

Deputy Industry, Mines and Trade  
Minister Said That Domestic  
Products Have Replaced 1,540  
Foreign Products Over the Past  
year, Putting an End to Their Imports

# IRAN NEWS

Supreme Leader of Ayatollah  
Seyed Ali Khamenei Donated Some  
450m Tomans to Help Free  
Prisoners of Unintentional Crimes,  
According to the Managing-General  
Of Iran's Diya Headquarters

VOL. XXVI, No. 6934 TEHRAN Price 20,000 Rials


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## Iranians Urged To Adapt Themselves To Life Under COVID-19

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian president says it is unclear when the coronavirus pandemic will be gone, so people should adapt themselves to living alongside this virus for quite some time.

President Hassan Rouhani said Wednesday the activities in society should not be closed despite the pandemic.

"I'm telling our dear people, because it is not clear when this virus outbreak is over, we should stand ready to keep working and continue to acquire science and knowledge, conduct research, keep the society alive and give hope to the society, with the assumption that unfortunately this virus is here to stay with people for quite some time," said President Rouhani.

The president said no one can tell when this will be all over.

"We should base our activities on this assumption because today no one in the world can predict when this epidemic will be over. No one can tell how many days or weeks or months from now the epidemic will be over. So, we should go about our activities from a pessimistic perspective and with long-term planning, keeping in mind that this virus is here to stay," said the president.

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## 80 More Iranians Die From COVID-19

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Head of Iran's Health Ministry's Public Relations Office Kianoush Jahanpour said on Wednesday that 73,791 people out of a total of 93,657 infected with the coronavirus have survived and recovered while 5,957 have unfortunately succumbed to death including 80 deaths occurred over the past 24 hours.

Jahanpour said that 1,073 new affected cases have been detected since yesterday.

Over the last 24 hours, 80 people died due to the deadly virus, he added.

The Iranian official noted that 2,965 cases are in critical condition.

He added that 453,386 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

Meanwhile Deputy Minister of Health for Treatment Affairs Ghasem Janbabaie said yesterday that statistics suggest that men, particularly those working at businesses, got infected with coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at a higher rate than women.

Speaking during a video press conference on Wednesday, Janbabaie said that the fatalities of men due to the novel coronavirus disease are more than that of women.

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## Persian Gulf Always 'Persian' Gulf, Not 'Washington' Gulf



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has underlined that the body of water to the south of Iran has been, and will always remain the "Persian Gulf" forever, not "Washington" Gulf or "New York" Gulf.

President Rouhani said on Wednesday any other title than the "Persian" to be used for the Persian Gulf is untrue. "And the Americans should know that this gulf is called the 'Persian' Gulf; it is not called the 'New York' Gulf or the 'Washington' Gulf. It is the 'Persian Gulf'," said President Rouhani.

"I congratulate a nation (Iranian nation) whose name is put on this gulf, which is called the Persian Gulf, which has always been the Persian Gulf, and will remain the Persian Gulf forever," said the president.

"It is a gulf whose littoral provinces on the Iranian coast, from Khuzestan to Sistan-Baluchestan, to Hormozgan, to Bushehr and others, all provinces which lie on the Persian Gulf's coast, even provinces near the coast like Fars province and other provinces, have protected the border well. They have always resisted and keep resisting foreigners firmly today," he added.

The president urged Washington to look at history to realize that the name "Persian" is an integral part of this body of water.

"By the name of this gulf and waterway, and by the nation which has been living next to this water way and has protected it, the Americans should get to understand the situation and stop hatching plots against the Iranian nation every day.

He underscored that the Iranian nation and military are working in tandem to protect the Persian Gulf as they have always been.

The President made the comments on the National Day of Persian Gulf, which is annually marked in Iran on April 29.

## Iran Issues License for Biggest Bitcoin Mining Farm

TEHRAN (PressTV) - iMiner, a cryptocurrency company registered in Turkey, has been granted a license to mine digital coins and offer trading and custody services in Iran, Tabnak news website reports.

The charter issued by Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade will allow the company to operate with a computing power of 96,000 terahash per second at a bitcoin mining farm in the central city of Semnan, the report said.

Hashrate is a measure of the power of computers hooked up to the bitcoin network that dictates their ability to produce new coins.

According to Tabnak, the bitcoin mining farm set up by iMiner with 311 billion rials (\$7.3 million) of investment is the biggest in Iran, where 6,000 machines will be producing cryptocurrencies.

The official website of iMiner introduces it as "one of the first and most reputable" companies offering custody and other back-office services in Turkey, Russia, Canada and the United States.

Interest in bitcoin mining is finding traction in Iran where subsidized power rates are attracting prospectors from countries as far as China, Ukraine and France.

The government, however, has proceeded with caution due to the opaque nature of cryptocurrencies and the electricity-intensive process strain on Iran's national power grid.

Bitcoin mining consumes large quantities of energy because it uses costly software to solve complex math puzzles to validate transactions in the cryptocurrency. The first miner to solve the problem is rewarded in bitcoin and the transaction is added to the blockchain or digital ledger.

Last year, Iran's energy ministry published a report on power consumption, which put the central Semnan province in the red for the highest utilization rate. The small province reportedly dwarfed the vast southern province of Khuzestan which was grappling with scorching temperatures.

Countries with cheap electricity have emerged as major hosts of cryptocurrency mining. China is a major player in the bitcoin market, hosting a substantial share of miners.

In the past, Chinese cryptocurrency miners have officially requested to set up shop in Iran, taking advantage of cheap energy to power and cool their electricity-intensive servers.

Digital miners in Iran are said to be basing their operations in locations with access to subsidized electricity, such as factories, agricultural sites, government offices and mosques.

While there is no precise tabulation on cryptocurrency mining in Iran, one electrical industry spokesman has put the number of bitcoin mining machines north of 148,000.

## Leader Approves Vesting Of Justice Shares Owned By 49m Iranians

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has endorsed a government request to vest restricted stocks of dozens of government-run companies that are owned by tens of millions of Iranians.

In a decree issued on Tuesday, Ayatollah Khamenei ordered the government to prepare the required conditions for owners of the Justice Shares to be able to trade their stocks in the market and reach the profits that have accrued on the shares over the past years.

The Justice Shares were issued in 2006 during the administrative government run by former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The scheme was launched in line with the amendments made to the Article 44 of the Iranian Constitution which requires the government to move toward economic privatization.

More than 49 million Iranian citizens own the currently unvested shares. Current estimates suggest the value of the stocks owned by each shareholder have increased from an initial price tag of 10 million rials to 80 million rials (\$500).

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## Commander Warns U.S. Over Violating Iran Territorial Waters

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Armed Forces has warned that the United States is sure to be dealt with a more severe blow than before if it takes the slightest action against the Islamic Republic's interests, including its territorial waters.

"The Americans have certainly experienced this [in the past] that they will receive a harder slap than before upon perpetrating the slightest action or infringement against the Islamic Republic's territorial waters and our people's interests," said senior spokesperson for Iran's Armed Forces, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi, in an interview broadcast live on state television on Tuesday night.

"We do not joke [with anyone] when it comes to the issue of our defense," he added.

The comments came after a recent tweet by U.S. President Donald Trump in which he alleged that he had directed the U.S. Navy to "shoot down and destroy" Iranian gunboats that "harass" American ships, following a recent confrontation between U.S. warships and Iranian military boats in the Persian Gulf.

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## Pakistan Approves \$18.6m to Fence Border With Iran

KARACHI (Dispatches)- Pakistan's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved 3 billion rupees (\$18.6 million) in additional funds for the fencing of its border with Iran.

The funds were in the form of a supplementary technical grant. Pakistan started fencing certain areas of the border in May last year, which Iran is against.

The Senate of Pakistan was informed about the move by the Frontier Constabulary of Balochistan on May 10, 2019.

The 900 km border begins at the Koh-i-Malik Salih mountain and ends at Gwadar Bay in the Gulf of Oman. It passes through a diverse landscape of mountain ridges, seasonal streams and rivers, and is notorious for human trafficking, smuggling and cross-border militancy.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has opened five crossings on the border to allow cargo trucks to cross over to Balochistan, Foreign Office spokeswoman, Aisha Farooqui, confirmed on Tuesday, adding that no individual movement was permitted.

"All five border points are open for cargo only. Pedestrians can come only through Taftan," Farooqui told Arab News, referring to another crossing on the 900 km Pakistani-Iranian border in Balochistan province.

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# Zarif Holds Talks With Afghan Leaders

TEHRAN - Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif has held telephone conversations with Afghan leaders as part of Tehran's efforts to stabilize the political situation in Afghanistan.

Zarif held separate telephone conversations with Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah on Tuesday evening as part of the Islamic Republic of Iran's attempts to help stabilize the political situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the launch of intra-Afghan negotiations.

## Tehran, Islamabad Weigh Plans to Broaden Economic Ties

*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

**TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani and the prime minister of Pakistan have called for efforts to resume trade exchanges between the two neighbors following a halt in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, and discussed the ways to enhance bilateral economic relations in defiance of the US sanctions.**

In a telephone conversation on Wednesday, President Rouhani and Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan called for the expansion of relations between Tehran and Islamabad, and stressed the need to share the experiences, knowledge and technology in the fight against the novel coronavirus.

