

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and His Russian Counterpart Sergei Lavrov Discussed the Recent Developments Concerning Political Crisis of Afghanistan, Yemen and Ceasefire in Yemen on a Phone Call

IRAN NEWS

Head of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce Says Afghanistan Has Opened Its Land Border and Iran's Trade With Afghanistan Has Resumed Since Two Weeks Ago and Currently the Trade Is as Before

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Easing Lockdown Will Follow Expertise Guidelines

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said yesterday that any decision to ease lockdown and reopen activities will follow the expertise guidelines.

Rabiei said in a press conference that all the policies concerning coronavirus outbreak are pursued in accordance with guidelines of the Health Ministry and experts and a final decision to resume activities after they were halted to contain the virus, will be taken on that basis.

Health experts in Iran's health section have produced plenty of protocols concerning workplace sanitation in order to reopen the businesses, according to Rabiei.

He said that the government updates its knowledge of the virus using any information available in any country about the contagion and the plans to contain its economic effects.

On the formation of new government in Iraq, Rabiei said that Iran's longstanding policy is to respect Iraqi sovereignty, obeying the religious authority in the country and avoiding any intervention in Iraqi affairs.

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Some 46,000 Recover From COVID-19 in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN -Health Ministry Spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour says 45,983 patients have so far recovered from the novel coronavirus, and been discharged from the hospital.

Speaking in a daily briefing on Monday, Jahanpour said 1,617 new cases of infection were confirmed during the past 24 hours, raising the total number to 73,303.

Jahanpour also noted that 111 patients died in 24 hours, increasing the death toll to 4,585.

He said 3,877 patients are also in the severe conditions of the disease.

So far, he added, 275,427 COVID-19 tests have been taken in the country.

Meanwhile deputy health minister said the novel coronavirus infection rate and the number of deaths have been on the decline in most of the country's provinces.

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Iran Exempted from OPEC+ Output Cut Deal



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Oil Minister says Iran, along with Libya and Venezuela, has been exempted from cutting oil output as they are under sanctions.

Bijan Namdar Zangeneh made the comment after members from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as well as non-members agreed, via a webinar, on April 13, 2020 to curtail production by nearly one million barrels per day. The move is aimed at boosting plummeting oil prices due to the coronavirus crisis and a Saudi-Russia price war.

"This meeting followed discussions on Thursday and Friday (April 9 and 10) where producers had reached agreement to reduce production by 10 million barrels per day," said the oil minister.

"There was only a little problem with Mexico," he added.

"Based on the quotas [for output cut] initially agreed on, Mexico was supposed to curtail its crude output by 400 thousand barrels per day, but the country's energy minister did not agree with that," said the minister.

"During the discussions, it was decided that Mexico reduce 100 thousand barrels per day in May and June, and that the US cut the remaining production (300,000 bpd) on behalf of Mexico," he noted.

Accordingly, Zangeneh added, the agreement was finalized and it will come into force on May 1.

"For the two months of May and June, supply will be cut by 10 million barrels per day. In the following six months, daily production will be reduced by 8 million barrels per day. In the 16 months after that, i.e., from the beginning of 2021 to April 2022, oil supply will be cut by 6 million barrels a day," he said.

"Oil and energy ministers of G20 have also agreed to reduce oil supply by 3.7 million barrels per day for a period of one year.

"The arrangements for this agreement will be made in coordination with the International Energy Agency (IEA); moreover, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will voluntarily cut another 2 million barrels per day of production in addition to the output cuts agreed on," he added.

As for how oil prices will change after the agreement comes into force, he said, "We should wait for reaction from the market."

The coronavirus pandemic has dwindled global oil demand by as much as 30 percent. That, alongside a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia sent crude prices into an 18-year low last month.

To help support oil prices, OPEC and non-OPEC members agreed, after hours and day of marathon talks, to cut their output by 9.7 billion barrels per day for the months of May and June.

October 2018 was set as the base line to determine production levels for all countries that are parties to the agreement, except for Saudi Arabia and Russia. An output level of 11 million barrels per day was set as the production base for those two countries.

Iran Names U.S. Sanctions "5th Column" of Coronavirus

NEW YORK (IFP) - The Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations on Sunday called the US sanctions against Iran a "fifth column" of the coronavirus and added that any act whatsoever restricting the ability of a nation to tackle the crisis would let the disease spread like wildfire and consequently weaken the global fight against the pandemic.

The full text of the report "the Impacts of U.S. Sanctions in the War Against Coronavirus" is as follows:

The entire world is now facing a World War Against COVID-19. This relentless and highly contagious virus, as the common enemy of the whole human family, is seriously threatening the lives of all with no distinction as to nationality, race, color, religion or gender.

At this common fight, all of humanity is on the same front. But, despite our tireless efforts, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the virus is clearly "accelerating".

We MUST win this battle by standing united, going beyond mere "expression of solidarity" and demonstrating "solidarity in action" as well as well-coordinated international cooperation.

To succeed quickly and sustainably, we must ensure that no individual, family, community or nation is left behind as no nation will be spared and no one will be safe until everyone all over the world is safe.

Any act whatsoever restricting the ability of a nation to tackle the crisis would let the disease spread like wildfire and consequently weaken the global fight against the pandemic.

A clear example is the continued application of unilateral sanctions, which undermine the related ability of targeted nations and the whole world to fight the pandemic. Accordingly, their application under current unprecedented global health crisis involving all nations is against the common interests of humanity.

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IMF Can Grant Loan to Iran Despite U.S. Objection

TEHRAN (MNA) - Despite U.S. opposition to grant loan to Iran, International Monetary Fund (IMF) can provide Iran with the necessary assistances to combat the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, without confronting Trump's administration, according to an article.

To get Iran the assistance it needs, the IMF can take steps to address the Trump administration's concerns.

According to an article by Bloomberg, the Fund can account for the unease of U.S. regulators by excluding dollars. Iran could even agree to accept the loan in euros alone, given that the EU is its primary supplier of medical goods.

Second, the loan could be paid into an account maintained in Europe by the Central Bank of Iran. This would mean that the funds are spent within the European financial system, the article adds.

In this scenario, IMF would reallocate some portion of Iran's 1.55 billion in SDR holdings (valued at approximately \$2.1 billion) to the buyer, which would then make a payment to Iran in a foreign currency, such as euros, to an account maintained by Iran's central bank outside the country.

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EAEU Removes Import Tariffs on 10 Iranian Products

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has removed tariff rates for the import of 10 Iranian products, according to the head of Iranian National Union of Agricultural Products.

"The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in a letter sent to the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said it has removed the import tariffs for 10 Iranian products," the Head of Iranian National Union of Agricultural Products Reza Nourani said.

These products, subjected to import tariffs by the Union, include potatoes, onions, garlic, cabbages, carrots, peppers, fruit juices, wheat, black grains, long-grain rice and baby food, he added.

Removing tariff rates for Iranian products by Eurasian Economic Union while the country is under sanctions and grappling with the outbreak of coronavirus will increase export and production, Nourani emphasized.

Turning to the required infrastructures, Nourani said, "Refrigerated containers should be added for increasing export. Unfortunately, we lack refrigerated containers for rail export and/or these refrigerated containers should at least be purchased or rented by Russia and Turkey."

Yemen Crisis Has No Military Solution

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top diplomat, Mohammad Javad Zarif, has said that a sustainable ceasefire in the war-torn country of Yemen sets the ground for a political settlement of the crisis arising from Saudi Arabia's five-year war against the country.

Speaking with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres during a phone call on Sunday, Zarif stressed that there is no military solution to the conflict in Yemen.

The foreign minister also welcomed the secretary general's attempts to establish a ceasefire in the country.

During the discussion, Guterres offered a report on the UN's efforts to conserve an ongoing ceasefire in Yemen.

Last week, the Saudi-led coalition claimed it was halting military operations in support of UN peace efforts and to avoid the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country.

Yemeni forces repel several Saudi attacks days after 'truce'

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Montenegro Sympathizes With Iran Over Deaths Caused by Pandemic

BELGRADE (IRNA) - President of Montenegro Milo Đukanović sent a message to his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani to sympathize with the people and the government of Iran over death of thousands of Iranians by coronavirus pandemic.

Đukanović wrote in the message the was well covered in the Montenegrin media that there is no doubt the

world has faced with the biggest challenge of the contemporary history and its consequences have affected all the countries.

Đukanović hoped that the measures taken by the governments and the self-sacrifice of the medical staff that are actually in the front line of the war against the coronavirus will stop the disease as soon as possible.

Iran Supports Families of Prisoners Amid COVID-19 Crisis

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN -Judiciary Chief said tens of thousands of families of prisoners will receive supportive livelihoods packs on the order of the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Hojatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday at the meeting of the Judiciary High Council that observing the dignity of individuals is one of the priorities of the Judiciary and is a must for all bodies of the judiciary.

