

Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) Plans to Hold an Exhibition on the Country's Medical and Healthcare Achievements in the Battle Against the Coronavirus Outbreak

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Official Says That the Country Has Developed COVID-19 Rapid Test Kits Based on Antibody Detection, Adding That the Kits Will Hit the Market Soon

VOL. XXVI, No. 6919 TEHRAN Price 20,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

MONDAY APRIL 13, 2020 - FARVARDIN 25, 1399

2

DOMESTIC

U.S. Sanctions on Tehran Include Essential Goods



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

Slump in Oil Price To Intensify Sanctions Pressure



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. Surpasses Italy To Reach Grim Record In Covid-19 Deaths



> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

Beating Virus Would Be Real Victory



> SEE PAGE 8

Tehran Studying Possibility of COVID-19 As Biological Warfare

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Health Department of General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran said comprehensive studies are underway to address the possibility of biological warfare behind the COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

Second Brigadier General Hassan Araghizadeh said, "Every country is looking into the matter to see the likelihood of any biological warfare behind the issue."

"The Iranian scientific centers are also conducting researches in this regard, however, a definite decision needs more time and effort," he added.

General Araghizadeh noted that the armed forces are equipped with necessary skills and facilities to identify any biological threat in time and carry out treatment procedures, adding that special health sectors are dedicated to carrying out extensive research and taking the necessary measures in countering bioterrorism.

The Iranian armed forces have been playing an active role in combatting the new pandemic.

According to General Araghizadeh, 70% of the capacities of the Iranian armed forces' hospitals are dedicated to the treatment of coronavirus patients.

"We have also committed ourselves to provide about 10,000 beds for the patients recovering from the disease," he added.

The armed forces have also been active in disinfecting public places across the country.

Recovered Iranian COVID-19 Patients Reach to 44,000

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Public Relations and Information Center of the Ministry of Health announced that so far, 71,686 people in the country have definitely been infected with the Coronavirus, 4,474 people have died due to the virus and 43,894 have recovered.

Kianoush Jahanpour on Sunday about the latest data on the deadly coronavirus in the country and the deaths caused by the virus said, "According to the definitive laboratory findings and from yesterday to April 12 in the country, 1,657 new patients with COVID-19 were diagnosed in the country and the number of patients with this disease reached 71,686."

Fortunately, 43,894 patients have recovered and have been discharged so far, Jahanpour added.

See Page 7

Iran Handling Coronavirus Outbreak Better Than U.S., Europe



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says Iran has handled the novel coronavirus outbreak better than Europe and the United States, assuring that the country's stocks of basic commodities are replenished better than ever.

"We had a sanctions virus, to which the coronavirus was added, but you did not have the sanctions virus. You have one virus while we have two viruses," he said Sunday, addressing Europe and the United States.

"We did better than you in the fight against the coronavirus," he said during a meeting of the National Headquarters for Managing and Fighting the Coronavirus.

President Rouhani said in fighting the virus, the Iranian people resisted well, took each other's hands and helped and assisted each other.

"This is an honor for all, for all our loved ones and people. Yes, our situation is relatively good in the fight against the disease and the dangerous virus, and our situation is better in comparison with some countries."

Iran has been among the countries hardest hit by the highly contagious virus that first showed up in China in late December 2019 before spreading across the globe.

Illegal U.S. sanctions have hampered the virus fight in Iran, which has confirmed more than 70,000 infections since the outbreak was reported in the country in late February.

Rouhani said religious gatherings would probably be cancelled during the holy fasting month of Ramadan due to the outbreak, noting that the national committee fighting the coronavirus would decide on the issue in its upcoming meeting.

"During the month of Ramadan, people usually hold various events at mosques ... reciting the Qur'an and praying. The final decision on this issue will be made in the next meeting," he said.

Ramadan will begin in late this month and last through most of May, with Muslims fasting from dawn until sunset. He also said the Iranian people may travel within provinces as of today (Apr. 12) and travel to other provinces as of Apr. 20.

He also announced that low-risk businesses will resume work in the capital, Tehran, as of April 18.

These businesses can start work while abiding by relevant health protocols, he said at a meeting of the National Coronavirus Headquarters.

These businesses can start work while abiding by relevant health protocols, he said at a meeting of the National Coronavirus Headquarters.

As part of the smart social distancing plan, low-risk businesses have already resumed work in all provinces other than Tehran as of April 11, he added.

He said businesses which are resuming work are required to register on a website specified for the same purpose by the health ministry.

President Rouhani added discussions were also held on the resumption of work for high-risk businesses.

"In a meeting we had with heads of committees [of the National Coronavirus Headquarters], it was decided that they draw up plans for high-risk businesses as well in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education as well as the Ministry of Industries, Mine and Trade, and that the decisions be implemented whenever the plan is ready in compliance with relevant protocols and directives," he added.

The president also urged citizens to preferably use their personal cars rather than public transportation as part of social distancing measures.

UAE Buys Israeli Missile System for Libya Rebels

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has paid the Israeli regime to deliver an advanced anti-aircraft missile system to the Libyan rebels under the command of renegade general Khalifa Haftar, a report says.

The Libya Observer on Saturday cited the New Arab newspaper as reporting that the UAE's purchase of the missile system was an effort to boost Haftar's forces trying to overtake the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and unseat the internationally-recognized government there.

"The UAE has signed a contract with Israel to provide Haftar with an air defense system made by [an] Israeli defense firm. The system has been transferred to Egypt in order to send it to pro-Haftar areas after training some of Haftar forces' military officers on how to use it," the report said, citing sources. While the Emirates had traditionally been one of the many Arab countries to side with the Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has increasingly warmed up to the Tel Aviv regime in recent years.

It was unclear whether the Libyan rebels would receive direct training from Israel.

They have been fighting to overrun the Libyan capital since April last year but have been bogged down on the city's outskirts since the start; and in recent days, they have been suffering heavy losses in intensified fighting. The rebels have lost a dozen commanders, armored vehicles, ammunition supplies, and at least three fighter jets and one cargo plane.

See Page 7

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Stability in Iraq Is of The Utmost Importance

On Thursday, April 9, Iraqi President Barham Salih in coordination with Iraqi political parties tapped Mustafa Al-Kadhimi for premiership and forming the cabinet and introduced him to the parliament after Adnan Zurfi withdrew from forming government in Iraq. Zurfi had been designated for the job after days of conflicts between Iraqi parliament, political parties and Iraqi, and ultimately with initiatives of Iraq President Salih on March 17 and was introduced to the Parliament, and since the beginning, Americans tried to convince Al-Zurfi to accept the job through lobbying and spending money for the parliament and parties but they failed and ultimately they resorted to create terror and panic but by Iran Quds Forces Commander General Esmail Qaani's visit to Baghdad their efforts which were like a coup were thwarted.

After being tapped for the job, Al-Kadhimi in his first televised address to the nation emphasized that arms should be in the hands of the government to run the country.

According to Baghdad Today report, Al-Kadhimi in his first televised speech addressing the Iraqi people said they have a big test ahead and it is a national duty and everybody is responsible for it. He added that for many years since the collapse of Baath Party and Saddam Hussein, Iraqi people's demands have not been yet materialized and all are responsible for the failures.

Al-Kadhimi vowed to form a government to serve the public and the government will not make decisions in dark and isolated rooms for Iraqi people. He reiterated that his government will act rather than talk. Kadhimi pledged to protect Iraqis from the Coronavirus pandemic by using all domestic capacities and foreign relations. He then said, "Iraqi sovereignty is a red line," adding that it is not a matter for debate and his government will do its best to safeguard Iraq's sovereignty. He reiterated that Iraq belongs to Iraqis and its sovereignty is not a matter of debate.

He said all arms should be in the hands and control of the government and not in hands of groups or individuals. He stressed that his government will never allow anyone to insult any Iraqi citizen by accusing him/her of being linked to foreigners, adding that Iraqis are born to the civilizations.

Kadhimi vowed to fight corruption as a national mission, and to return displaced people back home is his objective that he will not abandon it. He urged all Iraqis to cooperate with him for boosting trust and protecting Iraq against the conflicts.....See Page 7

WCC Urges Trump To Remove Anti-Iranian Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) – The World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches (WCC), in a message to the US President Trump, expressed concern over the U.S. cruel and inhumane sanctions against the Iranian nation, calling for their removal amid the pandemic.

The message came following the message by Director of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) Abouzard Ebrahimi Torkaman addressed to world religious leaders, calling on them not to remain indifferent toward the US inhumane sanctions on Iranians, in particular amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The letter reads that "in this Easter season, the central point in the annual church calendar for Christians around the world, and as Muslims approach the holy month of Ramadan, we confront a challenging new reality requiring us to refrain from gathering together in our faith communities, in order to protect ourselves and our societies from illness and harm."

"In this unprecedented situation, we have a special opportunity and responsibility for deep reflection, and for renewal and seeking new beginnings."

See Page 7



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

IRGC Commanders Donate Part of Salaries to Corona-Hit People

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) are donating 20 percent of their salaries to coronavirus relief efforts, a spokesman said.