They also emphasized the necessity for the resumption of cross-border trade, reopening of the border markets, and strengthening the trade ties in conformity with the health regulations.

The Iranian president and the Pakistani prime minister further condemned any type of discrimination or imposition of pressures against Muslims, and expressed their support for the Muslim communities.

Elsewhere in the telephone conversation, President Rouhani commended Pakistan for its opposition to the U.S.' illegal sanctions against Iran, and expressed hope that the two Muslim neighbors could further broaden the trade and economic relations.

He also noted that reopening of the border markets in full compliance with the



health and medical instructions will contribute to the promotion of the trade and economic ties between the two countries.

"We are willing to continue the exchange of commodities and border trade with Pakistan in the same way that trading of commodities with a number of the neighboring countries is going on," President Rouhani added.

He finally congratulated the Pakistani government and nation on the start of the holy month of Ramadan, and expressed hope that the joint agreements between Iran and Pakistan would be implemented to benefit the two nations.

For his part, Imran Khan highlighted the necessity of promoting and deepening relations with Iran, particularly the economic and trade ties, and welcomed plans on the resumption of trade activities at the common border and reopening of the border markets by observing the health instructions.

"The resumption of commodities exchange between the two countries will greatly help Pakistan's economy, which has encountered many problems due to the coronavirus," the Pakistani premier added. Imran Khan then condemned the U.S' sanctions and mounting economic pressures against Iran in the current tough circumstances when the world is engulfed by the coronavirus pandemic, stressing, "I deem it my duty to support Iran in the face of the U.S.' unlawful measures."

## Iranians Establish Long-Standing Civilization on Persian Gulf Shores

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance in a message on the occasion of the Persian Gulf National Day (tomorrow) wrote: "Before other tribes entered the shores of this sea, Iranians have been living on these shores for thousands of years and have established a long civilization on the shores of the Persian Gulf."

Iranians mark the National Persian Gulf Day, which is the anniversary of the victory over Portuguese troops during a war in the Persian Gulf in 1622.

The occasion commemorates the exit of colonial and foreign forces from the strategic waterway.

Tenth of Ordibehesht month (April 30) in the Iranian calendar marks the anniversary of Shah Abbas I of Persia's successful military campaign when the Portuguese navy was forced out of the Strait of Hormuz in the Capture of Ormuz (1622).

Abbas Salehi's message on the occasion of the Persian Gulf National Day was read by Reza Kamali Zarkani, Director General of Hormozgan Islamic Culture and Guidance and Secretary of the 10th Persian Gulf Cultural and Artistic Festival.

## Tehran Ready to Send Ventilators, Masks to Yerevan

TEHRAN (IFP) - President says the Islamic Republic is ready to export hygienic and health facilities as well as ventilators and face masks to Armenia.

Referring to successes gained in production of these stuff, President Hassan Rouhani said the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to meet the needs of other countries, including Armenia, in the fight against Coronavirus.

He made the statements in a phone conversation with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday afternoon.

Talking about the spread of the coronavirus in many countries around the world and the problems that this disease has created for governments and nations, the two sides stressed the need to develop regional and

international cooperation, and touched upon transfer of experiences in dealing with the coronavirus.

Rouhani and Pashinyan also reiterated that Iran and Armenia, as two neighbouring countries, should help each other more in these difficult circumstances.

They further confirmed that mutual ties are expanding, but put stress on the need for officials to work together in the Joint Commission to develop relations between Tehran and Yerevan.

For his part, Pashinyan praised the success of the Islamic Republic in combating COVID-19 and the positive results it has achieved.

He also offered congratulations to the government and people of Iran on the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan.

## U.S. Unable to Cite to JCPOA

TEHRAN (MNA) – Spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security Committee, Hossein Naghavi Hosseini said that U.S. cannot cite to 2015 nuclear deal, known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with relation to Iran's measures and activities taken in this regard.

He made the remarks in an interview with IRNA on Wed. and pointed to the U.S. State Department's moves for the continuation of Iran's arms embargo and added, "JCPOA is not an international convention, rather, this landmark deal was inked between 4+1 Group and the Islamic Republic of Iran in mid-2015."

Only a country, which was a member of Iran's nuclear deal, can cite to JCPOA with regards to Iran's activities, he said, adding, "not only U.S. withdrew from JCPOA in May 2018, but also it [U.S.] announced its opposition with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) vividly."

U.S. President Trump said that he would rip off JCPOA explicitly and for this reason, the U.S. cannot cite this international deal, Naghavi Hosseini added.

Turning to the U.S.' threat to send Iran's issue at UN Security Council (UNSC), he said, "the issue of sending Iran's nuclear program to UN Security Council has a legal basis and some members of the 5+1 Group still remain in place in JCPOA and have announced their stance in this regard clearly. For example, Russia has explicitly said that the launch of Iran's satellite does not violate rules and regulations within the framework of JCPOA."

Naghavi Hosseini termed the recent remarks of U.S. authorities against Iran during the outbreak of coronavirus global pandemic and the global fight against the deadly disease 'malicious and wickedness' and added, "as claimant of world leadership, it is a matter of regret to say that U.S. administration has the weakest record in the fight against coronavirus and raises this issue for diverting public opinion."

## Institutionalization Key to Well-Organized, Powerful Parliament

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy Interior Minister and head of election commission Jamal Orf said that the more the political parties get institutionalized, they will lead to well-organized parliament.

The head of election commission Jamal Orf said that there had been a historic relationship between the elections and the given political party.

Elaborating the role and the significance of the political parties' activities in holding competitive parliamentary elections and forming parliament which is going to be more powerful, Iran's senior official said that 80 political parties out of 116 including

provincial and national ones all across Iran, were actively involved in the national parliamentary elections forming their own establishments.

Expressing hope that Iran's political parties' activities would be more institutionalized in the near future, head of Iran's election commission highlighted, "the more the political parties get institutionalized, they will lead to well-organized parliament"

He also explained further that in this case, the parliamentary plans would be out of individuals' control so that people could see what the representatives of the given political parties are actually doing.

## Iran Donates Special Medical, Health Supplies To Afghanistan



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Defense Ministry in a ceremony donated special medical and health supplies to Afghanistan to fight coronavirus epidemic.

During the ceremony which was held in the presence of the Head of Iranian Defense Ministry for international affairs Brigadier General Mohammad Ahadi and Afghanistan Ambassador to Iran Abdolghafur Lival, medical supplies prepared by Iranian Defense Ministry to fight coronavirus were delivered to Afghanistan.

Ahadi said helping other humans regardless of political disputes, maintaining cooperation and convergence in the international community and interaction among governments and nations for fighting coronavirus were the positive outcomes of the pandemic.

Simultaneous with the outbreak of coronavirus, Iranian armed forces could help government to control the disease by producing medical and health items, he added.

In addition to preserving defense and combat readiness, Iranian armed forces have always stood by people for ensuring their health and security, he noted.

Ahadi went on to say that Iran has been pioneer in establishing peace and stability in the region, adding that Iran has always stood by its neighbor [Afghanistan] and has spared no efforts for helping oppressed Muslims in Afghanistan.

He also expressed readiness for sharing experience of Iranian armed forces with Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Lival thanked Iranian Defense Ministry, saying Iran has always stood by people of Afghanistan.

Humane behavior of countries indicated the depth of relations and friendship, he added.

Referring to Iranian armed forces as an honor for the Islamic World, Afghan diplomat hailed their capability to produce medical items.

Despite the fact that most of the countries in the world were not able to control the disease, Iran not only managed the situation inside the country but helped other countries like Afghanistan, he reiterated.

## Iran Supports Yemeni Solidarity, Territorial Integrity

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said unity among Yemeni groups and holding comprehensive political talks among different groups is the only way to establish stability in Yemen, adding that Iran supports united Yemen and preserving its territorial integrity.

Referring to the latest developments in southern Yemen, Mousavi said that based on its principled policy, Iran supports preserving territorial integrity of Yemen.

He added that such measures will not help solve current problems in Yemen but will make the situation more complicated.

Stressing the importance of stopping war in Yemen and lifting cruel blockade against Yemeni people, he said unity among Yemeni groups and holding comprehensive political talks among different groups is the only way to form united and inclusive government.

The Southern Transitional Council (STC) which is supported by UAE has declared autonomous rule across all southern provinces on Sunday.

It has also announced state of emergency.

## MP Calls for Increasing Economic Ties With Other States

TEHRAN (MNA) – An Iranian lawmaker points to the need for Iran's boosting of economic ties with countries across the globe.

"We should expand ties with world countries and pay attention to the fact that many countries consider economy as their first priority while this is not the case in Iran," Mehrdad Lahouti, the spokesman of the Parliament's Independent Faction, said.

"Given the coronavirus outbreak in the country and its negative consequences on the society, the government should mobilize all its resources this year to bring back Iran to normal conditions," he said.

Langarud's representative in the Parliament went on to say that people's health should be a priority but the country's conditions should return to normal in less than two months.

