

Twitter Suspended the Iranian Communication Minister Isa Zarepour's Account on Friday Just A Couple of Days After His Speech During the World Summit of Information Society Held in Geneva

# IRAN NEWS

The Islamic Republic of Iran Has Welcomed the Extension of the Ceasefire for More Two Months Agreed by Those Involved in the Yemen Conflict, the Spokesman at The Foreign Ministry Announced

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Regional States Urged To Cooperate to Prevent Israeli Intrusion



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Turkmen Gas Swap Through Iran to Azerbaijan to Double



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## Tehran Slams Grossi's Visit to Israel

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says the visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s chief Rafael Grossi to Israel ahead of the Monday meeting of the Board of Governors is in contradiction with the agency's principles of observing impartiality and maintaining its technical and professional status.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a phone call with the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Friday while pointing to the "destructive" measures of the Zionist regime, which is the "main culprit of illegal nuclear activities in the world."

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## Enemies' Efforts to Pit Iranians Against Establishment "to No Avail"



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says the enemies are seeking to pit the Iranian people against their government and the Islamic establishment but all to no avail.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks on Saturday at a ceremony marking the 33rd anniversary of the passing of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution.

The Leader said, "Western countries mainly pin their hopes on the popular protests in order to overthrow the Islamic Republic."

"They hope to set people against the Islamic establishment, by launching psychological warfare, recruiting mercenaries, and staging media campaigns against Iran," he said.

However, the Leader noted, "the enemies are making miscalculations as they did before" by erroneously believing that they can cause public dissent in the country.

He said they make such mistakes as they get "wrong advice" from "Iranian traitors" who say: "Count on the Iranian people to rise up against the Islamic establishment."

The enemies in the U.S. takes these pieces of "wrong advice, they make speeches at the Senate and inside the country. Some are naïve to suppose that people have lost their faith in religion and the clerics," he reiterated.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Iranians' "belief and interest in the Islamic Revolution and the religion has grown even more than the first day," citing the funeral procession held for Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said, "Iran will not reach an impasse" despite some who claim otherwise on social media.

He also underlined that the West has plundered nations all the way from Asia to Africa and South America for the last three centuries.

"While the West has been ravaging the world... murdering, torturing and establishing slavery, their thinkers adopted human rights laws," he said, adding this paradox in speech and actions is a "masterpiece of the West civilization."

Ayatollah Khamenei also emphasized "the enemy's lies, deceptions, and psychological warfare must be exposed."

He touched upon the recent illegal seizure of an Iranian oil tanker by Greece and the confiscation of its oil by the U.S., praising Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) for retaliating Athens' act of piracy.

Days after the Iranian oil tanker was captured by Greece in its territorial waters, the IRGC naval forces seized two Greek oil tankers in the Persian Gulf over violations.

The Leader said that the enemy has "accused Iran of stealing in their media campaigns," however, "taking back what is stolen from you is not called stealing, you are the thieves."

The leader also said, "Now that the enemy is seeking to run [Iranian] officials down, it is of greater importance to appreciate the officials," he said, citing a building collapse in Abadan in southern Iran.

He added that while those who are behind the deadly incident must be punished, it is imperative to be grateful to the officials who traveled to the city and met the victims' families and supervised the rescue operation.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader said that Imam Khomeini helped align dualities which had been meant to contradict one another.

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## 4 INTERNATIONAL

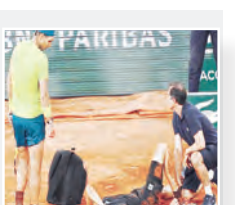
Russian Troops Trying to Cut Access To Sievierodonetsk



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## 8 SPORT

Nadal Into 14th French Open Final



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## Sanctions Unable to Hinder Iran Oil Industry Progress

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Oil Minister said that those who imposed sanctions think they can impede Iran's development and progress through the terroristic tool of sanction while it is a double-edged sword with which they have to grapple.

Delivering a speech at Baku Energy Forum in presence of the ministers and representatives of about 30 countries, Javad Owji referred to Iran's success in oil and gas production, saying, "Iran's oil and gas development has not been stopped despite cruel sanctions imposed against the country over years."

Iran, as a holder of the largest gas capacity in the world, currently has about 34 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves and is able to meet a significant amount of global needs, he noted.

"At present, we have the capacity to produce 1 billion cubic meters of gas per day," he said, adding, "Our oil production capacity is close to 4 million barrels, and we produce about 92 million tons of petrochemical products per year."

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## (P)GCC in No position to Comment On Iran's Missile Program

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has condemned baseless claims made by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (P)GCC against the Islamic Republic, especially about its national defense program, saying the body is in no position to comment about the country's missile program and issues pertaining to its military and defense policies.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh rejected the anti-Iran allegations made in a statement by the GCC at the end of their 152nd session of the Ministerial Council in Riyadh and said such "repetitive and destructive" statements show a "completely wrong approach" adopted by some member states and their "strategic confusion" vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic.

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## Confrontational Moves At IAEA Undermine Iran Cooperation With Agency

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The Chinese Foreign Ministry has warned against undermining the existing cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) through "confrontational moves" against the Islamic Republic during the upcoming meeting of the Agency's Board of Governors.

The ministry's spokesman, Zhao Lijian, made the remarks in reaction to reports that the US, the UK, France and Germany have prepared a draft resolution, pushing the Board of Governors "to rebuke" Iran in its June 6 meeting.

"China opposes relevant countries' moves to pressure Iran by pushing the IAEA Board of Governors to adopt a resolution," he said.

Lijian added that exerting more pressure on Iran "cannot solve any problems," and "will only escalate tension and complicate the situation."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman noted that the negotiations in the Austrian capital city of Vienna on the revival of the 2015 deal between Iran and world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), are now at a critical juncture.

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IN HIS EXALTED NAME

South Kaveh Combined Cycle Power Plant Hormozgan Province

## INVITATION TO PREQUALIFICATION

South Kaveh Steel Company (PJS) intends to award construction of South Kaveh Combined Cycle Power Plant (the "Power Station") with nominal capacity of 500 MW (±10%) on Built, Operate and Transfer (BOT) schemes, consisting of Class F combined cycle Block(s), all ancillaries and auxiliary equipment, common systems and the necessary interfaces, located in Hormozgan Province, Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone, to a qualified and competent investor through an international tender.

South Kaveh Steel Co. (PJS) (the "Off-Taker") will prepare a short list of bidders possessing the necessary qualifications via this invitation to prequalification after the required process and evaluation, then will evaluate and select an eligible Investor (successful bidder) possessing the required financing and technical capabilities and will award the engineering, procurement, construction and total financing of the Project (BOT basis) to said investor (the Company).

Development and Construction periods: 3+33 Months

Authorization period: 15 years.

Off-Taker consultant: MESSINAN Engineering Company

Interested applicants are hereby invited to send their letter of interest and then obtain (buy) prequalification documents, within seven (7) calendar days after the second posting of this invitation notice up to twenty-one (21) calendar days after the second posting of this invitation notice, in the following ways:

A) A representative of the applicant, carrying a valid proxy letter, may refer in person to

South Kaveh Steel Co. (PJS),

Postal Code: 1467883741

No. 1, Corner of 7th Alley, The Intersection between the North Falmak St. and North Zarafshan St., Phase 4, Shahrak-e-Gharb, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Tel.: +98-21-88569750, Ext. 2163 (Mr. Abbasian), Fax: +98-21- 88570749

B) Visiting the South Kaveh Steel Co. (PJS) website at www.skSCO.ir and submitting the payment receipt to pertinent Email as monagheseh-02@skSCO.ir



## FM Amirabdollahian to Visit India

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian will be on India visit next week, with key focus expected to be on connectivity especially via Chabahar port, and on the situation on Afghanistan, Indian media have said.

This will be Amirabdollahian's first visit ever to India since taking charge last year. He was expected to visit India earlier this year, but that got postponed as India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar was confirmed with Covid-19, the Indian English-language website "wionews" reported.

Chabahar remains the key focus area of engagement as India is developing the 1st Phase of Shahid Beheshti Port at Chabahar. After operations began at the Chabahar port in December 2018, the port has handled more than 8200 TEUs and 1.28 million tons of bulk cargo.

## Regional States Urged To Cooperate to Prevent Israeli Intrusion

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi has warned against Israel's plot to infiltrate into the region, urging regional nations to remain fully cautious in the face of the Tel Aviv regime's attempts to gain a foothold there.

In a phone call with Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan, Raisi said the Zionist regime is by no means a friend of the regional nations, adding that it has committed "unprecedented" acts of oppression against the Palestinian people.

He pointed to the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and reiterated Iran's support for the advancement of peace talks between the two countries.

Raisi expressed hope that the remaining issues between Baku and Yerevan would be solved peacefully in accordance with international law while respecting the two sides' territorial integrity and national sovereignty as well as rights and security of the people in the Caucasus region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is deeply committed to the point that regional issues must be resolved through consensus and cooperation among all countries in the region and on the basis of common interests and mutual respect," the Iranian president added.