He stressed that imprisoned criminals should be punished, but their families must be subjected to aid.

“Today, our prisons have both security and health, but the situation of prisoners in the United States and some Western countries is worrying. They are accused of violating human rights against their people,” the Judiciary Chief noted.

He reiterated that the U.S. and the western states are accused of violating human rights of their own people.

Mostazafan Foundation of the Islamic Revolution is assigned to provide aid to the families of the prisoners.

Raeisi also announced that senior judiciary officials are to allocate 20 percent of their monthly wages for three consecutive months to those most affected by the coronavirus.



The judiciary chief added that the decision has been made following the last week command of the Leader of the Islamic Republic, urging all Iranians to perform ‘Equality and Sincere Assistance Maneuver’, in a bid to show sympathy and provide sincere assistance to the needy and the poor in society.

The commanders of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) have allocated 20% of their wages to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

Due to the same command, the IRGC, Basij and Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, as well as other volunteer forces, have started aiding needy people since the beginning of the coronavirus breakout, but the Leader’s command made them re-united for carrying out the maneuver all across the country.

Devotion of Iranian Medical Staff Never to Be Forgotten

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri said on Monday that devotion of Iranian medical staff helping patients fight the epidemic while putting their own health at risk that will be registered in history of the country.

Speaking in the meeting to introduce the new head of the Red Crescent Society of Iran, Jahangiri said that the powerful medical staff of Iran did a great job in the fight against the coronavirus, adding the big dimensions of the disease affected the entire world community.

Jahangiri said that the artists and the writers will register instances of the self-sacrifice. Some 45 doctors and nurses died of contracting coronavirus at Iranian hospitals.

Saying that we need to try to minimize the effects of the coronavirus, Jahangiri added some parts of society were hurt by lockdown, public quarantine and Social Distancing procedure required to stem spread of the epidemic.

He said that the Red Crescent Society is an organization that serves people and the people trust it.

He added that it is an asset for the Red Crescent Society that it has millions of risk-taking volunteers working with the formal staff of the organization.

The fact is that, as President Hassan Rouhani put it, Iran is now fighting with two viruses: coronavirus and U.S. sanctions, he said.

He hoped the country will defeat both at minimal costs.

Iran Can Defeat COVID-19 Without Relying on West

TEHRAN (MNA) – Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said that Iran can defeat the COVID-19 outbreak by relying on its domestic capabilities and past experiences.

“Regarding confronting coronavirus and other issues, we have no choice but to stand on our own feet ... we should not wait for the lifting of sanctions,” Sayyari, Deputy Coordinator of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Army, said.

He went on to laud the country’s production of required materials and equipment for the anti-corona fight such as face masks, disinfectants, ventilators, test kits, and hospital beds in the shortest time possible.

“Nobody helps you without making you feel obligated, so we need to use our past experiences, rely on domestic knowledge and capacity, and believe that we can do it. Be sure that we can

defeat the coronavirus.”

The global outbreak of the virus proved that each country is busy solving its own problems, he said, adding, “America, with all its claims of being an advanced country, are pirating masks of other countries and its people are fighting in supermarkets over toilet paper ... This shows that the civilization they claim to have is just a fake front.”

“Did the same happen in Iran after the outbreak given the existence of all the sanctions, economic pressures, and hostilities towards the nation? Absolutely not,” he added.

Iranian people are following humanity and sacrificing their lives despite going through hard days, he said, noting that this shows “the Iranian nation’s cultural identity.”

Minister Expects Gov’t Assistance to Cultural Workers



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of culture said on Monday that he expects the Government to provide the people of media, arts, and culture with assistance to help them cope with damages they incurred by the pandemic.

Abbas Salehi wrote in separate letters, to First Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri, President’s Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi, Head of the Planning and Budget Organization Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht, and Minister of Economy Mohammad Nahavandian that the coronavirus has caused a damage of 976 billion toman to the culture, media, and art sections.

Salehi said that he expects the Government to provide assistance to those who work in these areas for the losses they suffered by the recess caused by lock-down, Social Distancing and public quarantine.

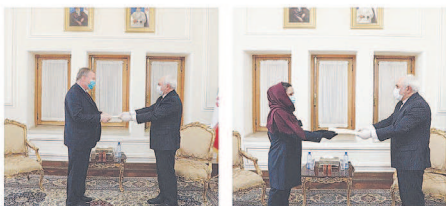
Salehi made it clear that the people involved in cultural works including the artists are among the most vulnerable class of people.

Salehi said on Sunday evening, in a tweet, that he wrote a letter to first vice-president and minister of economy to inform them of the damages incurred on the culture section, publications, theater, cinema and the media.

Zarif Meets Envoys of Iraq, Czech, Bulgaria, N Korea, Nicaragua

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has held separate meetings with the new ambassadors of four countries and the outgoing ambassador of Iraq in Tehran.



The new ambassadors of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Bulgaria, the People’s Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Nicaragua have met with Foreign Minister Zarif at the beginning of their diplomatic missions.

In separate meetings on Monday, the foreign diplomats handed over copies of their credentials to the Iranian foreign minister.

The outgoing ambassador of Iraq, Saad Jawad Qandil, also held talks with and bade farewell to the Iranian foreign minister at the end of his diplomatic mission.

Tehran, Minsk Discuss Health Status of Iranian Students

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran’s ambassador to Minsk on Sunday discussed the health status of Iranian students and means to facilitate their return to Iran in a meeting with the dean of Minsk State Medical University.

In the meeting, Saeed Yari thanked Anatoly Sikorsky and his colleagues for their efforts to protect Iranian students’ health, and added that the Iranian Embassy is ready to cooperate with the university to improve the health conditions of Iranian students.

Sikorsky gave a report on the measures taken by the university to preserve the health of all of the students, and stressed that the university has an identical approach in dealing with all students from other nations.

The two parties also discussed ways to facilitate the return of the Iranian students.

Sikorsky assured the Iranian ambassador that they will take all necessary measures to cooperate with the embassy in order to solve the academic issues of the students and help them return home.

Most of the nearly 800 Iranian students studying at the Belarusian universities are studying medical sciences.



Iran Among World Top 10 States in Virtual Learning

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Center for International Affairs and Overseas Schools said on Sunday that Iran is among top ten countries in the world in terms of presenting virtual learning courses.

Gholam Reza Karimi said the effective measures have been taken by Iranian Education Ministry over the last two months have widely reflected in the world.

Referring to the impacts of coronavirus outbreak on education in the world, he said based on UNESCO statistics 1,576,021,818 learners in 188 countries have been affected by COVID19 until April 11.

He added that 19 states in the US have so far ordered to close schools until the end of the year.

Karimi noted that Portugal, UAE, Kuwait, UK and Pakistan were also among countries whose schools will be closed by the end of the year.

Italy has also announced that it will not possible to open schools by the end of the year, he said.

Karimi went on to say that although some countries like Iran, Qatar, France, Germany and Iraq have closed their schools, teachers are controlling distance learning.

Iran Air Flight to Repatriates Iranians From Austria and Slovakia

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran’s embassy in Vienna issued a statement that a special Iran Air flight will be operated to repatriate Iranians who wish to return to their homeland amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vienna said in a statement to students and compatriots living in Austria and Slovakia that the Embassy is trying to operate a special Iran Air flight to repatriate compatriots wishing to return to the country.

According to the embassy, all students and compatriots who intend to return to the country should send their full details (name and surname, passport number, country of residence and mobile phone number) to the consular section of the embassy as soon as possible.

The exact time of the flight will be announced after obtaining initial information and subsequent coordination.

Iran embassy in Vienna last week provided service for repatriate Iranians to return back to the country from Frankfurt airport.

Zarif Confers With Turkish, Qatari FMs

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has held talks with his Turkish and Qatari counterparts on the latest developments in Afghanistan.

In separate phone conversations on Monday, Zarif exchanged views with Qatari Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on the political crisis in Afghanistan, especially the peace process in the country.

The latest situation of COVID-19 outbreak in the region and the world as well as the collective ways to cope with it were among the other issues discussed in the phone calls.

Iran Exports \$20b Worth of Goods to Neighboring States

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran exported \$20.3 billion dollars’ worth of goods to the neighboring countries over the past 10 months in the previous Iranian year.

According to the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, Iran had planned to export \$48 billion worth of goods in the entire last year, so that \$20.3 billion was exported by the end of the tenth Iranian month of Dey falling on January 20, 2020.

IRNA economic reporter said that the small, medium-size, and big businesses were to export 70 million Euros of non-oil goods in the past year, from which 55 million Euros was materialized in the first 10 months.

Expansion of barter agreement to help production, trade and specifically export is a major factor in light of boosting the export capacities by a surge in the manufacturing sector.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 13:04 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 19:55 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:02 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:30 |

60. "Did I not enjoin on you, O ye Children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he was to you an enemy avowed?-

61. "And that ye should worship Me, (for that) this was the Straight Way?"

