

Health Ministry Spokesman
Announced Yesterday That
More than 35,000 COVID-19
Patients Have Recovered Across
Iran While the Death Toll Was 4232


IRAN NEWS

For the First Time, Iran's Exports of
The Defense Industry Succeeded in
Achieving the Technology of
Manufacturing and Producing
Advanced Ionic Filters for New Masks

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2 DOMESTIC

Judiciary Chief
Calls Gaza
"World's Biggest Prison"



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Resumes
Exporting Fuel to Iraq



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Iraqi President
Taps al-Kadhimi for PM



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Man Utd Must Be Ready
For Return To "Normality"



> SEE PAGE 8

\$1.b of Iran's Frozen Assets Released

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Central Bank Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati says 1.6 billion dollars of Iran's assets held abroad have been released.

Hemmati said on y with the legal follow-ups of the Central Bank, the U.S. effort to seize and transfer the CBI's funds in Europe was thwarted.

Hemmati underlined that \$1.6 billion worth of assets belonging to the central bank at Luxembourg's Clear Stream, has now been released.

The money had been frozen since January 15, 2015 at the international central securities depository (ICSD).

"By intelligently monitoring the efforts of the United States and taking the lead in legal action, as well as following the judicial proceedings in Luxembourg, two victories were achieved by the Islamic Republic and the Central Bank of Iran at the beginning of the New Persian Year," he noted.

First, \$1.6 billion belonging to the Central Bank was released and then another branch of the Luxemburg's court issued an interim order not to transfer the same funds to the United States to be distributed among the false claimants of the September 11 incident, underlined Hammati.

Under the U.S. pressure, billions of dollars of Iran's oil money and other funds are held up in several countries at a time when they are urgently needed to fight the deadly coronavirus.

See Page 7

Tehran Blasts "Maximum Expectation" as U.S. Blocking IMF Loan

TEHRAN (PRESSTV) - Iran's Ambassador to Belgium Gholam Hossein Dehqani has cast doubt about the American officials' intention to relieve anti-Iran bans should the Islamic Republic make a direct plea for the removal of sanctions, saying that Washington wants Iran to surrender to US demands.

In an op-ed published by Euronews on Thursday, Dehqani censured Washington over ignoring the global calls for sanctions relief as Iran is battling the deadly new coronavirus, which has killed has killed 4,110 people in the country.

"By this, they probably mean a direct plea to the US government to obtain the relief. They even went so far as to blame the entire international campaign as Iran's sanctions relief scam. Is the US government stalling such relief only pending a direct request from the Iranian side? Or, could it be a matter of the US administration's policy within the broader maximum pressure campaign?" he wrote.

Zarif Hails Russia's Green Corridor Initiative For Coronavirus Battle

TEHRAN (IFP) - In a thread on his Twitter account, posted in Russian language, Foreign Minister Zarif welcomed Russia's idea of creating a green zone amid the outbreak of COVID-19.

"In order to contain the situation of coronavirus, different countries have closed their geographical borders, but opened them to provide assistance," Zarif said.

"(U.S. President) Donald Trump continues to resist the international demand for lifting the sanctions on Iran in order to counter the coronavirus infection. Coronavirus may spread to the neighboring countries," the top Iranian diplomat warned.

"Iran welcomes the Russian idea of 'creating a green corridor instead of an economic war and sanctions'," he added.

His comments came after Russian President Vladimir Putin called for a common plan to support the global economy.

Speaking via teleconference to the leaders of the G-20 group of nations last week, Putin urged the creation of 'green corridors' to transport essential goods and technologies without sanctions as the world continues to battle the coronavirus pandemic.

Leader Hails Nation in Dealing With COVID-19 Outbreak



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has praised the Iranian nation's "shining" performance in the fight against the deadly coronavirus pandemic, which he described as a "test" facing the entire world.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the comments in a live televised speech on Thursday, marking the birthday anniversary of Imam Mahdi (PBUH), the Twelfth and last Shia Imam.

The Leader highlighted the sacrifices that the country's medics have been making to help treat those infected with the disease — called COVID-19 — and rein in the outbreak, which he called a "modern plague" afflicting the world.


Ayatollah Khamenei said the greatest honor in this battle goes to the entire staff members of Iran's healthcare system, who have "placed their own lives and health at the service of people."

The medical society's bravery, the Leader added, "will live on as a happy memory in the mind of this nation."

Ayatollah Khamenei further praised the efforts being made by the health workers who entered the scene voluntarily to back up the fight against the virus, including Basij Forces, students and people from other walks of life.

The Leader also referred to the Armed Forces' major contribution to the national campaign against the disease, saying they "spared no effort in the fields of science, construction and production of health and medical facilities."

See Page 7



شركة مجتمع حجاز فولاد

Sirjan Jahan Steel Complex

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE NO. 99001

Hereby Sirjan Jahan Steel Complex (SJSCO) invites reputable firms and companies to the tender No. 99001, in respect of selling and exporting 20.000 Mt of 5SP Steel Billets (Size; 150 × 150 mm) on the basis of FOB shipping point, therefore interested bidders are invited to obtain the tender documents by sending a formal letter of interest to the E-mail addresses below:
SJSCO.SALES@gmail.com DKMSJSCO@gmail.com

S No.	Description	End Date
1	Submission of Financial Bid	7 (seven) days from tender notice publication

Terms & Conditions:

- The tender documents will be sent to the bidders via E-mail.
- All bids should be sent in sealed envelopes.
- Conditional bids shall not be accepted.
- LOI should be prepared on company's heading, stamped and signed by the authorized signatories.
- No financial bid shall be accepted later than above-said end date of bid submission.
- SJSCO reserves the right to reject any or all the proposals.

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ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

It's Better to Leave Than to Stay

It is better to name the Coronavirus as "destruction of Corona" rather than a virus because all reports and news show that its extensive spread has made the world more fear of it rather than looking at its cruel behavior so that some of leaders have resorted to hide the truth and deny it.

Saudi Family thinks it is better nobody knows the number of people dying how and where. African countries essentially likely do not know how many people have been infected with the virus. The U.S. Navy has fired commander of its aircraft carrier for raising alarm over the outbreak of the virus in the carrier which infected officers and soldiers, and many other countries, each in its own style, is trying to manage the condition as they think it is for their national interests.

But in this horrible health situation and pandemic of the virus in the world, the U.S. still insists on its cruelty and world-mongering, and considers its attitude as part of its power diplomacy. The country still insists on keeping its hegemony for sanctions in the world for defeating its target countries. It still insists on keeping its troops across the world. It still insists on covering its collapsed economy in fighting with Coronavirus from the eyes of world. The country still wants to sort out, through secrecy, its failure in conducting coup d'etat in Iraq for bringing its favorite prime minister to power after the IRGC forces commanders visit to Baghdad foiled it.

These insinuations are mostly because Americans have not yet realized dimensions of Coronavirus destruction. Examples for widespread cruelty of universal globalism have no limits. From Saudi Crown Prince Bin Salman to Zionists, UK, France, Germany and the U.S. all have feared to repent. If, in this short article, we want to point to one example for those tyrannies, we can point to the U.S. confrontation with the nations, it suffices to point to their presence to Iraq. While Iraq's parliament has approved a law which sees foreign forces in the country illegal, Americans are still challenging and confronting it.

They thought if Adnan al-Zurfi became Iraq Prime Minister, they could have changed decision of whole Iraqi people and parliament on the pullout of their foreign forces. This stupidity cannot be compensated with coercion and militarism. Today the world has totally changed. Revolution in telecommunications and widespread dissemination of news in any second, whose tools have been provided to the world by the U.S. itself, has been employed against the hegemony of domination. World public analyze any smallest action and react to it.....See Page 7

Israel Fears Not Surviving Beyond 80 Years

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The head of Lebanon's resistance movement Hezbollah says the occupying Israeli regime is feeling an existential threat to its political survival.

"At the time being, there exists a usurping entity in the occupied Palestine, which is worried about sustaining its political existence," Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech.

"It fears it may not live beyond 80 years," he added.

Israel proclaimed existence in 1948 after overrunning huge swathes of Arab territories. It launched a fresh war in 1967, occupying more Arab land, including the Palestinian West Bank, and began propping up illegal settlements upon the seized lands in defiance of international law.

Backed by the U.S., the regime has been pushing to consolidate its occupation of Palestinian land, but it has failed to do so in the face of resistance from Palestinians and the advocates of the oppressed nation's cause.

The regime's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come to grips with an overwhelming trust deficit after being indicted in three corruption cases earlier this year.

See Page 7

UNIDO to Launch Biomedical Waste Project in Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – According to Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based International Organizations Kazem Gharibabadi, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is planning to launch a hospital waste project in Iran.

According to Gharibabadi, the project is environmental-friendly and is to be run amid the country's battle against the outbreak of COVID-19.

