

Head of Iran's Health Ministry's Public Relations Office Kianoush Jahanpour Said Yesterday That 1,006 New COVID-19 Affected Cases Have Been Detected and 63 Others Have Lost Their Lives

IRAN NEWS

The European Union Foreign Policy Chief Says the U.S. Is No Longer a Party to the 2015 Nuclear Agreement Between Iran and Major World Powers

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Iran to Cut Dependence On Russia for Maintenance of Bushehr Plant

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran says it will probably cut its dependence on Russian engineers and become self-sufficient in the maintenance of its Bushehr nuclear power plant by 2022.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said right now the majority of maintenance work in Bushehr nuclear power plant is being carried out by Iranian experts.

"We may cut our dependence on Russian experts in this field within two years," Kamalvandi said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the spokesman declared two cargos of nuclear fuel have been imported to Bushehr in cooperation with the Russian state atomic energy corporation Rosatom in two flights during the past week.

"These cargos included 38 tons of 4.5-percent enriched fuel, which produce as much energy as 12 million barrels of oil," he added.

Kamalvandi said the fuel will be enough to produce 1,000 megawatts of electricity in the next year.

Iran has started building a second reactor at the Bushehr nuclear power plant as part of the biggest Russian-Iranian joint project.

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Iran Will Target U.S. Bases If It Faces Security Threat

TEHRAN (PRESSTV) - A senior Iranian official has warned that the country will launch missile strikes on American bases in the region if its national security is endangered, downplaying a recent U.S. threat of naval action as "mere propaganda."

Mohsen Rezaei, the secretary of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council, told the Doha-based Aljazeera broadcaster on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic would firmly respond to any threat against its security.

"We will never initiate a war with the United States, but the end of any war that Washington may start will be decided by Iran," said Rezaei, a former chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The remarks came one week after US President Donald Trump tweeted that he had directed the US Navy to "shoot down and destroy" Iranian gunboats that "harass" American ships, following a confrontation between US warships and Iranian military boats in the Persian Gulf.

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Iran Has Key Role in Keeping Security of Persian Gulf



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN Supreme Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution says Iran has a key role in keeping the security of the Persian Gulf, and the presence of extra-regional forces threatens any initiative that could benefit the people of the region.

In a series of tweets published on the Twitter page of Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader also said that the Persian Gulf belongs to the nations living there, and those are the ones responsible for ensuring its security.

"Iran with its long coastlines has a key role in keeping the security of this region. By God's grace we will do our part. This is our historical, geographical and regional duty," said one of the tweets, which were posted on the occasion of the National Persian Gulf Day.

The Persian Gulf belongs to the nations living there. Its security is the duty of these nations, & Iran with its long coastlines has a key role in keeping the security of this region. By God's grace we will do our part. This is our historical, geographical & regional duty. pic.twitter.com/friXXdYq0c

The Leader also said that a "wise and rational collective policy" in favor of the people of the region cannot be achieved while foreign forces are present in the Persian Gulf.

The #PersianGulf region can be managed by a wise and rational collective policy that benefits all Persian Gulf countries. The factor that threatens such a proper, wise move is the presence of foreign forces in the region.

The #PersianGulf is our home & the place for the presence of the great #IranianNation. The shores of the Persian Gulf & much of the Gulf of Oman, belong to this nation, & it should be present there. It should demonstrate its power. We're a powerful nation with a great history.

The remarks came against the backdrop of Washington's incessant acts of military adventurism in the Persian Gulf region.

The 10th day of Ordibehesht (April 29) – the second month on the Iranian calendar, which fell on April 29 this year – has been designated as the Persian Gulf National Day to commemorate not only the historical victory of the Iranian forces against the trespassers in the southern waters but also to remind all that the true name of the Persian Gulf will remain so forever.

Number of Reservoir Dams In Iran to Top 156 by August 2021

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran's energy minister says the country plans to build 12 more large dams in the next 15 months.

The number of large dams in Iran would reach a total of 156 by August 2021, says the country's energy minister as the government pushes ahead with plans to build 12 more reservoirs across the country.

Reza Ardakanian said on Thursday that a total of 40 new reservoir dams had been opened in Iran since August 2013, when the current administrative government came to office.

He made the comments while attending an inauguration ceremony led by President Hassan Rouhani for a new reservoir in the western province of Ilam. The construction of the dam, a 384-meter structure which can contain 20 million cubic meters of water, has cost the government over \$8 million.