Surah 36. Ya-sin (60 - 61)

Iran to Dispatch 10 Commercial Attachés to Major Export Destinations

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) says the organization plans to dispatch at least 10 commercial attachés to 10 major export destinations of the country in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20).

Masoud Kamali Ardakani mentioned Russia, Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, Oman, China, India, Afghanistan, and Armenia as the major export markets for dispatching the new commercial attachés.

He said financial resources and budget problem are the major reasons for the decrease in the number of commercial attaches of Iran across the world, adding that some experienced former commercial attaches of Iran are now deployed in the TPO who have good experience and knowledge about identifying the market and offering consultants to economic activists.

He said although physical presences of commercial attaches in the target countries are very effective but they can help economic activists very much even in Tehran.

Ardakani added that in the year of Production Leap, commercial attaches can act as watchdogs of national economy and termed them as the most important tools for introducing Iran's export products to the international markets or identifying the needs of exports destinations for Iranian goods.

He added that production and industrial unit in the country has revived in the past



two years and after the outbreak of the Coronavirus, some intact potentials have revived.

He noted that providing domestic needs and providing exports needs especially for neighboring countries are necessary in the year of Production leap, adding that the country will boost its share of exports to neighboring states and the role of commercial attaché is very crucial at this stage.

Re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions on the Iranian economy has led the Islamic Republic to reduce its dependence on oil revenues and elevate its other sources of income instead; while increasing non-oil exports has come as the most significant approach in this regard.

To expand non-oil exports during the sanctions time, Iranian economic and trade organizations have been defining some strategies and resolved to pursue them vigorously.

The major strategy is to focus on the neighboring countries and the trade partners in the region, and it is, in fact, one of the top priorities of the government for defying the U.S. sanctions.

Opening trade centers in those countries and dispatching more commercial attachés there is an important measure to materialize this objective.

EDBI to Provide Facilities for Export-Oriented Enterprises

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Export Development Bank of Iran says the bank is to provide some 80,000b rials of facilities for those enterprises which have capacities for exports.



On the sidelines of meeting of First Vice-President with Finance Ministry officials, Dr. Ali Akbar Salehabadi said that those enterprises which are export-oriented and have export capacities can be supported and encouraged by the bank in the range of its sources.

He said the bank has earmarked half of its sources and half of National Development Fund's sources for granting loan facilities with 14 percent interest rate to different production and export enterprises and receivers of the loan, which enjoy great credibility in production and exports, can get some discounts in the interests of their loans.

Salehabadi noted that this year the bank is very serious on paying attention to the knowledge-based companies so the bank has earmarked 4,000b rials of facilities for the knowledge-based companies with export capacity with interest rate of 12 percent.

Chadormalu to Use All Strength to Materialize Surge in Production Slogan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The new CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company says while the country needs to boost its economic strength more than ever as the Supreme Leader in his New Year message has emphasized the surge in the production in the country, closure of production units is not wise and all should double efforts to materialize the surge in production slogan.



Eng. Naser Taghizadeh in the first working day of the company after the New Year holidays felicitated the New Year to all crusaders of production front and wished happiness to all and victory over the Coronavirus.

He said that despite the outbreak of Coronavirus, the company by observing all health advice and protocols continued its activities and this year it will also with full strength help the huge steel production cycle to run in the country in order that it would meet the domestic demands for this strategic good while it would export its surplus production to earn forex and have smallest share in boosting national economy.

Taghizadeh added that the company by observing all health protocols continues its activities with full strength and criticized those who say industrial units should come to a halt till full containment of the virus, adding that it is not a wise suggestion.

He said while in the current condition the country needs more than any time to boost its economic strength, the closure of the production units is not a wise decision and instead all should double their efforts.

He also hailed the staff of HSE unit of the company for fight with the virus in towns of Oghda and Ardakan, adding that since the first day the company has taken measures to protect its staff against the virus.

Taghizadeh noted that in case any staff of the company or their family members is infected with Coronavirus, the company will pay all expenses for their treatments.

Copper Exports Doubled in 2019-2020 To Surpass \$1b

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has seen its copper exports doubled in the past calendar year ending March 19 despite a series of bitter sanctions imposed by the United States aimed at hampering the Islamic Republic's trade of lucrative metals.

A senior official at IMIDRO, Iran's largest metals and mining holding, said on Sunday that the value of exports for main copper products reached more than \$1 billion over the past year.

Mohammad Aqajanlou said that total sales of the National Iranian Copper Industry Company (NICICO) topped 220 trillion rials, nearly \$1.5 billion, a milestone in the 48-year-history of the company.

Aqajanlou added that total turnover for the Iranian copper industry exceeded \$4.5 billion over the past year and the NICICO posted a return on investment of 143 percent.

He said another historic achievement for the copper smelters in Iran was to reach a total output of 1.18 million metric tons of concentrate last year while production for copper cathode reached an all-time high of 250,130 tons.

He said that copper cathode accounted for more than two thirds of total domestic consumption for purified copper which was over 160,000 tons over the past year.

That means that copper concentrate, a relatively raw form of the metal, accounted for a bulk of Iran's exports, an issue which has faced criticism with many believing the NICICO should create more capacity for using copper concentrate inside Iran rather than shipping it in large quantities to countries like China.

Aqajanlou rejected the criticism and said the current supply and demand situation in the Iranian copper industry makes exports of concentrates more preferable.

Iran's 11-month copper cathode production remains stable despite US sanctions on metals sector.

Some experts also believe that rising exports for raw copper at a time of increased American bans on Iran's trade of lucrative metals could also help the government access new hard currency resources.

The United States imposed its extensive sanctions on Iran's metals industry on May 2019, exactly a year after it withdrew from an international agreement on Iran's nuclear program and prepared its tough sanctions on the country's sale of crude.

Exports of Petrochemical Products Continue Despite Restrictions

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Currently, Iran petrochemical products are exported to almost all countries, spokesman of the Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Union Seyyed Hamid Hosseini told ILNA.

He said that in exports of products we have no problem, but prices have fallen recently.

"Due to the cold weather and the protective measures against the new coronavirus, the export of many products such as diesel fuel and gasoline was almost stopped, but the export of oil derivatives from the Persian Gulf Star Refinery (naphtha, diesel, and gasoline) to be continued, he added. According to Hamid Hosseini, Iran's exports to Iraq have been suspended for about two weeks, but the problem has been resolved and it is now exported from the borders of the Kurdistan Region, Parviz Khan and mainly Bashmaq.

China is the top destination for Iran's petrochemical products, but the UAE purchased \$2 billion worth from March 2018 to March 2019.

Even though the United States imposed sanctions on the entire petrochemical sector in November 2018, the UAE spent about \$481 million on Iranian exports from December 2018 through March 2019, according to Tehran's official data.

IOTC Implementing Smart Social Distancing Plan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) says the company has allocated a special flight between Bushehr and Kharg Island and paying 50 percent of the ticket's fluctuating fare to passengers of vessels between Bushehr and Ganaveh route.

Speaking in the meeting of the Anti-Coronavirus Management, Abbas Asadrouz said that IOTC as a technical, operational and professional company with its natural duties in the field of receiving, storing and exporting crude oil, laboratory services and attention to its surroundings has special attention to observe its social responsibilities.

He said since the outbreak of Coronavirus in the country and in order to prevent staff of the company and residents of the island from being infected with the virus, the company in collaboration with other companies and organizations on the island has taken measures in this operational region and it has succeeded in containing the virus on Kharg Island.

Asadrouz added that one of the major actions of the company was to control arrival and departure of people and restricting air and marine travels in the departure points of the island, and he hailed patience and cooperation of residents of the island and staff of the company.

He added that in order to ease the return of residents of Kharg Island back home, the company allocated a special flight between Bushehr and Kharg for native residents of the island.

He noted that the company also launched the smart social distancing plan by reducing 50 percent of capacity of vessels which commute between Bushehr and Ganaveh and Kharg Island. He said the ticket price will be based on 50 percent of its fluctuating fare and it will be valid for a week.



Shahid Motahari Hospital Helps ESC to Materialize Production Leap

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Shahid Motahari Hospital which is in charge of taking care of staff of Esfahan Steel Company (ESC) has drawn up plans and strategies in coordination with senior officials of the company in line with materializing the slogan of the year "Production Leap" and it is after helping the macro objectives of ESC.

Head of Shahid Beheshti Hospital Dr. Alireza Adani said that due to brilliant record of ESC in health and medical activities, the hospital has drawn up some strategies before the health ministry's directives in order to control those people who enter the company and they undergo advanced check-ups.

