionist regime knows it well that its days are numbered and its collapse is imminent and any time it will happen. Recent clashes with the Palestinians and resurgence of Palestinians' intifadha will accelerate this collapse and even this fake regime has domestic political rift which it can also help the Palestinians to increase their struggle for bringing down this fake regime faster than the Zionist regime's expectation.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does play a joke with anyone over its red lines which are its national territory and independence and it will not spare any due response to any bully or attack, no matter it comes from which country.

So we recommend the Biden Administration not to be fooled by the Zionists' claims and to stay away from any stupid act against Tehran because Iran is now strong enough to expel any offence and they are better not to test Iran's patience.

God willing the Islamic Republic of Iran has turned into a regional and even world power and it helps the country not to bow down to bullies and the era of the hit-and-run also has ended and everything has changed into Iran's favor and such rehearsal of attacks by the Zionists is not able to affect Iran's determination. So we recommend the Zionist or any hostile country not to play with the lion's tail or else you will regret it.

### Iran, Oman...

FROM PAGE 1

IRNA described the revival of the gas supply contract with Oman as a major diplomatic victory for President Ebrahim Raisi's administration since it took office in August last year.

Raisi is due to Oman on Monday for an official visit to the Sultanate. The trip comes a week after a senior Iranian trade delegation traveled to Oman to discuss increased economic ties between the two countries.

The IRNA report said Owji and Rumhi had also reached agreements on a joint development project for Hengam, a major oil and gas field that is located within the maritime boundaries of Iran and Oman in the Strait of Hormuz.

### Borrell Warns of...

FROM PAGE 1

The obstacle to a deal in Vienna is said to be the US insistence on keeping Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on its so-called terror list. Tehran has said the IRGC is a red line for the Islamic Republic and that any agreement in Vienna must guarantee respecting the country's red lines.

Iran also says the US must guarantee that it will not withdraw from the nuclear deal like what Washington did unilaterally in 2018 under former President Donald Trump

## Titmus Goes Close to 200m Free World Record

DELAIDE (Dispatches) - Ariarne Titmus narrowly missed the world record in a sizzling 200m freestyle swim at the Australian championships as fellow Olympic champion Kaylee McKeown took out the 100m backstroke crown. Young prospect Mollie O'Callaghan, 18, was also on fire and has qualified for four events at the world championships in Budapest next month -- the 50m and 100m backstroke and 100m and 200m freestyle.

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## Bernal Working All Day in Bid to Return

CUNEO (Dispatches) - Colombia's 2019 Tour de France Champion Egan Bernal is "working all day every day" at a training camp in Italy just four months after a near fatal road accident in his homeland. There were fears for Bernal's life when the star rider in cycling's richest team Ineos Grenadiers hit a stationary bus at 62kph in January, suffering multiple broken bones. But on Friday the 2021 Giro champion Bernal was in upbeat mood at a gala on the fringe of the current Giro, near his training camp at Cuneo.

# Warriors Storm Back to Take 2-0 Lead in Western Conference Finals

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - Stephen Curry scored 32 points with six 3-pointers and eight rebounds, Kevon Looney had a career-high 21 points and 12 rebounds, and the Golden State Warriors used one of their signature third-quarter flurries to rally past the Dallas Mavericks 126-117 for a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

Luka Doncic and the Mavericks led most of the way before the Warriors took their first lead of the night on Otto Porter Jr.'s 3-pointer 18 seconds into the fourth. Porter's three-point play with 7:21 remaining made it 100-92.

Doncic scored 18 of his 42 points in the first quarter - two points shy of his 20-point Game 1 total. His 3-pointer with 13 seconds before halftime put Dallas up 72-58 at the break and gave him 24 points.