The outbreak has affected many industrial manufacturers and tourism industry, he regretted, adding that the government needs to devise a new plan to resolve economic problems as it cannot rely on tax revenues this year.

The virus has so far infected more than 92,500 people while claiming above 5,800 lives. The country has gradually reopened most businesses by following health guidelines.

## 13-Ton Cargo of Laboratory Diagnostic Equipment Arrives Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – The fifth consignment of laboratory diagnostic equipment has arrived in Iran through the Sari Su border market in West Azerbaijan Province, according to an official.

Head of Bazargan Customs Administration Sadeq Namdar said on Wednesday that the consignment weighed 13,292 kilograms of pharmaceutical items, including laboratory products, laboratory diagnostic equipment (blood serum) was delivered to Iran.

It was loaded from France and entered the country through the Sari Su border market in Mako, with the agreement of the border managers of Iran and Turkey, he added.

The value of these pharmaceutical items sent from France is 1.495 million euros, he noted.

The first cargo of medicine purchased from Germany that weighed 26 tons arrived in the same market 28 days ago, said Namdar.

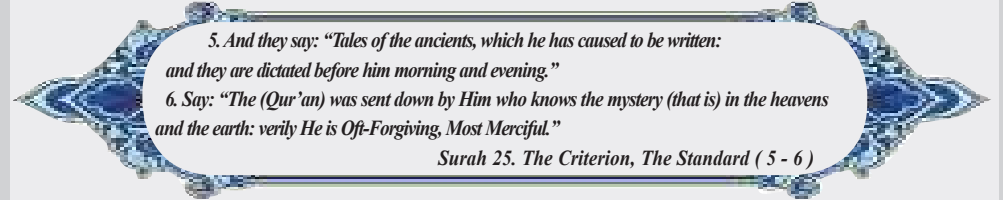






## PRAYER TIME

<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Noon (Zohr)	13:01
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Evening (Maghreb)	20:09
<span style="color: gray;">■</span> Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:38
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:11



## Turkey Blamed for Closure of 89% of Iranian Transportation Companies

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN – Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce Gholam-Hossein Shafei says recent measures of Turkish government for closing its borders because of the outbreak of Coronavirus have affected Iran's international transportation companies as 89 percent of them have closed down.**

In his letter to the Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami, Shafei urged the minister for talks with Turkish government who have closed their borders for Iranian trucks while Turkish trucks can enter Iran. He urged the minister to stop entrance of Turkish trucks into the country.

Shafei in his letter said that some 450 companies with over 15,000 drivers are involved in the international transportation but Turkish government by closing their borders have actually closed down 89 percent of Iranian transportation companies.

Chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce lodged his protest against stoppage of country's international road transport system due to the lack of cooperation of Turkey with Iran.

Under such circumstances, Turkish trucks can easily transport and transit their cargoes to the Islamic Republic of Iran, he criticized.



Shafei pointed to the considerable reduction of activity of 450 Iran's international transportation companies which led to the reduced activity of 15,000 Iranian truck drivers in the cargo transit sector, he said, adding "Turkey has closed its borders with the Islamic Republic of Iran since Feb. 21 due to the outbreak of coronavirus global pandemic."

He put the unemployment rate of Iranian transportation companies and truck drivers at 89 percent and said, "This is while that Turkish trucks can transport their cargoes easily into Iran via Bazargan and Poldasht borders."

He pointed out that this issue has increased transport costs extremely and also cost price of all goods and commodities.

He noted that Turkish government's decision has worsened the condition for Iran's imports and exports and it has increased the cost of imports and exports and it will make difficult the condition for competition of Iranian goods in the international markets.

Shafei added that currently Iranian trucks can get to Europe via Russia and it increases the cost and time of the transportation.

## Iran Earned \$5.8b From Agrifood Exports Last Year

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iranian authorities say the agrifood sector has brought the country over \$5.8 billion in foreign currency revenues over the past calendar year ending late March.

An Iranian deputy agriculture minister said on Tuesday that the country had exported a total of 7.104 million metric tons of agrifood worth \$5.812 billion over the 12-month period.

Shahrokh Shajari said main agrifood export items over the period included pistachio, which brought the country around \$965 million, followed by apple, tomato and watermelon whose exports generated nearly \$862 million in hard currency income. The official said exports for fruit farming products reached a total of 1.945 million tons worth \$2.727 million last year while crop farming accounted for 4.416 million tons of export shipments worth \$2.092 billion.

He said Iran's export of livestock and poultry reached 568,000 tons worth \$719 million over the last calendar year while seafood exports accounted for 127,000 tons or \$249 million worth of agrifood shipments sent to other countries. The government plans to purchase more than 10 million tons of local wheat.

Shajari said that Iran had spent \$6.392 billion on imports of 6.941 million tons of food and agricultural products over the year ending late March. He said Iran's main agrifood import items were corn used as animal feed, for which the government and private entities spend over \$2.176 billion, followed by semi-white or whitened rice with \$1.9 billion, soymeal and soybeans on \$0.95 billion and \$0.905 billion respectively.

Iran has seen a surge in non-crude export revenues over the past two years and since the United States imposed its inclusive bans on the country's sale of oil.

The agriculture sector grew by nearly nine percent over the past calendar year, the government estimates show, as rising exports of agrifood has encouraged farmers to expand cultivation and production for various products.

## Five New Investment Contracts to Be Inked in Chabahar Port

TEHRAN (MNA) – Deputy Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) for Ports and Economic Affairs of Sistan and Baluchestan said that seven investment contracts were concluded by the private sector during the last year and five more are underway in the first half of the current Iranian year.

The Deputy of Ports and Maritime Organization of Sistan and Baluchestan Hossein Shahdadi referred to the measures adopted in the field of attracting cargos and goods via Chabahar port and the approval of the Iranian cargo owners as well as allocating a special discount for Chabahar port and said, "we have witnessed a 20 percent increase in attracting investment from the private sector

in 2019 in the form of seven contracts."

"The value of these contracts is 408 billion Tomans and they are in the fields of constructing reservoirs for oil, Gas (LPG), and Bitumen as well as multi-purpose warehouses for storing goods, and creating a site for washing and disinfecting trucks." Shahdadi noted.

He went on to say that five other investment projects are under final consideration and said, "These contracts are expected to be concluded in the first half of the current year and their value is estimated at 2500 billion Rials. They are also related to constructing reservoirs for oil products and multi-purpose warehouses for storing goods."

## Pakistan Resumes Importing Food From Iran

**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN - Pakistani border officials announced the resuming food imports from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Pakistani border officials announced that the crossings of Chagai, Washuk, Panjgur, Turbat, and Gwadar would remain open for three days every week to import Iranian commodities.

Observing special precautions to avoid the coronavirus outbreak, up to 20 trailers can enter Pakistan daily through the border crossings, Dawn News reported.

Petrol and diesel have also been allowed to export from Iran to Pakistan via Chagai border crossing.

On March 13, 2020, Pakistan banned the import of any food items and products from Iran and Afghanistan following the coronavirus outbreak.

## Major Programs of IOTC Explained

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**



TEHRAN – The CEO of Iranian Oil Terminals Company in an interview with NIDC website explained the major programs of the company for the current year and reiterated the company would continue restoring and exporting crude oil.

Mr. Abbas Asadrouz said that as its main task, the company will continue its responsibility for storing and exporting crude oil according to the National Iranian Oil Company's schedule in the current year. He added that the second program of the company will be to follow and complete the underway projects like repairing one-million-barrel reservoir No. 26, reservoir No.6 and the western pier.

Asadrouz added that training the human resources for improving sustainable productivity is another program on the agenda for this year.

He stated that one of the key programs on the agenda is to implement the physical asset management project which has been ordered for the first time by the oil minister in 2014 and it has been upgraded last year. He noted implementing the project is a key model in the company, reiterating that the company is determined to implement it this year.

## Saba Steel Complex Sets Two New Records for Production

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – In the first month of

the Year of Surge in Production and due to efforts of the hardworking staff in the units of Shahid Shahbazi direct reduction and hot rolling plant, Saba Steel Complex took a successful step towards materializing its annual goals by producing 129,460 tons of iron sponge and 127,197 tons of hot coils.

Director of Operations at the Saba Steel Complex Mr. Bahman Khalili announced this achievement and said previous record for production of sponge iron in the complex dated back to last August and it was 128,000 tons while the record for production of hot coil in the complex dated back to last December with production of 120,172 tons.

He noted that such achievements amid the outbreak of Coronavirus and protection of health of the staff are another golden leaf in the book of achievements of Mobarakeh Steel Group.

Khalili noted that one of the factors for such achievements is the unity and consolidation between the management and staff in Saba Steel Complex in all levels. He further said another factors for the success can be mentioned like employing all effective capacities in the complex, increasing the production speed and reducing damages by using valuable experiences of the staff as the main asset of the organization.

He said by completing the remaining developmental activities in the complex, the path will be paved for maximum production.

## South Pars Phase 14 Refinery Online by June 2021

TEHRAN (Shana) – Operator of the South Pars Phase 14 development project said plans were devised to bring the project's onshore refinery to full production tilt by June 2021.