According to reports, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azeri President Ilham Aliyev announced last month that their respective countries would be setting up border security and delimitation commissions, signaling a step towards the



settlement of a decades-long conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Pashinyan and Aliyev met in Brussels in April for rare talks mediated by the European Council President Charles Michel.

The Iranian president further warned against Israel's plot to infiltrate into the region and urged regional nations to remain fully cautious in the face of the regime in order to prevent it from gaining a foothold.

He said the Zionist regime is by no means a friend of the regional nations, adding that it has committed "unprecedented" acts of oppression against the Palestinian people.

Raisi said Tehran supports the expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the fields of energy and transportation which would promote peace and stability and ensure economic prosperity in the region.

"As part of its principled policies, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes and heeds preservation of the regional geopolitics, including international borders, respect for national sovereignty of countries and strengthening of the inter-regional communication infrastructure," the Iranian president pointed out.

The Armenian president, for his part, commended Iran's important and effective role in the region and its stance on regional developments.

Khachaturyan said Armenia is keen to boost economic, trade, political and cultural cooperation with Iran, noting that regular sessions of the two countries' joint economic committee would certainly facilitate the expansion of relations.

## Iran, Norway, Italy Representatives Discuss Problems of Syrian People

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Ali-Asghar Khaji, a senior aide to Iranian Foreign Minister, in separate meetings in Geneva with representatives of Norway and Italy, reviewed ways to help remove economic problems of the Syrian people and the humanitarian crises in Syria.

The meetings were held as a meeting of Syria's constitutional law committee is being held in the UN European office in the Swiss city.

During the meetings, Khaji and the Norwegian and Italian sides appreciated the measures taken by the government of Syria, particularly a general amnesty order by the president of the country.

They called for continuation of such moves in different areas to alleviate the sorrows of the Syrian people.

## Official Blames Racial Discrimination in U.S.

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary-General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi has said that the exodus of African American staffers from the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden shows the existing systemic racism in American society.

Gharibabadi made the comment on his twitter page.

He tweeted: "The exodus of African American staffers from the White House #Blaxit is emblematic of the systematic racial discrimination against non-White ethnic minorities. They describe the work environment in the WH with little support from their superiors and fewer chances for promotion."

American media have reported that more than 20 Black aides at the White House have left the Biden administration since late last year, with some citing a lack of mentorship and opportunity as the reason for their departure.

The departure has been labeled as Blaxit.

## Kuwait Seizes Iranian Boat With Three Sailors

TEHRAN (MNA) - Kuwaiti authorities have said they have seized an Iranian boat and arrested three people, media have reported.

The Kuwaiti authorities have said that they have captured the Iranian boat based on charges of intercepting and robbing local fishing vessels, according to its Interior Ministry.

"The maritime patrols of the General Administration of Coast Guard intercepted an Iranian boat carrying three people after receiving several reports against them in the southern region stating that they had robbed and intercepted fishing vessels," the interior ministry tweeted on Thursday, according to "thenationalnews" website.

Investigations are continuing, the ministry said.

## Iran Dismisses FBI Claim About Cyberattack as Baseless

NEW YORK (IRNA) - Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations categorically dismissed a claim by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about what it says was an Iranian cyberattack against an American hospital as baseless.

Iran itself is a victim of the U.S. and Israeli cyberattacks against its infrastructures, including its nuclear facilities, the Iranian mission said.

"...This baseless allegation is an example of psychological warfare against Iran & thus of no value," it said.

"It is ironic that such a disinformation campaign is spread by the FBI almost a year after the alleged cyberattack, calling into question the validity of the claim," the Iranian mission added.

FBI Director Christopher Wray on Wednesday held Iran responsible for an alleged cyberattack against Boston Children's Hospital which he said had happened a year ago.

He claimed that FBI managed to defuse the attack before any serious harm to the hospital's computer network.

## Tehran, Norway Sign MoU On Political Consultations



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - A memorandum of understanding on political consultations was signed between Iran and Norway during the visit of the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs to Oslo.

The tenth round of Iran-Norway political consultations was held during the visit of Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri to Oslo.

At the end of the tenth round of Iran-Norway political consultations, which was co-chaired by Ali Bagheri and Henrik Thune Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway, a memorandum of understanding between Iran and Norway was signed by both parties.

A number of bilateral, regional, and international issues were discussed at the meeting.

Bagheri Kani said that Iran and Norway have to make efforts to strengthen the political resolve of the two countries for further promotion of bilateral relations.

He said that benefits of bilateral relations between the two countries in the midst of the global food and energy crises will go beyond the interests of Iran and Norway and would benefit the whole Europe.

More cooperation of Iran and Norway to help remove the problems of Afghan refugees and launching an efficient fight against the root causes of insecurity in Afghanistan and the region were among other issues discussed by the two sides.

He also warned the Zionist regime to stop daydreaming to attack the Islamic Republic.

Bagheri Kani made the remarks in an interview with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) that "Zionists can merely imagine attacking Iran in their daydreaming, and whenever they dream it, they will never wake up of such a dream!"

The Iranian diplomat answered a question made by interviewer of the Norwegian government-owned radio and television public broadcasting company, undermining potential military attack by the Zionist regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

For several years, the Israeli officials have claimed that they want to prepare their military apparatus to attack Iranian nuclear facilities, but facts on the ground have shown that they are not capable of doing such a mistake at all.

Iran has proved that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes and it has cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency to implement agreements and supervisions by the UN nuclear watchdog.

## Political Interference in IAEA's Technical Affairs Unconstructive

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has described any political interference in the technical affairs of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as "unconstructive," stressing the need for avoiding political approaches in the forthcoming meeting of the Agency's Board of Governors.

Iran's top diplomat made the remarks in a phone call with his Singaporean counterpart, Vivian Balakrishnan, during which the two sides discussed bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest.

During the call, Amirabdollahian said an end should be put to the creation of "artificial and unconstructive circumstances" during the forthcoming meeting of IAEA's Board of Governors.

"The process of technical cooperation between the Agency and the Atomic Energy Organization [of Iran] and the frequent emphasis put on the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program by the Agency cannot be reversed all of a sudden and through a hasty political statement," Amirabdollahian said.

"During the recent visit to Iran by [Director General of the IAEA Rafael] Grossi, we reached a mutually satisfactory agreement through a positive process. We believe that political interference in the technical affairs of the Agency is totally unconstructive," Iran's foreign minister added.

Amirabdollahian emphasized that Iran is serious about achieving a "good, lasting and strong" agreement in the negotiations held in the Austrian capital city of Vienna to revive the landmark 2015 deal.

"An agreement is within reach, provided that all parties [to the Vienna talks] commit to diplomacy and their obligations in a realistic manner and avoid posing threats," Iran's foreign minister said.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has already warned to respond strongly and proportionately to any "unconstructive move" at the upcoming meeting of the UN nuclear watchdog, which will be held on June 6.

## Iranian, Russian FMs Discuss Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian talked with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on phone on issues of mutual interest and most important regional and international developments.

Amirabdollahian focused on the latest status of bilateral relations, and issues that were discussed during the last meeting of the two countries' presidents in Moscow.

He said that messages between Iran and America have been exchanged continually through the EU during the past two months aimed at removal of the sanctions, but the unconstructive move made by the United States and the three European countries in drafting the IAEA Board of Governors resolution and the anti-Iranian propaganda are disrupting the atmosphere of the nuclear negotiations.

The Iranian foreign minister also referred to the preparation of a roadmap for the future of Iran-IAEA cooperation during the last visit of IAEA Chief Rafael Grossi to Tehran, emphasizing that the responsibility of the aftermaths of issuing any anti-Iranian resolution

during the next week session of the IAEA is up to those sides that have disturbed the diplomatic process.

The Russian foreign minister, for his part, expressed delight for his upcoming visit to Tehran, arguing that Tehran-Moscow comprehensive ties are expanding in every possible dimension.

Sergei Lavrov said that Moscow is definitely opposed to the US-EU3 draft resolution at the IAEA Board of Governors.

He said that that draft has no positive effect on the process of nuclear negotiations and the Iran-IAEA issues need to be resolved in the process of bilateral technical cooperation.

The two sides, meanwhile, focused on the comprehensive bilateral cooperation documents, ways for broader economic cooperation, especially between the Iranian and Russian public and private sectors, and the latest developments in Russia-Ukraine war.

In that respect, Amirabdollahian stressed the importance of negotiations between Kiev and Moscow, which was confirmed by his Russian counterpart.

## Tehran Ready to Dispatch Medical Aid, COVID Vaccines to Nairobi

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian voiced Tehran's readiness to dispatch medical humanitarian aid, such as COVID vaccines to Kenya.

The foreign minister made the remarks during a phone conversation with his Kenyan counterpart Raychelle Omamo.

The two foreign ministers discussed bilateral relations, as well as international issues.

Amirabdollahian stressed the significance of relations with African countries, Kenya in particular, and called for further cooperation between Iran and Kenya in dealing with common threats, such as terrorism and piracy.

He said that there are good potentials for expansion of relations in all trade and private sector areas between the two countries.

The Kenyan foreign minister, for her part, referred to Iran's strategic position in the region and expressed hope that holding an upcoming joint commission would lead to further enhancements of bilateral ties.