Expressing gratitude to UNIDO and its Director-General Li Yong and China, the Iranian envoy put the value of the project at one million euros, using UNIDO-China finance.

Judiciary Chief Calls Gaza “World’s Biggest Prison”

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a telephone conversation with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi named Gaza the biggest prison in the world.

“Today, about 5,800 Palestinians, including more than 200 women and children are jailed by the Zionists,” he lamented.

“No Muslim can endure that Palestine be surrounded by occupiers,” he noted.

Referring to the dearth of medical facilities in Palestine, under the restrictions imposed by Zionists, Raeisi named the Israeli regime's behavior a ‘crime against humanity’.

He also criticized the silence of international bodies and organizations toward Palestine's situation and the cruelty of the Israeli regime, in particular under the conditions that the deadly coronavirus is a big threat to the lives of Palestinians.

He, elsewhere, addressed the martyrdom of Lit. Gen. Qasem Soleimani by the direct order of U.S. President Trump, saying that assassination of the leaders of the Resistance axis will only lead to further strengthening of the resistance.



Zarif, His Kazakh Counterpart Discuss Cooperation on COVID-19 Battle

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Islamic Republic of Iran and Kazakhstan have stressed the expansion of collaborations in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a phone call on Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Kazakh counterpart, Mukhtar Tileuberdi, exchanged views on how to deal with the coronavirus which, has been spreading throughout the world. Earlier in the day, Zarif, in telephone conversations, discussed the issue with his Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts.

Zarif had earlier pointed to measures taken by Iran in the fight against coronavirus outbreak under US cruel and unilateral sanctions imposed against Iran. Some countries, including Azerbaijan, have sent their aid packages to the Islamic Republic of Iran to combat coronavirus.

The new coronavirus first emerged in China in December 2019 and later spread worldwide.

Khavazi Becomes New Minister of Agriculture



TEHRAN (IP) - Kazem Khavazi became the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad with 196 votes of the members of parliament in his favor.

In an open session of parliament, Wednesday 8 April, members of Majlis discussed the proposed plans by Kazem Khavazi, nominated for the post of Minister of Agricultural Jihad.

Upon the vote of confidence hearing the views of the proponents and opponents of the nominee as the minister for the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, the MPs finally voted 196 in favor and 19 against and 4 abstentions out of a total of 215 MPs present at the session.

Khavazi elaborated his plans for parliamentarians and said he has some plans for north and south seas which creates job opportunities there, adding that he is going to support internal vegetable seeds and increase the amount from 2% to 20%.

He promised to the representatives to get the farmer's right in guaranteed price and is going to increase their insurance.

The new Minister of Agricultural Jihad highlighted that he will have more communication with startups and knowledge-based companies.

Mohammad Moradi representative of Qorveh, Dehgolan expressed that Khavazi has remarkable managing experience and has a good sense of teamwork while Mahmood Sadeqi representative of Tehran believes that Khavazi's plans are out of date.

New Health Protocols Must Be Observed by All

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani said the country's new smart distancing initiative aimed at containing the COVID-19 pandemic will come into effect from April 11 and must be followed by all.

“The initiative must be implemented strictly under the close supervision of the Health Ministry and the National Headquarters to Fight the Coronavirus,” Rouhani said in a phone conversation with Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki on Thursday.

The president further said that the new measures will come into force on Saturday, stressing that all health protocols need to be observed by all.

The president has repeatedly called on Iranians to stay indoors, noting that social-distancing and self-quarantining have helped the country's health authorities make major breakthroughs in their battle against the viral infection.

In a separate phone conversation with Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati on Thursday, the Iranian president urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to fulfill its duties toward all member countries, including Iran, without any bias.

“Under these tough circumstances, the IMF should perform its duty with regard to its international commitments and avoid being swayed by mischievous acts of the enemies of the Iranian nation,” Rouhani said.



Iran Expresses Regret over Hungary's Expulsion of 17 Iranian Students

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has expressed deep regret over Hungary's decision to expel 17 Iranian university students on unjustifiable charges that they had violated coronavirus health protocols.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi said the accusation is not true.

“What Hungarian officials call a violation of health protocols is, in fact, the students' objection to the improper quarantine conditions at a Budapest hospital where infected and healthy individuals were kept in one place,” said Mousavi.

“But unfortunately, authorities, without realizing these conditions, pointed the finger at the university students and first issued a directive for the expulsion of three students and then 14 others without paying attention to the fact the health protocols had, in fact, been violated by the Budapest hospital,” the spokesman added.

“Unfortunately, the three students mentioned above were taken to a migrants' camp in very appalling conditions before they returned their country for fear of

the coronavirus at the request of their families and through the good offices of the Islamic Republic of Iran's embassy,” he added.

Mousavi said the Iranian foreign ministry and the Iranian embassy in Hungary had made every effort to manage the situation and prevent the expulsion of the students.

“Receiving consultation from legal counsellors, the Iranian embassy helped employ lawyers and pursue the matter through legal channels with the cooperation of the students themselves and their families,” he noted.

Mousavi said a Hungarian court ruled that the 14 students had to be expelled, adding the students were not allowed to take their case to the court.

“There is important and admissible evidence that the Iranian students had the right to take their case to the court, but they were denied the chance,” he said. “The Iranian foreign ministry firmly demands Hungarian officials to reconsider the verdict and prepare the conditions for the Iranian students to continue their studies,” he said.

Mousavi noted that the foreign ministry will keep pressing ahead with diplomatic efforts to restore the students' right.

Tehran, Ankara Agree to Have Customs Working 24/7

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran and Turkey have agreed on the 24-hour operation of their customs offices at the borders while observing the health protocols amid the outbreak of coronavirus.

Iranian President's Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi and Turkish Finance and Treasury Minister Berat Albayrak have agreed that the customs of the two countries can cooperate 24 hours while observing health protocols.

In a phone conversation on Thursday, the two sides hailed the effective steps taken to develop and facilitate economic cooperation.

Meanwhile, they stressed the need to facilitate trade and commerce between the two countries in the current situation.

For his part, Vaezi thanked Turkey for sending humanitarian aid saying that Iran is ready to provide any kind of assistance and transfer its experience in dealing with the COVID-19 to the Turkish government.

Amir-Abdollahian Urges U.S. to Leave Banditry, Lift Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Parliament Speaker's Special Aide for International Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian called on the United States to leave its hawkish policies against the country amid the fight against COVID-19.

“The U.S. and some other pretenders of civilization, instead of lifting the sanctions, have maximized the sanctions and turned into the bandits of face masks and coronavirus test kits across the world,” Amir-Abdollahian wrote in a tweet on Thursday. While the Islamic Republic is battling the fast-spreading outbreak, the Trump administration refuses to ease up its “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, which were reinstated in 2018 after President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the landmark nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers.

Moreover, the U.S. has been reported to hijack medical supplies in different instances, even from its global allies. Germany has accused Washington of redirecting three million Germany-bound masks for its own use, in a move condemned as “modern piracy”. France has also said while the regional leaders are struggling to secure medical supplies as American buyers outbid them.

Iran Welcomes Designation of Al-Kazemi as Iraq's New PM

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi says Tehran welcomes the designation of Mustafa al-Kazemi as the new Prime Minister of Iraq.

In a statement on Thursday, Mousavi said the Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported the independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political stability of Iraq.

He stressed that the only way to resolve the conflicts peacefully is that all Iraqi political currents reach a consensus through democratic processes.

Therefore, Iran welcomes the consensus reached among Iraqi political groups today, resulting in the designation of Mr al-Kazemi as the new Prime Minister of Iraq, and considers it as a right step in the right direction, Mousavi noted.

While wishing success for Mustafa al-Kazemi, Iran hopes he can establish a new government to meet the demands of the people and the top religious authority of the Arab country and to create a stable, united Iraq with a significant position at the regional and international levels, he added. “Undoubtedly, the alliance and synergy of all different Iraqi tribes, political groups and prominent personalities, including Mr Adnan al-Zurfi, has been effective in the realization of this important goal and will remain so for the rest of the path,” reads the statement.

As before, the Islamic Republic of Iran declares its full readiness to cooperate with the Iraqi government so that it can overcome the problems and achieve the great goals of the Iraqi people and the top religious authority, stated Mousavi.

Iraqi President Barham Salih assigned Mustafa al-Kazemi to form the new Iraqi government after Adnan al-Zurfi failed to do so.

Red Cross Allocates 500,000 Swiss Francs in Donation to Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Tehran says the organization is making efforts to create a financial channel for Iran to receive international humanitarian aid amid its battle against the new coronavirus.

Barbara Rizzoli made the remarks in a meeting with the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), Karim Hemmati, in Tehran on Wednesday.

She also announced the organization's decision to allocate 500,000 Swiss francs in donation to Iran as the first step to support the country in its fight against COVID-19.

“As the first step, the International Committee of the Red Cross has donated 500,000 Swiss francs to support the Iranian Red Crescent Society in its efforts to confront coronavirus [which] is in progress,” she said.