Speaking to Shana, Mohammad Mehdi Tavassolipour said the EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) section of Phase 14 refinery of South Pars had currently progressed more than 83%.

He said the problems caused by the coronavirus outbreak and limited financial resources were the main issues slowing down completion of the South Pars Phase 14 refinery. "Provided that the problems hindering the project are eliminated, the first train of the refinery will come on stream by late March 2021."

Phase 14 refinery will be the last onshore processing facility belonging to the massive joint gas field. Iran shares South Pars with Qatar in Persian Gulf waters.

The official further said that the offshore section of the phase was fully operational with 56 mcm/d of production capacity. The last platform of the project came online on March 19 with 14.2 mcm/d of gas production capacity.

The offshore section of the phase entails 4 platforms including two satellite and two main platforms each with 14.2 mcm/d of gas production capacity.

Phase 14 development is aimed at producing 56.6 million cubic meters per day of rich gas, 75,000 barrels/day of gas condensate and 400 tons/day of sulfur, and 1 million tons/year of liquefied petroleum gas and one million tons/year of ethane to be fed to petrochemical plants.

## Iran Exported Goods Worth \$41.37b Last Year



**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Head of Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) says despite sanctions and restrictions on banking transactions, Iran exported goods worth \$41.37b to 128 countries last year.

Speaking to ILNA, Afrouz Bahrami said that the fund is ready to play his role in the exports by guaranteeing the exporters' loans.

On the exports condition this year, she said last year and despite sanctions and restrictions in international banking transactions, Iran exported goods worth \$41.37b to 128 countries and the fund would do its best to at least keep this amount of exports.

Bahrami added that according to the World Bank forecast on world economies affected by the coronavirus and slump in oil price, Iran will suffer the least economic damage and drop in its exports, reiterating that it does not mean that Iran's economy would not be affected by the virus but its impact will be lower comparing to other states.

She added that in order to reach the set target for exports, this trend in exports should be kept. She noted that access to financial resources should be eased if the country wants to boost exports because exporters need financial resources for developing the exports.

Bahrami added that increasing the capital of the fund can help exporters, adding that the amount of money in the fund is some \$120m and if the fund is to help the exporters in the current sanctions era, it needs more capital to cover the exports.

She added that due to efforts of deputy industry minister, the budget of the fund will increase by 100m euro this year but this figure is also insignificant.

## Iranian Scientists Make Spacecraft Chemical Thrusters

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iranian Space Research Center said that Iranian scientists have designed and produced single propellant and bi-propellant spacecraft chemical thrusters.

Hossein Samimi said space systems such as satellites, spacecraft, and mono craft use special engines to move in space and to control their position which are called thrusters.

Thanks to their high thrust, possibility of repeated turning on and off, suitable control and their successful application background, these propulsion systems are

considered as the most applicable thruster in space missions, he added.

Such systems are necessary to promote space requirements and decreasing time of designing, development and manufacturing space shipments, he noted.

Samimi said that materials used in bipropellant thrusters are made of a special alloy of platinum with the ability to tolerate very high temperatures and is resistant to abrasion and oxidation.

To achieve the technology of single propeller thrusters, a nanocatalyst is needed with the ability to tolerate the physical and thermodynamic properties, he reiterated.



## China's Legislature To Meet in May

BEIJING (AFP) - China's top legislature will hold its annual session next month after postponing the meeting for the first time in decades due to the virus outbreak, official news agency Xinhua said Wednesday.

The Communist Party leadership announced in February that it would put off the annual National People's Congress (NPC) for the first time since the Cultural Revolution as the country battled the coronavirus outbreak, which has since become a global pandemic.

The rescheduled session on May 22 will be seen as a sign of confidence by the leadership that the country has largely brought its outbreak under control.



## Second U.S. Navy Destroyer Hit By COVID Outbreak Returns to Port

WASHINGTON (AFP) - A U.S. destroyer hit by dozens of coronavirus cases sailed into San Diego Tuesday for cleaning, making it the second Navy warship temporarily put out of action by the pandemic.

With less than half the 300-strong crew tested, 47 sailors aboard the USS Kidd were found positive for COVID-19, the Navy said.

Two had been medically evacuated to the U.S. mainland last week and 15 others were subsequently transferred to another vessel with better medical facilities, the USS Makin Island, for monitoring "due to persistent symptoms," it said.

The first cases surfaced last week while the Kidd had been patrolling for drug smugglers in the Caribbean.



## Lebanese Protesters Back on the Streets as Economy Crumbles



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanese protesters confronted army troops for a second day Tuesday as anger over a spiralling economic crisis re-energized a months-old anti-government movement in defiance of a coronavirus lockdown.

Scuffles resumed in second city Tripoli in northern Lebanon as protesters hurled rocks at security forces who fired a volley of tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the demonstrators.

The violence came after a protester died on Tuesday from a bullet wound he had sustained during overnight confrontations between troops and hundreds of demonstrators in Tripoli.

Following the funeral of 26-year-old Fawaz al-Samman in the city's central Al-Nour Square, demonstrators went on the rampage, torching and vandalising banks and military vehicles.

Sixty people were injured, including some 40 soldiers, during the overnight exchange which saw protesters throw stones at troops who fired live rounds into the air to try to disperse the angry crowds under clouds of tear gas.

Tuesday's confrontations were the latest in a string of anti-government protests and social unrest fuelled by unprecedented inflation and a free-falling Lebanese pound that reached record lows against the dollar this week.

Angered by the financial collapse, demonstrators have rallied across Lebanon, blocking roads and attacking banks, re-energising a protest movement launched in October against a political class the activists deem inept and corrupt.

"I came down to raise my voice against hunger, poverty and rising prices," Khaled, 41, told AFP, saying he had lost his job selling motorcycle parts and could no longer support his three children.

Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war, now compounded by a nationwide lockdown to stem the spread of the coronavirus which has killed 24 people and infected almost 700 others.

The Lebanese pound has lost more than half of its value on the black market, where it traded at a record low of around 4,000 pounds to the dollar this week.

Economy Minister Raoul Nehme on Tuesday said that prices have risen by 55 per cent, while the government estimates that 45 per cent of the population now lives below the poverty line.

This has unleashed a public outcry against a government that has yet to deliver a long awaited rescue plan to shore up the country's finances more than three months since it was nominated to address the crisis.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab acknowledged that living conditions have "deteriorated at a record speed" but said on Tuesday he would not tolerate "riots" and that perpetrators would be held accountable.

## Fuel Truck Bomb Kills More Than 40 in Syria

BEIRUT (AFP) - A fuel truck bomb killed more than 40 people including at least six Turkey-backed rebel fighters on Tuesday in a northern Syrian city controlled by Ankara's proxies, a war monitor said.

"At least 22 people including civilians were killed and 27 others wounded when an explosive device inside a fuel truck exploded in a market" in Afrin, said Rami Abdul Rahman, the head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

He said the death toll could climb as some of the wounded were in critical condition.



## UN Warns of New Humanitarian Crisis

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations has said nearly one million displaced people in Yemen risk losing their shelter, warning of a dire funding shortfall and "a very real probability" that the new coronavirus is already circulating undetected in the war-torn country.

Some \$89.4m is urgently needed in coming weeks to keep life-saving aid programs running, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said on Tuesday, adding that the shortfall threatens critical assistance for Yemenis and refugees "most vulnerable" to COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

"Yemen is already considered to be the world's largest humanitarian crisis," UNHCR spokeswoman Shabia Mantoo told a virtual press briefing in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The country is now also facing the overlapping threat of the coronavirus pandemic, and the impact of recent torrential rain and flooding."

Mantoo said more than 100,000 people across Yemen have been affected by recent floods, according to initial reports.

On April 10, Yemen reported its only laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case, a 60-year-old port official who has since recovered and tested negative for the virus, Yemen's coronavirus committee said on Monday.

Yet, inadequate testing and a shattered health system have sparked fears the actual number of coronavirus cases could be higher in a country whose population has been weakened by widespread hunger and disease after more than five years of fighting.

In a separate statement on Tuesday, the office of the UN aid chief in Yemen said, "There is now a very real probability that the virus has been circulating undetected and unmitigated within communities," based on transmission patterns and given the time passed since Yemen reported its first case.

"Since the first confirmed COVID case, we have warned that the virus is now in Yemen and may quickly spread," Lise Grande, the humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, was quoted as saying in the statement.

## Biden Wins Hillary Clinton's Endorsement

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden won the endorsement on Tuesday of Hillary Clinton for the office she fell short of winning in 2016 in her bid to become the first woman elected as U.S. president.

The endorsement, at an online town hall on the effects of the coronavirus crisis on women, came at a critical moment as Biden aims to raise his profile with female voters and other key demographic groups even as the pandemic ravages the U.S. economy.

Clinton - a onetime secretary of state, U.S. senator from New York and first lady - suffered an upset defeat in the 2016 presidential election to Republican Donald Trump, despite winning the popular vote.

She also lost the 2008 Democratic presidential race to Barack Obama, whom Biden served as vice president.

Biden, who has vowed to pick a woman as his running mate this year, introduced Clinton at the town hall as the person who should be now be president.