Omamo also highlighted the necessity for expansion of cooperation in regional and international areas.

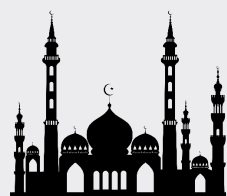
## Imam Khomeini Airport Officials Deny Cyberattack on Airport

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport officials denied any "cyberattack" on the airport in response to the disruption to the airport's passport system.

Javad Salehi, a spokesman for Imam Khomeini Airport City, declared the disruption to the airport's passport system on Saturday morning, June 4, a "technical and hardware failure of the offline server" and said the problem had been "resolved." Speaking about the details of the problem, Salehi said, "The online server sends data to the offline server throughout the process, and if it does not receive data, it will stop the process of sending information on its own."





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:03
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:38
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:03
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48

56. But thee We only sent to give glad tidings and admonition.  
57. Say: "No reward do I ask of you for it but this:  
that each one who will may take a (straight) Path to his Lord."

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (56 - 57)

## Turkmen Gas Swap Through Iran to Azerbaijan to Double

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Oil Minister Javad Owji says the country has reached agreements with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to double the amount of natural gas exchanged between the three as part of a deal reached in November.**

Owji said on Thursday that Iran, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan had almost finalized agreements for doubling the volume of gas mentioned in their swap deal.

Under the current agreement, Turkmenistan supplies 5-6 million cubic meters per day of gas to Iran's northeastern regions while Iran supplies the same amount to Azerbaijan on its northwestern border.

"Fortunately, everything is ready for the increase (of the volume) in the gas swap agreement and it will be doubled very soon," Owji told reporters in the Azerbaijani capital Baku, where he held talks with senior government officials and attended an energy forum.

The Iranian oil minister said the increase had been discussed in talks in Tehran, Baku and Ashgabat in recent months.

Owji had indicated in January that the country has the capacity and infrastructure required to increase the volume of gas swapped with Turkmenistan to 40 mcm per day or 10-15 billion cubic meters per year.

Iran's current administrative government has hailed the gas swap operation with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan as a major success in the field of energy diplomacy.



Experts say the deal has allowed Iran to deepen its economic ties with the two neighbors. Reports say Iranian state and private firms have signed major deals with counterparts in Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan in recent months.

Reports in the Iranian media published last week suggested that Iran is working on similar oil and gas swap arrangements with Russia, a country where energy exports have been targeted by Western

Meanwhile Owji and Azerbaijani Minister of Economy Mikayil Jabbarov signed a memorandum of understanding to increase Turkmen gas transfers through Iran to Azerbaijan.

Owji met and held talks with Jabbarov on Friday in Baku, Azerbaijan.

During the meeting, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding on enhancing mutual cooperation.

Under the memorandum of understanding, the parties agreed to double the volume of gas transported from Turkmenistan to the Republic of Azerbaijan via Iranian lines.

The two sides also discussed other economic issues of mutual interest in the areas of energy, oil, gas, transportation, and bilateral trade.

### Iran, Kazakhstan

#### Discuss Energy Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Oil Minister Javad Owji and Kazakhstan's Minister of Energy Bulat Aqchulaqov, in a meeting in Baku, discussed ways for further cooperation in energy areas.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 27th Baku Energy Forum.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed mutual cooperation on upstream and downstream parts of petroleum industry and different types of energy cooperation.

Both sides stressed the potentials for widespread cooperation in oil and gas sectors.

The Iranian minister left Tehran for Azerbaijan's capital on Wednesday to attend the 27th Baku Energy Forum and negotiate with the officials present at the three-day event.

### Iran, Georgia

#### Discuss ICT Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Senior Iranian and Georgian officials held talks aimed at paving ground for mutual cooperation on information communication technology.

Deputy Iranian Minister of Information and Communications Technology Mohammad Khansari held talks with the Georgian deputy minister for economy and sustainable development.

The talks took place in Geneva on the sidelines of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) 2022.

The Iranian and Georgian officials agreed to revive a memorandum of understanding the two countries signed in 2017 for cooperation on communication and information technology, and form a working group tasked with re-launching negotiations in this regard.

The World Summit on Information Society, sponsored by the United Nations, is the largest global gathering on information and communication.

This year, the annual gathering began on March 15. Its final week takes place on May 30-June 3.

### Iraq, Iran Call for Cooperation in Healthcare Sector



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iraqi and Iranian officials have discussed ways to enhance collaborations in medicine and healthcare sector.

Iranian Minister of Health and Medical Education Bahram Einollahi is paying a visit to Baghdad and Najaf cities to hold separate meetings with Iraq's high-ranking officials, including President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim.

The Iraqi premier described Tehran-Baghdad ties as very important, calling for expansion of cooperation, in particular in healthcare and medicine.

According to Iraqi News Agency (INA), al-Kadhimi and Einollahi discussed ways to develop mutual relations.

The Iraqi prime minister pointed to firm historical and social affinities between the two neighboring states, underlining the need for cooperation in line with providing both brotherly nations with various services.

The Iranian minister noted that exchange of professors and students, as well as medical equipment and medicines, between Iraq and Iran are among capacities, which should be attached importance.

As another leg of his stay in Iraq, Einollahi held talks with President Salih, when both sides emphasized on the exchange of experiences between the two countries and the need for implementing inked agreements.

In the meeting, which was held at al-Salam Palace, Einollahi conveyed Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's greetings to his Iraqi counterpart that was welcomed and replied by the Iraqi president warmly.

Salih and Einollahi further assessed the consolidated ties between the two neighboring states in line with interests of both nations.

The Iranian health minister expressed Iran's support for security and stability in Iraq, hoping that mutual collaborations will guarantee both countries' interests.

In another meeting, the minister also met with Iraqi Cleric Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim.

According to media office of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the two sides discussed common challenges, including COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected both nations.

The meeting between Einollahi and Hakim was held in holy city of Najaf. The Iraqi side called for unity between Iraqi and Iranian health sectors to cooperate and exchange experiences in dealing with medical challenges.

Hakim noted that healthcare crises like coronavirus pandemic helped improve capacities and capabilities, adding that Iraq and Iran have been successful in fighting the crisis.

## CBI Given Sweeping Powers to Intervene in Forex Market

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has been allowed to openly intervene in the country's foreign exchange market to dampen prices that have climbed to near record highs in recent days.

Reports in local media published on Thursday said that heads of the three branches of the Iranian government, who form the top decision-making body in the country, had authorized sweeping powers for the CBI to intervene in the forex market.

The reports said the new mandate would enable the CBI to restore calm to a market where foreign currency prices have soared in recent days.

The Iranian rial traded at 316,500 against the US dollar on Thursday, slightly lower from prices reported at the close of trade a day earlier.

The price is a near-record low for the rial in recent years. The currency has lost much of its value since the United States pulled out of an international deal on Iran's nuclear program in 2018 and imposed sanctions on the country.

However, the official IRNA news agency said that hard currency prices will drop after the CBI starts to implement its new forex policies.

The Tasnim news agency said CBI managers had held an emergency meeting with a group of currency exchange businesses late on Wednesday to brief them about the new policies.

CBI Governor Ali Salehabadi confirmed on Wednesday that the lender will be given a special mandate to intervene in the exchange market.

Iran has reported a surge in oil export revenues in recent months despite American sanctions targeting the sales.

Authorities say the country has no concerns about the supply of foreign exchange needed to fund imports of basic goods into the country.

## China's Import From Iran Surges 25%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - China's General Administration of Customs has declared that the South Asian country's trade exchanges with Iran experienced 16 percent increase in first four months of the current year (2022), showing the volume of bilateral exchanges exceed more than 5 billion dollars in the same period.

The latest statistics of that country's General Administration of Customs indicate that the trade volume increased from 4.33 billion dollars in the same period in 2021 to 5.025 billion dollars in four months of January to April in 2022.

China's import from Iran hiked 25 percent, reaching 2.489 billion dollars in the first four months of the current year, while the South Asian country imported 1.982 billion dollars of commodities from Iran in the same period last year.

It is worth mentioning that oil has been the major imported item from Iran, which experienced an increase in recent months as well.

The value of China's export to Iran mounted 8 percent from January to April, reaching 2.536 billion dollars, while it stood at 2.348 billion dollars in the same period last year.

China and Iran signed the 25-year strategic cooperation agreement in March 2021 to expand economic, political and technological collaborations.

China's General Administration of Customs also announced that the country's total global trade stood at 1975 billion dollars in the first four months of the current year, showing 10 percent increase comparing to the same period last year.

Interestingly, 1004 billion dollars out of the total number allocated to trade exchanges with other

Asian countries, which is more than half of foreign trade volume of the country.

China's trade exchanges with Europe stood at 272 billion dollars, indicating only 9 percent increase in comparison with the same period last year.

China-US trade showed 11 percent increase, reaching 245 billion dollars from January to April. China exported 185 billion dollars of goods to the US and imported only 60 billion dollars of commodities from the Western country.

## Tehran Calls for All Countries' Contribution in Managing World's Cyberspace

GENEVA (IP) - The Iranian Minister of Communications and Information Technology stressed adopting strategies for managing the world's cyberspace so that all countries could play a role in managing it.