She also expressed her condolences over the deaths of Iranians, including medical staff and relief workers who were at the forefront of fighting the pandemic.

“The Iranian Red Crescent's request to have a financial channel for receiving humanitarian aid is a rational and basic request in order to help Iranian people, especially in the situation of coronavirus crisis, and the ICRC, in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

(IFRC), will make every effort from its Tehran delegation to Geneva Headquarters to respond to this request,” said the ICRC head of Tehran delegation.

Touching on the effect of the U.S. sanctions against Iran, the ICRC official said, “We understand the serious concerns about the impact of sanctions on the import of medicine and medical equipment into Iran.”

The Red Cross would also seek to interact with Swiss companies to provide some of the special medicine needed by Iran, she added.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:52
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:07
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:34

54. Then, on that Day, not a soul will be wronged in the least, and ye shall but be repaid the meeds of your past Deeds.
55. Verily the Companions of the Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do;
Surah 36. Ya-sin (54 - 55)

Iran Resumes Exporting Fuel to Iraq

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Presiding Board Member of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Seyed Hamid Hosseini said that Iraq has opened its land borders for Iranian fuel trucks which had been closed for more than 10 days.

After the outbreak of Coronavirus, Iraq shut its land borders with Iran and it stranded Iranian fuel trucks in the borders. But now after the crisis in Iraq has relatively abated, the country is gradually opening its borders but Iranian trucks are still wandered.

Hosseini said Iraq has been one of Iran's best customers of its oil products but during the outbreak of Coronavirus, exports of Iran's oil exports to Iraq via land borders were disrupted.

He added that since opening of borders between both countries, Iran's exports to Iraq, except its oil products, have resumed. He noted that the delay for resumption of gasoline export to Iraq was because Iranians were drivers of fuel trucks.

He reiterated trucks which carry fuel take their consignments to the exact destinations while other goods can be unloaded in the border points.

On the future of Iran's gas, electricity and oil products exports to Iraq, he said that although Iraq has no energy provider better than Iran, the tension between Iran and the U.S.



in Iraq has caused that U.S. President Donald Trump extends waiver for Iran's energy exports to Iraq for only one month while in the past it was extended for three months.

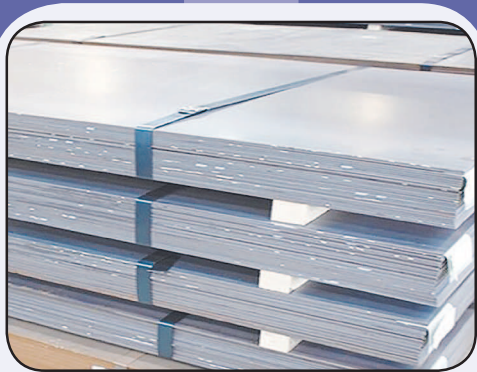
Hosseini also pointed to the decline in the value of energy exports to Iraq, adding that concern about granting waiver by the U.S. for energy exports to Iraq has increased but above all the slump in the global price of oil and gas and, as the result electricity, will lead to a decline in Iran's exports revenues from Iraq's energy market, expressing hope that Iran's exports to Iraq could increase in terms of weight to compensate slump in the price.

He further said that due to the shutdown of borders, the prices of commodities in Iraq have increased because of shortage and lack of distribution.

Hosseini reiterated all Iranian goods are welcomed in Iraq but after the outbreak of the virus, Iraq's major needs are food stuff and hygienic goods.

He stated that at this stage he cannot assess the exact amount of exports to Iraq.

Iran Implements 5 Steel Projects Worth 21,000b Rials



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade reported that five steel projects worth 21,392 billion rials have been launched during the 11 months of the last Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), adding that four projects were impended in development format.

Based on Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade statistics, five projects, including a creative and four development ones, were implemented in Isfahan, Lorestan, Fars and Khuzestan provinces.

The mentioned plans which dealt with pipe, profile, steel, direct regeneration unit and steel ingots provided job opportunity for about 1,000 local people.

Iran is now standing on the 10th position in the world with regard to producing steel.

It is also expected to rank 7th in five years due to achieving 55 million tons capacity.

This year Iran by achieving capacity of 40 million tons of steel is predicted to produce more than 30 million tons of steel ingots.

Meanwhile some 21,679,000 tons of crude steel were produced in the 11 months of the last Iranian calendar year [from March 21, 2019 to Feb. 19, 2020], showing a 5.2 percent growth as compared to the same period last year.

In the same period, the volume of aluminum ingot production registered a 16.2 percent decline while the production of cement in the country showed a 12.2 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Statistics show that 18,864,000 tons of steel products were produced in the country, recording a 5.5 percent hike as compared to the same period last year.

Some 55,706,000 tons of cement were produced in the country in the 11-month period, showing a 12.2 percent growth.

Production of tiles and ceramic, glass, glass containers also registered a 5.5, 7.2 and 19.3 percent growth respectively as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

CEO Details Major Performance of NIDC in Past Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Board of Directors and CEO of National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) on Monday and during his meeting with the company's managers highlighted major performance and achievements of the company in the last Iranian calendar year which ended on March 19.

Eng. Seyed Abdollah Mousavi said despite two major disaster and incident of flood and the outbreak of Coronavirus in the country last year, the company did not lag behind in fulfilling its own innate duties while doing their social responsibilities.

He added that NIDC usually acts in alignment with the Oil Industry programs but the company experienced new and different responsibilities last year which totally differed with previous ones.

Mousavi added that in the early days of last year, heavy rains caused floods in the country and in wake of it, NIDC became as one of the main members of the Disaster Management Headquarters of Khuzestan Province and rushed to the help and rescue of the flood-hit regions and people in the province.

He added that floods created problems for the company in its drilling operations and after floods were contained, all rigs near the rivers once again were returned to the network because of endeavors of NIDC staff.

Mousavi reiterated floods could not stop the company pursuing its other activities and it continued its programs



in logistics, drilling and HSE fields as the schedule.

On drilling wells, he said endeavors of personnel in the company led to drilling and completing of 114 wells which were carried out successfully and they came on stream.

He added that out of 116 wells, three were exploratory, 39 were developmental-descriptive and 72 maintenance wells, stating that 81 wells were drilled for National Iranian South Oil Company, 16 for Iranian Offshore Oil Company, four for Iranian Central Oil Fields Company, three for Petroleum Engineering and Development Company, seven wells in form of a project and three wells NIOC Exploration Directorate.

Mousavi reiterated that the company drilled 163981 meters of well last year, adding that some 22,808 meters were drilled in the turnkey projects and carried out 24,404 meters more horizontal and directional drilling.

He noted that 28 drilling machines for drilling the aforementioned wells as well as two rigs for maintenance wells were used.

He also pointed to the integrated technical and engineering services and cooperation with the knowledge-based companies as the major achievements and performance of the company last year.

Mousavi said the company has cooperated with 200 domestic part-manufacturing companies and held some specialized and training courses for its staff.

29% Growth in Load and Unload of Essential Goods in Ports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) released its report on the performance of the organization in ports field in last Iranian calendar year which ended on March 19. According to the report, the organization carried out several programs to develop and accelerate activities in the port which led to 29 percent growth in loading and unloading of essential goods and 6 percent growth in loading and unloading of goods of 149m tons.

The organization also posted 8 percent in loading and unloading of non-oil goods in ports which were around 103m tons, 15 percent growth in cabotage and transshipment of non-oil goods and 9 percent growth in dock of vessels with capacities over 1000 tons.

Exploiting the capacity of all ports in compliance with the decision of National Essential Goods Headquarters for tentative distribution of essential goods, easing the release of essential goods needed by the country from Imam Port, outlining strategic document for developing rail transportation in ports and holding port-to-port rail maneuvers at Shahid Rajaei Port were of the major performances of the PMO last year.

Offering 25 percent discount for port and marine expenses, offering special discounts at Shahid Beheshti Port of Chahbahar for carrying, cooling, storing, THC for the first five years of exploitation, 50 percent discount for tariffs and expenses for stoppage at quays for cabotage vessels carrying essential goods at the ports of departure and embark were some other major performances of the organization last year.

The report also detailed the performance of the organization at Chahbahar, Imam Khomeini, Bushehr, Anzali and Shahid Rajaei ports.

Preparing the outline and approval of the comprehensive structural plan for special economic zones of Imam Khomeini, Shahid Rajaei and Bushehr were also of other actions of the organization taken last year.



OPEC, Allies Agree to Cut Output by 10mn bpd

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN, Apr. Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh informed on Friday that OPEC and its allies have agreed on a historic production cut that would take 10 million barrels per day offline as the coronavirus pandemic saps demand for crude.

He made the remarks after the 10-hour OPEC+ extraordinary meeting, saying that other oil producers, the US, Brazil and Canada, are to join OPEC in this decision.