Ardakanian said that Iran had broken a record of launching a dam once every two months while adding that adding that some 380 trillion rials (\$2.375 billion) had been spend on reservoirs and drainage and irrigation systems over the past six and a half years.

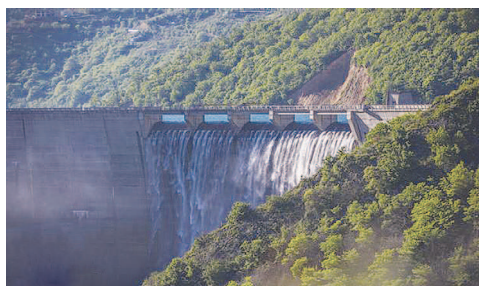
"We hope this trend would continue relying on engineering principles and observing environmental issues," he said.

Iranian authorities are preparing for floods by releasing water from dams in 12 provinces.

The minister said Iran had only 19 reservoir dams in 1979, when the Islamic Revolution took place.

"Currently, the number of these dams has reached 144 ... on average, nearly four reservoirs have been built each year in the country," said Ardakanian.

Building new dams accelerated in Iran after flash floods in March and April last year inundated many towns and villages and left tens of thousands displaced in north and southwest of the country. Experts believe Iran would take benefit of its expanding network of reservoirs and irrigation systems as the country expects more wet seasons in the coming years.



ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Enforcing the Biggest Quarantine in the 21st Century

The Coronavirus, better known as the COVID-19, is considered as the most influential factor of the modern world which could enforce billions of people into house quarantine and actually confined them to their houses.

What we have seen in the world in recent three decades that has emerged and had social impact, and issuance of central orders, seemingly has been aimed at protecting the lives and the Information Technology (IT), and if it had happened before the Industrial and Telecommunications Revolution, it would have been never able to persuade this huge amount of people in the world to stay at their homes. It is because administering major part of the world, from macro managements to earning a livings, is possible through connection with computers or mobile phones and it made imposition of the house quarantine possible for containing the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Some analysts believe that there is a possibility that some powers have planned such a dangerous plot for threatening the live of humanity in order to take advantage of the resulted climate from the outbreak of the virus for their expansionist policies. Like the World Wars I and II which broke out because of plots of some western countries for more dominance and it led to the rise of power and authority of some rich countries in the world, and its result was the formation of United Nations and the United Nations Security Council which gave veto right to five countries and it was dictated to the world. The world community with the global sustainable peace plan and formation of new governing through the United Nations dictated new form of centralized hegemony without any precondition to all countries in the world.

A strong belief lies in these analyses about the grandeur and emergence of this dangerous virus that the post-Coronavirus world may have more dangerous consequences in thoughts of the think-tanks and it may be like what happened after two world wars and formation of the United Nations for a global order and its consequences, and another method for ruling in the human societies; and its type and style comparatively is related to the modern mass media and even to the virtual space dominance with the modern distributed tools in the world or actually in the Cybernetic Capacity in Rolling Theory.

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U.S. Will Not Let Iran Buy Weapons Once Ban Expires

WASHINGTON (UPI)- U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States will prevent Iran from buying conventional weapons once a United Nations embargo expires in October.

"We're not going to let that happen," he told reporters during a press availability in Washington, D.C.

The embargo against selling conventional weapons to Iran, set to expire on Oct. 23, is part of the 2015 multination accord aimed at preventing Tehran from developing nuclear weapon capabilities in exchange for sanction relief.

In 2018, President Donald Trump pulled the United States from the deal, calling it "defective at its core" and reimposed sanctions against Iran -- a move that Iran retaliated against by restarting nuclear activities banned under the agreement with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

China, Russia and other countries are believed to be waiting in the wings eager to sell Iran weapons barred under the embargo, a reality caused by the nuclear deal, Pompeo said, stating its failures "are legion. One of them is now upon us."

Pompeo said they are working with the United Nations Security Council and with the deal's three European signatories to extend all U.N. sanctions under the deal.

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Iran Urges U.S. to Release Detained Iranian Scientist

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Secretary of Iranian Judiciary's Headquarters for Human Rights Ali Baqeri-Kani on Friday urged the immediate release of detained Iranian scientist Dr. Sirous Asgari in the U.S. prison.