IRGC Spokesperson General Ramezan Sharif announced on Sunday that the IRGC commanders have taken part in a countrywide exercise launched by Basij, codenamed “devout help”, after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali

Khamenei stressed the need for helping the needy ahead of the holy month of Ramadan.

Sharif said all IRGC commanders have decided to donate 20 percent of their salaries to the people who have lost their jobs due to the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The donation of 20% percent of the monthly incomes will continue until the coronavirus crisis ends in Iran, the spokesman noted.

U.S. Sanctions on Tehran Include Essential Goods

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Sunday that US' unilateral sanctions against Tehran also include restrictions on essential goods highly required by the country.

Jahangiri made the remarks speaking during a ceremony in Tehran to introduce the new Minister of Agricultural Jihad Kazem Khavazi who recently won the vote of confidence from the Iranian Parliament to gain the post.

Although the U.S. sanctions seemingly make no problem for Iran to purchase its essential items, such as wheat, banking exchanges for the imports of such items are impossible due to restrictions caused by the U.S. sanctions, the first vice-president said.

While they claim the sanctions do not impose any restrictions on the imports of drugs and medical supplies, different countries say that they will be questioned by the U.S. if they export medicine to Iran, he added.

Underlining the significance of self-sufficiency in producing wheat, Jahangiri said that the country's wheat production is expected to rise to 14 million tons this year.

The vice-president also said that with the inauguration of the Persian Gulf Star refinery in southern Iran, the country is not only meeting its gasoline needs, but also exports gasoline and gas oil to other countries.

He said that if Iran had failed to focus on this project, the US would undoubtedly sanction the exports of gasoline to Iran. Jahangiri underscored that sanctions restricted the government's ability to access its financial resources.

“Still, at the very beginning of the coronavirus crisis, the government made the necessary planning to grant 12-percent loans to affected institutions and has been trying to create conditions to meet the needs of low-income families,” he added.

Earlier on Saturday Jahangiri said new economic programs are required in order to tackle the repercussions of the coronavirus outbreak.



He said the COVID-19 epidemic affects people's health and has economic and social consequences.

“The most important responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance is to adopt policies consistent with the current situation in order to ease economic pressure on people and affected enterprises,” he said in a meeting with senior economic authorities.

He said the government had to change some of its economic policies after the U.S. imposed its sanctions.

“Unfortunately, we have been gripped by effects and consequences of the coronavirus in the country in recent weeks, making it all the more necessary to adopt new economic policies and plans through consultations with the country's experts and economists,” Jahangiri noted.

“One of the government's most important policies was to boost people's resistance against the pressure of the United States' unfair sanctions. Today, we should be able to boost that resistance against the pressure caused by fallout from the coronavirus outbreak,” he said.

Iran Pushing Ahead With Campaign Against COVID-19

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says the country has pressed ahead with its campaign against the coronavirus despite the U.S. sanctions.

Mahmoud Vaezi, the chief of staff of President Hassan Rouhani, discussed measures adopted by the government to fight the coronavirus epidemic.

Vaezi said Iran began to take action at the time the virus outbreak was reported in the country.

“Iran was the second country to detect the disease and, since the outset, enforced measures to control the spread of, and treat the disease by shutting down schools and universities as well as religious, cultural and sports gatherings, urging people not to go on trips and stay home, and launching the national campaign against the coronavirus,” he said.

The official said the social distancing plan was the country's major strategy to fight the disease.

“The first stage of this strategy began at the beginning of the outbreak of the virus, and by the admission of health and medical experts, it played a key role in fighting the epidemic in the country,” he said.

The president's chief of staff refuted the accusation that the government did not act in time to contain the disease.

“This criticism is not fair,” he said.

“Since the moment we became sure the disease had entered the country, we formed the National Coronavirus Outbreak. The president, himself, assumed management of the crisis and we immediately began measures to control the disease,” he underlined.

“The national campaign against the coronavirus was one of major measures adopted by a country across the world to fight the coronavirus. Tens of millions of people were screened in this plan,” he said.

“There was no delay,” he noted.

He said action was taken to identify infected people in a timely manner and separate coronavirus patients from healthy people, a move which was instrumental in bringing down the fatality rate.

Iran Supports Any Iraqi PM Elected by Parliament

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's ambassador to Baghdad has expressed the Islamic Republic's support for whoever the Iraqi parliament elects as the next prime minister in a legal process.

In a post on his Twitter account, Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi underscored that the Islamic Republic of Iran respects the law and political system in Iraq.

“Any figure who would be elected as the prime minister (of Iraq) in a legal process and with the vote of

confidence of this country's parliament will receive our support,” the ambassador noted.

His comments came after Iraqi President Barham Salih nominated head of intelligence Mustafa al-Kazemi as Iraq's new prime minister-designate.

The nomination on Thursday came moments after predecessor Adnan al-Zurfi ended his bid to form a government. Al-Kazemi now has 30 days to submit his cabinet lineup to the 329-member parliament for a vote of confidence.

Bushehr Nuclear Plant Partially Halts Activity

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) deputy head said on Sunday that the activities of the first unit of Bushehr nuclear power plant have been halted to replace fuel and carry out regular maintenance measures.

Mahmoud Jafari said that the first unit of Bushehr nuclear power plant will pause its activity as of today in coordination with the national power grid to do fuel replacement and regular inspection and overhaul, according to AEOI's public diplomacy center.

He said the plant undergoes fuel replacement so that it would be ready to connect to national power grid during the peak consumption period in the summer.

“The unit has delivered 43 billion kwh of electricity to the national grid since it was launched and it has generated 7.2 billion kwh of power since the previous overhaul in May 2019,” Jafari added.

The official said that World Association of Nuclear Operators carried out an assessment of Bushehr nuclear power plant last year and rated it among its first five members.

Iran Exported More Electricity To Neighbors This Year

TEHRAN (MNA) – Spokesman of Iranian Ministry of Energy Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said that the country exported more electricity to neighboring countries this year as compared to last year.

According to the country's 6th Five-Year Socioeconomic and Cultural Development Plan, the ministry must reduce the losses of the country's electricity network to less than 10 percent, he added.

Presently, the ministry has managed to decrease the rate of electricity network's losses to less than 10 percent, he said, adding, “accordingly, the trend of nationwide electricity network's losses last year was on a completely downward trajectory and this will continue this year [started March 21, 2020].”

Turning to the current situation of the country amid the coronavirus pandemic, he stated, “the Ministry of Energy has taken measures to prevent power officials from referring to subscribers' residences for registering power meters consumed.”

He pointed to the export of electricity by the Islamic Republic of Iran to neighboring countries and added, “based on the commitments made in this regard, Iran's export of electricity will continue on a regular basis this year.”

Gov't Introduces Legal Measures To Support Fight Against COVID-19

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Vice Presidency for Legal Affairs has announced the details of measures to support the country's fight against the novel coronavirus.

Due to the outbreak of the corona virus and the need to ensure the health rights of citizens, Iran's Vice Presidency for Legal Affairs has taken several measures.

The most important of these measure are as follows:

Developing the legal capacities to support the medical staff both in terms of providing the protective equipment and employment contracts

Developing the legal capacity to protect the health of citizens, especially citizens with special physical, social and legal conditions

Developing legal capacity to protect detainees and convicts through leave, parole, and other legal means, and pursuing these matters in the judiciary and the executives branches

Developing legal capacities and other available facilities for provinces with special status, such as northern provinces and holy and tourist cities, and proposing traffic restrictions, amount of work attendance and providing health facilities

Developing legal protections for businesses, and classifying the contracts affected by the outbreak of the virus as well as preparing and proposing a letter to the cabinet on how to apply force majeure and hardship cases

Developing civil and penal capacities to deal with the racketeering and related economic crimes amid the outbreak of the disease and the ways to deal with them

Developing civil and penal capacities to deal with intentional or concomitant violations of health rules and regulations and the resulting civil and penal accountability

Preparing a new judicial action plan and submitting a bill to the International Court of Justice regarding violation of the interim order by the United States in not lifting the sanctions affecting the prevalence of coronavirus, as well as coordinating the government's legal efforts to prepare documents and the draft bill.

FM Stresses Importance of Unity Among Afghan Parties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underlined the importance of unity among different groups in Afghanistan, establishing peace and stability and developing mutual cooperation.

Zarif made the remarks on Sunday in a phone conversation with supervisor of Afghanistan Foreign Ministry Mohammad Hanif Atmar.

Earlier, Zarif in separate phone conversations with President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer of the Unity Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Abdullah Abdullah emphasized the importance of political structures based on Afghanistan constitution with regard to peace and national reconciliation, saying that Iran supports peace process in Afghanistan with participation of all Afghan political groups.

He also reviewed disputes which happened after the recent presidential elections in Afghanistan.

Zarif, Guterres Discuss U.S. Sanctions, Yemen Crisis

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister and the UN secretary general have conferred on the US sanctions on the Islamic Republic amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

In a phone conversation on Saturday night, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and UN Chief Antonio Guterres discussed the unilateral and unlawful sanctions imposed by the United States against Iran and its impacts on Tehran's fight against the novel coronavirus.