Zanganeh noted that the decision is a two-year one and the output cut is the biggest one in OPEC and non-OPEC history.

Earlier on Tuesday, Zanganeh had called on the United States and Canada to join non-OPEC oil producers led by Russia to reduce crude production.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Namdar Zanganeh said, "Before any meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC there needs to be an agreement on production numbers for any country that will reduce output", adding that the U.S. and Canada need to play a role in determining production cuts.

Referring to his teleconference with the chairman of OPEC and the Oil Ministers of Kuwait and Russia, Namdar Zanganeh noted that details concerning OPEC's next conference were discussed.

Zanganeh said on Tuesday that before any meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC members, an agreement must be reached on the basis of each country's production.

In a tweet on Tuesday, he referred to his talks with the head of the OPEC Conference (Algerian oil minister), saying, "Yesterday evening, I also made telephone calls with the Russian and Kuwaiti oil ministers about how to decide during the next meeting between OPEC members and other oil producers to restore stability to the oil market."

"The vague circumstances around which the upcoming OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial (meeting) is being organised is of grave concern to me," the minister, Bijan Zanganeh, wrote in the letter dated April 7 and addressed to the Algerian oil minister, who holds the presidency of OPEC.

Inflation Rate Hits Record High

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran's Central Bank under pressure from the critics finally released the report on inflation rate for last Iranian calendar year as according to the report the country posted the highest inflation rate in the past four decades with 41.2 percent.

The Central Bank under pressures from the critics and economists finally released report on the inflation rate in the country.

According to the report, Iran's inflation rate stood at 41.2 percent last year which is the highest in the past four decades and it is another setback for President Hassan Rouhani's government.

The central bank has been barred from releasing any data on inflation following the order of President Rouhani.

The government preferred Iran Statistical Center to issue any economic statistics in order to manage the figures according to what it wanted.

According to reports, the Central Bank under pressure from Judiciary was forced to release the report.

Iran, Brazil Sign Scientific Cooperation Agreement



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran and Brazil signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wednesday on scientific cooperation between the two countries.

The document was signed between the scientific and technological department of Iran's Presidential Office and Sao Paulo Research Foundation.

The document provides support for joint research projects between the two countries while holding joint educational workshops and seminars were also included in the document.

Plans for exchange of researchers have also been envisaged in this document which pave the way for further scientific cooperation between the two countries.

Explosion Shakes Business Center in Moscow

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - An explosion shook a business center in Russia's capital Moscow on Thursday, the country's Emergency Ministry said.

The blast occurred in a boiler room of Panorama shopping mall in the city center, smashing windows and walls of the building, the ministry said in a statement. The explosion caused a minor fire which was extinguished by the firefighters, it said. One woman suffered minor injury in the incident.



GNA Forces Bomb Military Convoy South of Tripoli

TRIPOLI (Dispatches) - Forces of Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) bombed a convoy of militias affiliated with renegade commander Khalifa Haftar on Thursday.

The GNA's air force targeted the convoy, which included two armored vehicles belonging to the United Arab Emirates, after monitoring their movements on the road between the towns of Tarhuna and Bani Walid south of Tripoli, the GNA-led Burkan Al-Ghadab Operation (Volcano of Rage), said on Facebook.

No additional details were provided.



Iraqi President Taps al-Kadhimi for PM



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's president named intelligence chief Mustafa al-Kadhimi as prime minister-designate on Thursday, the third person tapped to lead the country in just 10 weeks as it struggles to replace a government that fell last year after months of deadly protests.

Kadhimi was nominated by President Barham Salih, state television reported, shortly after the previous designated prime minister, Adnan al-Zurfi, announced he was withdrawing having failed to secure enough support to pass a government.

Iraq, exhausted by decades of sanctions, war and political corruption now faces economic ruin, social unrest and a growing outbreak of the new coronavirus, all of which it must face with only a caretaker cabinet.

Adel Abdul Mahdi, who resigned under pressure from anti-government protests in November, still heads the government as caretaker prime minister. Salih's first choice to replace him, Mohammed Allawi, withdrew on March 1 after four fruitless weeks trying to gain support.

Like Salih's previous choices to replace Abdul Mahdi, Kadhimi is seen as a political independent, who will have to amass support from the powerful sectarian parties that dominate Iraq's legislature to approve a cabinet within a month.

The former journalist, who wrote against dictator Saddam Hussein from exile in Iran and Britain, returned after the U.S. invasion in 2003. He has held his role heading intelligence since 2016.

"I will work tirelessly to present Iraqis with a program and cabinet that will work to serve them, protect their rights and take Iraq towards a prosperous future," Kadhimi wrote on Twitter.

Zurfi had been rejected immediately by parties who viewed him as a threat to their political and economic power in Iraq, calling him an "American joker" for his ties with the U.S.-backed authorities that ruled Iraq after the 2003 invasion.

Thursday marked the 17th anniversary of the day that U.S.-led troops occupied Baghdad. Zurfi had signalled he would check the power of Iran-aligned militias in Iraq. Kurdish parties finally decided on Wednesday not to back Zurfi, sealing his fate.

Canada Looks to Reinstate Saudi Arms Sales Agreement



OTTAWA (AFP) - The Canadian government said Thursday that it had renegotiated the terms of a \$14 billion light armored vehicles contract with Saudi Arabia, paving the way for exports to recommence.

Vehicle sales had been on hold since 2018 due to tensions between Ottawa and Riyadh over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and Saudi Arabia's involvement in the war in Yemen.

The move marks a shift for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who had indicated in December 2018 that he was looking to end the controversial agreement.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Francois-Philippe Champagne, however, said in a statement that Canada had "been able to secure significant improvements to the contract." Canceling the deal "could have resulted in billions of dollars in damages to the government of Canada, with potential damages amounting to the full value of the contract," he said.

The move would have put thousands of Canadian jobs at risk, not only in "southwestern Ontario but also across the entire defense industry supply chain, which includes hundreds of small and medium enterprises," he added.

The vehicles are made in Canada by a subsidiary of American contractor General Dynamics. Among the "improvements" Champagne noted were financial protections for Canada if it chooses to delay or deny export permits in the event the vehicles are not used for their stated purposes.

"Under our law, Canadian goods cannot be exported where there is a substantial risk that they would be used to commit or to facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law or serious acts of gender-based violence," he said.

Trump Using Coronavirus to Score Political Points

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization has hit back at the U.S. president over his handling of the coronavirus crisis, saying Donald Trump is politicizing the virus.

The WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus made the remarks after Trump scrutinized the UN body's initial response to the contagion, and threatened to pull US funding for the organization.

"Please don't politicize this virus. It exploits the differences you have at the national level. If you want to be exploited and if you want to have many more body bags, then you do it. If you don't want many more body bags, then you refrain from politicizing it. My short message is: Please quarantine politicizing Covid. The unity of your country will be very important to defeat this dangerous virus," Tedros said at a news conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

Tedros called for unity and a halt to "politicization" of the global health crisis, urging the United States to show "honest leadership".

Trump, whose own response to the corona crisis has been widely criticized, claimed the WHO had downplayed the coronavirus, and threatened to freeze the organization funding, only to later backtrack from the threat.

"I can't believe he (Tedros) is talking about politics when you look at the relationship they have to China. So China spends 42 million, we spent 450 million and everything seems to be China's way. That's not right, it's not fair to us and honestly it's not fair to the world," Trump said.



Afghan Gov't Frees 100 Taliban Prisoners

KABUL (Reuters) - The Afghan government freed 100 Taliban prisoners on Wednesday as a first step in a peace process with the hardline Islamists, despite the group's suspension of talks on a planned prisoner exchange crucial to moving to formal talks to end years of war.

Differences over the prisoner release question have been complicating U.S. brokered attempts to create a lasting peace agreement to end more than 18 years of conflict in Afghanistan.

"The government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan released 100 Taliban prisoners today based on their health condition, age and length of remaining sentence, as part of our efforts for peace," said Javid Faisal, a spokesman for the Afghan National Security Council, which has been negotiating with the Taliban.

A February pact between the United States and the Taliban, under which U.S.-led international forces will withdraw in phases in exchange for Taliban security guarantees, is the best chance to reduce U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan.

But peace hinges on talks between the U.S.-backed Afghan government and the militants. A prisoner exchange is meant to build confidence on both sides for those talks.

Despite this week's setbacks over the prisoner releases, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Tuesday said progress had been made since he visited Kabul on March 23 and also met Taliban officials in Qatar to iron out the differences.

Pakistan Shoots Down Indian Drone

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Pakistan's army said Thursday it had shot down a small Indian surveillance drone in Kashmir, as tensions rose over continued cross-border shelling in the disputed territory.

According to a statement from the army media wing, the Indian quadcopter -- about the same size as a commercially available hobby drone -- had crossed 600 metres (650 yards) over the de facto border known as the Line of Control (LoC).