Iran is concerned about the health of all Iranians held captive in the US prisons; he said, adding, "The immediate release of Sirous Asgari can put an end to concerns about the health of the professor."

Iran is so much concerned about the scientist who had contracted COVID-19, he stated adding that the country is pursuing the release of the professor from the relevant authorities.

Rouhani: People Are Not Alone

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that the end of coronavirus outbreak is not clear and everyone should keep fighting with the virus and the people should know that they are not alone in this fight.

President Rouhani made the remarks in the video conference to inaugurate some national projects on Thursday.

Saying that all the parts of the Islamic System are standing by the people, Rouhani added that the general statistics of coronavirus is decreasing in Iran and that some hospital beds allocated to coronavirus patients are now empty.

He said that compared to other countries, Iran has been noticeably successful in the fight against the coronavirus, but the fight should go on until there will be no sign of the disease.

Saying that the end of the potentially fatal disease is not clear, he added that the government, military forces, benefactors and people of industry and production are all standing by people with all power.

There is no way to defeat the virus but cooperation and solidarity; although the main burden is on the shoulders of the Ministry of Health, success will be gained only with



the help of the people, he said, adding that the current condition has put workers and ordinary people are under pressure.

He went on to say that the deposits in the banks and stock markets have changed for the better, which is a good thing. Two million people are active in the stock market which is very remarkable.

Rouhani went on to say that it is the fifth consecutive year that Iran is self-sufficient in producing wheat.

COVID-19 Punishes Those Who Sanctioned Iran's Oil

TEHRAN (IFP) - First Vice President says the coronavirus took severe revenge on the countries that sought to harm the Islamic Republic by imposing sanctions on the Iranian oil.

Es'haq Jahangiri said these countries will understand what difficult conditions will be created for the managers when one of the most important sources of income is eliminated.

"Today, the price of Persian Gulf oil has reached \$14 to \$15, which makes it unreasonable to extract oil given the costs. We are affected by lower prices, but we are better prepared to deal with the crisis," he underlined.

Speaking in a meeting with managers and top officials of the country's health ministry, the top official said one of the economic consequences of the corona epidemic was the fall of stock market indices across the world, but the Iranian stock market did well and showed amazing growth.

As regards the spread of the coronavirus in Iran, he noted that fortunately, the performance of the government and the medical staff proved the effectiveness of the Islamic Republic and the government.

This became more apparent when, along with Iran, other countries started to handle the crisis. By comparing the situation after the outbreak of the disease, the people realised the efficiency of the medical system and the management of the Iranian government, maintained Jahangiri.

"There were negative atmosphere to underestimate the government's performance, but due to the high rate of casualties in the United States and European countries despite their economic capacity, it was proved that Iran has performed very well in dealing with the crisis so far."

They thought Iran would be defeated by the coronavirus due to the sanctions, but this did not happen by God's grace and thanks to the efforts of the managers and the medical staff, as well as the cooperation of the people, continued Jahangiri.

In the end, Jahangiri emphasised the continuation of screening plan and implementation of research and scientific projects to break the chain of virus transmission, adding the method of the Islamic Republic of Iran in dealing with COVID-19 has attracted the attention of various countries at the international level.

Great Work of Teachers Is To Develop Talents For Transcendent Values

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in a message congratulating all teachers in schools, universities and seminaries on Teacher's Day, highlighted the great work and jihad of teachers to flourish the talents of children and adolescents in the path of Islamic and revolutionary values with the aim of creating a just, idealistic and religious society.

In his message, Ayatollah Khamenei noted that a young generation that is being raised in this direction is a great asset that no other valuable phenomenon is equal to it.

In this message, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution called the great work and jihad of teachers the flourishing of the talents of children and adolescents in the path of revolutionary and Islamic values and extended his congratulations on Teacher's Day to all teachers in schools, universities and seminaries who nurture the thoughts and knowledge of the children and youth of the country in schools, universities and seminaries.

Pakistan FM lauds Iran Leader's Support for Kashmir

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has lauded the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei for his "continued support" for the people of the Muslim-majority Himalayan region of Kashmir.

"The continued support of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for the people of Kashmir is praiseworthy," Pakistan's Foreign Ministry quoted Qureshi as saying in a statement.

According to the foreign ministry, Qureshi made the statements in a phone call with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif earlier this week.

Ayatollah Khamenei expresses concern about tensions in Kashmir and urges India to follow a fair policy toward the Muslim-majority region.