Various international leaders, figures and groups have denounced Washington's sanctions for hampering Iran's coronavirus fight.

The sanctions, imposed on the country after Washington withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal in 2018, target much-needed humanitarian aid and related finances from reaching the country.

The bans come despite an International Court of Justice's ruling banning Washington's aid-related sanctions in 2018. Earlier on Saturday, the Vatican expressed sympathy with the Iranian people and talked to the US over its draconian sanctions on Tehran amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Vatican's secretary of state Cardinal Pietro Parolin talked to US officials following a letter by head of Iran's Islamic Seminaries Alireza Arafti to leader of the Roman Catholic Church Pope Francis.

The Vatican has expressed sympathy with the Iranian people and talked to the US over draconian sanctions on Tehran amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Saturday phone call, the Iranian foreign minister and the UN secretary general also conferred on the plight of the Yemeni nation, whose country has been pounded by the Saudi-led coalition for the past five years.

The war-torn country on Friday reported its first case of infection with the novel coronavirus in a southern province under the control of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to the country's former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. This has raised fears of an outbreak in an impoverished country where five years of a bloody campaign led by the regime in Riyadh have shattered the health system.

Iran Not to Seek Outside Help to Meet Defense Needs

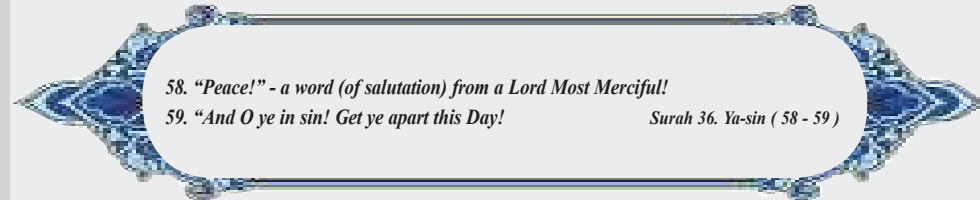
TEHRAN (MNA) – Deputy Coordinator of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said that the country will not seek help from other countries to meet its defense needs.

Speaking yesterday regarding the realization of this year's motto ‘surge in production’, as introduced by Leader of the Islamic Revolution, he said, “the Army and Armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been a forerunner in the implementation of these mottos introduced by the Leader in all years.” He pointed to the motto in the previous year entitled “Boosting Domestic Production” and added, “in the previous year [ended March 20, 2020], the Armed Forces of the country witnessed considerable achievements.” Since the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Army Force of the country has produced defense equipment, he said, adding, “for this purpose, we will not seek help from other countries in meeting our defense demands in the region as we have managed to produce our defense needs ourselves.”



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 13:04 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 19:54 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:04 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:32 |



Slump in Oil Price To Intensify Sanctions Pressure

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid-Reza Hariri says China's oil imports from Iran have slumped in the first two months of 2020, adding that the slump in oil price can intensify the pressure of sanctions on Iran.

Speaking to Eghtesadonline, Hariri said that statistics show that China has increased its oil imports from Russia and Saudi Arabia by 26 and 11 percent respectively, while Iran's oil sales to China have dropped by 81 percent in the same period.

He said that it seems statistics reported by Reuters are not reliable because it raises this question how China has increased its oil imports from Saudi Arabia and Russia and decreased its imports from Iran while the country is involved in fight with the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Hariri said currently one cannot rely on such statistics on China's oil imports from Iran and one should wait for the release of figures from the reliable global related organizations.

He reiterated that since the beginning of 2020 and the outbreak of the Coronavirus, demands for energy and transportation have extremely decreased and it has drastically affected the oil price. He noted in such a condition one cannot expect China to increase its oil imports.

On Iran's oil exports to China, he said after the JCPOA, Iran's oil exports to China witnessed a turning point and its daily exports to China reached 580,000 barrels per day but the figure dropped to 260,000 barrels per day last year, reiterating that in the



current condition and due to sanctions and lack of access to the statistics, one cannot rely on the reported statistics.

Hariri admitted that the U.S. restrictions on Iran oil sales are very extensive and any purchaser of Iran's oil could face heavy fines from the U.S., noting that purchasing Iran oil is very risky. He stated that it is natural when the oil price soars, there are some companies which rush to buy oil by getting discounts and ready to accept the risk of fines but when the oil price is cheap, the amount of discount and profit falls and nobody is ready to accept the risk of buying Iran oil.

He underlined that unfortunately by the slump in oil price, the pressure of sanctions on the country will increase because Iran cannot give discounts to allure purchasers.

Hariri said one should take into consideration that most big Chinese oil companies have considerable trades with the U.S. or their shares are in the U.S. stock market and nobody can expect them to ignore their interests in trade in the U.S. instead to purchase Iran oil.

He concluded that one cannot expect that improvement of Iran-China ties to increase the level of Iran's oil exports to China, reiterating that as long as sanctions are, Iran cannot rely on oil sales.

Gov't to Allocate \$250,000 to Make up for Tourism Industry Losses

TEHRAN (IFP) - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts says the ministry is pursuing the allocation of about \$250,000 to compensate for the damages to Iran's tourism infrastructure.

Ali Asghar Mounesan said the tourism industry needs to be activated as soon as possible after containing the coronavirus so that jobs that have been damaged can make up for some of their losses with the government's help.

Mounesan noted that the tourism industry is linked directly and indirectly with various sectors of the economy.

"With its economic, social and cultural effects, tourism is one of the most important and vital sectors of any country, but the outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran and around the world has caused the industry to suffer the most."

World Travel and Tourism Council statistics show that tourism accounts for 10.4 percent of the world's gross domestic product and creates 320 million jobs. It is also responsible for creating one-fifth of new jobs. Moreover, for eight consecutive years it contributed to global economic growth more than other sectors, emphasized Mounesan.

The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts stated the World Tourism Organization recently issued a report estimating that international tourist arrivals could decline by 20% to 30% in 2020. Arrivals could also return to seven years ago due to the outbreak of the coronavirus.

"The organization has estimated a loss of 290 to 440 billion dollars," Mounesan pointed out.

The containment of the pandemic is the utmost priority and the tourism sector is committed to support all measures taken to curb the outbreak. UNWTO is working closely with the World Health Organisation, its Members States and the industry to ensure a coordinated and effective response, he added.

Bandar Lengeh's 97% Growth in Decuple Indexes

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director of Ports and Maritime Office of Bandar Lengeh in Hormuzgan Province Mr. Ghasem Askari Nasab says after implementing some plans last year, the ports of the province witnessed 97 percent growth in the operation sector, and over 127,000 cars have been transited to the Central Asian states in the transit sector.

Speaking on the performance of the ports in Hormuzgan Province, he pointed to the outline and implementation of decuple programs of the office for better and favorable services in the marine and port services, adding that boosting quality and quantity of loading and unloading of goods, monitoring weak and strong points with concentration on marine and port activities, capabilities of humane forces for implementing developmental programs with an eye on offering better services to sailors, economic activists and port agents in west of Hormuzgan Province are the major axes of the decuple objectives of the office.

Askari Nasab added that last year and according to set schedule, 97 percent progress was materialized in all operation fields.



He also noted that Bandar Lengeh is considered as the beating heart for the transit of vehicles in Iran and the safe crossroads for marine and land transportation for the Central Asian countries.

He further said that last year over 127,000 vehicles were transited via Bandar Lengeh to the Central Asian states without any damage, adding that the port for the second consecutive year ranked first among ports in the country.

He then detailed some activities and performance of the company last year like the rise in the volume of loading and unloading of goods, launching special line for exports of refrigerated goods to the Persian Gulf states, rise in the number of marine travels and passengers before the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

Askari Nasab went on to say that last year, one of the priorities of the organization was to boost and to develop the infrastructures and consequently, the infrastructures of Shive Port in Parsian County were developed which helped exports to Port of Al-Ruwais in Qatar to accelerate.

Karoon Co. Set Ups Ponds for Disinfecting Shoes

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Karoon Petrochemical Company has made special ponds at the entrances of its buildings to disinfect shoes.

After the outbreak of Coronavirus and the warnings of health ministry for observing health advice to fight the virus, Karoon Petrochemical complex took action by boosting safety for health of its staff.

According to reports, the company, after using disinfectants to disinfect all areas in the complex, decided to set up special ponds for disinfecting the shoes of staff when they enter the buildings and offices.

The decision is made to minimize the outbreak of the virus inside the buildings. The decision has been welcomed by the staff and the decision was in line with social responsibility of the complex and its commitment to observe all issues regarding the HSE. The move is a preventive act as the company continues its production activities.



IDRO's Undecuple Approach For Surge in Production



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) says the organization has taken measures to adjust its programs with the slogan of the year for surge in production.

In meeting with managers of IDRO, Mohammad Baqer Aali pointed to naming of the year by Supreme Leader as year of production leap as well as Industry Minister's order for adjusting programs of the organization in line with surge in production, adding that the organization has taken measures to review its plans and to adjust them with the slogan of the year based on its achievements in the pick-up in production which was the slogan of last year.