"This blatant act was aggressively responded to by Pakistan Army troops shooting down Indian quadcopter," the statement read.

An Indian army spokesman said the drone "is not ours".

The incident came as Pakistan and India accuse each other of violating ceasefire terms at the LoC, with sporadic shelling reported from both sides.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours nosedived in February last year, with India launching an air strike inside Pakistan after accusing its neighbour of harbouring a group that staged a suicide bomb attack that killed 40 Indian paramilitaries in Kashmir.

Pakistan launched its own raid the next day and later shot down an Indian fighter jet and captured its pilot, taking the arch-rivals to the brink of war.

The sky-high animosity between the two countries deescalated after Pakistan returned the downed pilot to India.

Tensions also recently spiked when New Delhi revoked the partial autonomy of Indian Kashmir in August.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since independence in 1947, and has been the spark of two wars and numerous flare-ups between the two foes.



Sanders Quits U.S. Presidential Race

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Bernie Sanders, a democratic socialist whose progressive agenda pushed the Democratic Party sharply to the left, ended his White House campaign, clearing the way for a Nov. 3 election battle between former Vice President Joe Biden and Republican President Donald Trump.

Sanders, a onetime front-runner who promised to lead a grassroots political revolution into the White House, acknowledged he no longer had a path to victory after a string of decisive nominating contest losses to Biden but promised to work with his more moderate former rival to oust Trump.

The independent U.S. senator from Vermont said the coronavirus outbreak, which has taken him off the campaign trail and limited his ability to get his message out, required a broad response and urgent attention in Congress.

"I cannot in good conscience continue to mount a campaign that cannot win, and which would interfere with the important work required of all of us in this difficult hour," he said in a livestreamed speech to supporters from his hometown of Burlington, Vermont.

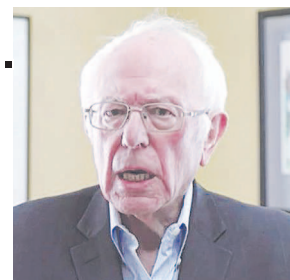
Sanders, 78, called it a "difficult and painful decision" but said he would stay on the ballot in future primaries and continue to gather delegates in order to push the Democratic platform toward his populist anti-corporate agenda, including a government-run healthcare system and tax hikes for the rich.

The departure of Sanders, Biden's last remaining rival in a field that once included more than two dozen candidates, sets up a long battle for the White House between the 77-year-old Biden and Trump, 73, who is seeking a second four-year term in office.

That matchup for the foreseeable future will revolve around Trump's handling of the public health crisis that has upended all aspects of American life and rocked the country's economy.

Biden on Wednesday signaled he was ready for a bruising general election fight and the challenge he now faces in trying to unite the Democratic Party's liberal and moderate wings.

"It's going to be a really rough and I suspect pretty mean campaign," Biden told donors at an online fundraising event after Sanders' announcement.





Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

Elahieh Apt (\$2600)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
J, balcony
pkg, yard
marble fl
Fully Furn

Fereshteh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Jordan (\$1900)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1800) 2bdrs, F.F
(\$2300) 3bdrs, F.F
(\$3000) 4bdrs, F.F
All with S/p, S, & J

Darrous Villa (\$3000)
800sq.m, 5bdrs, S/pool
green yard, & pkg lots

Velenjak (\$2200)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p

Elahieh bldg (\$6000)
4storey, 12bdrs, & pkgs

Niavarar (\$1700)
160sq.m, 3bdrs, & F.F

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Portuguese Hotels to Lay Off 85% of Workers in April

LISBON (Reuters) - Around 85% of hotel workers in Portugal will be temporarily laid off in April due to the impact the coronavirus is having on the country's economy, Hotels Association AHP said.

AHP said 93.8% of Portuguese hotels will or have already applied to be able to temporarily lay off workers. AHP President Cristina Siza Vieira said this was a way to "keep jobs".

Approved by the government, the lay-off measure allows companies to temporarily suspend jobs or reduce working hours but does not permit them to fire staff or make them redundant.



Global Trade to Plunge by Up to A Third in 2020 Amid Pandemic

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Global trade growth is expected to plummet by up to a third in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the World Trade Organization said, warning that the numbers would be "ugly".

"World trade is expected to fall by between 13 percent and 32 percent in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts normal economic activity and life around the world," the WTO said in a statement.

There were a wide range of possibilities for how trade would be hit by the "unprecedented" health crisis, it added.

However, WTO chief Roberto Azevedo warned the downturn "may well be the deepest economic recession or downturn of our lifetimes".

In its main annual forecast, the 164-member WTO pointed out that trade had already been slowing in 2019, before the emergence of the novel coronavirus.

But the virus has now infected some 1.4 million people since late last year, killing more than 80,000 and forcing governments across the world to take radical measures.

More than half of humanity has been asked to stay at home and economic activity has ground to a virtual standstill in many places.

Global trade, already hit by trade tensions and uncertainties around Brexit, is expected to register "double-digit declines in trade volumes" in nearly all regions this year, the WTO said.

"This crisis is first and foremost a health crisis which has forced governments to take unprecedented measures to protect people's lives," Azevedo said in a statement.

"The unavoidable declines in trade and output will have painful consequences for households and businesses, on top of the human suffering caused by the disease itself," he said.

Before the current crisis, trade tensions, uncertainty and slowing economic growth weighed on global merchandise trade, which registered a slight decline of 0.1 percent in 2019 after rising 2.9 percent a year earlier.

The dollar value of world merchandise exports fell by three percent to \$18.89 trillion, the WTO said.

World commercial services trade fared better last year, with exports in dollar terms rising by two percent to \$6.03 trillion, but the expansion was far slower than in 2018, when services trade increased by nine percent, said the WTO.

But the situation has taken a dramatic turn since the new coronavirus first emerged in China late last year.

The WTO said that while the global shock might invite comparisons to the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the situation now was worse.

"Restrictions on movement and social distancing to slow the spread of the disease mean that labour supply, transport and travel are today directly affected in ways they were not during the financial crisis," it said.

"Whole sectors of national economies have been shut down, including hotels, restaurants, non-essential retail trade, tourism and significant shares of manufacturing."

Developments remained very uncertain, said the WTO.

An optimistic outlook posits that a sharp drop in trade will be followed by a recovery starting in the second half of 2020, said the organisation.

But the more pessimistic view is that the initial decline will be steeper and the recovery will be "prolonged and incomplete".

"Under both scenarios, all regions will suffer double-digit declines in exports and imports in 2020", it said, adding that North America and Asia would be hardest hit.

French Economy Shrinks 6% in Q1

PARIS (AFP) - In its worst performance since 1945, the French economy shrank around six percent in the first quarter of this year as the coronavirus pandemic decimated business activity, the Bank of France said.

Official figures showed previously that the economy shrank 0.1 percent in the last three months of 2019, meaning that with two consecutive quarters of negative growth, the country is now technically in recession.

The French central bank said that in the last two weeks of March, as the coronavirus crisis deepened, economic activity plunged 32 percent.

"You have to go back to the second quarter of 1968, hit by the May (political upheaval), to find a similar fall in activity," it said, noting that even that year the downturn was 5.3 percent, still less than the latest figures.

For every two weeks the country is locked down by the virus, the Bank of France expects the economy to shrink by 1.5 percent.

At the same time it cautioned against a simple, straight-line extrapolation of the estimates since the situation is developing.

The current lockdown began March 17 and has been extended by two weeks to April 15 but the authorities have suggested this could be kept in place longer if the virus shows no sign of at least levelling off.

Among the worst affected sectors of the economy, the Bank of France listed construction, transport, restaurants and lodging.



U.S. Projects Oil Output to Fall Nearly 2m bpd

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. oil companies are expected to reduce oil output temporarily by nearly 2 million barrels per day as lower crude prices force companies to cut back operations, the U.S. Energy Department said.

"The private sector and the free market are driving those cuts," the department said regarding projections in a U.S. Energy Information Administration, or EIA, report.

The United States, the world's top oil and natural gas producer, pumped a record more than 12 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2019, according to the EIA.

But global prices for crude have dropped as oil demand has plummeted roughly 30%, or about 30 million bpd, as the coronavirus pandemic slams economies. At the same time, Saudi Arabia and Russia have been flooding markets with extra supply.

The EIA's short-term energy outlook released on Tuesday projected that U.S. oil output will slowly fall through the first quarter of 2021 to just shy of 11 million bpd, or about 1.8 million barrels less than the peak of late last year.

Saudi Arabia, Russia and allied oil producers will discuss stabilizing global oil markets on Thursday, but will agree to deep cuts to their output only if the United States joins with curbs to help prop up prices that have been hammered by the coronavirus crisis.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday the Organization of the Petroleum Countries, of which Saudi Arabia is the de facto leader, had not pressed him to ask U.S. oil producers to reduce their output to support prices. Trump said he thought U.S. cuts were "happening automatically" by private companies.