He added that at the entrances and upon the arrival at the company, some screenings and check-ups are conducted and the lab activities have been also enhanced in order that all people could enjoy health care measures and the result of this decision is the boost in health and hygiene level.

Dr. Ajdani added that Shahid Motahari as one of the best private hospitals in Isfahan has undergone some changes in its process in facing the Coronavirus and it has allocated one of

its wards fully for this virus and it is currently admitting the patients.

He said all individual's protection and treatment is observed and the ward has been actually isolated and has disconnected with other wards of the hospital.

He noted that a 200-man team is currently serving in this ward for fighting the Coronavirus and they are fully under health care and supervisions.

He noted that the hospital is working to attract investment for expansion of its wards especially its ICU ward.

On the programs of the hospital for the current year, Dr. Ajdani said expansion of CT Scan ward is one of its major plans, expressing hope the plan is completed by the end of the spring.

He said so far 97 percent of Coronavirus-infected patients in the hospital has been recovered and been released. He said treatment of Coronavirus-infected patients needs a strong medical team and fortunately Shahid Motahari Hospital has so far done good and satisfactory performance regarding the Coronavirus infected patients.



China Reports Highest Number Of Covid-19 Cases in Weeks

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's northeast Heilongjiang province which borders Russia has become the new battleground against the coronavirus as authorities reported the highest number of new daily cases in nearly six weeks, driven by infected travellers from overseas.

China fears a rise in imported cases could spark a second wave of COVID-19 and push the country back into a state of near paralysis.

A total of 108 new coronavirus cases were reported in mainland China on Sunday, up from 99 a day earlier and marking the highest number of cases since 143 infections were reported on March 5.



2 Civilians Killed in Attacks By Haftar Militias in Libya

TRIPOLI (Dispatches) - Two civilians were killed late Sunday in attacks on civilian settlements in the south of Libya's capital by militias loyal to warlord Khalifa Haftar.

In Sidi Selim, a woman was killed by a rocket attack, said the Abu Selim Municipality in Tripoli.

In Ain Zara, a rocket hit a house and one child was killed while four other civilians were wounded, the State of Emergency and Rescue Council under the Health Ministry of the Government of National Accord (GNA) said in a statement.

As part of measures against the novel coronavirus, a ceasefire came into effect on March 21. Despite this, Haftar's militias have continued their attacks on the capital.



Afghan Prisoner Releases "Important Step"



KABUL (AFP) - The U.S. special envoy who negotiated a deal with the Taliban said Monday that an initial prisoner exchange between the insurgents and the Afghan government was an "important step" toward peace.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Taliban on Sunday released 20 Afghan security-force prisoners. The move came after the government last week released hundreds of insurgent captives.

"The release of prisoners is an important step in the peace process and the reduction of violence," US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad said on Twitter.

"Both sides should accelerate efforts to meet targets specified in the US-Taliban agreement as soon as possible," he added, noting the exchange was more important than ever with prison populations threatened by coronavirus outbreaks.

Khalilzad and the Taliban signed a deal February 29 that paves the way for U.S. and other foreign forces to quit Afghanistan in return for various commitments from the insurgents.

The deal said the Afghan government would release 5,000 Taliban prisoners while the insurgents would free 1,000 Afghan security force personnel.

The exchange was supposed to have happened by March 10, allowing peace talks to begin between the Taliban and the Afghan government -- but the process has been beset with problems.

Kabul has claimed the Taliban want 15 of their "top commanders" to be released, while the insurgents have accused Afghan authorities of needlessly wasting time.

A small Taliban team met with the government to discuss a comprehensive prisoner swap last week, but walked out of talks after officials began releasing prisoners only gradually.

On Sunday, the Taliban told AFP that their decision to release a group of prisoners was "a goodwill step ... to accelerate the prisoner exchange process".

Pakistani PM Appeals for Debt Relief to Combat Coronavirus Fallout

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan has appealed to international stakeholders for urgent debt relief for developing countries so they can deal more effectively with the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, the government said on Sunday.

Pakistan has recorded 5,183 cases of the virus, with 88 deaths. The country's already-struggling economy has been hit hard by nationwide preventive lockdowns that have brought economic activity to a halt and caused widespread unemployment.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, in a video message released by the foreign office, said he was worried people in the developing world would die of hunger as a result of lockdowns.

"Pakistan with a population of 220 million, so far the best stimulus package we can afford is \$8 billion," Khan said in the video, adding that highly indebted countries lack fiscal space to spend on health and social support.

Pakistan, which is over \$100 billion in debt to foreign lenders and spends the largest chunk of its budget on debt servicing, last week began a \$900 million cash disbursement program to 12 million poor families rendered unemployed due to lockdowns.

Johnson Says "No Question" Medics Saved His Life

LONDON (Dispatches) - British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said his personal battle with the coronavirus "could have gone either way" and said there was "no question" doctors saved his life, speaking in a candid video message after leaving hospital Sunday.

The UK leader checked into hospital a week ago and spent three days in intensive care after he was diagnosed with COVID-19 at the end of March, the most high-profile leader to come down with the virus.

Dressed in a suit and tie, Johnson thanked his doctors and vowed to help Britain defeat the virus as the country's death toll topped 10,000 Sunday -- a grim milestone only a handful of countries have passed. "I hope they won't mind if I mention in particular two nurses who stood by my bedside for 48 hours when things could have gone either way," said Johnson, referring to the state-run National Health Service (NHS) staff who cared for him at London's St Thomas' Hospital.

North Korea's Kim Reshuffles Top Governing Body

SEOUL (AFP) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has carried out a major reshuffle of his State Affairs Commission, official media reported Monday, replacing more than a third of its members.

Kim has established an iron grip over the levers of authority in his nuclear-armed country since inheriting power in his late 20s in 2011.

He is chairman of the SAC -- the North's highest decision-making body -- and five of its 13 other members were replaced at a meeting of the country's rubber-stamp Supreme People's Assembly parliament on Sunday, the state KCNA news agency reported.

Pictures carried by the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed hundreds of lawmakers sitting in close proximity to each other without wearing protective masks.

A cabinet report reiterated the North's insistence that "not a single case" of the coronavirus pandemic that has swept the world since emerging in neighbouring China has been reported in the country.

Pyeongyang put thousands of its own people and hundreds of foreigners -- including diplomats -- into isolation and mounted disinfection drives as it sought to prevent an outbreak, which experts say could be devastating given its weak health sector and widespread malnutrition.

"State emergency anti-epidemic campaign will continue to be intensified to prevent the spread of COVID-19," the cabinet report said.

There was no mention on KCNA of Kim presiding over the meeting himself, and he did not appear in photos of it.

The new SAC members include Ri Son Gwon, a former senior army officer named as foreign minister earlier this year, while his predecessor, career diplomat Ri Yong Ho, was removed.

Another former foreign minister, Ri Su Yong, was also taken off the committee.



U.S. Could Start Reopening in May

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United States may be ready to start gradually reopening next month, the government's top infectious diseases expert said Sunday, as signs grew that the coronavirus pandemic was peaking.

President Donald Trump had earlier wanted the world's largest economy to be "raring to go" by Easter Sunday, but most of the country remained at a standstill and churches took celebrations online to halt the spread of the virus that has killed more than 22,000 people in the U.S.

Trump has cast the decision on when to ease the lockdown as the biggest of his presidency as he faces competing pressures from public health experts and businesses along with some conservative allies who want a swift return to normality.

Anthony Fauci, the veteran pandemic expert who has quietly sought action to stem infections, said in a televised interview that parts of the country could begin easing restrictions in May -- but was cautious.

"I think it could probably start at least in some ways maybe next month," Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told CNN.

"We are hoping by the end of the month we can look around and say, OK, is there any element here that we can safely and cautiously start pulling back on?" Fauci said.

"If so, do it. If not, then just continue to hunker down." Fauci said that regions would be ready at different times rather than the United States turning back on like a "light switch."

Stephen Hahn, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, told ABC he was "hopeful" about a reopening on May 1 but added: "I think it's too early to be able to tell that."

Unlike in many Western countries, lockdown decisions are primarily up to local governments, not the president, and leaders of a number of hard-hit, densely populated states have vowed to act as soon as necessary.

"We want to reopen as soon as possible," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo told reporters. "The caveat is we need to be smart in the way we reopen."

Neighboring New Jersey's governor, fellow Democrat Phil Murphy, said that an economic recovery depended on a "full health-care recovery."



Erdogan Rejects Turkish Minister's Resignation

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - President Tayyip Erdogan rejected the resignation on Sunday of Turkey's interior minister, who said he was stepping down in the wake of a short-notice coronavirus lockdown which sent people rushing to shops to stock up on supplies.

Authorities declared the 48-hour curfew in dozens of cities shortly before 10 pm on Friday, giving millions of people just two hours' notice and prompting a wave of desperate last-minute buying.