He noted that the organization's moves are based on converging the activities and programs of its affiliated companies, boosting productivity, expansion of share of the market and products and businesses, completing unfinished projects, producing production to replace imported goods and investment in the knowledge-based products field.

Aali continued to say that the macro approaches of the organization for materializing surge in production are to develop domestic production capability, presenting package for renovating the industries, supporting the knowledge-based companies, guiding undercover companies with an objective to push for surge in production and accelerating the unfinished projects.

He also pointed to the role of IDRO as a developmental body for completing the production chain in the target industries from raw material to the end products domestically, and production of products to replace the imported items.

Aali noted that boosting productivity in production and diversification of tools for financing, helping export-oriented production units and diversification in production are of major approaches of the organization.

MSC Posts 12% Growth in Delivery of Products in Local and Foreign Markets

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN- Head of Sales and Marketing Department of Mobarakeh Steel Company says the company witnessed 12 percent growth in delivery of its products in local and foreign markets in last Iranian calendar year comparing to the preceding year.

Gholamreza Taheri said that the company's delivery of its products in the local and foreign markets last year jumped from 6.742m tons to 7.58 tons.

On the value of the amount of deliveries, he said that its value witnessed 67 percent growth last year comparing to the preceding year and it rose from 235,000b rials to 391,000b rials.

Taheri further said that the total amount of delivered products in the domestic and foreign markets was 7.58b tons as the share of domestic market was 6.13m tons and the share of exports was 1.42m tons despite restrictions and sanctions.

He further said that the amount of delivery of products in the domestic market grew by 5 percent last year from 5.864m tons to 6.13m tons.

Taheri noted that the total volume of the company's exports last year jumped from 878,000 tons in the preceding year to 1.45m tons last year which shows 65 percent growth.

He also stated that the total value of the delivered products in the domestic market last year, comparing to its preceding year, grew by 57 percent from 209,000b rials to 327,000 rials and the figure for the exported products witnessed 147 percent growth and it rose from 26,000b rials to 64,000b rials.

It is noteworthy to say that the company since its exploitation has delivered 113m tons of different types of products to the domestic and foreign market as the domestic market's share is 92m tons.



Qalibaf Appointed New Head of SEO



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN- Hasan Qalibaf Asl was appointed as the new head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) to replace Shapour Mohammadi.

Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand appointed Qalibaf to the post replacing Mohammadi who was the SEO head since July 26, 1996.

Qalibaf Asl was previously the head of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), the main stock market in Iran.

He is one of the most experienced stock market official in the country and is also a teacher at Al-Zahra University.

South Pars Gas Refineries Up



TEHRAN (Shana) - All the refineries processing South Pars gas output are operating normally and there is no drop in their output despite the coronavirus outbreak, an official with the South Pars Gas Complex said.

Ali Ahmadi, the complex's caretaker of coordination and production control, said: "With the operation of South Pars Gas Complex refineries, in order to achieve sustainable and maximum production in the special conditions of the coronavirus outbreak, appropriate measures at the level of refinery operation management have been done."

He added: "According to the health instructions of the Ministry of Petroleum, the necessary equipment have been procured for the presence of colleagues, and gas production is constantly being monitored to achieve maximum production and sustainability."

The official also underlined the importance of gas condensate production and continuous delivery of the item to consumers, adding: "The production situation of this product is always monitored and sent to the relevant bases."

Anak Krakatau Volcano Shoots Ash, Lava

JAKARTA (AP) — Indonesia's Anak Krakatau volcano spewed a column of ash 500 meters (1,640 feet) into the sky in the longest eruption since the explosive collapse of the island caused a deadly tsunami in 2018, scientists said Saturday.

Closed-circuit TV from Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation showed lava flares Friday night.

The agency said that the volcano was continuously erupting until Saturday morning. A level 2 alert status remained in place, the second-highest on a scale of four.



More Than 10% of U.S. carrier's Crew Test Positive for Virus

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - More than 10 percent of the 4,800 crew of the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier have tested positive for the coronavirus, the Navy said Saturday, days after the navy chief resigned over his mishandling of the outbreak.

"92 percent of the TR crew have been tested. As of today, 550 were positive, 3,673 were negative," a US Navy spokesman told AFP. The spokesman said 3,696 have been moved to hotels and barracks available on Guam, where the ship has been docked since its former captain blew the whistle on the outbreak, igniting a public standoff with the Pentagon that culminated in the resignation of US Navy Secretary Thomas Modly on Tuesday.



U.S. Surpasses Italy to Reach Grim Record in Covid-19 Deaths



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United States surpassed Italy on Saturday as the country with the highest reported coronavirus death toll, recording more than 20,000 deaths since the outbreak began.

The outbreak has now claimed the lives of at least 20,071 people in the US, which also leads the world in the number of confirmed infections with 519,453, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University.

Italy, the hardest-hit country in Europe with a population a fifth the size of the US, stood at 19,468 declared virus fatalities on Saturday evening, according to national authorities.

The U.S. reached the grim milestone as President Donald Trump mulled over when the country, which has registered more than half a million infections, might begin to see a return to normality.

The United States has seen its highest death tolls to date in the epidemic with roughly 2,000 deaths a day reported for the last four days in a row, a plurality of them in and around New York City. Even that is viewed as an understatement, as New York is still figuring out how best to include a surge in deaths at home in its official statistics.

Public health experts have warned that the US death toll could reach 200,000 over the summer if unprecedented stay-at-home orders that have closed businesses and kept most Americans indoors are lifted after 30 days.

Most of the present restrictions on public life, however, including school closures and emergency orders keeping non-essential workers largely confined to their homes, flow from powers vested in state governors, not the president.

Nonetheless, Trump has said he wants life to return to normal as soon as possible and that the measures aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 disease caused by the novel coronavirus carry their own economic and public-health cost.

In New York on Saturday, the state's governor and New York City's mayor engaged in a fresh squabble over their efforts to combat the virus in what is now the global epicenter, in this instance over how long schools might stay closed.

The state was sometimes slower to impose social-distancing restrictions than other jurisdictions, notably in California, while New York's two most powerful officials, both Democrats, sometimes disagreed with each other over matters of jurisdiction and the best terminology to use for certain measures.

They have not appeared in public together since March 2.

On Saturday morning, Mayor Bill de Blasio declared that New York City's public schools would no longer reopen on April 20 but stay closed for the rest of the academic year, saying it was "the right thing to do."

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, however, later used his widely watched daily news conference to dismiss the mayor's edict as merely an "opinion," and say he would make his own decision on school closures.

North Korea Calls for Stronger Coronavirus Measures

SEOUL (AFP) - North Korea called for stronger measures against the rapidly spreading coronavirus pandemic at a meeting presided by leader Kim Jong Un, state media reported Sunday, without acknowledging whether the country had reported any infections.

The already isolated, nuclear-armed North quickly shut down its borders after the virus was first detected in neighboring China in January, and imposed strict containment measures.

Officials in Pyongyang and its state media have repeatedly insisted that the North remains totally free of the virus, but Sunday's report did not make that assertion.

The coronavirus epidemic -- which has infected more than 1.7 million worldwide -- had become "a great disaster threatening the whole mankind, regardless of borders and continents", the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.



Kremlin Warns of Huge Influx of Moscow Patients

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The Kremlin said on Saturday a "huge influx" of coronavirus patients was beginning to put a strain on hospitals in Moscow as Russia's death toll rose to more than 100.

Moscow and many other regions have been in lockdown for nearly two weeks to stem the contagion, but hospitals in the capital are still being pushed to their limit, officials said.

On Saturday, a Reuters witness saw a tailback of dozens of ambulances queuing outside a hospital handling coronavirus cases in the region immediately outside Moscow, waiting to drop off patients.

One ambulance driver said he had been waiting 15 hours outside the hospital to drop off a patient suspected of having the virus.

"The situation in both Moscow and St. Petersburg, but mostly in Moscow, is quite tense because the number of sick people is growing," Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview on state television, Russian news agencies reported.

"There is a huge influx of patients. We are seeing hospitals in Moscow working extremely intensely, in heroic, emergency mode."

Russia's coronavirus crisis response centre said hospitals were taking all possible measures to ensure rapid admissions and that cases of ambulances needing to wait hours to drop off patients was not a systemic issue. Russia has reported 13,584 cases of the virus, and the authorities said on Saturday that 12 new coronavirus-related deaths in the last day had pushed the death toll to 106.

Peskov added that it would become clearer only in the next few weeks whether the country was nearing the worst point in its outbreak.

Sergei Sobyanin, the mayor of Moscow, said on Friday that the city was far from reaching the peak of the outbreak, saying it was merely in its "foothills".

On Saturday he said Moscow would introduce digital permits next week to control movement around the city to help enforce the lockdown.

UN Condemns Water Cutoff To Libyan Capital

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Libya has condemned the cutting off of water supply to the capital Tripoli over the past week as "particularly reprehensible" and said it must stop immediately.

An armed group on Monday stormed a control station at Shwerif, stopping water from being pumped and threatening workers, the Great Man-Made River Project, which supplies water to much of Libya, said in a statement.