Trump has said he expects Saudi Arabia and Russia, which can orchestrate statewide production cuts because they have national oil companies, will participate in cutting about 10 million to 15 million bpd.

U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette will participate on Friday in a virtual G20 ministerial meeting on restoring calm to global energy markets with his counterparts around the world, said Shaylyn Hynes, a department spokeswoman.

Germany Tightens Rules on Foreign Takeovers

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's government agreed on Wednesday to tighten rules to protect domestic firms from unwanted takeovers by investors from non-European Union countries.

The move comes at a time when Europe's biggest economy, and the EU as a whole, is reconsidering relations with China in the face of increased investment in critical sectors by Chinese state-owned enterprises.

In future, transactions which have implications for German security should be provisionally put on hold pending a final decision.

In addition, a review of a potential deal can be undertaken if there is "likely harm" to the public system or security. Previously, an "actual danger" was needed. The security of EU partners should also be considered.

"As the current situation shows, we in Germany and Europe need to have our own competencies and technologies in certain areas," Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told reporters.

The economy ministry also plans further measures requiring investors in artificial intelligence, robotics, semi-conductors, biotechnology and quantum technology to make public any purchases of 10% or more and allow Germany to screen them.

Asia-Pacific Response to COVID-19, Climate Emergency Must Build a Resilient, Sustainable Future

ARMIDA SALSIAH ALISJAHBANA

The unprecedented public health emergency triggered by the COVID -19 pandemic and its multi-faceted impact on people's lives around the world is taking a heavy toll on Asia and the Pacific.

Countries in our region are striving to mitigate the massive socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, which is also expected to affect the region's economic health. In its annual Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2020 launched today, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) expects growth in Asia-Pacific developing economies to slow down significantly this year.

Bold investments to sustain the region's physical and economic well-being is imperative. The Survey advises policymakers to protect the economic health of the region with measures that support affected businesses and households and prevent economic contagion. To tackle COVID-19 in developing Asia-Pacific countries, the Survey also calls for an estimated increase in health emergency spending by \$880 million per year through to 2030. Fiscal support will be crucial in enhancing health responders' ability to monitor the spread of the pandemic and caring for infected people. ESCAP is also calling on Asia-Pacific countries to consider setting up a regional health emergency preparedness fund.

The pandemic is also an opportunity for us to rethink our economic growth path that has come at a heavy cost to people and planet. According to the latest ESCAP assessment on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Asia and the Pacific is not on track to achieve any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030, with regression on several environmental Goals.

This stands in stark contrast with the region's impressive gains in material prosperity, which have been powered by intensive resource use. We are currently paying the price amid a public health emergency in a region with 97 of the 100 most air-polluted cities in the world and 5 of the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change. Economic policymaking is understandably focused on maximizing growth to reduce poverty and create jobs. Yet, we need to question this when the methods of growth undermine its sustainability over the long term.

The 2020 Survey is proposing a transition towards a growth path that ensures we bequeath a healthy planet to future generations. It is calling for a shift in the paradigm of production and consumption, which is at the core of all economic activities.



To bring about this fundamental shift in the way we produce and consume, we need to adopt the motto of 'no more business as usual' for all stakeholders in planetary well-being, namely governments, businesses and consumers. Policymakers should not lose sight of a looming climate crisis, but rather design economic stimulus packages with social inclusion and environmental sustainability built into every decision.

The Survey identifies challenges and constraints to making this switch for each group of stakeholders. The good news is that it is possible to take on these challenges and align the goals of all stakeholders with the 2030 Agenda's goal of sustainability.

In particular, the Survey urges governments in the region to embed sustainability in policymaking and implementation, transition out of fossil fuel dependency and support the greening of finance. The region continues to provide \$240 billion worth of annual

subsidies to fossil fuels while investments in renewables remain at \$150 billion.

Businesses can integrate sustainability by factoring in environmental, social and governance aspects in investment analysis and decisions. Carbon pricing will be a key tool to reduce emissions and mitigate climate-related risks. The region is already a leader in adopting the emerging sustainable business paradigms of the shared economy and circular economy.

All of us as consumers must understand the importance of switching to sustainable lifestyles. This will begin with increasing awareness of the impact of consumer choices on people and planet. Governments will have to play a significant role in encouraging consumer choices through positive reinforcements, small suggestions and eco-labelling of products.

Integrating sustainability also requires international collaboration, given the interconnected world in which we live. Asia-Pacific governments need to coordinate their climate action, particularly the development of climate-related standards and policies. Having achieved so much, yet also at the risk of losing so much, the Asia-Pacific region stands at a pivotal moment in its development journey. The next phase of its economic transformation should be more sustainable, with cleaner production and less material-intensive lifestyles.

With headwinds to the region's development journey strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic, let us heed the United Nations Secretary General's call to mobilize for a decade of action to build a sustainable and resilient future.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana is the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

EEU Regards U.S. Sanctions on Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a Friday telephone conversation with Iran’s ambassador to Russia, Minister of Commerce of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) said that the union supports Iran’s stance on the US irrational sanctions especially amid the global battle against the coronavirus

EEU’s Andrey Slepnev also urged an increase in mutual ties with Iran in the area of economy.

He noted that the union is in favor of further cooperation between the Chambers of Commerce of Iran and the member states of the Union.



ILO Warns of Devastating Consequences of COVID-19 on Labor Markets

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lockdown measures decided across the globe to fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, are having “devastating” consequences on labour markets, affecting around 81% of the world’s workforce, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) warned.

“This is the greatest test for international cooperation in more than 75 years,” ILO’s Director-General Guy Ryder said in a statement.

The ILO has monitored the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the world’s labor markets over the past few weeks. Since its first report on 18 March, lockdown measures taken to contain the spread of the disease has affected already around 2.7 billion workers, the organisation estimates.

“During the past two weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified and expanded in terms of its global reach, with huge impacts on public health and unprecedented shocks to economies and labor markets,” the report said.

“It is the worst global crisis since the Second World War,” it added.

“Workers and businesses are facing catastrophe, in both developed and developing economies,” Ryder warned. The crisis is threatening operations and therefore

solvency, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, making millions of workers vulnerable.

Employment has been impacted “on a greater magnitude than initially predicted at the start of the pandemic,” the ILO admitted, warning that the extent of the crisis will depend on the evolution of the pandemic and the actions taken to contain it.

Labor force adjustment plans, temporary layoffs or reductions in working hours are on the rise. “Employment contraction has already begun on a large, often unprecedented, scale in many countries,” the report said.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) estimated that the number of unemployed people has increased by at least 4 million across the EU since the crisis started while more than 7 million workers are on short-time work schemes.

But the impact will be harsher in developing countries where unprotected workers and those in the informal economy represent an important share of the labor force.

The extent of job destruction will “depend substantially on how quickly the economy will recover in the second half of the year and how effectively policy measures will boost labor demand,” ILO says.

UN Supports Frontline COVID-19 Response

TEHRAN (UNIC) -- As the coronavirus pandemic spreads to more than 200 countries and territories, killing more than 20,000 people, the United Nations is redoubling its support for frontline responders who are working around the clock to save lives.

“Healthcare workers are essentially the main response pillars that we have,” said Jan-Eric Larsen, from Operations Support and Logistics at the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Western Pacific in a video tweet. “Without the healthcare workers, we won’t be able to stop this transmission in time.”

“The problem we’re facing now is a very stretched market with limited supplies,” he said, explaining that when people use those supplies irrationally, it will create a strain on the healthcare system.

He said that WHO, together with partners, is working to ensure that vital supplies, including protective equipment, such as aprons, gowns and masks, reach healthcare workers treating patients in wards.

WHO has published operational guidance for maintaining essential health services during an outbreak and a handbook for public health capacity-building at ground crossings and cross-border collaboration. (All guidance documents can be found here.)

With the pandemic wreaking havoc on even wealthy countries’ healthcare capacity, the question remains whether the world’s poorest countries with weaker healthcare infrastructure can handle a massive outbreak.

The pandemic is quickly moving to the global South, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned Friday at the joint briefing to Member States by United Nations principle organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the UN Secretariat, in which he called for “massive global solidarity”.

COVID-19 poses serious challenges to the capacity of health systems around the world. Medical personnel are under pressure. Supplies and equipment are in urgent demand. And in many instances, temporary health infrastructure is needed to cope with the influx of patients requiring specialized treatment.

United Nations country teams are stepping up their support for national authorities. In Timor Leste, where one



case has been confirmed, the United Nations is supporting Government measures to prevent a potential COVID-19 outbreak. Advised by the Resident Coordinator and WHO, the Prime Minister recently ordered to establish an Inter-Ministerial Task Force for coordinated activities to fight COVID-19. The UN team is also siding with a range of partners, including news outlets, civil society organizations, businesses, youth representatives, and women leaders for a whole-of-society approach to prevention, preparedness, and response against COVID-19.