"The incidents that occurred ahead of the implementation of the curfew were not befitting the perfect management of the outbreak," Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said in statement on Twitter in which he said he was resigning.

Erdogan, however, judged it was not "appropriate" for Soylu to resign and the minister would continue in his position, the presidency said shortly afterwards.

Soylu's statement came just before the end of the weekend lockdown in 31 provinces across Turkey, including its largest city and commercial hub Istanbul, home to 16 million residents.

The opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) said the way the lockdown was announced had undermined efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak in Turkey, which has registered 50,000 cases.

"A decision that needs to be taken for public health became a threat to public health due to lack of planning," CHP spokesman Faik Oztrak said. "The sacrifice of people self isolating for days has been wasted."

More than 1,100 people have died of COVID-19 in Turkey, many of them in Istanbul where CHP mayor Ekrem Imamoglu said municipal authorities had no advance warning of the move. "Decisions taken without common sense and cooperation will only cause confusion and panic," he said.





Shanon
(adviser)

Aghdasieh Apt (\$2200)
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S/p, sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shariati Villa (\$4500)
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S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Mahmoodieh Apt (\$3000)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, S, J, balcony
(\$3000)

Niavaran (\$2500)
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Fully Furn

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China Still Implementing U.S. Trade Deal

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - China is still implementing the first phase of a Sino-U.S. trade pact, its ambassador to the United States said, but hoped the two could work together to assess the changing situation and coordinate their response, the Global Times said on Sunday.

The world's two biggest economies signed the tentative deal to pause a damaging tariff war in January, before the coronavirus pandemic spread, threatening a global economic depression.

Cui Tiankai said China was still buying U.S. agricultural products, and was lifting some curbs faced by foreign companies entering its financial market, the tabloid affiliated to the Beijing-controlled People's Daily newspaper said.



World Bank Forecasts Worst Economic Slump in South Asia in 40 Years

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India and other South Asian countries are likely to record their worst growth performance in four decades this year due to the coronavirus outbreak, the World Bank said on Sunday.

The South Asian region, comprising eight countries, is likely to show economic growth of 1.8% to 2.8% this year, the World Bank said in its South Asia Economic Focus report, well down from the 6.3% it projected six months ago.

India's economy, the region's biggest, is expected to grow 1.5% to 2.8% in the fiscal year that started on April 1. The World Bank has estimated it will grow 4.8% to 5% in the fiscal year that ended on March 31.

"The green shoots of a rebound that were observable at the end of 2019 have been overtaken by the negative impacts of the global crisis," the World Bank report said.

Other than India, the World Bank forecast that Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh will also see sharp falls in economic growth.

Three other countries - Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Maldives - are expected to fall into recession, the World Bank said in the report, which was based on country-level data available as of April 7.

Measures taken to counter the coronavirus have disrupted supply chains across South Asia, which has recorded more than 13,000 cases so far - still lower than many parts of the world.

India's lockdown of 1.3 billion people has also left millions out of work, disrupted big and small businesses and forced an exodus of migrant workers from the cities to their homes in villages.

In the event of prolonged and broad national lockdowns, the report warned of a worst-case scenario in which the entire region would experience an economic contraction this year.

To minimize short-term economic pain, the Bank called for countries in the region to announce more fiscal and monetary steps to support unemployed migrant workers, as well as debt relief for businesses and individuals.

India has so far unveiled a \$23 billion economic plan to offer direct cash transfers to millions of poor people hit by its lockdown. In neighbouring Pakistan, the government has announced a \$6 billion plan to support the economy.

"The priority for all South Asian governments is to contain the virus spread and protect their people, especially the poorest who face considerable worse health and economic outcomes," said senior World Bank official Hartwig Schafer.

Malaysia's Response to Covid-19 Ranked Fourth Strictest in SEA

PETALING JAYA (Dispatches) - Malaysia's Covid-19 response which includes the movement control order (MCO) is the fourth strictest among South-East Asian countries as of Friday, according to the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government.

According to the Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker, Malaysia is ranked fourth in Asean after Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines.

"The data collected can help decision makers and public health professionals examine the robustness of government responses and provide a first step into understanding exactly what measures have been effective in certain contexts, and why," the project's lead Thomas Hale said.

Malaysia's scored 85.71 on the tracker's stringency index ties the country with neighbouring Thailand which also has the same score. Malaysia's measures - ranked as the 51st most strict among the 122 countries measured - is higher than some other countries, such as the United States (66.67), Britain (71.43) and Australia (71.43).

The countries with the most stringent response are among others, India, New Zealand and Qatar, with Nicaragua in last place, according to the tracker.

The score is based on measurements of seven response indicators. They include policies such as school and workplace closures, travel bans, public event cancellations, public transport closures, public information campaigns and movement restrictions.

Other six measures gauged by the tracker include fiscal or monetary measures, investment in vaccines, Covid-19 testing framework and contact tracing measures. A higher position in the Stringency Index, however, does not necessarily mean that a country's response is "better" than others lower on the index, according to the Blavatnik School of Government.



Europe Set to Suffer More Severe Recession Than Rest of World

DUBLIN (Dispatches) - Europe is likely to experience a more severe recession than the rest of the world and might not show proper signs of recovery until next year, according to European Central Bank vice president Luis de Guindos.

Economic prospects are worsening as governments across the 19-nation euro area extend lockdowns to rein in the spread of the coronavirus. The French economy contracted some 6 per cent in the first quarter, Germany's is expected to shrink nearly 10 per cent in the current period.

"In the euro area, the most likely scenario is that we will see some signs of growth starting in the third quarter, but we will have to wait until 2021 to see a genuine recovery in economic activity," Guindos said in an interview with Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia and published on the ECB's website. "In any case, 2021 will not be able to make up for all of the downturn in 2020." The ECB is injecting unprecedented amounts of monetary stimulus into the economy, paying banks to borrow to ensure credit keeps flowing to companies and households. Policy makers also committed to buying more than €1 trillion of debt.

European governments are also stepping up. After making available hundreds of billions of euros individually to support their own economies, finance ministers have agreed on a joint €540 billion package. "With all these measures now in play, Europe is better equipped to respond to this unprecedented crisis," Guindos said. Investors are already concerned that countries' increased bond issuance to fund loan and guarantee programmes as well as other measures will be the beginning of a new debt crisis.

Guindos said additional government spending to counter the impact of the virus could be as high as €1.5 trillion - "an amount the likes of which we've probably never seen before".

Philippine Central Bank Chief Ready to Cut Key Rate

MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippine central bank is ready to cut its policy rate to below 3% to support an economy reeling from a "once in a lifetime crisis," according to Governor Benjamin Diokno.

"It is now clear that reverting to where we were in 2018 - policy rate at 3.0% - is no longer an appropriate policy goal," the governor said in a mobile phone message reply on Sunday. "A deeper cut is warranted

in response to the expected sharp economic slowdown." The key rate at 3% was the record low for the Philippines.

Another 2 percentage point cut in banks' reserve requirement ratio "is forthcoming" based on available data and the needs of the economy, Diokno said.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has cut its key rate by 75 basis points this year to 3.25% and slashed lenders' reserve ratio by 200 basis points to help the government shield one of the region's fastest-growing economy. Diokno and his team has thrown the government a \$6 billion lifeline by buying its debt, and also opened a facility to purchase government securities in the secondary market.

Out of the 1.17 trillion pesos (\$23 billion) that the government had lined up to fight the coronavirus, 830 billion pesos came from BSP's actions, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said last week. Gross domestic product could shrink by as much as 1%, its first contraction in more than two decades.

Inflation is likely to be closer to the lower end of a 2%-4% target this year, Diokno said. The central bank will continue to be data dependent and is aware that monetary policy works with a lag, he said. The next scheduled rate meeting will be on May 21, although the governor said on April 6 he's not ruling out an off-cycle move.

Bangko Sentral boosted the key rate by 175 basis points to 4.75% between May and December 2018 to cool the fastest inflation in nine years. Before the coronavirus outbreak, Diokno signaled a half-point rate cut for 2020, and had said he won't rush to cut banks' reserve ratio.

"These new realities call for bolder but appropriate moves on the part of the BSP. The challenge is to cushion the impact of the economic slowdown on people, firms and the financial system," Diokno said. "The monetary authorities job, in coordination with fiscal authorities, is to manage a 'soft' landing and ensure that economic takeoff begin quickly once the pandemic fades."

Germany to Lead EU Coronavirus Presidency

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Berlin has vowed a robust response to the health emergency when the country takes over the EU's rotating presidency in July. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas also called for the strengthening of the WHO and vaccines.

Germany has promised strong leadership to help EU countries to overcome the coronavirus pandemic when it takes up the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union on July 1. In an editorial for the German newspaper, Welt am Sonntag, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the country would assume a "coronavirus presidency to overcome the health crisis and its consequences."