The armed group is seeking to use the water cutoff as pressure to force the release of detained family members, UN humanitarian coordinator Yacoub El Hillo said in a statement.

The supply has been cut to more than two million people in Tripoli and nearby towns and cities.

Tripoli, seat of the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA), has been under assault for a year by the eastern-based Libyan

National Army of Khalifa Haftar.

An escalation in fighting since mid-March has involved intense bombardment, particularly in the south of the city near the front lines, with projectiles hitting a hospital.

The warfare has hindered efforts to prepare Libya's already tattered health system for an outbreak of the coronavirus, with 24 cases confirmed in the country. State efforts to slow the spread of the disease have included a curfew.

Electricity supply has also been repeatedly cut in Tripoli and some other areas over the past week.

"At this moment when Libya is fighting the threats of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to water and electricity is more than ever life-saving, and such individual acts to collectively punish millions of innocent people are abhorrent and must stop immediately," Hillo said.



Bangladesh Hangs Killer of Founding Father Mujibur Rahman



DHAKA (Dispatches) - Authorities in Bangladesh have executed a killer of the country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, nearly 45 years after the assassination.

Abdul Majed, a former military captain, was hanged at the central jail at Keraniganj near the capital, Dhaka, a minute after midnight of Saturday, said Inspector General of Prisons Brigade General AKM Mustafa Kamal Pasha.

Majed was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, adding that the arrest was "the biggest gift" for Bangladesh this year.

Majed publicly announced his involvement in the assassination and was reportedly hiding in India for many years.

The execution took place after President M Abdul Hamid rejected a clemency plea filed by Majed, seeking mercy. His wife and other family members visited him for the last time on Saturday.

Majed is one of a dozen defendants whose death sentences were upheld by the country's Supreme Court in 2009.

In 1998, a trial court sentenced them to death for their involvement in the August 15, 1975, killing of Rahman and most of his family members by a group of army officials. Rahman was the father of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who, along with her younger sister Sheikh Rehana, were the only survivors in the family.

After the assassination, subsequent governments and later President Ziaur Rahman awarded the killers by posting them mostly in Bangladesh's diplomatic missions abroad. Majed was posted as Bangladesh's ambassador to Senegal in 1980.

Rahman, former army chief and husband of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, was killed in a military coup in 1981.

In 2010, five others who admitted to taking part in the assassination were hanged. One man died of natural causes in Zimbabwe. The other six convicts, including Majed, were at large. Officials say at least one of them is in Canada and another in the United States.

Bangladesh became independent in 1971 after a nine-month war against what was then West Pakistan, now Pakistan, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Jordan Apt (\$2000)
250sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Velenjak Villa (\$4000)
1500sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Kamranieh (\$2500) 300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, F.F
Zaferanieh (\$1600) 130sq.m, 2bdrs, S/p, F.F
Fereshteh (\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
Darrous (\$2400) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Farmanieh (\$1800) 2bdrs
Farmanieh (\$2300) 3bdrs
Both with S/p, S, J, & F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Commercial office
Farmanieh (\$30 per sq.m)
4storey, 16unit, & pkg lots

IRAN NEWS
ADVERTISING
44253401

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate
Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

IRAN NEWS
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS
ADVERTISING

TEL: 44253448-50
FAX: 44253234
ADIRANNEWS@GMAIL.COM

Siemens CEO Rules Out Job Cuts From Coronavirus Impact

ZURICH (Reuters) - Siemens will not cut its workforce because of the economic downturn triggered by the new coronavirus, Chief Executive Joe Kaeser said, although short-time working measures could be extended in Germany.

"No one at Siemens will leave because of a temporary fluctuation in activity," Kaeser told Passauer Neue Presse in an interview published on Saturday.

Siemens still had to adapt to structural changes, like in fossil fuel power where the trend is moving toward renewable energies, he said.



Saudi-Mexican Clash Halts Record Oil Cut Deal

LONDON (Reuters) - Top oil nations struggled to finalize record output cuts at G20 talks on Friday to boost prices slammed by the coronavirus crisis, as Saudi Arabia clashed with Mexico despite U.S. President Donald Trump's mediation offer.

OPEC led by Saudi Arabia and its allies led by Russia, which together make up the informal OPEC+ group, had forged a pact to curb crude production by 10 million barrels per day (bpd) or 10% of global supplies in marathon talks on Thursday. Russia and OPEC said they wanted other producers including the United States and Canada to cut a further 5%.

But efforts to conclude the deal hit the buffers when Mexico said it would only cut output by a quarter of the amount demanded by OPEC+.

Measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus have destroyed demand for fuel and driven down oil prices, straining budgets of oil producers and hammering the U.S. shale industry which is more vulnerable to low prices due to its higher costs.

Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Friday Trump had offered to make extra U.S. cuts on his behalf, an unusual offer by a president who has long railed against OPEC.

Trump, who had threatened Saudi Arabia with oil tariffs if it did not fix the market's oversupply problem, said Washington would help Mexico by picking up "some of the slack" and being reimbursed later. He did not say how this would work.

But the offer was still not enough to close the deal.

Two sources familiar with the discussions said Saudi Arabia clashed with Mexico on Thursday and again on Friday, when the kingdom hosted talks of energy ministers from the Group of 20 major economies that were aimed at endorsing OPEC+ efforts.

Hours after talks ended, a G20 communique made no mention of the cuts or quantities, but only referred to "measures to ensure energy market stability". It remained unclear how the OPEC+ pact could be now finalized.

"We call on all nations to use every means at their disposal to help reduce the surplus," U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette had told the G20 talks.

Brouillette said the United States would offer support with a natural decline in its oil output driven by economic forces. Although not a formal cut, it still represents a major shift for by a country which has never joined OPEC in coordinated action. Brouillette said U.S. output could fall by between 2 million and 3 million bpd by the end of 2020 - a bigger drop over a shorter period of time than officials previously indicated.

U.S. Treasury Wants Warrants, Repayment From Major U.S. Airlines



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told major airlines on Friday he wants them to repay some of the \$25 billion in cash grants the U.S. Congress approved last month to cover payroll costs as airlines weather an unprecedented crisis due to the coronavirus, three industry officials briefed on the matter told Reuters.

The Treasury said in a statement Mnuchin will not require passenger air carriers that will receive \$100 million in payroll assistance or less to provide compensation and "funds will be available promptly upon approval of their applications." Reuters first reported earlier on Friday that Treasury would not seek warrants from smaller regional carriers, which had urged the government not to demand compensation.

Mnuchin spoke with the chief executives of major airlines in separate calls on Friday and told them the department was offering 70% of the aid in grants that would not need to be repaid, and 30% in low-interest loans for which the airlines would be required to offer warrants, the sources said. The interest rates would rise over time if airlines had not repaid them, the sources said. Three people briefed on the matter said the warrants, which would give the government the right to buy equity at a pre-set price and time, would be equal to 10% of the value of the loan.

That means that every \$1 billion in government aid would include \$700 million in grants, \$300 million in low-interest loans and an option for the government to buy \$30 million in shares. Two people said the warrants would be priced at current stock prices. Any of the terms could still be subject to change as talks continue.

Warrants do not generate any balance sheet debt and thus should not hamper the ability of airlines, which can also apply for a separate \$25 billion government loan package, to finance in the future, experts said.

Fitch Ratings Cuts 2020 Global Growth Forecast to 1.3%

LONDON (Dispatches) - Fitch Ratings has cut its baseline global growth forecast for 2020 to 1.3 percent from 2.5 percent in the December 2019 Global Economic Outlook (GEO). This revision will leave the level of 2020 GDP \$850 billion lower than in the previous forecast.

"We expect global growth to fall to 1.3 percent in 2020, which would be weaker than global downturns seen in the early 1990s and in 2001," the rating agency said in a report.

However, it raised the global growth forecast for 2021 to 3.3 percent from 2.7 percent in the December GEO. This reflects an assumption that the health crisis will ease in the second half of 2020, which should allow for a sharp bounce-back as activity reverts to normal levels, inventories are rebuilt, and some consumer and capital spending is re-profiled, Fitch pointed out. Meanwhile, it also sees an outright decline in global GDP this year if more pervasive lockdown measures have to be rolled out across all the G7 economies. Emergency macro policy responses are purely about damage limitation at this stage but should help secure a 'V-shaped' recovery in the second half of 2020 assuming that the health crisis eases, the rating agency noted.

The shock to the Chinese economy - primarily resulting from the official 'lockdown' response to contain the virus - has been very severe.

As per Fitch, the GDP is likely to fall by over 5 percent in the first quarter of 2020 and by 1 percent year-on-year.

"Falling GDP in China is virtually unprecedented and, in the near term at least, these numbers are worse than most previous hypothetical 'hard-landing' scenarios. The good news is that the daily number of new COVID-19 cases in China has fallen very sharply, which should pave the way for a marked economic recovery in 2Q20 - high-frequency indicators already point to this starting in March," noted the agency.

Nevertheless, the delayed impact of supply-chain disruptions and lower Chinese demand in the rest of the world will continue to be felt profoundly for some time, particularly in the rest of Asia and the eurozone, it added.