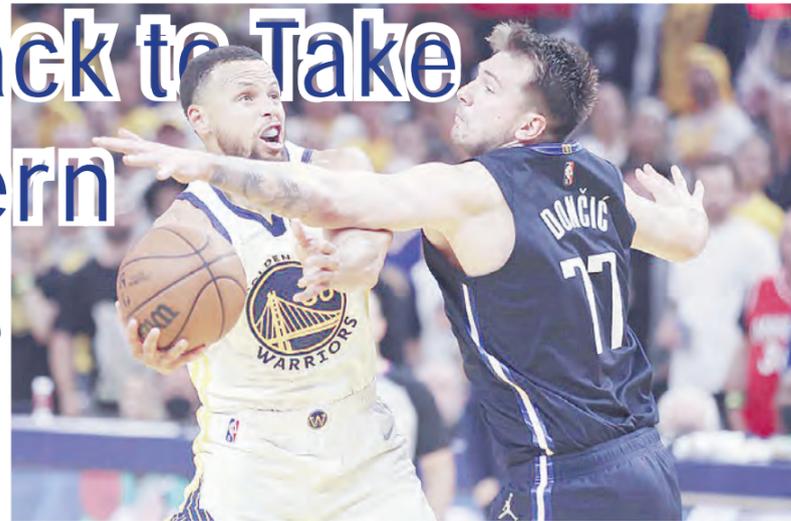
Andrew Wiggins' 3-pointer with 49 seconds left in the third got Golden State back within 83-81 only for Doncic to answer on a layup moments later. But a 25-13 quarter for the Warriors pulled them to 85-83 going into fourth - a third quarter reminiscent of those that defined so many of their recent playoff runs.

Doncic shot 12 for 23 and shined in a game of brilliant shotmaking - the Warriors finished 56.1% from the floor. In the first half alone, Dallas edged Golden State 52.3% to 51.2%, including a remarkable 55.6% to 53.3% from 3-point range.

The series shifts to Dallas for Game 3 on Sunday. Golden State is two wins from a return to the NBA Finals for the first time since making five straight trips from 2015-19.

Meanwhile Defensive Player of the Year Marcus Smart of the Boston Celtics was the leading vote-getter for the All-Defensive first team, with Mikal Bridges of the Phoenix Suns joining him as the other guard.

Former Defensive Players of the Year Rudy Gobert of Utah and Giannis Antetokounmpo of Milwaukee were also voted to the first team along with Memphis Grizzlies forward Jaren Jackson Jr.



Smart received 99 first-place votes and 198 points from the panel of 100 sportswriters and broadcasters. Bridges, the runner-up to Smart for the league's top defensive award, got 95 first-team votes and three second-team votes for a total of 193 points.

Players received two points for a first-team vote and one for a second-team vote. Gobert, the three-time Defensive Player of the Year, was a first-team All-Defensive selection for the sixth straight season. Antetokounmpo made it for the fourth straight season, which includes the 2019-20 season when was both the NBA MVP and Defensive Player of the Year.

Jackson, who led the league with 2.27 blocks per game, is a first-time selection. "We play defense when we play offense, and we play no defense when we can't score," Dallas coach Jason Kidd said. "That's something that we have to get better at this time of the year. You can get away with it in the regular season."

There's a little something about offense Kidd wants the Mavericks to understand, too. Always reliant on 3-point shooting, Dallas took its big lead because those shots were going in.

"We got to attack the paint more, like they did," Doncic said. "They attacked the paint a lot. They have two of the best shooters in the world, and they still attack the paint."

## Mbappe Reportedly Chooses to Stay at PSG In Real Snub

PARIS (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe has decided to stay at Paris Saint-Germain despite weeks of speculation linking the forward to a move to Real Madrid, according to widespread reports on Saturday.

The French World Cup winner has made up his mind to remain faithful to PSG and is poised to sign a three-year extension to his contract which ends on June 30, L'Equipe in France and Spanish sports paper Marca reported.

The player's entourage refused to elaborate but reports suggest PSG could make a statement later Saturday when the club are playing Metz in their final match of the season at the Parc des Princes.

The 23-year-old's 'will-he-won't-he' move to Madrid has kept fans and the two clubs on their toes over the past few months.

Mbappe has made no secret of his desire to play one day for Real, who will play Liverpool in the Champions League final next weekend after securing a 35th Spanish title.

But PSG, who have won the Ligue 1 title for a record-equalling tenth time but angered their hardcore supporters with their limp exit to Real in the last 16 of the Champions League, have battled to hold on to their biggest asset.

## Cuban Boxers Stage Victorious Professional Comeback

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - With five wins by knockout and another by unanimous decision, Cuban boxers made a triumphant comeback in their nation's first professional contest in six decades in Mexico.

Six members of Cuba's "Los Domadores" national team easily overcame their opponents -- five Mexicans and one Colombian -- at the Friday night gala in the central city of Aguascalientes.

The contest will go down in history "not only for Cuban boxing, but also professional boxing, with six Cubans entering through the front door," said team captain Julio Cesar La Cruz, 32.

The two-time Olympic champion won by knockout one minute and 40 seconds into the second round against Colombian Deivis Casseres.