The presidency is responsible for the functioning of the EU's legislative upper house. The position, currently held by Croatia, rotates among member states every six months and helps determine the bloc's agenda. When Germany takes over the presidency, Maas said one of the first tasks would be to "gradually lift the restrictions on travel and the internal market in an incremental and coordinated manner."

He added that there was "still no vaccine, no cure - for anyone," and that "solidarity" instead of "mutual blaming" was vital to defeat the virus. "It is not a question of which 'system' is superior, but rather of winning the fight against the virus together."

Maas said if EU leaders learn from the coronavirus crisis, the bloc will come out "stronger" and "more unified" than ever before.

The German minister called for closer collaboration, such as the joint procurement and production of life-saving medical goods, while keeping supply chains open and improving civil protection.

He also criticized those who exploited coronavirus restrictions for political means, saying they were violating democracy and the rule of law. In remarks clearly aimed at Hungary, Maas said restrictions "under the guise of the fight against the coronavirus" are "unacceptable."

"Anyone who undermines the European Union's fundamental values should not expect to benefit fully from the Union's financial advantages," he warned.

The minister went on to say that Germany requires a "healthy Europe" and a functioning global economy to operate as an export nation. He said the EU's €500 billion (\$547 billion) in aid - the largest package of public and business support in the bloc's history - is "not just an act of European solidarity, but for purely economic reasons" necessary for Germany.

When it comes to the EU budget for the next seven years, Maas said he is minded to invest in the bloc's future in areas including research, climate protection, technological and crisis-proof health and social systems.

Rising Unemployment From Virus Fight Threatens China's Poverty Targets



BEIJING (AFP) - Although China is claiming success in its battle against the coronavirus, millions have lost their jobs in the economic fallout, throwing into jeopardy an ambitious target to eradicate poverty this year.

Beijing has been working to fire up the economy after bringing it to a near standstill to curb the spread of COVID-19, but many firms have had a bumpy restart and workers are bearing the brunt of the pain.

Despite being a country of skyscrapers and high-tech innovations, China still has millions of people on meagre incomes. About 5.5 million rural Chinese live in poverty, defined by the government as surviving on less than 2,300 yuan (\$326) a year.

A slowing economy puts pressure on a key Communist Party goal to become a "moderately prosperous society" by the end of 2020, an ambition in place long before the virus emerged.

It also threatens a long-held tacit agreement between people and party that freedoms can be sacrificed in return for economic progress, an understanding that largely forms the basis of the authoritarian government's legitimacy in the absence of elections.

China has little in the way of social security benefits and workers who lose their jobs have an inadequate safety net, meaning mass unemployment often brings a fear of unrest.

Official statistics show jobless numbers have soared, with roughly five million more people out of work between December and February.

Data firm Caixin said its services purchasing managers' index, a key indicator of activity in the services sector, showed companies cut staff at the quickest pace on record in March.

Hu Fangdi, 23, lost her job as a saleswoman at an airport retail store two weeks ago and has had no luck finding a new role.

Iran Exports 7,000 Tons of Aquatic Food Products to Iraq

SHAHR-E KORD (IRNA) -Iran has exported over 7,000 tons of aquatic food products to the neighboring country of Iraq during the past Iranian calendar year ended on March 19, 2020, an agricultural official of southwestern Iranian province of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari stated on Monday. The province has produced more than 200,000 tons of aquatic food last year, Tahmoures Fattahi said.

He added that the province is planned to increase its aquatic food exports in the current Iranian year named by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei as “Surge in Production.”

Fattahi announced that Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari Province produces 40 percent of aquatic food of the country.



Qatar Takes Lead in Bond Issue

DOHA (Dispatches) - Qatar has taken the lead in bond issue, Oxford Economics said and noted other governments in the region could follow soon to “help finance the economic and fiscal shortfall” this year.

According to Oxford Economics, Qatar became the first Persian Gulf country to test investor appetite amid the combined shock from oil and coronavirus, issuing \$10bn in Eurobonds on April 7. The sale, split in tranches of five, 10 and 30 years, offered “attractive premium over existing bonds and saw high demand”.

Oxford Economics said, “With over 80% of government revenues coming from hydrocarbons, the slump in oil and gas prices poses a challenge for Qatar’s public finances, with the fiscal position seen turning negative this year even as spending is reduced.”

The transaction generated an aggregate order book peaking at approximately \$45bn, which clearly reflects investor confidence in Qatar, one of the few ‘double-A rated’ economies in the world.

The \$10bn Eurobond sale offered attractive premium over existing bonds and saw a huge demand from many investors from Asia, Europe, the U.S. as well as the Middle East and North African (Mena) region.

Oxford Economics noted the Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) in March painted a bleak picture for non-oil activity across the Middle East, registering record falls in most countries. “With Covid-19 measures tightening further and oil prices at multi-

year lows, we have made substantial downgrades to our growth forecasts for 2020, with PGCC non-oil GDP now seen falling 2.4% (previously we expected growth of 0.2%),” Oxford Economics said.

The March PMIs (released last week) showed that tightening Covid-19 containment measures and the oil price slump were taking a heavy toll on non-oil industries across the Middle East. It said restrictive measures have been in place for several weeks in the PGCC to contain the rise in Covid-19 cases, with recent forecasts suggesting substantial economic impacts across the region.

Oxford Economics said, “The PGCC countries have already announced fiscal measures to counter the economic shock of the severe containment, which we expect will counter the shortfall in oil receipts at least in the short run.

“We expect the magnitude of these to be determined by the extent and length of the restrictions, as well as each country’s structural economic vulnerability to the outbreak.

“Containment measures have already strangled the Mena economy. We now see non-oil GDP growth, even in the PGCC – the most resilient economies in the region – falling by 2.4%, with risks on the downside depending on any extension of the current lockdowns. Moreover, we expect second-order effects to depend on the structural resilience of the region.”

S.Korea Ranks 51st Among 52 Major Countries in Youth Population

SEJONG (Dispatches) - South Korea has seen the percentage of its youth population drastically decline over the past three decades, while youth accounted for 27.3 percent of the population in 1988.

According to a global comparison of 52 countries by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, the nation’s youth population aged up 14 plunged to 12.9 percent as of 2018, after falling below the 20 percent mark in 2004 for the first time.

Among the 52 countries with major economies, involving 36 OECD members, Korea ranked No. 51 in the percentage of youth population in 2018. The figure of 12.9 percent far falls short of the average of the Group of 20 (21.3 percent), OECD (17.7 percent) and EU (15.5 percent).

South Africa topped the list, as its youth population marked 29.5 percent in 2018, trailed by Israel with 28.4 percent, India at 27.4 percent, Indonesia with 26.6 percent and Mexico, 26.5 percent.

The remaining in the top 10 were Colombia (25.9 percent), Argentina (24.7 percent), Saudi Arabia (24.6 percent), Turkey (23.5 percent) and Costa Rica (22.2 percent). These 10 included three OECD members: Israel, Mexico and Turkey.

Among English-speaking nations, New Zealand posted 19.3 percent, followed by Australia at 18.8 percent, the U.S. at 18.6 percent, the UK at 17.9 percent and Canada, 16.1 percent.

Out of major European economies, France saw its figure come to 18 percent, Sweden with 17.8 percent, Norway at 17.6 percent, the Netherlands at 16 percent, Spain with 14.8 percent, Germany with 13.5 percent and Italy with 13.3 percent.

Among other Asian nations, China posted 17.6 percent, Singapore with 14.8 percent and Japan just 12.2 percent (the lowest of the 52 countries).

South Korea is projected to see lower figures than Japan in the coming years, given that the figures for Korea -- unveiled by the Ministry of Interior and Safety -- have been posting a steeper downhill gradient in recent years compared to the latter.

The Interior Ministry data shows the portion of young Koreans declined from 16.4 percent in March 2010 to 14 percent in March 2015 and 12.4 percent in March 2020.

Korea has become one of several countries undergoing rapid demographic changes that could dent the nation’s competitiveness in the mid to long term.

With fewer babies being born, senior citizens make up a growing proportion of the Korean population, and the average age has climbed over the past decade.

According to the ministry, the average age was 42.8 years old (41.6 for men and 43.9 for women) as of March 2020, as compared to 37.7 a decade earlier.

The average age exceeded 40 in 16 of the 17 major cities and provinces in Korea, with the city of Sejong being the sole exception, with an average age of 37. The capital Seoul recorded 42.8.

IMF...

FROM PAGE 1

The article maintains that such a transaction would not require approval from the IMF board of governors.

In an Instagram post in mid-March, 2020, CBI governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said he had written to the IMF’s head, Kristalina Georgieva, to stress Iran’s “right to benefit from the fund’s \$50-billion Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI),” to help it cope with the coronavirus pandemic.

The request, however, was opposed by the U.S.