In South Sudan, while there are no confirmed COVID-19 cases according to WHO figures, the UN team is working with authorities to support national preparedness and response plan for COVID-19. A laboratory with capacity to test COVID-19 has just been set up. The UN has also supported the construction of a multi-purpose infectious disease unit to isolate and treat suspected cases. Also, health workers have been trained to enhance surveillance and early detection, investigate suspected cases and manage patients with COVID-19 related symptoms.

In Argentina, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is supporting COVID-19 response efforts by helping to urgently procure 10 fully-equipped emergency modular units, which will provide 824 extra inpatient therapy beds. One-third of the space will be dedicated to intensive care units.

“Our team of qualified advisors, architects, engineers, project managers and specialists is eager to help countries, where needed, to address their health-related infrastructure needs during this crisis,” said UNOPS Director of Implementation Practices and Standards,

Nick O’Regan. UNOPS also stands ready to support partners’ emergency procurement needs through its global e-commerce solution, UN Web Buy Plus. This includes the supply of ambulances, transportable biosafety labs, mobile health clinics and prefabricated buildings that can be used as temporary health posts.

In Guatemala, UNOPS is assisting with the procurement of urgent medical items to diagnose, treat and monitor patients infected with COVID-19. It is also advising on mitigation actions that will help to ensure that the provision of existing healthcare services continues as planned – including the purchase of essential medicines and equipment.

In Afghanistan, UNOPS is working with the WHO to raise awareness and provide information on COVID-19 through a call centre. In February the centre received 144 calls from 22 provinces enquiring about COVID-19. From 1 March to 14 March, it registered 185 enquiries about COVID-19 from 28 different provinces.

The United Nations is donating 250,000 protective face masks to the medical professionals in New York City who have been working courageously, selflessly, and tirelessly in response to the spread of COVID-19. “To us, New York is not just our home or the headquarters of the United Nations,” Secretary-General António Guterres said in a statement. “It is a vibrant international capital through which the world communicates, debates, trades, and prospers.”

WHO is also assisting COVID-19 research, bringing together 300 scientists, researchers, national public health experts across the world on COVID-19 in February to assess the current level of knowledge about the new virus, agree on critical research questions that need to be answered urgently and ways to work together to accelerate and fund priority research that can contribute to curtail this outbreak and prepare for future outbreaks.

Experts identified key knowledge gaps, and research priorities and shared scientific data on ongoing research, thereby accelerating the generation of critical scientific information to contribute to the control of the COVID 19 emergency.

WHO is gathering the latest scientific findings and knowledge on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and compiling it in a database.

Tehran Blasts...

FROM PAGE 1

Dehqani said that “first and foremost, as a matter of principle, Iran does not recognize the unilateral sanctions of the United States and deems these unilateral coercive measures illegal and a violation of international law”.

President Donald Trump brazenly said last week that the U.S. had no “moral responsibility” to halt Iran sanctions if Tehran did not ask for it to fight the pandemic.

President Hassan Rouhani has warned the IMF to consider Iran’s request for \$5 billion without “discrimination” after reports said the US was seeking to block the loan.

Dehqani said that the U.S. is seeking “maximum expectations” from its “maximum pressure” campaigning, saying that Washington wants Iran to surrender.

“It appears the maximum pressure campaign set a maximum expectation for the Trump administration too. The secretary of state’s remarks to the effect that Iran had to listen to the United States, “if they want[ed] their people to eat” is a stark reminder of such expectation. Also, President Trump’s adamant insistence that Iran call them is as telling an example of this mentality. In this light, they will accept nothing short of Iran’s surrender,” he said.

“Under such circumstances, even the slightest hint would be interpreted in a maximalist light as Iran’s submission,” said Dehqani, stressing that, “this maximum expectation will no doubt breed disappointment for the US administration.”

He expressed deep disdain for the course of action the US has adopted since 8 May 2018” when Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed its sanctions. Dehqani noted that “smart diplomacy is the sum of the many small steps towards confidence-building.”

The ambassador also said “Iran is not alone in rejecting the legitimacy of U.S. sanctions. The European Union, for its part, does not recognize the extraterritorial effects of third-party legislation, and forbade the compliance by EU citizens with the extraterritorial effects of certain sanctions that serve the foreign policy objectives of a third country at the expense of the sovereignty of EU member states”.

He pointed to the recent remarks made by European Union (EU) foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, who said sanctions should not block deliveries of medical equipment and

supplies to countries working to curb the outbreak of the new coronavirus.

The Iranian ambassador pointed to various calls from international bodies, including the UN for the removal of sanctions against those countries affected by the corona virus and said, “COVID-19 is not a national issue; it is not confined to a certain geography, region, nation, culture and so on. It has created a unique moment of global solidarity”.

Israel Fears...

FROM PAGE 1

The crisis of confidence has given rise to much political opposition to the premier and his ruling party at the Knesset - Israel’s parliament - forcing the regime to hold three general elections since last year.

Nasrallah separately thanked Lebanon’s medical personnel apparatus for their efforts in the fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

“After God, the medical crews are the hope,” he added, according to Lebanon’s Naharnet news website.

Those serving the health system were fighting a “life-threatening enemy,” he said, likening the battle to the resistance that was put up by the movement’s fighters in 2006 in the face of Israel, which had launched a 33-day-long war against the country, Lebanon’s al-Manar television network reported.

Nasrallah said he had received many messages “from Muslim doctors and other medical crews [that] resemble what the men of the resistance said in their letter during the July 2006 aggression.”

Nasrallah called the struggle against the virus a humanitarian battle that exceeded all religious, political, or racial boundaries.

It’s Better to...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S. behavior in Iraq makes people infer that recent U.S. moves in Iraq’s military scene are not for reducing its military presence to observe its legal obligation but it is somewhat a move for expanding its militarism and operations in Iraq. For example, the U.S. has relocated its forces from places like north of Baghdad which are not so significant in terms of dominance, to other bases. Or they move its forces in the K-1 base and relocate them in most important and sensitive places in Iraq, namely, in the west of Iraq and in Al-Anbar Province where Ain Al-Assad base is located.



The importance of Ain Al-Assad Airbase is because it is close to joint borders of Syria and Iraq and it indicates that Americans are sensitive on regional interactions especially in military and security field of Iraq, and they do not want a safe security relation is restored between Iraq and Syria. This shows future dangers for Iraq, Syria and the region and they do not at all think that the era of looting resources of their former colonies at least in West Asia has come to its end. They are inattentive to the content of the statement of Iraqi resistance groups and their threats against American soldiers.

If today someone wants to offer well and wise advice to the U.S. President, he should tell him to have deeper attention on the Coronavirus. Western magician or witch cannot cure the Coronavirus. Paying attention to demands of world people and being content with own land and to stop excessive-demand attitude and aggression can cure the Coronavirus.

A wise advisor will recommend Mr. Trump it is better to him to leave the region than staying there. He should tell him to pack the bag from any part of the world and return Americans to their own land in order to appease global hatred against them. Only this behavior can cure the coronavirus.

Leader...

FROM PAGE 1

“New capacities were discovered, of which we had been unaware. It emerged that there exist great potentials both inside and outside the ranks of the Armed Forces,” the Leader added.

The Leader described the pandemic as a test for the world, including both governments and nations, adding, “The Iranian nation shone brightly in this coronavirus test.”

Ayatollah Khamenei further compared Iran’s response to the fast-spreading disease to that of the Western states.

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to some instances of the panic triggered by the outbreak in Western societies, which saw people flood the stores in their countries to stock up on essentials.

Footage broadcast on TV showed people engaging in fights over toilet paper or rushing to buy guns and ammunition as they feel a need to protect themselves and their families against potential threats, Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The Leader then underscored the public order in Iran, one of the countries hardest hit by the disease which first emerged in China late last December before spreading to other parts of the world.

Ayatollah Khamenei hailed the Iranian people for firmly adhering to the guidelines issued by the country’s health authorities to stop the virus spread, saying they even skipped popular Nature’s Day celebrations and chose to stay home.

The Leader said that the Iranian nation’s performance in dealing with the coronavirus is rooted in the country’s Islamic culture, adding that “during the past two decades, certain [parties] made attempts to undermine the Iranian-Islamic culture, but this sense of Islamic culture and the chain of Islamic values is very strong among the people.”

Ayatollah Khamenei said COVID-19 is a “great problem” and a “big challenge for humanity,” although it is not that sizable “compared to many other problems. In the past, we had a lot of problems in our world and in our country, which were no less than this incident.”

As an example, the Leader pointed to the use of chemical weapons some 32 years ago by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein which killed thousands of Iranians and his own people, adding that “all major world powers, of course, threw their support behind Saddam” in the crime.

The Leader further drew attention to the plight of the nations that have long been suffering under oppression and pressure in different parts of the world, including Yemen and Palestine, stressing that the pandemic should not divert attention from such major issues.