It also expects Italy, Spain, and France to see a very sizeable outright decline in GDP in the coming months. The interruptions to economic activity seen in China - and now in Italy - are on a scale and speed saw other than during periods of military conflict, natural disasters or financial crises. Even though it expects a recovery in China from 2Q20, growth is expected to fall to 3.7 percent for the year 2020 as a whole. It also forecasts Italian GDP to fall by 2 percent this year and Spanish GDP by almost 1 percent.

Eurozone growth is likely to be minus 0.4 percent this year, the agency estimates. Meanwhile, for the US, Fitch now forecasts GDP growth to be just 1 percent in 2020 compared with a pre-virus outlook of 2 percent and 2Q20 GDP is expected to fall by 0.5 percent (or 2 percent annualised).

According to Fitch, the decline in US GDP is reflected in the likelihood that travel, tourism, and business and leisure events will be disrupted for months.

However, going ahead, the recent aggressive macro policy responses - the emergency interest rate cuts, massive central bank liquidity injections, macro-prudential easing, credit guarantee schemes and substantive fiscal stimulus - should start to boost growth from 2H20, helping the level of GDP to revert to close to its pre-virus path over in the medium term, said the rating agency.

Air France in Talks With French Gov't Over Emergency Funding

PARIS (Reuters) - Air France KLM has requested several billion euros of emergency funds from the French state while it negotiates a loan package from banks, which would be guaranteed by France and the Netherlands, French business daily Les Echos reported.

The airline has asked for an immediate state cash injection to meet its needs for the next four to five months, the paper said, with air travel paralysed by the coronavirus shutdown.

Air France KLM and the French finance ministry declined to comment.

Negotiations with the banks over loans to tide it over for the next 12 to 18 months are taking longer than expected, Les Echos reported, adding that neither Air France KLM, nor the banks, were satisfied with the level of guarantee that France provides of 75%, which compares to a 90% backup by the Netherlands.

Sources previously told Reuters that Air France KLM is in talks with banks to receive up to 6 billion euros (\$6.5 billion) in state-backed bank loans.

The airline had said on Thursday that despite cost-cutting measures to stave off the impact of the coronavirus crisis, it expects it will be short of cash in the third quarter, but said it was confident of French and Dutch government support.

French finance minister Bruno Le Maire said earlier this week that the government was prepared to provide massive support to the airline in order to save a French industrial champion.

Air France KLM Chief Executive Benjamin Smith has asked the French government to increase its guarantee to 90%, Les Echos said.

Russia Tapped Foreign Exchange Reserves as Rouble Tumbled

LONDON (FT) - Russia burnt through \$7b of its foreign exchange reserves last month as a plunge in oil prices caused by the coronavirus pandemic sent the rouble tumbling and emerging economies around the world sought to prop up their currencies during the sharp sell-off.

The fall in Moscow's reserves was the first monthly decline since September 2018 and the largest for more than three years, according to data released on Friday.

It came as countries such as Brazil, Egypt and Mexico also tapped their savings during an unprecedented withdrawal of portfolio

investment from emerging markets as investors fretted that they would be hit hard by the global slowdown caused by the containment measures implemented to stem the spread of the virus.

Data on foreign exchange interventions are notoriously patchy, but global foreign exchange reserves are largely held in the form of U.S. government and agency debt. According to Federal Reserve filings, the quantity of such assets it holds in custody for foreign central banks has fallen by \$124bn since the third week of February. "Those countries with large foreign exchange reserves have probably been trying to resist local currency depreciation or smooth liquidity with foreign exchange intervention," said Chris Turner, global head of markets at ING.

The rouble fell more than 30 per cent last month as oil prices more than halved, but Russia's foreign exchange interventions, which kick in automatically when the price of global benchmark Brent crude oil falls below \$42 a barrel, managed to keep the currency from hitting a record low.

Russia's central bank governor last week insisted that the sales had "nothing to do with the exchange rate". A swath of other emerging market central banks have intervened in the markets in recent weeks.

Brazil's central bank has sold \$12.8bn in spot dollars and \$8.5b of foreign exchange swaps since the crisis unfolded, according to JPMorgan. The central bank's reserves have fallen by 3.8 per cent to \$343b in the year to date, according to Bloomberg data.

Peru has sold \$2.1b of foreign exchange swaps, while Mexico and Colombia have intervened to the tune of \$2b and \$1.5b, respectively, JPMorgan said.

How is coronavirus taking its toll on markets, business, and our everyday lives and workplaces? Stay briefed with our coronavirus newsletter.

Egypt's central bank sold \$5.4bn worth of foreign currency last month, roughly 12 per cent of its total, "to compensate for the decrease in foreign investment", it said.

Pakistan PM Seeks Donations to Mitigate Economic Impact of COVID-19

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said the government was raising extra funds to control the economic fallout of coronavirus in the country in order "to take care of 220 million people who live below the poverty line" amid a protracted pandemic.

The number of cases in the country stood at 4,780 by Friday evening, with 72 deaths recorded so far. In Punjab, the cases have reached 2,336, in Sindh 1,214, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 656, Balochistan 219, Islamabad 107, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir has a total of 248 cases.

Attending a telethon on 92 News to raise donations for the coronavirus fund, Imran said no government could win the war against COVID-19 alone and national unity was needed to defeat the contagion.

He said the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) comprised representatives from the federal and provincial governments, military officials and medical experts, who jointly take decisions through coordination.

Answering questions, he said Rs144 billion will be distributed among 12 million families, but we know there are more people who need this support. "We are using all our resources, but we have to take care of 220 million people who live below the poverty line across the country... that's why we have arranged this fundraising telethon," he explained.

He said the government was leaving no stone unturned to tackle the crisis.

"Countries around the world are taking the brunt of coronavirus... many governments are struggling... even the rich European countries. You can see the situation in New York... even they were asking for help from other states.



"We know that the coronavirus cases will further rise in the coming days, but by limiting our movement, we can flatten the curve... this is the aim of my government."

He said due to a weak health system in the country, people are requested to socially distance themselves. "We have to take all possible precautions... that's the only way out of this crisis," he maintains. "No one knows what the situation would be in future... we can only hope for the best," said the premier.

He assured that all the public donations would be used to support the poor as their numbers would be growing continuously owing to the closure of industries and businesses.

Iran's "Untimely" to Be Screened in U.S.

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian movie 'Untimely' directed by Pouya Eshtehardi will be screened in Columbus International Film & Animation Festival.

Because of the outbreak of coronavirus the festival will be held online on April 15-19.

The Columbus International Film + Animation Festival is a Columbus, Ohio, United States annual film festival which is designed to encourage and promote the use of film and video in all forms of education and communication.

It is the first and oldest film festival in the United States, having existed since 1952.



Italy Extends Lockdown to May in Signal to European Business

ROME (Dispatches) - When Swiss authorities closed the nation's ski runs in mid-March, two days after the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, the coronavirus was already ripping through the chic resort of Verbier.

A longtime destination of Europe's jet set for off-piste skiing and apres-ski high life, Verbier's packed gondola lifts and bars made it the perfect incubator for Covid-19. Even after the lifts closed, vacationers and seasonal workers partied one last time before heading home.

"It's a perfect opportunity to spread — it's a virus heaven," said Corinne Cohen, a doctor at a clinic close to the resort. At one medical practice in Verbier, 80% of patients tested positive for Covid-19.

Cohen and other physicians called for Verbier to be quarantined. The Swiss government demurred, saying that isolating the resort wouldn't limit the spread of Covid-19.

That decision increased scrutiny of Switzerland's approach, which was criticized for initially prioritizing the economy and individual liberties over containment. Those tensions also illustrate the challenge of coordinating a pandemic response across borders with four other major European nations.

While the WHO is based in Geneva, Swiss authorities were slow to embrace its recommendations on contact tracing and isolation, and ramped up testing only in recent weeks.

"This is the host country of the WHO and the host country initially did not follow WHO advice," said Annelies Wilder-Smith, a professor of emerging infectious diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine who lives in Switzerland.

After Italy became the pandemic's epicenter, Switzerland initially kept open the 460-mile (740-kilometer) frontier with its southern neighbor, partly because the Swiss canton of Ticino relies on about 70,000 cross-border Italian workers to power its economy. Now Ticino has Switzerland's highest infection rate.

When WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called in mid-March for countries to "test, test, test," Daniel Koch, head of communicable diseases at the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health said such an approach was no longer appropriate for the country.

While most Swiss people were happy with the official response, 42% wanted stronger measures, a poll in March by the Sotomo Research Institute showed.

Countries like Singapore and South Korea invested heavily in strategies to combat epidemics after experiencing the virus outbreaks of SARS in 2003 and MERS in 2015. Others, such as Italy or Switzerland, were caught less prepared, according to Didier Trono, a professor of virology and genetics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne. Fears of ruining the economy by overreacting also played a role, as they did in the U.S. and U.K.

"Switzerland doesn't stand out as the bad person in the class," Trono said. "Generally speaking, highly democratic modes of functioning are also not best suited in these situations, where blitzkrieg-like approaches are needed."