Clinton told the former vice president: "I am thrilled to be part of your campaign to not only endorse you but to help highlight a lot of the issues that are at stake in this presidential election."

Democratic U.S. presidential candidate Joe Biden reacts as former Secretary of State and 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton

endorses him for president in a video screengrab made during a Biden campaign online town hall about the impact of COVID-19 on women run from Biden's home in Wilmington, Delaware, U.S. April 28, 2020. Biden For President/Handout via Reuters

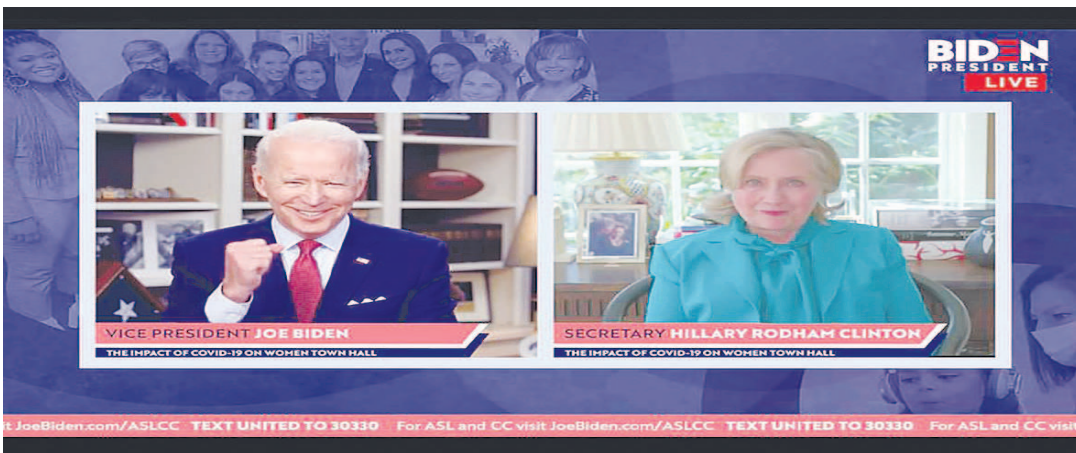
Clinton's defeat four years ago remains the source of anger and consternation among liberals, including some who wrestle with whether they chose the right candidate.

Women favored Clinton over Trump in 2016, exit polls showed, and are expected to play a critical role in swaying the most competitive swing states in the Nov. 3 election between Biden and Trump.

On Tuesday, Biden and Clinton promoted the need to define abortion as essential healthcare during the coronavirus pandemic and to provide subsidies to victims of domestic violence forced to take time off from work.

The former first lady's signature issue during the presidency of her husband, Bill Clinton, was healthcare reform, and her early career included advocacy on family and children's issues. Speaking on the webcast, she said women were disproportionately hurt by some of the consequences of the pandemic.

Biden agreed, adding that abortion was being used as "a political wedge" during the crisis. Some Republican-led states have sought to curb the procedure as part of their emergency response.



## Americans Losing Faith in What Trump Says About Coronavirus

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Americans appear to be losing faith in what President Donald Trump says about the coronavirus pandemic, with almost everyone rejecting Trump's remark that COVID-19 may be treated by injecting infected people with bleach or other disinfectants, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Tuesday.

The April 27-28 public opinion poll found that fewer than half of all adults in the U.S. - 47% - said they were "very" or "somewhat" likely to follow recommendations Trump makes about the virus. That is 15 percentage points lower than the number who said they would follow Trump's advice in a survey that ran at the end of March. And 98% of Americans said they would not try to inject themselves with bleach or other disinfectants if they got the coronavirus, including 98% of Democrats and 98% of Republicans. That is a near-unanimous rejection of an idea that Trump floated at a time of widespread anxiety about the virus.

A majority of Americans said they were concerned about how the coronavirus is spreading, according to the poll, as the number of COVID-19 cases surpassed 1 million people in the United States this week, killing more than 56,000.

Trump publicly mused about the benefits of "cleaning" COVID-19 patients on the insides with disinfectants or ultraviolet light during a news conference last week, directing health officials in the room to look into it.

Medical experts immediately condemned the president's suggestion, and the makers of disinfectant products warned the public against ingesting them. Trump later tried to portray his remarks as sarcasm, but given his popularity with some Americans, health officials expressed concern his remarks would persuade some people to poison themselves.

Overall, Trump's overall popularity has not changed much over the past week. Forty-three percent of Americans said they approve of his overall job performance, and the same number also approve of his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among registered voters, 44% said they would vote for Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, while 40% said they would back Trump if the election were held today. The Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted online, in English, throughout the United States. It gathered responses from 1,001 adults, including 416 Democrats and 419 Republicans.







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## EU Sees New Brexit Talks at an Impasse

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Negotiations between the European Union (EU) and ex-member Britain over new trade arrangements from next year are at an impasse due to disagreements and the coronavirus crisis, according to diplomats and officials in the bloc's hub Brussels.

Halted when the epidemic started, the EU's tortuous Brexit talks with Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government were renewed a week ago but have quickly hit snags, the sources said. "We are at an impasse," said one diplomat following the negotiations aimed at agreeing new trading terms between Britain and the 27 member states of the bloc from 2021 when London's current, status-quo transition period after Brexit ends.



## OPEC Oil Supply Surges In April Ahead of New Cut

LONDON (Reuters) - OPEC oil supply in April is at its highest since December 2018, a company that tracks oil shipments said on Tuesday, as producers pump at will before a new supply-limiting pact takes effect in May.

The month-on-month increase is more than 2 million barrels per day (bpd), Daniel Gerber, chief executive of Geneva-based Petro-Logistics, said. He did not give a March figure, but OPEC said in a report it pumped 28.61 million bpd last month.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is pumping more in April because an earlier supply pact it had with Russia and other outside countries collapsed in March, prompting OPEC to remove limits on its output.

April's increase is being driven by "record supply from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as a multi-year high from Kuwait despite the country reining in production in advance of the May 1 curtailment," Petro-Logistics said.

Oil has slumped this year following a slide in demand caused by lockdowns to contain the coronavirus outbreak and the ending of the earlier OPEC-led pact. Brent crude LCOc1 hit a 21-year low of \$15.98 a barrel on April 22.

To shore up the market, OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, agreed earlier this month to a new supply pact from May 1. Kuwait has said it is already cutting production ahead of the new agreement.

OPEC+ plans to reduce output by a record 9.7 million bpd for May and June. Other nations, including the United States, have also said they will be pumping less.

Petrologistics is among the companies that measures OPEC supply, which excludes oil produced and placed in storage, by tracking tanker shipments. OPEC does not issue timely estimates of its own production.

## Common Set of Rules Needed To Help Restart Air Travel



LONDON (Reuters) - A common set of rules is needed to help facilitate the restart of global air travel, the head of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said, adding that new measures must still allow airline operations to be economically viable.

With no end in sight for the travel bans which have brought flying to a near-halt, airlines across the world are facing deep uncertainty and heavy future losses, and no visibility on how and when operations can restart.

IATA's Director General Alexandre de Juniac said that he was working with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the United Nations aviation agency, to develop new safety rules which will enable travel once coronavirus restrictions ease.

He said that a common set of measures needed to be adopted by all. "A single system, that is absolutely key for the restart of our industry so it is something we are working on," he told an online press conference.

He said that the sooner the new measures were decided upon, the better, as they were key to allowing the recovery to start.

In creating a new set of rules, however, authorities must be careful not to damage the economics of the industry, he warned.

"What we are building and discussing with the governments or with ICAO and the WHO these days is to restart this industry in a way that is economically manageable," he said.

He said that if airlines and countries adopted a range of different rules then that would add complexity and cost and ultimately limit aviation's recovery. There are reports that some countries will require airlines to leave middle seats free, force passengers to fly with masks, or make them quarantine for two weeks after travelling.

IATA earlier said that air cargo measured in tonne-kilometres fell by 15% in March compared to the same month a year earlier as the coronavirus pandemic triggered travel restrictions. It could fall by between 14% and 31% in 2020 as a recession takes hold, the body warned.

## Euro Banknotes Safe to Touch Despite Coronavirus

BERLIN (Dispatches) - There is no significant risk of catching the coronavirus from euro banknotes, the European Central Bank said Tuesday, citing lab tests that showed the germs survived far longer on other surfaces.

Cash is still widely used in the 19-nation eurozone but many shops and businesses have asked customers to switch to cards or contactless payments to avoid handling bills possibly touched by an infected person.

In a blog post, ECB executive board member Fabio Panetta said tests by European labs showed that the survival rate of coronaviruses is "10 to 100 higher" on a stainless steel surface, like a door handle, than on euro banknotes in the first few hours after contamination. "Other analyses indicate that it is much more difficult for a virus to be transferred from porous surfaces such as cotton banknotes than from smooth surfaces like plastic," Panetta said.

Euro notes are printed on pure cotton-fibre paper, which helps make them resistant to wear and tear.

"Overall, banknotes do not represent a particularly significant risk of infection compared with other kinds of surface that people come into contact with in daily life," Panetta wrote.