World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 (WSIS Forum) has kicked off on May 30, and it will continue to June 3, 2022, in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Iranian Minister of Communications and Information Technology, who is attending the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland, explained the purpose of the trip and the most important points of the summit in an interview with Iran Press news agency.

Referring to the meeting with the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Houlin Zhao, Iran's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Issa Zarepour, explained that Zhao had praised the Iranian efforts to develop communications and information technology.

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology of Iran added that the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union promised to cooperate in developing communications and technology in Iran and employing specialized Iranian staff in the ITU.

Zarepour also said that one of the most essential discussions Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland was the adoption of strategies for managing the world's cyberspace so that all countries could play a role in managing it.

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology of Iran stated that all countries' cultures and special conditions should be considered in any regulation of cyberspace. This idea was considered by the participants in the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland.



## Saudi Receives First Foreign Hajj Pilgrims

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia on Saturday welcomed its first batch of hajj pilgrims since before the coronavirus pandemic, which prompted authorities to sharply restrict the annual ritual.

The group from Indonesia landed in the city of Medina and was set to travel south to the holy city of Mecca in the coming weeks to prepare for the hajj next month, state media reported.

"Today we received the first group of this year's pilgrims from Indonesia, and the flights will continue from Malaysia and India," Mohammed al-Bijawi of the country's Hajj Ministry told the state-run Al-Ekhbariya channel.



## Bomb Kills Two Peacekeepers in Mali

BAMAKO (Dispatches) - Two UN peacekeepers were killed and one wounded after an improvised bomb exploded in central Mali, a spokesman for the MINUSMA mission tweeted.

They were just the latest deaths in the center of the country, which has since 2012 been wracked by a deadly jihadist insurgency.

In a separate incident, six civilians were killed when a cart hit another explosive device a day earlier, a military official and two councilors said.

The soldiers were part of the Egyptian contingent of the UN peacekeeping mission, a security official said.



## Russian Troops Trying to Cut Access to Sievierodonetsk



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said Moscow had reinforced its troops around Sievierodonetsk and attempted to cut off Ukraine's access to the industrial city, the focus of a Russian offensive to take the eastern Donbas region.

Serhiy Gaidai, governor of Luhansk province, said Russian forces were blowing up bridges across the Siverskyi Donets river to prevent Ukraine bringing in military reinforcements and delivering aid to civilians in Sievierodonetsk.

"The Russian army, as we understand, is throwing all its efforts, all its reserves in that (Sievierodonetsk) direction," Gaidai said in a live TV broadcast on Saturday.

"Russians are blowing up bridges, so we could not bring in reinforcements to our boys in Sievierodonetsk," he said. Since being driven back from the capital Kyiv, Russia has launched a massive assault in Luhansk and Donetsk, two provinces that make up the eastern Donbas region.

For both sides, the fighting in the east in recent weeks has been one of the deadliest phases of the war, with Ukraine saying it is losing 60 to 100 soldiers every day.

Ukraine's military said on Saturday Russia had used artillery to conduct "assault operations" in Sievierodonetsk, but Russian forces retreated and Ukrainian troops are holding positions inside the city, around 145 kilometres (90 miles) from the Russian border.

Russian soldiers also attempted to advance towards Lysychansk, across the Siverskyi Donets river from Sievierodonetsk, but were stopped, Ukraine's military general staff said.

Reuters reached Sievierodonetsk on Thursday and was able to verify that Ukrainians still held part of the city.

In neighboring Donetsk province, Russian troops were just 15 km (9 miles) outside the city of Sloviansk, regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told Reuters on Friday.

Britain's defence ministry said on Saturday that Russian air activity remains high over Donbas, with Russian aircraft carrying out strikes using both guided and unguided munitions.

In Ukraine's southern Odesa region on Saturday morning, a missile hit an agricultural storage unit, wounding two people, the regional administration's spokesman wrote on Telegram.

Tens of thousands have died, millions have been uprooted from their homes and the global economy disrupted in a war that marked its 100th day on Friday.

Ukrainian officials are counting on advanced missile systems recently pledged by the United States and Britain to swing the war in their favor, and Ukrainian troops have already begun training on them. read more

## German Lawmakers Approve 100b Euro Military Revamp

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's Bundestag, the lower house of parliament, approved creation of the 100 billion euro (\$107.2 billion) special defense fund that Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The money is destined to top up the regular defense budget of around 50 billion euros over several years to help re-build Germany's military, which has suffered years of neglect following the end of the Cold war.

The government decided to amend the constitution to create the fund in order to exempt it from Germany's so-called debt brake that enforces fiscal restraint. It needed backing from the opposition conservatives as well as the ruling coalition in order to reach the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed for a constitutional change.

The fund should enable Germany to meet the NATO target of spending 2% of its economic output on defence each year, making it the world's third-biggest military spender behind the United States and China. The Kremlin earlier on

Friday accused Germany of "remilitarization" as it moved to boost military spending and said it increased security risks.

The Bundestag also passed a budget foreseeing 139 billion euros of new debt this year - Germany's second-highest-ever level - to cushion Europe's biggest economy against fallout from the Ukraine conflict.

The budget required parliament to allow an exemption from Germany's debt brake for a third year in a row, with the new debt to go towards funding aid for households and companies struggling with high energy prices as well as support for Ukrainian refugees and Kyiv.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner wants to return to the brake next year, which according to government sources would allow the Cabinet to spend no more than 15 billion-17 billion euros in new debt.

Separately on Friday, the Bundestag approved raising Germany's minimum wage to 12 euros per hour from 9.82 euros currently - one of the key election promises of Scholz and his Social Democrats.



## S. Korea, U.S. Stage Rare Drills With Air Carrier

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea and the United States staged their first combined military exercises involving an American aircraft carrier in more than four years, Seoul's military said on Saturday, amid reports that North Korea was preparing for a nuclear test.

The three-day drills took place in international waters off the Japanese island of Okinawa until Saturday, including air defense, anti-ship, anti-submarine, and maritime interdiction operations, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

The exercises came amid signs that North Korea is gearing up to conduct a nuclear test for the first time since 2017. Seoul officials have said Pyongyang has conducted multiple experiments with a detonation device in preparation for its seventh underground explosion.

The USS Ronald Reagan, a 100,000-ton nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, joined the drills, alongside the guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam, the Aegis-equipped USS Benfold destroyer, and the Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn, the JCS said.

South Korea also sent the 14,500-ton Marado amphibious landing ship, the 7,600-ton Sejong the Great destroyer, and the 4,400-ton Munmu the Great destroyer, among others.

It was the allies' first joint military exercise since South Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol took office last month, and their first bilateral exercises involving an aircraft carrier since November 2017.

"The exercise consolidated the two countries' determination to sternly respond to any North Korean provocations, while demonstrating the U.S. commitment to provide extended deterrence," the JCS said in a statement.

At a recent summit with Yoon, U.S. President Joe Biden promised to deploy "strategic assets" - which typically include aircraft carriers, long-range bomber aircraft or missile submarines - if necessary to deter North Korea as part of efforts to bolster the extended deterrence.

On Friday, nuclear envoys from the United States, South Korea and Japan met in Seoul to brace for "all contingencies." read more

## India Decries Biased U.S. Report on Religious Freedom

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India has defended its record on religious tolerance and rebuked the United States for its own rights issues after a report accused Indian officials of supporting attacks on minority worshippers.

Washington's annual report on religious freedom around the world contained a rare - if indirect - criticism of New Delhi, its emerging ally, on Thursday, documenting incendiary comments by Indian public officials and accounts of discrimination against Muslims and Christians in India.

New Delhi's foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said on Friday that senior U.S. officials had made "ill-informed" and "biased" comments coinciding with the report's release.

"As a naturally pluralistic society, India values religious freedom and human rights," Bagchi said in a statement.

"In our discussions with the U.S., we have regularly highlighted issues of concern there, including racially and ethnically motivated attacks, hate crimes and gun violence," he said. Like its neighbor China, India frequently bristles at foreign criticism of its rights record.

New Delhi has routinely denounced the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an autonomous government panel, which has repeatedly recommended India be put on a blacklist.

U.S. politics, Canada's multiculturalism, South America's geopolitical rise—we bring you the stories that matter.

The State Department is highly unlikely to take action against India, identified by successive U.S. administrations as a key strategic partner in the face of a rising China.

The report on religious freedom globally in 2021 said attacks on members of minority communities, including killings, assaults, and intimidation, occurred throughout last year in India. These included cow vigilantism - assaults on non-Hindus for allegedly slaughtering cows or trading in beef.

Many Hindus, who account for about 80 percent of India's 1.35 billion people, consider cows sacred and several states ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party have enacted laws or toughened old ones against slaughtering cows.

Modi's Hindu nationalist government has also championed a series of measures that critics have called discriminatory.

"In India, some officials are ignoring or even supporting rising attacks on people and places of worship," Rashad Hussain, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, said at the report's launch on Thursday.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the report showed religious freedom and the rights of religious minorities were under threat around the world.