Cuba has long been a powerhouse of Olympic boxing, but participation in professional sport was barred by the late revolutionary leader Fidel Castro in 1962.

After decades of defections by boxers who fled overseas to pursue salaried careers, the communist nation's authorities in April finally opened up participation in professional boxing competitions.

The Cuban Boxing Federation said before Friday's contest that the fighters would be allowed to keep 80 percent of the salary owed to them for each fight.

Four Olympic medalists made their professional debuts in Mexico, including three-time world champion Lazaro Alvarez, along with two-time Olympic champions Roniel Iglesias and Arlen Lopez.

Lopez knocked out Mexico's Fernando Galvan just one minute and 34 seconds into the first round.

"We want to show the high quality of Cuban boxing and that we can go far in professional boxing," he said afterward.

The Cuban squad was rounded out by world champion Yoenlis Hernandez and super featherweight Osvel Caballero.

All the Cubans won by knockout except for Alvarez, who beat his Mexican competitor Francisco Mercado by unanimous decision.

# De Bruyne Named Premier League's Player of the Season



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City midfielder Kevin de Bruyne has been named the Premier League's Player of the Season for the 2021-22 campaign, the league said.

De Bruyne won the award for the second time after also getting the prize in the 2019-20 season.

The Belgium international scored 15 goals and provided seven assists in 29 games this season and has been a key player for City, who need a win in their final game on Sunday to lift their sixth Premier League title. The 30-year-old saw off competition from City team mate Joao Cancelo, Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah, Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min and others.

"There is so much quality in the Premier League and it is a pleasure to be nominated with so many other great players who have had incredible seasons for their clubs," De Bruyne said.

"I think my performances this season have been good and I am happy that I have been able to contribute with goals and assists throughout the season."

## Wimbledon Stripped of Ranking Points Over Russia, Belarus Ban

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wimbledon, widely regarded as the world's most prestigious tennis tournament, was stripped of ranking points by the sport's main tours in a move which threatens to reduce the Grand Slam to the status of a high-profile exhibition event.

The decision by the ATP and WTA was in response to Wimbledon banning Russian and Belarusian players following the invasion of Ukraine.

"It is with great regret and reluctance that we see no option but to remove ATP Ranking points from Wimbledon for 2022," said an ATP statement.

"Our rules and agreements exist in order to protect the rights of players as a whole. Unilateral decisions of this nature, if unaddressed, set a damaging precedent for the rest of the Tour."

"Discrimination by individual tournaments is simply not viable."

When world number one Novak Djokovic won Wimbledon in 2021, he earned 2,000 points. Wimbledon chiefs at the All England Club branded the move by the ATP and WTA as "disproportionate".

The WTA, which operates the women's tour, joined their male colleagues in withholding points for the tournament which starts on June 27.

Wimbledon's ban has ruled out a swathe of top players, including men's world number two Daniil Medvedev and last year's women's semi-finalist Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus as well as two-time major winner Victoria Azarenka.

The ATP, however, hinted at a resolution to the impasse.

"We remain hopeful of further discussions with Wimbledon leading to an acceptable outcome for all concerned." WTA chief executive Steve Simon said that his organization believed "that individual athletes participating in an individual sport should not be penalized solely because of their nationalities or the decisions made by the governments of their countries."



## Klopp Confirms Origi Is Leaving Anfield

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp confirmed that striker Divock Origi will leave the Premier League club at the end of the season.

The Belgium international has not played enough matches to trigger an extension to his contract and has been heavily linked with a move to AC Milan.

The 27-year-old has been a bit-part player since he joined Liverpool in 2014 but has scored vital goals including two in an astonishing comeback against Barcelona in the Champions League semi-finals in 2019.

Origi also scored in the final that year as Liverpool lifted their sixth European Cup against Tottenham.

"I expect Div to get a special reception, or farewell, or whatever," said Klopp, whose side are just one point behind Premier League leaders Manchester City with one game left.

"He is, and will be for me, forever a Liverpool legend (and) one of the most important players I ever had."

"That sounds completely strange with the amount of games he had, but it is, and was, a pure joy to work together with him."

Klopp, whose side host Wolves on Sunday, said it would be a "harsh moment" when Origi leaves Anfield.

"I remember so many things when I think about Div that's incredible -- important goals, injuries... bad injuries, and all these kinds of things -- ups and downs," he said. "He is a Liverpool legend, no doubt."