In China, the central bank announced in February that it was using ultraviolet rays to disinfect banknotes in a bid to curb the outbreak. Panetta's blog did not mention whether any tests had been done into the contamination risks when using euro coins.

More than 340 million people across the continent use the euro currency.

Cash remains the dominant mode of payment for eurozone consumers, the ECB said, accounting for three quarters of transactions. It is especially popular in large countries like Germany, Italy and Spain. Demand for cash has been "less predictable" during the coronavirus crisis, Panetta said, with some people hoarding money at home while others are spending less because of the lockdowns.

## Lufthansa May Seek Creditor Protection Alongside Berlin Rescue Talks

BERLIN (Reuters) - Lufthansa might seek some form of protection from creditors while talking to the Berlin government about a 9 billion euro (\$9.76 billion) rescue package, a company source said on Tuesday after government and airline sources said talks on a deal were continuing.

The company source said that the type of creditor protection scheme under consideration would require the company to be still solvent and where management could stay on to oversee a restructuring.

Lufthansa's shares had risen as much as 12.1% earlier on Tuesday, which traders attributed to prospects of a rescue deal being close. They were 3.3% higher.

The shares were also supported by the reported size of the rescue package, which met with some earlier expectations, traders said.

Lufthansa and the economy ministry had earlier declined to comment after news outlet Business Insider had cited company sources as saying that

Berlin would help the airline in return for a blocking minority and one or two supervisory board mandates.

A government source said talks would continue but gave no timing.

Sources close to the talks said there would potentially be a conversation on Tuesday between Chancellor Angela Merkel and Lufthansa Chief Executive Carsten Spohr, but they added this was not with view to concluding a deal.

Lufthansa's shares were up as much as 12.1%, which traders attributed to prospects of a nearing deal amid time pressure to stem ongoing losses. The shares were also supported by reported the size of the rescue deal, which met with some earlier expectations, they said.

The question of state influence in the management of the company is a tricky one for Germany's coalition government.

Merkel's conservatives (CDU/CSU) want to leave Lufthansa's management relatively free of intervention, while the Social Democrats (SPD) want the state to share ownership in order to influence decision-making to protect employees.

Unions representing pilots, crews and ground staff demand job guarantees if tax payer money flows. Spohr was cited in weekly newspaper Die Zeit as saying the company needed to remain in charge of its decision-making.

If Berlin had too much say, then governments of Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and federal German states could want to follow suit. Lufthansa has subsidiaries in Austria, Switzerland and Belgium and its two German hubs Frankfurt and Munich are located in the state of Hesse and Bavaria.

## Singapore's Projected Economic Growth Set to Dip Below the Forecast Range

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Singapore will enter into a recession in 2020, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) warned in advance on Tuesday about the inevitable.



"The Singapore economy will enter into a recession this year," MAS grimly said in its 132-page report.

This is due to the low dealt by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Job losses and lower wages will be par for the course, with a rise in employment losses.

The report said: "Notwithstanding the large financial buffer provided by the government, as well as labour market adjustments on the intensive front, the large, abrupt shock to the Singapore economy is still likely to cause retrenchments and unemployment to rise."

Moreover, the length and intensity of the downturn is subjected to "significant uncertainty".

Singapore's projected economic growth is set to dip below the forecast range of -4 to -1 per cent.

It will be the worst-ever contraction on record, the central bank said in its latest half-yearly macroeconomic review.

Singapore's recovery is dependent on how the pandemic evolves and the efficacy of policy responses around the world, MAS also said. The Singapore economy already contracted 2.2 per cent year-on-year in the first three months.

It was the first negative quarter since the global financial crisis in 2009.

Singapore's worst recession to date occurred during the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998, when the economy experienced a -2.2 per cent growth. The dotcom bust in 2001 saw the economy shrink 1.1 per cent.

The global financial crisis in 2009 saw full-year economic growth at 0.1 per cent.

MAS said the Singapore economy is likely to "contract more sharply" in the second quarter of 2020.

Singapore's prospects from the third quarter and beyond are hinged on external circumstances.

These are determined by the pace at which other countries recover from their own health and economic challenges, which are based on the transmission and incidence of Covid-19.

A strong rebound might be off the cards.

MAS said: "Given the likely protracted nature of this pandemic, containment measures can only be wound down in a gradual manner. In fact, intermittent rounds of re-containment measures may be required, thus hampering a decisive rebound in economic activity." A materialisation of three risks in "any combination" would drag Singapore's economic growth below its current projected range.

The first is that any deployment of stricter containment measures around the world would further constrain economic activities. The second is weak demand affecting the timing of recovery brought about by a pandemic that takes longer to be controlled and the resumption of global economic activity being delayed.

The third is the difficulty in achieving a complete containment given the "more contagious but less detectable nature" of Covid-19, compared to the SARS outbreak in 2003. There are some bright sparks though.

## Moody's Slashes India Growth Forecast to 0.2% for 2020



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday slashed India growth forecast for calendar year 2020 to 0.2 per cent, from 2.5 per cent projected in March.

For 2021, Moody's expects India's growth to rebound to 6.2 per cent.

In its report titled - Global Macro Outlook 2020-21 (April 2020 update), Moody's has lowered G-20 advanced economies as a group to contract by 5.8 per cent in 2020.

Moody's said the economic costs of coronavirus crisis amid the near shutdown of the global economy are accumulating rapidly.

Also Read: India signs \$1.5 billion loan agreement with ADB for immediate response against Covid-19

It expects G-20 advanced economies as a group to contract by 5.8 per cent in 2020. Even with a gradual recovery, 2021 real GDP in most advanced economies is expected to be below pre-coronavirus levels.

China's economy is forecast to grow by 1 per cent in 2020.

"India extended a nationwide lockdown to 40 days from 21 days, but relaxed restrictions in rural areas to facilitate agricultural harvesting in the second half of April. The country has determined that many of these areas are free of the virus. India also plans a phased opening of different regions while continuing to carry out identification and contract tracing," Moody's said.



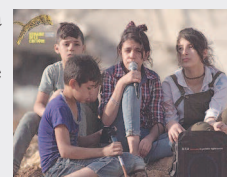
## Iranian Cinematic Work Awarded at German Festival

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian documentary 'Copper Notes of a Dream' directed by Reza Farahmand received an award at Munich International Documentary Film in Germany.

Produced by Morteza Shabani, the film narrates the story of some boys who collect the copper wires from homes demolished during war and sell them to make a living.

The Munich International Documentary Film Festival has been held since 1985.

The latest edition of the event was held in Germany on May 6-17, 2020.



## Oil Storage Pressures Prices But Output Pact Will Help

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Tuesday oil markets would start balancing out once an output deal takes effect in May but no significant price rise is likely in the near future due to high levels of oil in storage globally.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other large oil producers, including Russia, have agreed to cut output by almost 10 million barrels per day (bpd), or 10% of global oil production, in May-June.

Additional cuts are expected from countries such as the United States, Canada, Norway and Brazil to combat the fallout from the global spread of the novel coronavirus that has hit economic activity worldwide.

"However, you shouldn't wait for a significant rise in the price of a barrel in the nearest future due to high inventories," Novak wrote in a column in the ministry's in-house magazine published on Tuesday.

The main concern for the oil market is even though the size of the output cuts are historically unprecedented demand has fallen even more and storage for all the unused oil is shrinking quickly.

Fuel demand is down 30% globally, and storage is becoming precious, with roughly 85% of worldwide onshore storage full as of last week, data from intelligence firm Kpler showed.

Separately, Alexander Gladkov, the head of production and transportation department at the energy ministry, told an online conference on Tuesday the oil price was expected to average \$30 per barrel this year.

The oil markets have fallen for eight of the past nine weeks.

Novak also said in his column that he is counting on an economic recovery in China, a leading energy consumer, to help balance out the oil market.

"We hope to see positive changes in the economies of other countries," Novak said.

Under the global production cut deal, Russia is expected to cut its oil output by around 20% in May-June.

Russian oil producer Tatneft has already cut its output by around a fifth this month, according to sources and data seen by Reuters.

Rustam Khalimov, Tatneft's first deputy general director for oil and gas exploration, said during the conference on Tuesday the company will stop production at its less efficient oil wells to cut output, while it plans to divert investments from production to oil refining.



An official at Gazprom Neft, Russia's fastest-growing oil producer, told the same event that the development of hard-to-recover oil projects would slow down due to the global output deal.

Russia started pipeline gas deliveries to China in December as part of efforts to diversify away from commodity exports to Europe, its main consumer of oil and gas.

The market share of Gazprom in Europe exceeded 35%. Novak said the Kremlin-controlled company is able to keep its share at this level.

Russia also ramped up its liquefied natural gas production by more than 50% last year to 40.5 billion cubic metres thanks to the launch of the Yamal LNG plant controlled by Novatek.

Novak said LNG production increased by more than 17% in January-February from a year earlier.

The minister said Russian coal production and exports are likely to fall this year without providing any numbers.

## March Global Sales Slump Spells Trouble Ahead For Japan's Carmakers



TOKYO (Reuters) - Global vehicle sales by Japanese automakers dropped by 34% in March when the coronavirus outbreak spread worldwide, and are set to fall further in the months ahead as the crisis continues.