"For example, in India, the world's largest democracy and home to a great diversity of faiths, we've seen rising attacks on people and places of worship," Blinken said.



## Biden to Visit Saudi Arabia in Coming Weeks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - United States President Joe Biden is set to visit Saudi Arabia in the coming weeks amid a larger shift in tone towards the kingdom, according to multiple U.S. media reports.

On Friday, Biden said he has "no direct plans" to go to the kingdom for now, but he did not rule out the visit.

The trip would signal the most distinct departure to date from the Biden administration's pledges to "recalibrate" ties with longtime ally Saudi Arabia for alleged human rights abuses. Biden called the country a "pariah" in 2019.

News of the visit comes as Washington has increasingly turned to Riyadh and other major fossil fuel producing countries in an effort to replace Russian oil and stabilize global markets following the invasion of Ukraine.

There are concerns that high prices at the gas pump could hurt Biden's Democratic Party in the upcoming midterm elections, in which it will fight to maintain majorities in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate.

The reported trip will be added to a planned visit to Israel and Europe in June, unnamed U.S. officials told multiple outlets, although details were still being hammered out.

Biden is also set to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) during the visit, according to multiple reports.

In 2021, a U.S. intelligence report directly implicated MBS in the 2018 killing and dismemberment of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Riyadh has rejected the findings.

In the wake of the report, Washington indicated that Biden would not be dealing with MBS directly going forward, as his predecessor, former President Donald Trump, had done, but would only engage directly with his counterpart, King Salman.

Prior to taking office, Biden had said in a 2019 debate that as president he would make Saudi Arabia "pay the price" for Khashoggi's killing, "and make them in fact the pariah that they are".

The White House has struck a distinctly different tone in recent months, with White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Thursday praising "the leadership of King Salman and the crown prince of Saudi Arabia" in the extension of a truce between warring sides in Yemen.

For his part, Biden said on Friday that while he has not changed his views on human rights, his job is to "bring peace" where possible. He did not confirm or deny reports of the possible upcoming visit to the kingdom.



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## Russian Gas Exports Drop 27% in January-May

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's Gazprom said today its gas exports to countries outside of the former Soviet Union dropped by more than a quarter year-on-year between January and May after losing several European clients.

Exports to countries outside the region totalled 61 billion cubic metres, a 27.6 per cent fall from the same period last year, the energy giant said in a statement.

Gazprom added that gas deliveries to China via the "Power of Siberia" pipeline were increasing, but it did not provide any figures.



## Global Factory Growth Stunted by War

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global growth in factory activity slowed in May as China's strict coronavirus curbs and Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupted supply chains and dampened demand, adding to woes for businesses already struggling with surging raw material prices. Manufacturing growth slowed last month in economies as diverse as France, Japan to Malaysia, business surveys showed on Wednesday, illustrating the challenge policymakers face in trying to combat inflation while not stifling anemic economic activity.

S&P Global's final manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the euro zone fell to 54.6 in May from April's 55.5, its lowest since November 2020 though just ahead of a preliminary reading of 54.4. Anything above 50 indicates growth.

In Britain, manufacturing activity expanded last month at the weakest rate since January 2021 as producers of consumer goods struggled against a worsening cost-of-living crunch.

"Inflation is driving up the cost of doing business and dampening some consumer demand," said Simon Jonsson at KPMG.

"The conflict in Ukraine has caused new and worsened supply shortages, while COVID-19 restrictions in China, and border friction closer to home, have also adversely impacted UK manufacturing."

China's Caixin/Markit Manufacturing PMI showed a further contraction there, standing at 48.1 in May although improving slightly from April's 46.0, a private survey showed. That was in line with official factory activity data released on Tuesday.

While COVID curbs are being rolled back in some cities, suggesting China's manufacturing slump has bottomed out, analysts do not expect a rapid rebound like in early 2020, saying fears of fresh outbreaks will continue to weigh on confidence and demand.

"Disruptions to supply chains and goods distribution may gradually ease as Shanghai's lockdown ends. But we're not out of the woods as China hasn't abandoned its zero-COVID policy altogether," said Toru Nishihama, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute in Tokyo.

"Rising inflation is forcing some Asian central banks to tighten monetary policy. There's also the risk of market volatility from U.S. interest rate hikes. Given such layers of risks, Asia's economy may remain weak for most of this year."

Lockdowns in China have snarled global logistics and supply chains, with both Japan and South Korea reporting sharp declines in output.

Japan's manufacturing activity grew at the weakest pace in three months in May, and manufacturers reported a renewed rise in input costs, the PMI survey showed, as the knock-on effects of China's lockdowns and the Ukraine conflict pressured the economy. The final au Jibun Bank Japan PMI fell to a seasonally adjusted 53.3 in May from 53.5, marking its slowest pace since February.

In a glimmer of hope, South Korea's exports grew at a faster pace in May than a month earlier, separate data showed on Wednesday, as a rise in shipments to Europe and the United States more than offset fallout from China.

The monthly trade data, the first to be released among major exporting economies, is considered a bellwether for global trade.

## Malaysian Factory Output Hits Wall in May

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Global supply disruptions, price increases to raw materials and a drop in new orders caused Malaysia's manufacturing sector to stagnate in May, according to S&P Global Malaysia.

In the S&P Global Malaysia Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI), Malaysia fell from 51.6 in April to 50.1 in May. A score below 50 denotes contraction while a score above 50 signals expansion.

The research house noted that while Malaysia was marginally inside the expansion zone, its latest position indicated broad stagnation to the sector.

Citing the historical link between manufacturing performance and countries' economic output, S&P Global Malaysia also suggested that the latest result meant the resurgence in Malaysia's GDP growth was about to end.

"Manufacturers continued to struggle in May against the headwinds of elevated price pressures and supply chain delays, as well as labor shortages," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"Lockdowns in mainland China in particular continue to aggravate the supply situation which, alongside difficulties sourcing workers, has led to a deteriorating factory production trend."

Manufacturers reported a sharp decline in new orders in May, causing output volumes to recede for a fifth consecutive month.

Companies also reported lower hiring levels in May, which resulted in the sharpest fall reported since August 2020 or during the height of the initial Covid-19 wave.

Among others, firms complained of continued difficulties in sourcing migrant labor and an inability to replace workers who have quit.

Problems with sourcing and receiving raw materials continued to put pressure on input prices, which have risen consistently for two years.

Despite the conditions, however, Williamson said firms still held a positive view of the future.

"Optimism has been buoyed by stronger export sales and signs of a possible peaking of both supply delays and input cost inflation.

"Supply chains lengthened to the least extent for almost a year in May, and input costs rose at the slowest rate since last September; both welcome indications that the supply and inflation crisis may be starting to ease," he said.



## U.S. Manufacturing Activity Accelerated in May

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - American factory growth sped up in May after slowing in the prior two months, even as employment contracted and firms continue to face supply challenges, according to a business survey released today.

The Institute for Supply Management said its manufacturing index rose to 56.1 per cent from 55.4 per cent in April, beating expectations and staying above the 50-per cent threshold indicating expansion for the 24th consecutive month.

Prices showed signs of easing, but employment entered contraction territory, falling 1.3 points to 49.6 per cent, the report said.

"The US manufacturing sector remains in a demand-driven, supply chain-constrained environment," ISM manufacturing survey chair Timothy Fiore said.

"Sentiment remained strongly optimistic regarding demand." However, he said, 10 per cent of firms surveyed said they continue to have difficulty getting material from Asian suppliers.

"Overseas partners' disruptions are beginning to impact US manufacturing, creating a near-term headwind for factory output growth," he said.

The Covid-19 lockdowns in China have been exacerbating shortages experienced in recent months of the pandemic, fuelling the global inflation surge.

However, the ISM survey showed the prices index fell for the second straight month to a still-high 82.2 per cent in a sign pressures may be easing. The index has been above 70 per cent in 17 of the past 18 months.

But Fiore cautioned that "instability in global energy markets continues." Comments from survey respondents reflected signs of optimism.

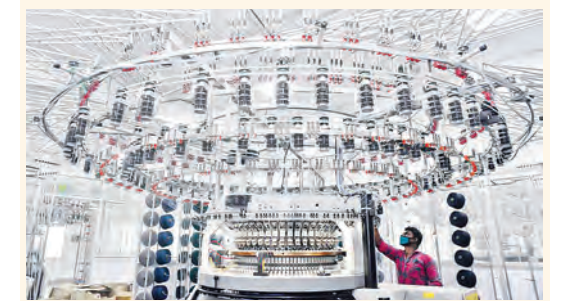
"Suppliers are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel for restoration of (semiconductor) component supply," one Computer & Electronic Products executive said.

Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics flagged the positive signals in the report but said even though China is loosening lockdowns, supply issues will persist.

"Supply-chain conditions will remain highly strained and are unlikely to return to pre-Covid norms any time soon," he said.

"Growth in the manufacturing sector will moderate, but a mix of still-healthy goods spending and plenty of backlogs will keep factory output rising in the second half of 2022."

## India's May Factory Activity Remained Strong



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - India's factory activity expanded at a better-than-expected pace last month as overall demand remained resilient despite persistently high inflation, encouraging firms to hire at the fastest rate since January 2020, according to a private survey.