Iran is one of the countries most affected by the pandemic and the U.S. sanctions are hampering the country’s efforts to contain the virus.

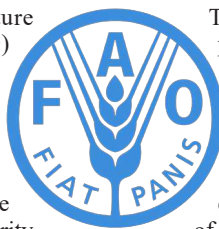
FAO Warns of Adverse Effects of Coronavirus

TEHRAN (FAO) - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warned that in many countries informal laborers, vulnerable urban populations and others that rely heavily on the market are likely to be hit by the adverse effects of the COVID-19.

While the full impact of COVID-19 and the novel coronavirus that causes it on food security and agricultural food systems is still unfolding, it is clear that this outbreak will have significant negative effects on people all along the food supply chain, says a new report released by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The report indicates that while there is enough supply of food in the world to feed everyone and there is no need for hoarding of food, the COVID-19 outbreak has the potential to disrupt critical food supply chains severely, both between countries and inside countries in rural and urban areas. Movement or import/export restrictions may result in challenges to the transport of key food items and access to food processing units and markets. Both producers and consumers would feel the impact. Ultimately, this could lead to reduced farmers’ incomes, instability of food prices and temporary food shortages.

This situation is likely to have significant adverse effects in particular on the most vulnerable actors, such as informal laborers, vulnerable urban populations and others that rely heavily on the market to meet their food needs. Reduced or lost wages and unstable prices would have serious implications for acute food security and malnutrition levels in these populations.



The combination of the above impacts could potentially lead vulnerable households to resort to negative coping mechanisms, which would have lasting effects on their lives and livelihoods, including a reduced number of meals, increased school drop-out rates, reduced means to cover health expenditures, gender-based violence, selling of productive assets, etc.

In this context, FAO has reviewed its ongoing humanitarian/resilience programming in different countries and analyzed the potential impacts of the virus in order to ensure the continuous support for the most vulnerable and anticipatory actions to address the secondary effects of the virus.

As such, FAO tries to maintain the provision of critical assistance where there are already high levels of need while meeting new ones emerging from the effects of the coronavirus. Within the Plan, FAO’s efforts will focus on four main activities:

*Setting up a global data facility to support analysis and inform assessments and programming in contexts already experiencing humanitarian.

*Stabilising incomes and access to food as well as preserving ongoing livelihood and food production assistance for the most acutely food-insecure populations.

*Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations.

*Ensuring people along the food supply chain are not at risk of coronavirus transmission by raising awareness about food safety and health regulations, including rights, roles and responsibilities of workers.

Easing Lockdown...

FROM PAGE 1

Warning that some adventurous policies cost people’s lives in the region, he advised the United States to grasp a new realistic understanding of its own wrong policies in Iraq.

On Afghanistan, he said that Iran supports formation of a strong central government in Afghanistan and will spare no effort to help establish such a government as it is in line with international security and the fight against terrorism.

He also said that the United States is not in a position to block Iran’s requested \$5 billion loan from International Monetary Fund. Rabei said that Washington is not in a position to prevent international organizations from doing their legal obligations.

The U.S. must understand that international institutions are not their property and other countries not their subjects, he said in response to a question on the US intention to block Iran’s \$5 billion loan bid from IMF.

He underlined that IMF’s response to the issue will indicate that participation in international affairs is not subject to unilateral policies by any state, adding that IMF’s decision represents the moral and humanitarian objectives of the funds established on humanitarian basis. On legal vote by a Luxembourg court to release Iran’s money, Rabei said that the money was blocked due to the U.S. claim and they were trying to move the money to the United States and seize it by another verdict.

Some 46,000 Recover...

FROM PAGE 1

In comments at a meeting in the central city of Isfahan on Monday, Iraj Harirchi said the majority of provinces in Iran have seen a downward trend in the COVID-19 cases and the deaths due to the infection.

He also noted that the infection rate in six provinces has been following a gradually growing trend, while it has been flatlining in a number of other provinces, such as in Isfahan.

Harirchi pointed to three main strategies the Health Ministry has adopted to contain the coronavirus pandemic, saying they include smart social distancing, detection of asymptomatic people who are infected and may spread the disease, and detection and segregation of people who have had contact with the coronavirus patients or carriers of the disease.

Yemen...

FROM PAGE 1

Days after the so-called Saudi-led coalition claimed to have halted its aggression in Yemen due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Yemeni Army has announced that it repelled several Saudi assaults on various fronts in just one day.

Saudi-led forces have, however, continuously violated the so-called ceasefire with numerous land and air attacks.

At least 80 percent of the 28 million-strong population of Yemen is reliant on aid to survive. Yemeni officials have described Riyadh’s announced truce as a “deceitful” measure “meant to mislead the world public opinion”.

Iran Names U.S. Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

In short, in our common fight against COVID-19, sanctions, by undermining our front from within in favor of the enemy, function exactly like the “fifth column”. It is but a treachery.

Sanctions inhibit Iran’s ability to fight COVID-19.

While Iran is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the coronavirus, the U.S. sanctions – which, according to the US officials are the most extensive sanctions ever imposed on a country -- are drastically hindering Iran’s efforts to identify and treat patients and effectively prevent the spread of the virus.

This is despite the fact that Iran’s medical facilities, doctors and nurses are among the very finest in the world, and the professional nature of its national efforts to suppress COVID-19 is highly acknowledged by the WHO.

The so-called humanitarian exemptions are not working.

To escape from the disgrace of the illegal and immoral nature of sanctions, the U.S. officials continue to claim that humanitarian and medical needs are exempt from sanctions.

On 27 February 2020, the U.S.Treasury finalized with much fanfare “The Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement” (SHTA) allowing certain humanitarian transactions with Iran. However, this narrow channel does not match Iran’s humanitarian needs in the current situation.

The United States has forced SHTA to pursue a very tight and tough procedure, under the pretexts like “ensuring the upmost transparency” or “enhanced due diligence” -- requiring companies to provide extensive information to the Treasury Department every month on the Iranian beneficiaries of the goods, the Iranian companies’ business relationships and financial details and alike -- thus making it practically very difficult for companies to trade with Iran.

Additionally, almost impossible or cumbersome nature of transferring Iran’s reserves blocked outside the country to the designated Swiss bank, not only does not allow the SHTA to function properly now but may actually render it redundant in a matter of few months.

Likewise, recently several companies that supply the medical equipment required to fight the coronavirus have stopped shipping to Iran because the current U.S. sanction’s regime makes the shipping of such items to Iran almost impossible.

Moreover, the only message of the U.S.’ additional new sanctions, imposed in the midst of the coronavirus outbreak, is that companies must avoid doing any business with Iran, even if their work is humanitarian in nature.

In short, the U.S. sanction’s regime, including its related penalties, is extremely broad and has created a compliance minefield for the legal trade with Iran and consequently, medical suppliers and relief organizations simply steer clear of doing business in Iran in the fear of accidentally getting caught up in the U.S. sanctions’ web.

From the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, Iran has received emergency aid from neighboring and other countries as well as the WHO and certain humanitarian organizations, which are highly valuable and much appreciated in current trying times.

However, for a vast country like Iran with a population of nearly 83 million, which is among the worst impacted countries by COVID-19, such emergency aid is not the panacea as, under the current pandemic, donor countries themselves face their own crises. Accordingly, neither Iran nor any other country can rely only on emergency aids.

In the World War Against COVID-19, either we will win together or we will lose together. But we MUST win it through, first and foremost, rendering massive support to the most needed developing countries.

It is also essential that each and every country could use, freely and fully, its own resources to effectively suppress the pandemic, which is impossible without immediate removal of all sanctions on banking, insurance, transportation, medical, industry, energy, exports, imports and the like.

This is what the international community is calling for. Such strong and repeated calls have recently been made including by the United Nations Secretary-General, the WHO Director-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and some other international dignitaries as well as many former and current statesmen and stateswomen, parliamentarians, religious leaders, academia, non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions.

To prevent further deterioration of the situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the international community must not allow the continued application of inhuman and unlawful sanctions to harm the very health and lives of the world citizens.

Under the current global pandemic, urgent removal of all sanctions is in the interest of all humanity and hence a must. To prove that we are mature enough to care, in addition to our own, about the life of the rest of the humankind, this is the right thing to do which must be done promptly.

Former Chelsea Goalkeeper Bonetti Dies Aged 78

LONDON (Reuters) - Former Chelsea and England goalkeeper Peter Bonetti has died at the age of 78 after a long battle with illness, the Premier League club announced on Sunday.

Nicknamed "The Cat" for his quick reflexes in goal, Bonetti made 729 appearances for the London club in two stints between 1960 and 1979 — second on the club's all-time appearances list behind former defender Ron Harris.

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Arteta Recovers From COVID-19

ANKARA (Dispatches) - English Premier League club Arsenal's manager Mikel Arteta has recovered from the coronavirus, local media reported.