Demand for cars has plummeted as people have been ordered to stay indoors in many countries to control the spread of the coronavirus, leaving motorways deserted and deep uncertainty about the longer-term impact on the global economy.

Analysts expect that this will put consumers off buying new cars, cutting 2020 global vehicle sales by around a third, compared with an 11% fall after the global financial crisis.

In a sign of the damage so far, Toyota Motor Corp, Nissan Motor Co, Honda Motor Co and Japan's four other major carmakers reported sales of around 1.82 million cars last month, down from around 2.77 million a year earlier.

Their combined global sales for the financial year ended March fell 7.3% to 26.5 million vehicles, their lowest in four years, calculations by Reuters based sales figures announced on Tuesday by individual automaker showed.

Toyota, Japan's biggest automaker, sold 779,151 vehicles in March, down 22.6% from a year ago. For the year ended March, it sold 10,456,593 units, down 1.4%.

Meanwhile Nissan sold 315,194 vehicles last month, a 43% drop from a year ago. In the year to March, its vehicle sales hit a nine-year low of around 4.8 million units as the pandemic piled pressure on Japan's No. 2 automaker, which had already been struggling with falling sales and profitability.

Most automakers are preparing for a big financial hit from the coronavirus, as lockdowns in the United States and Europe have kept buyers out of dealerships.

But Nissan's sales and profits had been falling even before the outbreak, forcing it to roll back on an aggressive expansion plan pursued by ousted leader Carlos Ghosn.

Chris Richter, senior research analyst at brokerage CLSA, expects that the size of last month's fall in global vehicle sales will continue in the next year, and anticipates a 35% drop in sales for the current financial year ending March.

Plummeting sales in March suggest much weaker-than-expected annual profits at Japanese automakers, which will announce financial results next month. And it is likely to translate into annual operating losses at most Japanese automakers in 2020.

## Free Content During Pandemic Threatens Cultural Industries

GENEVA (AFP) - Books, films, concerts: free content has been spreading almost as fast as the coronavirus, making life easier for those sheltering from the pandemic, but also threatening already fragile cultural industries, the UN warned Tuesday.

As countries around the world have imposed strict physical distancing measures to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus -- cancelling events, banning public gatherings, and asking billions of people to stay home -- access to free cultural content online has become omnipresent.

While some content creators have themselves opted to make their artistic products available, Francis Gurry, the head of the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization, voiced concern that numerous requests are coming in for IP "exceptions... for the cultural sector to disregard copyright".

WIPO's IP rules do permit exceptions to cultural copyright to facilitate access to books, publications and other creative content in certain specific circumstance and under certain conditions.

But in an interview with AFP, Gurry questioned whether it was justified to use the ongoing pandemic, which has killed more than 210,000 people worldwide, as an excuse to make entire museum exhibits, operas, ballets, concerts and publications available to the public at no cost.

"We should be much more measured," he said, pointing out that such moves were dramatically slashing the income of many professionals in an already fragile sector.

"To cast off a copyright, you have to prove that there is a special need," he said.

"I do not really see evidence of a problem accessing content" in the current situation, he said, pointing out that it was still possible to purchase cultural goods online, like books and music.

At the same time, he said, content creators have been hard-hit by the crisis.

Many in the field had completely lost their revenue streams, Gurry warned, pointing for instance to film production, which has all but ground to a halt, where hundreds of people are usually involved in making a single movie.

"It is hard to quantify the consequences as this is happening, but the sector is in deep distress," he said.

His warning came as WIPO on Tuesday celebrated the entry into force of an international treaty giving new rights to film and television actors.

The Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances was adopted in 2012, but is only coming into force now that the minimum required number of 30 countries have ratified it.

The treaty gives performers rights over the reproduction, distribution and rental of their audiovisual performances, which could mean they are able to earn more money.

It updates previous multilateral provisions agreed in 1961 for the digital era and extends to actors some of the same protections enjoyed by musicians, giving them more power to decide how their performances are used.

"In a number of countries, there are no protections for actors," Gurry said, adding that the new treaty would change that.

Any country that is party to the text "will be obliged to put in place rights for audiovisual performers, like television and film actors," he added.

### Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 1

Pakistan sealed the border on Feb. 24 after Tehran confirmed coronavirus-related deaths.

The South Asian nation began installing barricades in May last year, despite resistance from Tehran.

At Taftan, however, Pakistanis who were in Iran for pilgrimage continued to cross into Balochistan as Iranian authorities stamped them out.

Other crossing points, namely Gabd, Mand, Katagar and Chedgi, remained closed until the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) decided to open them for transport of dates and other essential commodities.

According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Interior on April 21, the crossing points will remain open three days a week to facilitate trade. Three entry points — Gabd, Mand and Taftan — were reopened on April 21 for up to 50 trucks and 110 pickup vehicles a day.

From Monday, entry of 40 trucks and up to 100 pickup vehicles a day — also three times a week — is allowed at Katagar and Chedgi.

According to the ministry's notification, the trucks can enter between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. The vehicles and cargo have to be disinfected after customs clearance. Protective measures are in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

### Leader...

FROM PAGE 1

Justice Shares had been valued at \$36 billion in 2014. However, current estimates suggest the 25 listed companies and another 14 that are planning an initial public offering (IPO) would bring some \$15 billion to the stock market once the Justice Shares are vested.

In his decree to the government, Ayatollah Khemenei regretted the fact that vesting of Justice Shares had taken so many years as the law stipulates a minimum of two years as the holding period for the shares.

The leader also set a series of conditions for allowing the Justice Shares to become tradable, saying shareholders should be able to choose which government-run firm they want to own a stake in.

He said the government departments are required to prepare conditions for listing of state-run companies as soon as possible.

Experts believe trade at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) would further boom once Justice Shares become tradable in Iran Fara Bourse, a TSE subsidiary for trade of securities and other instruments.

The TSE has already broken record highs this year with growing number of new investors joining in. The overall value of the market reached over \$198 billion on Tuesday after main index TEDPIX rose 3.03 percent to top 845,353 points.

### Iranians Urged...

FROM PAGE 1

He underlined activities should go on, but at the same time people should abide by health protocols.

"This is the solution: We should abide by all health protocols, and don't forget that it is necessary to work, produce and conduct activities while taking the required precautions," he added.

President Rouhani said the stay-at-home recommendation remains in force, urging citizens to leave home only when it is really necessary.

"Once, we would keep telling people to stay at home; now, we are telling people to stay home, too, if they have nothing essential to do outside. But we said they may leave home from a certain date onward to do necessary work and run essential errands while taking precautions," said the president.

"We have urged people to stay out of home for as short a period of time as possible before returning home. That means we have moved from social distancing to smart social distancing," he noted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, President Rouhani underlined that specifying certain spots in the country does not mean fellow countrymen are no required to observe health directives there anymore.

"Even today that we have divided the country into white, yellow and red areas, it does not mean, at all, that health protocols needn't be observed in white areas. It's quite the opposite and people in white areas must comply more fully with health protocols, so that the great achievement obtained in white areas can be well protected," he noted.

### 80 More Iranians Die...

FROM PAGE 1

He noted that the rate of infections of men is globally more than women as more men are exposed to the disease for their more presence at businesses.

The official said that further details on the rate of infections and fatalities of men and women will be released in the future.

He noted that improvements in the number of COVID-19 cases of infection these days is because of practicing social distancing protocols and the natural falling trend of the epidemic as well.

The Government's decision to close schools and universities and the subsequent restrictions and social distancing protocols were all effective and contributed to slowing down the epidemic, the official said.

### Commander Warns U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

According to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), American vessels resorted to "unprofessional and perilous" behavior in the waters during the incident, "causing trouble" for one of the elite force's logistics ships that was conducting a routine patrol.

A U.S. Navy statement has, however, alleged that 11 IRGC boats had closed in on six US naval vessels in the Persian Gulf "in dangerous and harassing approaches."

Shekarchi said Trump's remarks served "psychological warfare" purposes aimed at tarnishing the public opinion, charming voters to help him get re-elected, and also helping him avoid criticism over his mishandling of domestic affairs. The Americans, the spokesman added, are waging a smear campaign to demonize the Islamic Republic, "while they [themselves] are in contravention of international law [in the waterway] and causing problems [here]."

Still referring to the maritime incident, Shekarchi said the Islamic Republic wondered what business the United States and its forces had in the region.

He further asked, "What do they (Americans) want from the regional countries in the Persian Gulf waters," while the countries of the region are perfectly capable of providing its security?

"Not only do they not have any answer for this question, but they also cause harassment and trample on international law," the military official said.

The IRGC says Iranian naval forces have been directed to target American "terrorist" vessels or warships should they harass Iranian civil or military vessels off the Persian Gulf. He named some of the violations committed by the US forces in the region as troubling fishermen, ignoring environmental issues, and accosting the regional countries' military centers.



## Patriots Fullback Develin Retires

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - New England Patriots fullback James Develin announced his retirement from the NFL on Monday, citing complications from a neck injury which cut short his season last year.

The powerful 31-year-old was an unsung part of the Patriots offense in recent seasons, with his ability to make yardage contributing to three Super Bowl victories in the 2014, 2016 and 2018 seasons.