The survey comes just a day after official data showed Asia's third-largest economy expanded at an annual rate of 4.1% during the January-March quarter, its weakest in a year, amid rising risks from price pressures.

Still, the Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (INPMI=ECI), compiled by S&P Global, came in at 54.6 in May, slightly lower than April's 54.7 but above the 50-level separating growth from contraction for an eleventh month.

It was better than the Reuters poll median prediction of 54.2.

While new orders, a gauge of overall demand, increased strongly last month, albeit at a slower pace, foreign demand grew at its strongest pace since April 2011 despite worries over the Russia-Ukraine war, China's economic slowdown and high inflation.

"India's manufacturing sector sustained strong growth momentum in May," noted Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at S&P Global.

"In response to demand resilience, companies continued with their efforts to rebuild stocks and hired extra workers accordingly."

Firms hired workers at the quickest rate in nearly two and a half years, welcome news for the labor market. Unemployment rose to 7.83% in April from 7.60% in March, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, a Mumbai-based private think tank.

But surging prices remained a major concern.

Although input price inflation eased a bit in May, output prices jumped at their fastest pace since October 2013, suggesting overall inflation would remain elevated over the coming months, which might aggravate the cost of living crisis.

"While firms appear to be focusing on the now, the survey's gauge of business optimism shows a sense of unease among manufacturers," added De Lima.

## Sri Lanka Seeking \$3b Under IMF Extended Fund Facility

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka is in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to borrow at least \$3 billion via the lender's extended fund facility (EFF), sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The island state's government expects another round of technical talks with the IMF in early June and hopes to reach to a staff-level agreement as soon as the end of this month, two of the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

A spokesperson for the IMF didn't immediately reply to a request for comment. Spokespeople for Sri Lanka's finance ministry and central bank didn't respond to a request for comment.

Sri Lanka has requested a rescue plan to overcome its worst economic crisis since independence in 1948. It defaulted on some overseas debt earlier this year and is struggling to pay for imports of basics such as fuel and medicine.

An EFF program, which would be the 17th IMF plan for the nation, requires countries to make structural economic reforms "to correct deep-rooted weaknesses," according to the IMF's website. These programs normally last three years with a grace period of 4-1/2 years to start paying back the loan, once the plan is approved.

A \$3 billion deal would represent almost four times the country's quota with the IMF.

The IMF said last week it was in talks with Sri Lanka for a "comprehensive" reform package, but didn't specify what type of program was being negotiated.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took office in May after mass protests forced the resignation of his predecessor, Mahinda Rajapaksa, plans to present an interim budget within weeks.

## Turkey Hikes Gas, Power Prices

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey raised natural gas and power prices and its energy importer blamed a "perfect storm" in global markets, feeding into an inflationary surge in the country that likely hit a 24-year high last month.

Turkey imports virtually all of its energy needs, leaving it vulnerable to the big price rises seen this year, and soaring world energy costs in recent months sharply raised the import bill.

Overall inflation of at least 70% and lira weakness have become a major headache for President Tayyip Erdogan ahead of elections set for mid-2023, with polls showing dwindling support for him and his ruling AK Party over the economic strains.

Natural gas prices were raised by 30% for households, by 16.3% for gas used in electricity production and by 10.2% for gas used in industry, state energy importer BOTAS said.

This follows a 35% hike in household gas prices in April.

"The public knows well that with the impact of the perfect storm in global and European energy markets consumers have been left exposed to exorbitant energy prices," BOTAS said.

It said global price rises had not been passed on at the same level to Turkish consumers and the latest hikes were designed to keep the impact on consumers at a minimum level.

Separately, the energy market regulatory authority (EPDK) raised electricity prices by between 15% and 25%, according to the Official Gazette.

Annual inflation hit 70% in April and May data is due on Friday. It is expected to have risen to 76.55% due to high energy and food prices and the weakening lira, with the end-year forecast at 63.5%, according to a Reuters poll.

The lira was flat at 16.4275, having weakened 20% this year in addition to a 44% slide in 2021 following a series of unorthodox interest rate cuts sought by Erdogan.

Data on Wednesday showed Turkish manufacturing activity contracted for a third month running in May as both output and orders slowed amid muted demand and the ongoing price pressures.

Gas price rises were initially seen pushing the consumer price index (CPI) up 50 basis points and the power price hike was seen contributing 35 basis points, according to calculations by three economists. Natural gas has a weight of 1.55% in the CPI, while electricity has a weight of 2.32%.



## Iranian Actress Named Jury Member at Tribeca Festival

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian actress Niki Karimi has been selected as a jury member at the 21st Tribeca Film Festival. The 21st Tribeca Film Festival will be held on June 8-19. Niki Karimi has been selected as a jury member at the 21st Tribeca Film Festival. Born in 1971, Niki Karimi commenced her cinematic activity in 1989, but her most significant debut was made in the film "The Groom" directed by well-known Iranian director Behrouz Afkhami in 1990. She has been selected to be a jury member at several national and international film festivals.



## SWIFT: Crucial Cog of Global Banking System

PARIS (Dispatches) - By booting more Russian banks from SWIFT over the war in Ukraine, the West has left them out of the backbone of the international financial transfer system.

The European Union agreed yesterday to exclude three more Russian banks from SWIFT, including the country's biggest, Sberbank, as part of a sixth set of sanctions over the conflict.

The EU had previously kicked seven Russian banks out of the financial messaging system in an effort to cripple the country's banking sector and currency.

*Here are five questions regarding SWIFT:*

### What is SWIFT?

Founded in 1973, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT, actually does not hold funds or manage accounts itself.

But its messaging system, developed in the 1970s to replace the use of ageing Telex machines, provides banks the means to communicate rapidly, securely and inexpensively.

The non-listed, Belgium-based firm is actually a cooperative of banks and proclaims to remain neutral.

### What does SWIFT do?

Banks use the SWIFT system to send standardized messages about transfers of sums between themselves, transfers of sums for clients, and buy and sell orders for assets.

More than 11,000 financial institutions in over 200 countries use SWIFT.

But its preeminent role in finance has also meant that the firm has had to cooperate with authorities to prevent the financing of terrorism.

### Who represents SWIFT in Russia?

According to the national association Rosswift, Russia is the second-largest country following the United States in terms of the number of users, with some 300 Russian financial institutions belonging to the system.

More than half of Russia's financial institutions are members of SWIFT, it added.

Russia does have its own domestic financial infrastructure, including the SPFS system for bank transfers and the Mir system for card payments, similar to Visa and Mastercard.

### Are there precedents for excluding countries?

In November 2019, SWIFT "suspended" access to its network by certain Iranian banks. The move followed the imposition of sanctions on Iran by the United States and



threats by then-Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that SWIFT would be targeted by US sanctions if it didn't comply.

Iran had already been disconnected from the SWIFT network from 2012 to 2016. Seven Russian banks were excluded in March.

Sberbank had not initially made the list in order to allow EU countries to pay for Russian gas and oil deliveries.

Gazprombank, the financial arm of Russian energy giant Gazprom, remains in the system. Most of EU payments for Russian oil and gas deliveries go through that bank.

### Is exclusion an efficient weapon?

In practical terms, being removed from SWIFT means Russian banks cannot use it to make or receive payments with foreign financial institutions for trade transactions.

Sberbank said today that it was not affected by the new EU sanctions, pointing to previous US and UK measures that already isolated its financial system.

It said the cutoff from SWIFT "does not change the current situation for international transactions", while transactions within Russia do not use the Belgium-based messaging platform.

Excluding a major country such as Russia could also spur Moscow to accelerate the development of an alternative transfer system with China.

## Enemies' Efforts to...

FROM PAGE 1

"He put religious spirituality and people's vote together" and accordingly, "put economic justice and wealth creation together," Ayatollah Khamenei added, stressing that "we neither oppress anyone nor do we accept being oppressed."

And he said that Iran will "strengthen its economy and improve its knowledge," and concomitantly "ensure security and build up defense".

"We have to observe national cohesion and unity and at the same time we have to respect diversity and different views," he added.

Commenting on life and legacy of the Founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini, the leader said that "Imam Khomeini was the spirit of Islamic revolution... who belongs not only to yesterday but today and tomorrow."

"The Islamic revolution notched up victory with people's presence, and in less than two months after the victory people took part in a referendum and chose the government system," he said.

"No one else except for Imam Khomeini could shoulder the heavy weight of leading a revolution," he stressed, adding that "He trusted people from the very first day."

## Tehran Slams Grossi's...

FROM PAGE 1

Grossi is on a trip to Tel Aviv and has met the regime's hawkish Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

The Monday meeting will come as a pause in the marathon negotiations to revive the 2015 Iran deal has entered its third month, with prospects described by Washington as "tenuous at best." Tehran blames the U.S. and its three European allies - France, Britain, and Germany - for failing to act constructively.

The high-profile visit by Grossi is against the backdrop of the latest report by the IAEA on Iran's nuclear program amid the stalemate in Vienna talks between Tehran and the P4+1 group of countries to salvage the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In a statement issued on Friday, Israel told the UN nuclear watchdog it would prefer diplomacy to end the stalemate on Iran's nuclear program. However, the statement said Israel reserves the right to self-defense and could take independent action if the international community fails to stop Iran's nuclear program within "the relevant time frame."