"Other world countries have to understand that the critical and difficult situation in Kashmir requires cooperation from all sides," Qureshi during the discussion.

"International organizations and the international



community have to continuously act to prevent Indian oppression in Kashmir and its illegal administration over the area," he added.

During the telephonic conversation, the two foreign ministers discussed the recent outbreak of desert locust in the region and agreed on the need for collective endeavors to effectively address this menace.

They also exchanged views on the Afghan peace process. FM Qureshi reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast support for peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan and our hopes for the earliest commencement of intra-Afghan negotiations.

He expressed thanks for Iranian leadership's principled position on the rights of the Kashmiri people and highlighted enhanced difficulties in occupied Kashmir due to communications restrictions and lack of unfettered access to medical and other supplies to address COVID-19.

Pakistani minister also drew his attention to the demonization of Muslims in India in the context of COVID-19, emphasizing that it should be rejected by the world community.

Iran Condemns German Ban on Lebanon's Hezbollah

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Foreign Ministry Spokesman has strongly condemned the German government's blacklisting of the Lebanese Hezbollah as a measure serving the objectives of the US and the Zionist regime of Israel.

In a statement on Thursday, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi vehemently condemned the German government's move to accuse the Lebanese Hezbollah of "promoting armed struggle with terrorist means."

"It appears that certain countries in Europe are adopting their stances without considering the realities in the West Asia region and by paying regard only to the objectives of the propaganda machine of the Zionist regime and the confused US regime," Mousavi added.

"The German government's decision has been made with a complete disrespect for the Lebanese government and nation, as Hezbollah is an official and legitimate part of that country's government and Parliament, and has always been an influential political party in the arena of creating political stability in that country," he said, adding that Hezbollah enjoys massive popular backing in Lebanon and in the region.

"The German government's decision has been also made with utter imprudence against a force that has had and still has a key role in the fight against the violent terrorism of Daesh (ISIS) in the region. The German government, therefore, must be held accountable for the negative consequences of its decision for the fight against the true terrorist groups in the region," Mousavi concluded.

The statement came after Germany designated the Lebanese Hezbollah a terror organization, banned all of its activities in the European country and ordered raids on sites linked to the Lebanese group.

The German police have raided four mosques and cultural associations linked with Hezbollah, as well as private homes of the Lebanese group's board members, treasurers and tax advisers.

Iran Advises UK to Stand On Right Side of History

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi in a message referred to humanitarian crisis in Yemen, saying that the UK must stand on the right side of history.

"As the atrocities of the aggression push #Yemen on the brink of the worst humanitarian crisis, coupled w/ COVID19, the British Gvt. has profited from the arms export to the KSA & left the blood of innocent Yemenis on its hands," Mousavi wrote on his Twitter account on Friday.

"The UK must stand on the right side of history!" he added.

Mousavi earlier 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.

Uzbekistan Lifts Transit Restrictions on Iranian Trucks

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN- The spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that Uzbekistan has lifted transit restrictions imposed on Iranian trucks due to the coronavirus concerns, ILNA reported.

"According to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tashkent, the transit restrictions for Iranian trucks in Uzbekistan have been lifted," Latifi said on Thursday.

According to the official, the decision was made by the Uzbekistan Crisis Committee, based on which the transportation restrictions for Iran, Afghanistan, and Italy were lifted provided that strict observance of health standards be applied.

The maximum stay for foreign trucks in Uzbekistan for transit, export and import procedures is set to be 10 days, and drivers must leave the country before the end of this period, Latifi explained.

Tehran Refutes U.S. Religious Freedom Report

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has rejected an annual report by the US government on religious freedom as blatant interference in the internal affairs of the other countries, saying the report is based upon wrong information and is condemned.

In a statement on Thursday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi decried the annual report on "religious freedom in the world" released by the U.S. Department of State, saying, "This report has made bogus and baseless claims about our country, particularly about the status of Jewish people in Iran, which do not apply to any of the legal and official faiths in the Islamic Republic of Iran and are rejected."

"The U.S. government has once again repeated the baseless and undocumented allegations about the status of religious freedom in the Islamic Republic of Iran in a new report, while the contents of this report reveal the lack of a proper understanding of the situation of Iran in this regard, and clearly reveals that invalid and anti-Iranian information and sources have been used to prepare it."