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## Former Liverpool Striker Robinson Dies Aged 61

LONDON (Reuters) - Former Liverpool striker Michael Robinson has died at the age of 61, the Premier League club said on Tuesday.

Ireland international Robinson, who won the league, League Cup and European Cup with Liverpool in the 1983-84 season, also played for Brighton & Hove Albion and Queens Park Rangers before finishing his career with Spain's Osasuna.

Robinson stayed in Spain after his playing career and became a respected television commentator, pundit and presenter.

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SPORTS

THURSDAY APRIL 30, 2020

# Next Year's Olympics Will Be Cancelled If Pandemic Not Over

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't brought under control by next year, the organizing committee's president warned, ruling out further delays.

The comments, in an interview with a Japanese sports daily published Tuesday, come as medical experts doubted whether the pandemic can be sufficiently contained by next year to hold an event drawing participants and spectators from around the world.

The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games, which are now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021. But Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori was categorical when asked by the Nikkan Sports daily whether the Games could be delayed until 2022 if the pandemic remains a threat next year, replying: "No."

"In that case, it's cancelled," Mori said.

Mori noted the Games had been cancelled previously only during wartime, and compared the battle against coronavirus to "fighting an invisible enemy".

If the virus is successfully contained, "we'll hold the Olympics in peace next summer", he added. "Mankind is betting on it."

Masa Takaya, a Tokyo 2020 spokesman, declined to comment on a possible cancellation of the Games and told reporters that Mori's remarks were based on "the chairman's own thoughts".

But the comments will add to growing questions about the postponement, decided last month after heavy pressure on the organizers and the International Olympic Committee from athletes and sports federations.

On Tuesday, the head of Japan Medical Association warned it would be "exceedingly difficult" to hold the Games next year if a vaccine has not been found. "I would not say that they should not be held, but it would be exceedingly difficult," Yoshitake Yokokura told reporters.

And last week a Japanese medical expert who has criticized the country's response to the coronavirus warned that he was "very pessimistic" that the postponed Olympics can be held in 2021.

"To be honest with you I don't think the Olympics is likely to be held next year," said Kentaro Iwata, a professor of infectious diseases at Kobe University.

"Japan might be able to control this disease by next summer, I wish we could, but I don't think that would happen everywhere on Earth, so in this regard I'm very pessimistic about holding the Olympic Games next summer," he said.

But Tokyo 2020 spokesman Takaya countered that even medical experts said it was too early to make a judgment on such a possibility.



Japanese officials and the IOC have said the Games will be a chance to celebrate victory over the virus, with some suggestions that the pandemic fight could even be incorporated into the opening ceremony. Postponing the Games is an enormous logistical and financial challenge, with the final pricetag for the delay still unclear.

In the interview, Mori said organizers were considering holding joint opening and closing ceremonies for the Olympics and the Paralympics in an effort to cut costs.

Under the plan, the Paralympics would join the Olympic opening ceremony on July 23, and the Olympic closing ceremony would be integrated into the Paralympics closing event in September.

But Mori admitted that Tokyo organizers had not yet obtained the consent of the IOC and their Paralympic counterparts.

"It's going to be a considerable cut in costs and a big message of victory against the global crisis, but it's not easy," Mori said.

Organizers have said the question of who will shoulder the additional costs is yet to be resolved, though Mori said the IOC should pay a share.

"We should make a decision after both sides examine and fully understand them," he added.

## Maradona Asks For Hand of God To End Pandemic

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - A decision to restructure Argentine football that will save Diego Maradona's club from relegation was dubbed another Hand of God moment on Tuesday, but the former striker said the divine intervention he wished for was to beat the coronavirus pandemic.

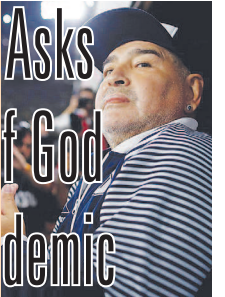
The Argentine Football Association voted to suspend relegation for two seasons on Tuesday, saving the Maradona-coached Gimnasia club, who are currently bottom of the league, from going down.

"This happened to us today and many people are calling it a new Hand of God," said Maradona, who dubbed his notorious hand-assisted goal against England in the 1986 World Cup as the Hand of God.

"But today I am asking for that hand to do away with the pandemic so people can get back to living their lives, with health and happiness," he added.

Maradona said he disagreed with the decision to suspend relegation for two years but called the favourable ruling "a prize."

Argentina has so far recorded 4,127 cases of COVID-19, with 214 fatalities.



## Players Should Not Be Rushed Back to Action

ATHENS (Reuters) - Professional athletes across the world should not be rushed back to action once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, and they must have a strong say in determining the conditions for their return, the World Players Association said on Tuesday.

Sports competitions around the world have come to a screeching halt this year as the virus spreads across the globe, starving clubs, leagues and federations of revenues and putting tens of thousands of professional athletes on hold.

"At the moment there is a lot of pressure from the leagues on all continents to resume," WPA Executive Director Brendan Schwab told Reuters in an interview.

"The players can only agree to that (return) if they know that their interests will be protected. The best approach we are seeing is when the leagues... set up joint groups where players have an equal say... where they are not being rushed."

Several football leagues in Europe, including Germany's Bundesliga, have drawn up their plans to be ready to resume play without spectators if it means finishing the season and remaining contractually in order with broadcasters and sponsors.

The WPA, an association representing some 85,000 athletes around the world through more than 100 player associations in over 60 countries, held a conference call earlier on Tuesday with its affiliated associations to update on the situation.

It is unclear what kind of influence the players or the WPA as a whole can yield with cash-strapped clubs and federations desperate for a return to action both on a national and international level.

However, the athletes' growing influence in global decision-making in sport was felt last month when their vocal opposition to competing in the Olympic Games in Tokyo this year contributed to a postponement of the Games to 2021.

The pandemic has infected almost 3 million people worldwide and killed more than 200,000, raising expectations of a prolonged battle to contain it.

## Murray Warns Against Quick Return After Virus

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray insists tennis must take it slowly as the sport's bosses consider when to return after the coronavirus.

The men's ATP and women's WTA tours are suspended until at least July 13 due to the pandemic, while this year's Wimbledon has been cancelled.

Premier League football clubs are hoping to finish their postponed season in the summer. But former world number one Murray believes tennis will be one of the last sports to resume due to the travel required.

"I'm sure all tennis players want to get back to competing and playing as soon as possible. But right now that is not the most important thing, Murray said on Tuesday.

"First of all, we want to get our normal lives back, just being able to go out, see friends, go to restaurants and have your normal freedoms.

"And then hopefully over time, things will start to allow for travelling and sport will be able to go back to normal as well. But I don't see that happening very soon."

Murray believes containing the virus is essential before there is any thought of tennis getting back in full swing. At present the U.S. Open and French Open are both set for August and September, but Murray said: "The first thing is to try and find a way to stop the virus spreading and once we have done that we will be able to do more normal things that everyone does rather than thinking about competing at sport."



## Henry Playing Waiting Game With MLS in Limbo

PARIS (Dispatches) - Thierry Henry is adjusting to life on pause with the Montreal Impact as the Major League Soccer side awaits the end of the coronavirus shutdown.

Former France, Arsenal and Barcelona star Henry took over as manager of Montreal ahead of the 2020 season, but saw his reign effectively put on hold after just two games when COVID-19 brought sport in North America to a standstill last month.



WHERE CHAMPIONS ARE CROWNED

brought sport in North America to a standstill last month.

Speaking on a video conference call on Tuesday, Henry said he is staying positive as he waits to see how the virus plays out.

Major League Soccer chiefs have said the league won't resume until June 8 at the earliest, as they work through different scenarios which could allow the 2020 season to be completed.

"Nobody knows who is going to move when, what's going to happen. We are waiting to see if we are going to play football again," Henry said Tuesday.

"All we can do on our side is to be focused and prepare to whatever is going to come our way. They are going to take the decision and we are going to have execute whatever they want us to execute.

"But on my side, all I can do is try to keep my team, the staff, prepared to whatever is going to come our way.

Henry admitted however that his work with staff had run into difficulties caused by the absence of fresh video footage.

## French Soccer Won't Resume Before September

PARIS (Reuters) - French professional soccer and other league sports will not be allowed to return before September, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said on Tuesday, in comments that appeared to call an end to their 2019-20 seasons.

The French football league is expected to decide in May on exactly how to end the Ligue 1 season, which currently has Paris St Germain leading Olympique Marseille by 12 points. The 2020-2021 season had been due to begin in August.

"The 2019-2020 season of professional sports, especially that of football, will not be able to resume," Philippe told parliament when announcing plans to end the national lockdown that has been in place since March 17.

"To give event organisers visibility, I want to make it clear that major sporting and cultural events, in particular festivals, major trade fairs, all events that bring together more than 5,000 participants and are therefore the subject of a declaration at the police headquarters and must be organised well in advance, cannot be held before September," Philippe said.

The football league said in a statement it would initially convene on April 30 to discuss the sporting and economic consequences of the decision before a second meeting that should formally end the 2019-2020 season.