According to the statement, the Israeli prime minister "stressed (to Grossi) the importance of the IAEA Board of Governors delivering a clear and unequivocal message to Iran in its upcoming decision."

Grossi said on Twitter that he had met Bennett in Tel Aviv at his invitation and held "important exchanges on topical issues."

"I stressed (to Bennett) the importance of @IAEAorg safeguards and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) for global peace and security," Grossi tweeted.

Unlike Israel, Iran is an NPT signatory and has consistently maintained that its nuclear program is exclusively civilian and subject to the most intensive UN supervision on earth.

Amirabdollahian told Borrell Iran was resolute on achieving a "good, strong and enduring" agreement with the five remaining parties to the JCPOA on the deal's revival and the removal of sanctions against Tehran.

The top Iranian diplomat rebuked the recent move by the United States and the three European signatories to the JCPOA to prepare a resolution urging Tehran to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog, saying it was a "hasty and unconstructive" behavior that contravenes diplomacy and would further complicate the Vienna talks.

"Any political action by the United States and the three European countries in the IAEA will undoubtedly meet with a proportionate, effective and immediate response from the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Amirabdollahian also hailed Borrell's efforts in the course of the negotiations and reiterated Iran's determination to continue the talks with the P4+1 group until achieving a final result through a realistic approach.

For his part, Borrell criticized certain attempts to thwart the talks. The senior EU diplomat underscored the importance of continuing consultations to distance from the current negative atmosphere in the IAEA and to focus on the continuation of the negotiations.

Amirabdollahian and Borrell also discussed the latest developments in the removal of sanctions against Iran and other issues pertaining to ties between Tehran and the EU. The two diplomats urged the IAEA to pursue a neutral and professional approach.

## Pakistan Eyes \$5b Trade Volume With Turkey

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif said the country's trade volume with Turkey is "insufficient" considering their fraternal relationship as he set a trade volume target of \$5 billion within three years.

Paying a three-day official visit to Turkey at the invitation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Sharif spoke at the Turkey-Pakistan Business Forum in Ankara.

"When this happens, I am the happiest person. I will be. We have everything necessary to reach that level," he noted.

Noting that Turkey has the world's leading contractors, he praised the Turkish construction sector and called attention to the many infrastructure projects the country has been carrying out around the world, especially in the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia.

Alluding to the current \$1.1 billion trade volume between the two countries, Shehbaz Sharif said: "Unfortunately, the brotherly relationship between Turkey and Pakistan does not reflect adequately on commercial relations."

Businesspeople from both countries are determined to increase trade and investments, he underlined.

"Economic barriers and obstacles between the two countries should be allowed to be overcome. Whatever is necessary should be done in this regard," he said.

He also invited Turkish businesspeople to his country, saying: "We have learned from the mistakes we made in the past. I do not make any political accusations. We will roll out the red carpet in our country, we will serve you Turkish coffee."

Also speaking at the forum, Turkey's Trade Minister Mehmet Muş noted that trade with Pakistan increased by 22.5% in 2021 compared to the previous year despite the pandemic's negative impact on world economies.

"When we look at the first four months of this year, there is an increase of approximately 7% compared to the same period last year. This is pleasing, but we are far behind the level," he underlined.

Meanwhile, the chair of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, said the visa application procedure is a serious obstacle to trade between the two countries.

"At least, we need to save the business world from this visa problem," he noted.

In 2018, the sale of military ships to Pakistan went down in history as the largest single-item export deal in the history of the Turkish defense industry.

The value of the deal is \$1 billion. Soon after, another agreement of greater value was inked, which was the sale of 30 ATAK helicopters to Pakistan, this time with a volume of \$1.5 billion.

## (P)GCC...

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He pointed to the statement's claims about Iran's nuclear program and its negotiations with the P4+1 group of countries in the Austrian capital of Vienna on the revival of the US-abandoned 2015 deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and said raising such issues only demonstrates the depth of the council's inattention to the obvious facts, which would bring nothing but discredit for the (P) GCC.

"While this council has turned into the largest arsenal of American and Western weapons in the world, it is not in a position to comment on the missile program and issues related to military and deterrent policies [of Iran]," the spokesperson said. The Saudi-led (P) GCC, in its statement, described Iran's nuclear program as a "challenge" facing the body. It also accused Iran of supporting "terrorism" and "destabilizing behavior" in the region, among others.

He said the issuance of such "clichéd" statements pursues no special purpose but creating a regional crisis and is apparently aimed at neutralizing the results of Iran's diplomatic engagement with its neighbors.

Khatibzadeh once again reiterated that the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are an "integral and eternal" part of Iran's territory, adding that the country strongly condemns "any claim about these islands as interference in its internal affairs and territorial integrity." The repetition of such interventionist positions in any form is completely rejected and will have no effect on the existing legal and historical realities," the senior Iranian diplomat said.

He emphasized that Iran, based on its strategic approach and principled policies, has always believed that interaction and cooperation with the neighboring states are the solution to regional issues and "welcomes affirmative initiatives in the field of the expansion of relations based on international principles and rules."

## Sanctions Unable to...

FROM PAGE 1

"Our daily gas output capacity has to reach 1.4 billion cubic meters in the next 8 years," he said, adding, "The world is in severe need of energy and Iran can meet a part of it. The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes investment in gas production and trade."

"Iran is located at the crossroads of the world energy transit. Large energy producers such as Russia and Turkmenistan are situated in north of Iran and Qatar is in the south. We have the capacity to transfer such huge resources to consumer markets," he said.

People around the world need to have access to energy, Owji said, adding that the Islamic Republic of Iran wants all people in the world to enjoy this God-given blessing and is prepared to cooperate in all sectors of oil and gas development, trade and transmission internationally and regionally through good and strong infrastructure in the country.

Referring to the holding of the Iran Oil Show, he described the localization of energy technologies in

Iran a good opportunity for joint cooperation with regional countries, saying, "[Iran's] experience in Turkmenistan gas swap to the Republic of Azerbaijan can be repeated for all neighboring countries."

"We have the second largest gas pipeline network, after Gazprom, and good projects have been defined in LNG sector. We have not even cut off the gas flow to the countries which delay their payments and we invite all nations and companies interested in making investment in oil industry's upstream and downstream sectors, as well as in transmission of the energy carriers," he said.

Considering the clean energy as one of the country's priorities, Owji said, "This year, we have produced about 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy which is scheduled to reach 4,000 megawatts by the next four years."

Iran's Oil Minister was in Azerbaijan to participate in Baku Energy Week and hold talks with officials attending the three-day international event.

## Confrontational Moves...

FROM PAGE 1

Therefore, he added, "confrontational moves at the IAEA Board of Governors will only undermine cooperation between Iran and the agency and disrupt the negotiation process."

The forthcoming meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors comes as a pause in the negotiations to revive the deal enters its third month, with prospects described by Washington as "tenuous at best." Iran blames the U.S. and its three European allies - France, Britain, and Germany - for failing to act constructively.

"We believe that the pressing task at the moment is to facilitate a smooth conclusion of the negotiations and bring the JCPOA back to the right track," the Chinese diplomat said elsewhere in his remarks.

Lijian also advised the United States to "make political decisions as soon as possible," and "actively respond to Iran's legitimate concerns and work toward an early consensus on outstanding issues."

"All relevant parties should create necessary conditions and a favorable environment for this," he added.



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## Valencia Set To Sign Gattuso

MADRID (Dispatches) - Valencia have sacked Jose Bordalas as coach, the club confirmed today, with Gennaro Gattuso being lined up to replace him. Valencia finished a disappointing ninth in La Liga last season, although they did reach the final of the Copa del Rey, which they lost on penalties to Real Betis. The club have also been cutting costs in recent seasons and have sold a number of key players without replacing them. Bordalas, who had one year left on his contract, criticized the board's transfer strategy in January.

## Lacazette Leaves Arsenal With No Contract Extension

LONDON (Dispatches) - French striker Alexandre Lacazette will leave Arsenal when his contract expires this month, the Premier League club said today, bringing the curtain down on his five-year stint with the north London side. Signed in 2017 for a then club record £46.5 million (RM256 million) from French side Olympique Lyonnais, Lacazette was the club's top scorer in a season twice. But the 31-year-old lost his place in the starting lineup this season after scoring only six goals in all competitions.

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SPORTS

MONDAY JUNE 6, 2022

# Nadal Into 14th French Open Final

PARIS (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal reached his 14th French Open final when Alexander Zverev was forced to quit their semi-final after suffering a sickening right ankle injury. Zverev had to leave the court in a wheelchair after turning his ankle as he chased down the ball in front of the players' boxes on Court Philippe Chatrier where his team and family were sitting.

The German was trailing 7-6 (10/8), 6-6 after more than three hours of play at the time of the horror injury.

As his piercing screams of pain echoed around the 15,000-seater court, a tearful Zverev was helped from the court by medics.

Minutes later, the 25-year-old returned on crutches and conceded the match, with Nadal embracing his heartbroken opponent.