Ayatollah Khamenei also warned against the plots that the enemies have constantly been hatching against Iran, urging everyone to stay focused on the threat in parallel with efforts to tackle the pandemic.

Arrogant powers, the Leader warned, are “hostile to the principle of the Islamic Republic system.”

Australian Basketball Fans to Get Refunds for USA Games

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A sports promoter has promised to refund fans left disappointed by poor views and a lack of big-name NBA stars, such as LeBron James, at two Australia v USA basketball matches last year.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) said TEG Live would refund Aus\$5 million (US\$3 million) to about 5,000 people who bought 20,000 tickets to the games in Sydney and Melbourne in August.

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2022 World Athletics

Championships Set for July 15-24

LONDON (Dispatches) - The world athletics Championships originally scheduled for next year in Eugene, Oregon, will take place on July 15-24 in 2022, avoiding a potential clash with the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

World Athletics last month shifted the event to 2022 to accommodate the rearranged Tokyo Olympics, which were postponed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Man Utd Must Be Ready for Return To “Normality”

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is looking at transfer targets during the lockdown and believes Manchester United are well-placed to exploit any knock-on effects of the coronavirus suspension.

With training and matches halted in a bid to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Norwegian has used some of this unexpected free time to pinpoint how best to improve the squad.

Jadon Sancho, Jude Bellingham and Jack Grealish are among the names liked with the club, with Solskjaer working with United's staff to fine-tune targets.

“Football is going to get back to normality at one point, and it's very important we're ready when that happens,” the United manager told Sky Sports.

“We want to be the best at everything, and of course now is a chance to spend more time, you discuss players, discuss plans.”

Asked whether United can exploit the transfer market when football returns, Solskjaer said: “Who knows how the market is going to react to this? Who knows which clubs need to sell players?”

“There might be just a situation there where you can exploit, and I know that we at Man United, we are one of the biggest, and the biggest, financially well-off.

“I'm sure we are capable, when we get back to normality, that we can do the business that we want to.”

Solskjaer's team last played on March 12 against Austrian side LASK in a Europa League last-16 first-leg game played behind closed doors, which they won 5-0.

Marcus Rashford and Paul Pogba are likely to have recovered from their injury lay-offs by the time football resumes.

“In a way, they have got an opportunity here to play a bigger part in this season than they had hoped,” said Solskjaer.

“And they are big players for us, some of the most important players.”

United are currently fifth in the Premier League table, chasing a top-four berth that would guarantee entry into next season's Champions League.

“We can kick on, I'm sure we can get a good start and climb up that table if we keep doing the right thing,” said Solskjaer.

“Even with the FA Cup and Europa League, if that does go ahead, we've got good chances there.”

Meanwhile Mikael Silvestre hopes to



see Paul Pogba team up with Bruno Fernandes in the Manchester United midfield but admitted he doesn't think his compatriot's 'head is at United any more'. Pogba has struggled to make any impact on Manchester United's season due to an ongoing ankle issue, starting just five times in the Premier League, and has long been linked with a move away from the club. While manager Solskjaer insists Pogba is still one of his 'most important players', speculation continues to rumble on behind the scenes, with a move to Juventus or Real Madrid considered a likely summer scenario. Silvestre, who spent nine years at Old Trafford, believes Pogba is still well liked at the club and the squad would be happy to keep him, however, he is concerned that the France international simply wants to leave. Read the latest updates: Coronavirus news live 'We have to wait and see but it doesn't look like his head is at United any more,' Silvestre said on a podcast for The Athletic. 'I saw him before the lockdown and he looked happy, everyone is behaving like normal with him. He is part of United so if he was to stay there wouldn't be any issue, I just hope we see the best out of him.

Paraguay Court Releases Ronaldinho Into House Arrest



ASUNCION (AFP) - A Paraguayan judge on Tuesday ordered the release of Brazilian football great Ronaldinho and his brother into house arrest while they await trial on charges of using false passports to enter the country.

Judge Gustavo Amarilla told reporters that he had ordered the “continuation of house arrest in a hotel for Ronaldinho and his brother.”

The pair were jailed one month ago to await trial, but their lawyers have posted bail of \$1.6 million.

Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was a star of Brazil's 2002 World Cup win and played for European giants Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan, among others.

The ruling means the brothers can swap their grim police cell block -- which has also housed Paraguay's former soccer federation chief and the ex-speaker of the lower house of parliament -- for a plush colonial-style hotel in downtown Asuncion. The brochure of the refurbished 107-room Palmaroga Hotel, located in the capital's historic center, describes it as offering “a seamless blend of early 1900s Renaissance grace and modern comfort as well as luxury.”

Jordan Wins Long-Running China Trademark Dispute

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's Supreme Court has ruled in favour of basketball legend Michael Jordan in a long-running trademark dispute, ending an eight-year legal battle with a Chinese sportswear firm that illegally used his name.

Upholding intellectual property rights is one of the core disputes of the US-China trade war, and a phase one deal signed in January saw Beijing pledge to improve protections of intellectual property.

The landmark ruling, made late last month, prohibits the Fujian-based Qiaodan Sports from using the Chinese translation of Jordan's name, Qiao Dan.

The retired Chicago Bulls player and six-time NBA championship winner has a huge following in China, a country that has legions of avid basketball fans. The Supreme Court decision overturns two previous verdicts in favour of the Chinese firm.

However, it still allows the firm to continue using its logo of a silhouetted basketball player -- which has similarities with the “Jumpman” logo used by Nike to promote its “Air Jordan” line of sports shoes.

However the Supreme Court referred the case over the use of the logo for retrial by the State Intellectual Property Office.

In 2016, Jordan won the right to his name in Chinese characters, but the Supreme Court upheld the firm's right to use its trademark “Qiaodan” in Romanised English.

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Mourinho Admits He Was in Wrong

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham boss Jose Mourinho has accepted he was in the wrong for holding a one-on-one training session with midfielder Tanguy Ndombele in a public park in London.

Mourinho was pictured on social media flaunting government rules by meeting up with the midfielder Tuesday, even though they kept to social distancing guidelines.

Fellow Spurs players Davinson Sanchez and Ryan Sessegnon were spotted running side by side in a separate session, while Serge Aurier filmed himself on Instagram running alongside a friend.

“I accept that my actions were not in line with government protocol and we must only have contact with members of our own household,” said the Portuguese manager.

“It is vital we all play our part and follow government advice in order to support our heroes in the NHS and save lives.”

London Mayor Sadiq Khan told the BBC the players and Mourinho should be leading by example.

“My concern is people, particularly children, who might support Spurs or follow football may see these images, pick up a paper, watch the internet and think, well if it's OK for them, why isn't it OK for me?” he said.

The Premier League has been suspended since mid-March due to the spread of COVID-19.

Qatar, Russia Deny Buying World Cup Rights



DOHA (Dispatches) - Qatar and Russia hit back at allegations of bribery after U.S. prosecutors accused them of paying millions in bribes for the rights to host the 2018 and 2022 tournaments.

According to U.S. Justice Department documents released Monday, FIFA officials received bribes to vote in favour of awarding the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 tournament to Qatar.

Doha said it “strongly denies the allegations contained within the court papers” while the Kremlin said it “absolutely legally got the right” to host the 2018 global football spectacle.

The U.S. legal action is linked to a wide-ranging 2015 corruption scandal that left world governing body FIFA in turmoil and led to the downfall of then-president Sepp Blatter.

In the ensuing years, the U.S. government has accused a total of 45 people and various sports companies of more than 90 crimes and of paying or accepting more than \$200 million in bribes.

“Russia absolutely legally got the right to organise the World Cup,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery said in a statement the allegations “are part of a long-standing case, the subject of which is not the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup bidding process.”

Neymar Welcome Anytime At Barca



MADRID (Dispatches) - Neymar “will always be welcome” back at Barcelona, the Spanish giants' striker Luis Suarez told Mundo Deportivo.

Neymar left Barca in a world record move to Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 but has been persistently linked to a possible return to the Camp Nou. Suarez told the paper: “Everybody knows ‘Ney’, we all know the affection we have for him in the dressing room.

“His ability is indisputable and he still has so much to show. He will always be welcome in the changing room, we appreciate him a lot.”

Suarez, 33, recovering from right knee surgery, said it was “complicated” to talk about players joining Barca at this time of crisis with the coronavirus pandemic.

“But I can talk about players, and these are huge players,” he commented when asked by the paper to discuss the rumours linking the 28-year-old Neymar with a Barca return.

The Uruguayan also had warm words for Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez, the 22-year-old Argentine whose name also been associated with a move to Catalonia. “Lautaro is a player who is progressing in Italy, he is a flexible centre-forward, with spectacular moves and that shows what a great a striker he is.” Questioned about how any eventual new signings would fit in Suarez said: “There will always be a healthy rivalry between us, and while we are all focused on the same objective, that is winning, any players who come in to help the team achieve its aims will always be welcome.”