Still, the Swiss implementation of social distancing has been exemplary, said Wilder-Smith, while the government has incrementally adopted WHO advice. Where the country still lags behind is on capacity for "liberal testing, and more contact tracing," she said.

Switzerland now has one of the highest per capita testing rates in the world, though the focus remains on risk groups. The government has banned gatherings of more than five



people, but the strict lockdowns imposed in neighboring Italy and France aren't in place.

The epidemic started in many places at the same time in Switzerland, complicating a systematic containment, Trono said. "Now there are far too many fires everywhere, and we're past being able to contain it here, here and here."

Surveillance must go beyond Alpine virus hotspots, such as Verbier and the Austrian ski resort of Ischgl, from which tourists spread Covid-19 across Europe. That imperative is running up against pressure from lawmakers and businesses to reopen the Swiss economy as industries from gold refining to tourism suffer.

For now, the government agrees with the WHO that it's too soon to relax restrictions, which have been extended until April 26.

"As soon as the trend of new infections declines sharply we can say the epidemic wave is declining and will continue to decline," said Koch, the Swiss government's coronavirus czar. "But it's still a little too early to make that call."

It will also be important over the coming weeks to use antibody tests to determine what fraction of the population has already been exposed, according to Trono.

"Once we have determined whether the presence of antibodies indicates resistance to further infection, we will additionally know who can go back to work without risk to themselves or others," he said. "That may allow some precision de-confinement."

As governments look for exit strategies, the WHO is stressing the continuing need for testing, isolation and contact tracing.

"Lockdowns will slow the virus, but they won't stop it," Bruce Aylward, senior adviser to the WHO's director-general, said on Wednesday. "They provide a window to prepare for the post-lockdown reality."

Global Business, Workers, Civil Society Join Call for Debt Relief For Poorer Nations

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The International Chamber of Commerce on Friday joined a global trade union and a major civil society group to urge immediate debt relief for the world's poorest countries to help them fight the coronavirus pandemic and mitigate its economic impact.

In an open letter to finance ministers, the groups also urged countries to contribute to the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, an International Monetary Fund instrument that provides debt service relief to its poorest members.

The ICC, the International Trade Union Confederation and Global Citizen, a group pushing to end extreme poverty by 2030, warned that failure to address the debt and financing needs of developing countries could trigger a series of debt defaults that would have devastating and wide-ranging consequences.

"We are concerned that a failure to immediately address the debt and financing needs of developing countries during this unprecedented crisis will result in large-scale loss of lives and livelihoods — potentially resulting in a fundamental collapse of social and economic systems," the groups wrote.

The letter reflects increasing support for a push by the World Bank and IMF for official bilateral creditors to temporarily suspend debt payments for the poorest countries, which will be hit hardest by the pandemic.

Details of the IMF-World Bank proposal are still being finalized ahead of debate by finance officials at the virtual Spring Meetings of the Fund and the Bank next week.

On Friday, the Institution of International Finance, which includes over 450 banks, hedge funds and other financial firms, also backed the call. Other backers include the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Jubilee USA Network alliance of faith groups.

Nearly 140 campaign groups and charities, including Oxfam and Save the Children, have also urged the Group of 20 major economies and private creditors to cancel debt payments.

In their open letter, published Friday, the ICC, ITUC and Global Citizen warned that some developing countries now faced an "impossible choice" between servicing sovereign debt repayments or paying nurses and purchasing ventilators.

"Without urgent action, we see a fundamental risk that a series of debt defaults will further exacerbate the unprecedented economic downturn already unfolding before us," the groups said.

Oil Stability Needed for Predictability

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Oil price stability is needed for predictability in the global oil market, and volatility in oil prices must end immediately, Turkey's energy and natural resources minister said Saturday.

"All actors' main point, whether they are oil producing or consuming countries, was that there should be cooperation and solidarity in the supply and demand sides of the oil market," he said in the wake of a Friday G20 energy ministers teleconference, also attended by officials from the International Energy Agency (IEA), International Energy Forum (IEF) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on global markets, social life, and economic activities around the world was the main topic of the conference, Donmez told Anadolu Agency in an exclusive interview.

"Price volatility in recent weeks was the main concern," of the meeting, he said. "Rather than high or low oil prices, lack of projection and volatility in oil prices have a higher negative impact on the market."

He added that while there was a supply-and-demand balance of 100 million barrels per day (bpd) before COVID-19, now there is a decline of 20 million bpd on the demand side.

This is due to the stalled global transportation industry since two-thirds of global crude output is used in transportation and the rest is used mostly in petrochemistry, he added.

Donmez told how earlier Friday OPEC and non-OPEC oil producing countries agreed to curb their total production by 10 million bpd, which could later increase to 13-14 million bpd after more countries join in.



The change in crude oil prices is usually reflected in natural gas prices in about six months' time, according to market fundamentals, but Donmez said there is already fluctuation in gas prices now.

Noting that there are usually long-term contracts in the natural gas market, rather than spot prices in crude oil, he said Turkey

mostly purchases its gas via pipelines, but there are some liquefied natural gas (LNG) purchases as well.

"There are countries that we buy LNG from. We buy from them when spot daily prices are affordable. However, there is fluctuation in those prices as well due to the contraction in demand," he explained.

"As an energy-consuming country, we told the G20 energy ministers meeting that we want price volatility [in oil and gas] to end immediately since it hurts market predictability," Donmez said.

"For high energy demand countries, such as Turkey, falling prices are an advantage to lower our costs. But there's also a limit to turning this price decline into an advantage as well, as our public started to use less oil, especially in land and air transportation [due to COVID-19]," he explained.

Donmez said he hopes energy markets return to their competitive nature under normal conditions very soon, and thanked all Turkish energy sector employees for their work amid the virus.

"It's very important for our public to have uninterrupted access to energy goods and services during these hard days. The health and safety of our employees in the Turkish energy industry is very important. I want to thank all of them. They are working with great dedication to make sure energy services continue without any disruption," he said.

Spain Eases Some Restrictions on Workers

MADRID (Dispatches) - This coming Monday will mark a return to regular activity for some non-essential businesses that were placed in a temporary period of "hibernation" on March 30. For companies located in regions that observe Easter Monday, the return will be pushed to Tuesday.

These include companies from the industrial and construction sectors that were forced to close for two weeks as the government ramped up existing confinement measures in a bid to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Employees at these companies and factories, who are mostly unable to perform their jobs from home, will be allowed to go back to work. Some services that were closed on March 30, such as gestorías — companies that deal with bureaucratic paperwork and tax filings for their clients — will also reopen next week. Meanwhile essential workers — those involved in healthcare and the food chain, among others — will continue to perform their work, as they have since the introduction of the state of alarm on March 14. So will people working from home, who were not included in the ban.

Stability in Iraq Is...

FROM PAGE 1

Of course it should be noticed that by his remarks on public disarmament do not mean Hashd Al-Shaabi and he does know well the message of Iraqi groups that Iraq parliament approval is serious and passing of the time will change nothing about the nature of the approval (exit of the U.S. troops from Iraq).

So he continued to say, "All security body in different sections (Army, Police, Hashd Al-Shaabi and Peshmerga) will continue their tasks decisively for preventing spread of arms.

The PM-designate can get vote of confidence of all parties and parliament in one month. Formation of the government is much important than bread so groups and parties can interact by insisting on exit of the U.S. troops and they can cooperate with him while his priority is Iraq's independence. I think Iran insists more on stability in Iraq and it will never be ready to accept that Iraq's independence and national interests are taken hostage by political currents and Iraqi people remain deprived from interests of stability.



Recovered Iranian COVID-19...

FROM PAGE 1

The head of the Ministry of Public Relations Center said, "Unfortunately, in the past 24 hours, 117 COVID-19 patients have lost their lives, and 4,474 people have lost their lives in the country to date."

Jahanpour also stated that it is better WHO does not turn into a political field.

On the sidelines of his press conference and reacting to the U.S. policy in this critical time, he said that it is better World Health Organization (WHO) is not turned into a political field while before the US claim, many have said WHO is a U.S.-affiliated.

He said: "We do not want WHO to turn into the political sphere and matter because it is not a political body."

"I say WHO is not a political body at all," the spokesman noted. "Iran has run and continued its cooperation and ties with WHO as tightly as possible and it will," Jahanpour added.

"To combat and defeat the COVID-19 joint and common cooperation is required. If Trump and the U.S. administration said such a thing, such a claim is against health and humanity," he stated.

WCC Urges Trump...

FROM PAGE 1

of humanity everywhere, the letter said that it threatens all people regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, politics or any other human affiliation, discriminating only in the severity of its impact on people and communities already made vulnerable by pre-existing health conditions and poverty.

The letter highlighted that an effective response to the pandemic demands an unprecedented degree of global solidarity and cooperation, special care for the most vulnerable, and swift action to mitigate the conditions which create additional vulnerability.

"In this context, the World Council of Churches (WCC), ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance, and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCCUSA) share a deep concern for the impact on the people of Iran of the sanctions imposed by the United States," noted the letter.