"It's very tough and very sad for him. He was playing an unbelievable tournament and he's a very good colleague on the tour," said 13-time champion Nadal.

"I know how much he's fighting to win a Grand Slam. For the moment, he was very unlucky. I'm sure he'll win not one, but much more than one. I wish him all the best.

"It had been a super tough match. Over three hours and we didn't even finish the second set. It's one of the biggest challenges on the tour when he's playing like he did today."

He added: "For me, to be in the final of Roland Garros is a dream, without a doubt, but at the same time, for it to finish that way... I have been there in the small room with Sascha and to see him crying like that -- I wish him all the best."

Nadal, chasing a record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title, will play either Marin Cilic or Casper Ruud in Sunday's final.

Until the dramatic end of the match, Zverev had been pushing Nadal all the way.

In a rollercoaster, 91-minute first set, Zverev broke in the opening game before Nadal levelled at 4-4.

The Spaniard, dripping with sweat under the closed roof, saw three set points come and go in the 10th game as the German's



all-or-nothing hitting kept him in the match.

Nadal, celebrating his 36th birthday Friday, then saved four set points in a knife-edge tiebreak, one of them off a spectacular running crosscourt forehand.

A blistering forehand pass gave him the opener on a sixth set point.

Zverev, playing in the semi-finals at Roland Garros for the second successive year, hit 25 winners and 26 unforced errors.

The second set was punctuated by eight breaks of serve. When Nadal broke for 2-1, he did so on the back of an exhausting 44-shot rally.

Nadal becomes the second oldest man to make the final in Paris after 37-year-old Bill Tilden who was runner-up in 1930.

Victory saw Nadal, who knocked out world number one and defending champion Novak Djokovic in the quarter-finals, take his record at the French Open to 111 wins and just three losses.

If he wins the final, he would be the tournament's oldest champion, eclipsing 34-year-old compatriot Andres Gimeno who took the title in 1972.

Nadal has made his 30th Grand Slam final despite his own doubts over his long-term future in the sport.

A chronic left foot injury has forced him to admit that any match may be the last of his record-breaking French Open career.

He needed over four hours to see off Felix Auger-Aliassime in five sets in the last-16 and then required another four hours to defeat Djokovic in four sets.

## LeBron Becomes First Active NBA Player Worth \$1b

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Los Angeles Lakers superstar LeBron James has become the first active player in NBA history with a net worth of \$1 billion, Forbes magazine reported.

The 37-year-old forward, a four-time NBA champion and four-time NBA Most Valuable Player, ranks second on the league's all-time scoring list and has played in the league since 2003.

In the Forbes list of highest-paid world athletes from May 2021 to May 2022, James ranked second in total income with US\$121.2 million, trailing only Argentine playmaker and Paris Saint-Germain star Lionel Messi's \$130 million.

The Lakers struggled to a 33-49 season and James missed the playoffs for only the fourth time in his career, but he still became the oldest player to average 30 points a game, hitting 30.3 per contest.

In a 19-year NBA career, James has made more than US\$385 million in salary alone as a player for the Cleveland Cavaliers, Miami Heat and Lakers.

Off the court, James took a star turn in Hollywood with the film Space Jam: A New Legacy and sold a minority stake in his production company, SpringHill.



## Marquez Undergoes Successful Arm Surgery

ROCHESTER (Dispatches) - Six-times RMotoGP world champion Marc Marquez has undergone a successful fourth operation on his arm as the Spaniard targets return in the 2023 season, MotoGP organizers said.

The Repsol Honda rider, who broke his arm at the 2020 Spanish Grand Prix, last went under the knife 18 months ago but was hampered by the injury again in recent months.

"Repsol Honda Team's Marc Marquez has completed surgery on his right humerus at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The medical team have deemed the operation a success as Marquez's recovery begins," MotoGP said in a statement.

The 29-year-old will stay in the United States for the coming days before heading back home to continue his recovery.

Marquez suffered a huge crash in qualifying at the Italian Grand Prix last weekend but recovered to finish 10th on Sunday in what was likely his final race of the campaign. He will finish the season in ninth place.

Riders head to Barcelona this weekend for the ninth race of the season.

## Dumoulin to Retire at The End of the Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Dutch cyclist Tom Dumoulin will retire from professional cycling after the 2022 season, the former Giro d'Italia champion announced.

Dumoulin, who currently races for Team Jumbo-Visma, won the Giro in 2017 while also claiming time trial silver medals at the Olympics in 2016 and 2020.

The 31-year-old, who finished second in the 2018 Tour de France, said he has had a frustrating year after suffering from "fatigue, aches and injuries".

"For a while now there has been a disbalance between my 100% dedication, everything I do and sacrifice for my sport and what I subsequently get out of it in return," he wrote in an Instagram post.

"With a lot of patience and a very cautious (training) approach, I'm convinced that I could get back to my full potential on the bike.

## Mane to Listen to Senegalese People on Liverpool Decision



LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool forward Sadio Mane said he will listen to the Senegalese people while deciding his future at the Premier League club amid speculation that he could leave Anfield with just a year remaining on his current contract.

Mane, who has been linked with a move to German champions Bayern Munich, earlier said that he would announce a decision following last weekend's Champions League final against Real Madrid, which Liverpool lost 1-0.

Speaking ahead of Senegal's Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Benin today,

the 30-year-old told reporters that he had seen an online poll that showed a majority of his compatriots were in favour of a summer move.

"Like everyone else, I'm on social media and I see the comments," said Mane.

"Isn't it between 60-70 per cent of Senegalese that want me to leave Liverpool? I will do what they want. We will see soon. Don't be in a hurry because we will see this together. The future will tell us."

Mane signed for Liverpool from Southampton in 2016 and has been an integral part of Juergen Klopp's side, winning the 2018-19 Champions League and the league title the following season.

He also helped Liverpool to the League Cup and FA Cup double last season, contributing 23 goals in all competitions.

## Celtics Storm Back to Beat Warriors

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - The Boston Celtics staged a furious fourth quarter comeback to beat the Golden State Warriors 120-108 and stun the home team in Game One of the NBA Finals in San Francisco.

In his Finals debut, veteran forward Al Horford was sensational for the Celtics, scoring a team high 26 points including 4-for-4 shooting in the final frame.

The Celtics squad made a combined 21 three pointers and saw five players finishing in double digits behind a balanced attack that made up for an off-night from forward Jayson Tatum.

"That's kind of who we've been all year: tough, grinders, a resilient group," Celtics rookie head coach Ime Udoka told reporters.

The Celtics looked all but dead when the Warriors turned a two-point halftime deficit into a 92-80 lead entering the fourth quarter.

But the visitors roared back, outscoring the Warriors 40-16 in the final frame behind nine three pointers to steal home court advantage and improve to 8-2 on the road this postseason. It marked the Warriors first home loss of this year's playoffs.

Warriors guard Stephen Curry opened the game red hot, scoring 21 points in the first quarter to send the crowd of gold-and-blue clad "Dubs" fans into a frenzy.

But the athletic and long Celtics defense limited Curry to just 13 points the rest of the game.

Perhaps the best news for the Celtics is that they managed to win despite Tatum scoring 12 points on 3-of-17 shooting.

"We don't expect JT to have a tough shooting night like that again," Udoka said.

"I don't know if you attribute it to jitters, some of the defense they were throwing at him ... but it shows what we are, which is a team."

The Warriors remained upbeat despite the disappointing finish.

"They stayed within striking distance, and they made shots late," said Warriors guard Draymond Green.



## Danes Shock France With 2-1 Victory

PARIS (Dispatches) - Andreas Cornelius came off the bench to fire two goals for Denmark as they came from behind to defeat France 2-1 in their Nations League Group A1 clash at the Stade de France.

Karim Benzema, who lifted the Champions League trophy with Real Madrid at the same venue last Saturday, looked like he was headed for another stellar night as he had an early shot smothered and then a goal ruled out for offside.

His strike partner Kylian Mbappe departed at halftime after picking up an injury but Benzema was undeterred, cutting in from the right and playing a one-two with Christopher Nkunku before dribbling past another couple of Danish defenders and firing home in the 51st minute.

The world champions had Denmark under enormous pressure for most of the second half but they levelled through substitute Cornelius when he deftly volleyed home a pass from Pierre Hojbjerg in the 68th minute.

The goal did little to stop the relentless waves of French attacks and Ngolo Kante should have put the home side back into the lead in the 81st minute, but his curling shot smacked off the right-hand post with Kasper Schmeichel stranded.

Denmark remained a danger on the break, with playmaker Christian Eriksen somehow firing his shot straight at Hugo Lloris with the goal at his mercy in the 86th minute, but Cornelius came to the rescue two minutes later.

The 29-year-old beat the offside trap to latch on to Joakim Maehle's long pass and blasted the ball high into the net past Lloris for the winner.

"It was better than even I expected. Fantastic, in front of 80,000 people, we go over and beat the world's best team," a delighted Cornelius told Danish broadcaster TV2.

"We have a strong team and have good players everywhere. We have lots of players who can come in from the bench and keep the level up. We are a small country but we can play with the best," he added.