Arteta told BBC One's Football Focus presenter Dan Walker that he has "completely recovered" after contracting the virus last month.

The U.K. on Friday confirmed 980 new deaths in the country over the past 24 hours, the largest rise on record in the country.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

TUESDAY APRIL 14, 2020

Messi Will Only Leave Barca For Two Destinations

MADRID (Dispatches) - While there has been talk of Lionel Messi leaving FC Barcelona in the past, it has been claimed the Argentine will only consider two destinations if he does decide to leave.

Inter Milan have long been linked with the Argentine superstar, although there was never any concrete approach from the Serie A giants.

The links with Inter have once again resurfaced, but former Barcelona star Rivaldo feels China or the Major League Soccer would be Messi's destinations, not Serie A.

"Inter's president Massimo Moratti said this week that he could bring Lionel Messi to the club and resume his personal clash with Cristiano Ronaldo in Italy, but as I've said before I don't believe that the Argentinian would leave Barcelona for any other European club," Rivaldo told Betfair.

"I think he has no reasons to leave Spain, but if that happens one day then he could sign for a club from China or MLS, but only when he stops being so decisive for the Catalan outfit.

"Even if a move to Inter could be financially encouraging for the player, I suspect that wouldn't be enough to convince him and I think this is more like propaganda from Inter's president than a real possibility in the next transfer market.

"Of course, Inter is a big European club that have recruited excellent players in the past and managed to win some important titles, but I can't imagine Messi changing club while he is still at his best level at Barcelona.



"So, to sum up I consider that these are just rumours and believe Messi should finish his career in Europe after representing just one club. If he does leave, then it will be to China or a north American club where he can enjoy a different environment with not as much pressure and competitiveness."

Meanwhile a Real Madrid star refused to pick between former teammate Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi as the greatest player of all time.

Only few would argue that the greatest soccer player in the world today is not Messi or Ronaldo. Some even believe that the two have surpassed the greats from the past eras such as Diego Maradona, Pele and the likes, making them the greatest of all time. But just like in any other sport, there can only be one "GOAT."

For years, many in soccer have already chosen their pick between Messi and Ronaldo. There were very few like Lucas Vazquez, a former teammate of Ronaldo in Real Madrid, who is reluctant to choose between the two.

In his recent Bleacher Report AMA Q&A with fans, Vazquez answered interesting questions about his career and what it was like playing with the Portuguese star.

According to Vazquez, he has a lot of memorable moments with Ronaldo. When asked what the legendary striker was like at Real, Vazquez revealed that Ronaldo demanded the best out of everybody, including himself.

Kyrgios Delivers on Food Pledge for People Going Hungry



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios has apparently followed through on a promise to help people going hungry in the coronavirus shutdown, with social media images showing boxes of essential items prepped for delivery.

The controversial Kyrgios, infamously outspoken and known for his fiery on-court antics, said on Monday he would personally drop food on doorsteps after COVID-19 restrictions closed down entire industries, forcing huge numbers of people out of work across Australia.

People queueing for welfare payments across the country have been likened to scenes from the Great Depression.

"Please don't go to sleep with an empty stomach," Kyrgios, the world number 40, posted on Instagram Monday.

"Don't be afraid or embarrassed to send me a private message. I will be more than happy to share whatever I have.

"Even just for a box of noodles, a loaf of bread or milk. I will drop it off at your doorstep, no questions asked!" he said in a post that attracted almost 100,000 likes.

His mother, Norlaila Kyrgios, posted on Instagram over the weekend a photo of a table laden with food -- including bread, fruit and canned goods -- with the caption "dining room or food distribution center".

Images of Canberra-based tennis star's Instagram stories shared on News Corp websites showed boxes of essentials captioned "deliveries in progress".

It comes just months after the 24-year-old led a bushfire relief campaign that raised millions of dollars.

Kyrgios gave Aus\$200 (US\$125) for every ace he hit across his home tennis summer, which ran until the end of the Australian Open.

Woods Relives Joy of Winning Fifth Masters

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Fifteen-time major winner Tiger Woods says he can't help feeling like the green jacket he claimed for winning the Masters last year doesn't belong in his locker anymore.

The 44-year-old Woods doesn't like the idea of holding onto the coveted sports coat due to the world-wide coronavirus epidemic that led to the 2020 Masters tournament being postponed until November.

The pandemic "has been a shock to all of us. We know it's still going to continue to get worse. It's a very difficult situation, a very difficult time, a unique time in history," Woods told CBS television on Sunday.

The American broadcaster replayed Woods' stunning comeback victory on Sunday with the five-time Masters winner adding his own commentary from his home in Florida.

Woods said it felt odd not to be in full training for a major and also to be keeping the winner's jacket for another seven months.

"This is not the way I wanted to have the jacket for a longer period of time," he said. "Come Masters Tuesday, after our Champions Dinner, we put our jackets back up in our lockers, and the next person who gets to take it off the grounds is the champion that particular week.

"So hopefully we'll have it in November, and we'll be able to compete for it."

The Masters has been rescheduled for November 12-15.

Woods says he was raring to go and would have been healthy for this year's event.

"Yes, I would have been good to go," Woods said. "Mind and body were coming together. I was not my normal self (earlier in the week), and all of my normal pre-major championship self.

"I'm used to having this four times a year. I kind of get in that mode. And it started happening again."

Looking back, Woods said he remembers little about his merrymaking on the green after holing the final putt 12 months ago.

"There were also rumours about potential interest from Manchester City, but their manager Pep Guardiola considers Messi to be where he should be and is still playing at a high enough level to help Barcelona very much.



Froome Says Recovery Almost Complete

LONDON (Reuters) - Four-times Tour de France winner Chris Froome said his recovery from a horrific accident last year was nearly complete and his training load was back to normal as he prepares for when competition resumes after the new coronavirus outbreak.

Speaking during a Team Ineos virtual race on Sunday, Froome described his recovery as "going really well" as he waits out the coronavirus lockdown at home in France.

"I'd go as far as saying it's pretty much complete," said the 34-year-old British rider.

"I am still doing some exercises off the bike just to strengthen that right side that was injured but I'm back to normal training loads again." Froome spent more than three weeks in hospital after breaking his neck, femur, elbow, hip and ribs when he crashed into a wall at high speed while training for the Criterium du Dauphin last June. The accident happened when he took his hands off the handlebar to blow his nose and was hit by a gust of wind.

He returned to competition in February at the UAE Tour, a race that was cut short by the coronavirus.

International racing has been suspended until at least June 1, with May's Giro d'Italia as well as the Milan-Sanremo, Tour of Flanders, Paris-Roubaix and Liege-Bastogne-Liege classics all having been postponed because of the pandemic.

But Tour de France organisers are focusing on a postponement of the June 27-July 19 race rather than a cancellation, according to an email seen by Reuters on Saturday which was sent to the publishers of the official Tour programme.

Hodgson Wary of Artificial End to Premier League Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Crystal Palace manager Roy Hodgson has warned against "artificial means" of deciding the Premier League.

In a statement to the London club's supporters, which saw the former England boss thank health workers and all those trying to combat the coronavirus, the veteran former England manager insisted there was widespread support for playing the 2019/20 season out to a finish.

"Everyone is in total agreement we need an end to this season," wrote Hodgson.

"We don't want artificial means of deciding who wins the league, who gets into the Champions League, who gets relegated and promoted."

His letter came after UEFA, European football's governing body, warned a failure to complete domestic leagues could see clubs excluded from continental competitions next season.

Hodgson said players who, in common with the rest of the British population, are currently in lockdown would ideally like three to four weeks' preparation before playing a match again.

But the 72-year-old added: "I accept there may have to be a squeeze on that time-frame."

The Premier League has been suspended until April 30 at the earliest, with further delays looking likely.



Hamilton Salutes Racing Legend Moss

LONDON (Dispatches) - World champion Lewis Hamilton on Sunday described Stirling Moss, who has died at the age of 90, as a "racing legend" and a "comrade from a massively different time".

Although Moss never won the Formula One world title, he was regarded as one of motor sport's greatest drivers, with his 1950s heyday seeing racers compete in a variety of disciplines.

The 35-year-old Hamilton, a six-time world champion, became a friend of Moss despite the pair's age difference and contrasting backgrounds.

"Today we say goodbye to Sir Stirling Moss, the racing legend," reigning champion Hamilton wrote on Instagram.

"I certainly will miss our conversations. To be honest, it was such a unusual pairing, our friendship.

"Two people from massively different times and backgrounds but we clicked and ultimately found that the love for racing we both shared made us comrades.

"I am truly grateful to have had these special moments with him."

Meanwhile, three-time world champion Jackie Stewart, who came into Grand Prix racing shortly after Moss's injury-enforced retirement in the early 1960s, told the BBC: "I think he's probably the best example of a racing driver there's ever been.