Iranian public health response to the coronavirus outbreak is severely impeded by the strict sanctions regime imposed on the country unilaterally by the United States since May 2019, resulting in an almost total economic blockade, the letter highlighted.

UAE...

FROM PAGE 1

The new Israeli missile system is meant to shore up the rebels' capabilities against the more powerful Libyan Air Force.

Fighting around Tripoli intensified in recent days after the rebels breached a March 21 humanitarian truce that had aimed to allow a focus on efforts to combat the coronavirus outbreak in the North African country.

Last Tuesday, Libyan government forces said Emirati drones had carried out two airstrikes in support of Libyan rebels near the city of Sirte.

Government forces in Libya say Emirati drones have carried out two airstrikes in support of Libyan rebels near the city of Sirte.

And on Wednesday, the Libyan rebels claimed they had downed two Turkish drones. Tripoli receives backing from Turkey.

Libya plunged into chaos in 2011, when a popular uprising and a NATO intervention led to the ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

Thomas Hopes Tour de France Goes Ahead

PARIS (Dispatches) - Geraint Thomas hopes the Tour de France goes ahead this year as the former champion bids to make the most of his peak years.

Team Ineos rider Thomas won the Tour de France in 2018 and is confident he could earn a second yellow jersey if the race can survive the coronavirus chaos.

The Tour is set to take place between June 27 and July 19, but with sporting events all over the world impacted its chances of surviving as scheduled appear remote.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

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

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,

Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran

Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and

Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Montreal WTA Tournament Put Off Until 2021

MONTREAL (Dispatches) - The Montreal WTA tournament, one of the key build-up events ahead of the US Open, was axed on Saturday and will not be played until 2021, officials said.

The event, scheduled for August 7-16, had been in jeopardy after Quebec Province requested that all sporting and cultural events be cancelled through August 31 as a means of slowing the spread of the coronavirus.

Beating Virus Would Be Real Victory

PARIS (AFP) - Paris Saint-Germain winger Pablo Sarabia says that beating the coronavirus would be the "real victory of the season", with most professional football shut down due to the pandemic.

France's Ligue 1 was suspended on March 13, with PSG sitting 12 points clear of Marseille at the top of the table, while having also reached the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time since 2016.

But Spanish international Sarabia says public health has to come first ahead of getting back onto the pitch.

"No, I'm not afraid about that (the season not restarting), it's not the thing I am worrying about," he told AFP.

"I am thinking about my family first and foremost and then about getting this sorted. This is a critical situation.

"Who knows right now whether the league will restart or not -- it is hypothetical and we all need to focus on the pandemic. Coming through this would be the real victory of the season."

Football players have come under pressure to take salary cuts, with Barcelona, Real Madrid, Juventus and Bayern Munich stars all among those to accept a reduction in pay.

And Sarabia says that the French clubs are also planning to take similar measures.

"All that is in our hands, if we can help, donate something, do what is in our hands, (we will)," he said.

"We are talking about it and our captains are in discussions and all we can do to help

PSG and the country in general, we will try to do that."

Sarabia, 27, joined the French champions from La Liga outfit Sevilla last year and has impressed in Paris, scoring 14 goals in all competitions so far this season.



He is hoping to use his unexpected free time to improve his French, having signed a five-year contract with PSG.

"I like to talk and if I don't understand the language and can't communicate that frustrates me a bit," said Sarabia.

"I'm trying to make the most of these days to study and come out with a better level of French."

PSG's main aim since the takeover by a Qatari investment group in 2011 has been to lift the Champions League trophy, but the capital club have still not reached the semi-finals since 1995.

A last-16 victory over Borussia Dortmund last month, though, having trailed after the first leg, raised hopes that PSG could finally make a serious tilt at European football's greatest prize.

"It was a difficult time when we lost in Dortmund but everything that has happened has shown how united we all are as a team," said Sarabia.

"I could see in the eyes of my teammates that we were going to get through, you could feel it.

"(But) there is still a long way to go before the final, and as I said before I don't think we should be thinking about that just now."

Major sports events around the world have been hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Pakistan Keen to Host ICC Events in 2023-31 Cycle

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Pakistan have offered to host global flagship tournaments after the International Cricket Council (ICC) invited expression of interest from its members for events in the 2023-31 cycle.

Pakistan last staged an ICC event in 1996 when it co-hosted the 50-overs World Cup with India and Sri Lanka and the country has been largely starved of international cricket since a 2009 attack on the touring Sri Lanka team in Lahore.

"The PCB has expressed its interest in hosting ICC events during the 2023-31 events cycle," a Pakistan Cricket Board spokesperson told Reuters. "We will work in line with ICC guidelines and look forward to submitting strong proposal in the coming months."

Pakistan played their first test on home soil since 2009 against Sri Lanka in December and have hosted Bangladesh this year. ICC chief executive Manu Sawhney toured several member countries encouraging bids following the governing body's decision to select hosts of future events through a bidding process.

"We are extremely encouraged with the positive response we've received for the 2023-31 cycle," an ICC spokesman said. "We have had close to 100 offers with 18 members showing interest in holding the 28 events proposed for the cycle."

West Ham Players Agree to Defer Salaries

LONDON (Dispatches) - Players at English Premier League side West Ham on Friday agreed to defer part of their wages during the coronavirus suspension while manager David Moyes will take a 30% pay cut.

The move comes just a day after top-flight rivals Southampton struck a similar deal with their players as clubs wrestle with the financial fallout of the virus which has shut down the sport for a month.

"The savings created by the measures will support the entire infrastructure of the club and enable us to retain jobs and continue to pay 100 per cent of staff salaries," said a West Ham statement.

Pogba Hungry to Come Back From Injury



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United star Paul Pogba said he is eager to return from a lengthy spell on the sidelines when football resumes following the coronavirus pandemic.

The World Cup winner has been limited to just eight appearances for United this season after battling a nagging ankle injury.

"I'm already training and touching the ball," Pogba, who hasn't played since December 26, told the United Podcast.

"I've been frustrated, a long time ago. Now I'm almost there, so I'm just thinking about getting back and training fully with the team and everything."

"You think bad but I've never had something like this in my career, so I always take it in a good way. It makes me more hungry to come back and do well. And, yeah, it just shows me as well how much I love football."

Pogba's agent Mino Raiola has hinted the 27-year-old could leave Old Trafford if he is unhappy at the end of the season.

However, the Premier League has been put on hold indefinitely due to the spread of the deadly virus.

"You have to be very patient because, well my injury, I don't know if people really know what happened," Pogba added.

"So I had a foot injury, which came in the game against Southampton. It was early this season and so I carried this for a long time, training and trying to be playing with it. After I stopped, I found I had a fracture.

Swiss Prosecutors to Drop One of Cases Against Blatter

ZURICH (Reuters) - Switzerland's federal prosecutor is about to end its investigation into former FIFA President Sepp Blatter's deals with the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) to sell World Cup broadcasting rights.

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) said it has informed all the parties of its intention to close the case and was seeking ways to end it.

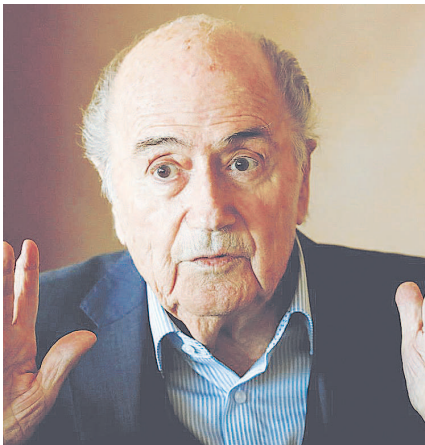
"We confirm the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland ...considers the criminal investigation into the partial facts and allegations concerning the contractual relationship with the CFU to be complete and ready for conclusion," it said in a statement.

The OAG "intends to discontinue the proceedings", it added, giving no reason for the decision.

As a result, Blatter, who is currently serving a six-year ban from football-related activities over ethics violations, will not be prosecuted for the matter which relates to selling TV rights for World Cup tournaments too cheaply.

The 84-year-old Swiss, who led FIFA until 2015, was accused of selling TV rights to the CFU for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups for \$600,000, seen as far below the market value at the time.

A spokesman for Blatter said he had not heard anything officially but had no reason to doubt the media reports.



Americans Won't Attend Sports Events Without Vaccine

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A large majority of Americans would be reluctant to attend future sporting events unless a vaccine for the coronavirus is developed, a survey by Seton Hall University has found.

With every major sport across North America in shutdown for the past month since the COVID-19 crisis erupted, professional leagues are already exploring the practicalities of how and when competition may resume.

But the results of the Seton Hall Sports Poll revealed deep unease among Americans about returning to stadiums before a vaccine had been developed.

The survey of 762 people carried out between April 6-8 found that 72% would not feel safe attending a sports event without a vaccine. Among identified sports fans, 61% said they would not feel safe.

Twelve percent of Americans polled said they would feel safe only if social distancing measures were in force while only 13% said they would feel safe.

"This virus has the attention and respect of the nation," said Rick Gentile, director of the Seton Hall Sports Poll, which is sponsored by the Sharkey Institute within the Stillman School of Business.