Mousavi also dismissed the unrealistic and biased allegations raised in the report, slammed the release of the report as interference in the internal affairs of the other countries, and condemned such interventionist behavior of the U.S.

Such brazen acts of interference in the domestic affairs of the countries and the release of superficial reports against them take place while millions of indigent and homeless people in various cities of the US are living below the poverty line and are deprived of the basic rights or medical and health services, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson added, noting that such conditions in the U.S. have turned deplorable and catastrophic under the shadow of the pervasive and terrible crisis of coronavirus outbreak in that country and have resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of American citizens.

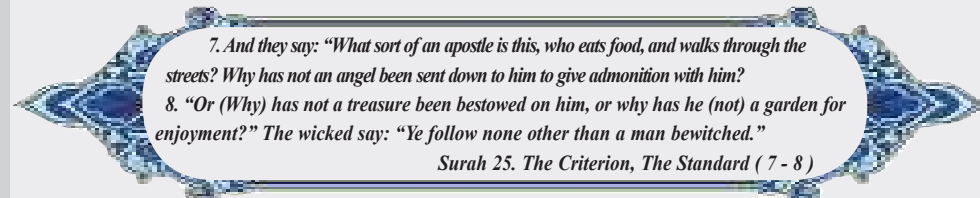
The Islamic Republic of Iran has always respected the rights of religious minorities within the framework of its Constitution, and those religious minorities have been fully enjoying the whole citizenship rights, particularly the political participation in the country's processes and the free exercise of their religions, Mousavi underlined.

"Since ancient times, Iran has embodied a diversified and miscellaneous society involving pure religions, cultures and languages, who have chosen this territory as a place and haven for their social, cultural and economic life since thousands of years ago, and also today, the people of Iran are still feeling the sweetness of such variety and beauty regardless of their religion, language and faith," the Iranian spokesman emphasized.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:35
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:09



IPRC Predicts Stagflation For the Country

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Islamic Parliament (Majlis) Research Center (IPRC) has predicted the country will face stagflation this year and government's budget is facing with challenges of rise in expenses and decline in revenues.

According to Fars News agency, IPRC in its recent report has reviewed the economic condition for this year and has forecasted a tough year for the government and the nation.

The report claims the government in the current Iranian calendar year will face with different types of budget deficit problems. The IPRC, even before the outbreak of the Coronavirus and in its previous reports, had warned the government about its budget bill.

It claimed Iran's economy has faced with the problem of revenues while the government expenses cannot be reduced in accordance with the fall in revenues and this problem has led to the sustainable budget deficit which has been one of the national economic woes in recent years.

The report claimed that the outbreak of the Coronavirus will have its own expenses and will intensify the problem of budget deficit in the current year.

The IPRC in its report pointed that the outbreak of the virus will increase the costs in the health sector and the government's financial support during the social distancing period.

It also pointed to the decline in revenues as the major factor in the budget deficit, adding that the government's oil sales and tax earnings will drop drastically. The report claimed that the national economy in the current year will face recession and the fall in demand due to the virus will slow down production and consequently government's earnings from tax will drop.



The parliament report also warned that the government may resort to the Central Bank to cover its budget deficit and it will lead to the rise in the liquidity in the society and inflation.

It also reiterated that because of decline in demand in the country, the velocity of money in the economy will slow and one can say the current year can be one of those years when the velocity of money will be at its lowest level and the inflation rate will not match the growth in liquidity.

In early April, the IPRC in another report had warned that the government's delay in extending financial support to low-income people hit by the coronavirus outbreak might entail "painful consequences."

In an elaborate allusion to the possibility of dissent and protests in Iran, the report charged that what President Hassan Rouhani's administration has done so far to support "the poor and vulnerable people" has been "belated, passive and non-proactive."

Iran's Potentials Edless

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Roads and Urban Development stated that the potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran are endless.



On the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony of 56 rail fleets and regarding the importance of this project in the year named 'Production Leap' and especially during sanctions, Mohammad Eslami said that authorities and people must believe that the potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran are endless.

"Not only we can support the domestic market but also we can export to other countries," he added.

"In the past years, our railway industry was experiencing stagnation, but we all were united to activate our railway system and it happened. Last year, we registered a new record in production in the last 20 years, especially in the time that tough sanctions are imposed on our country," Eslami said.

"We can pass the barriers by looking at domestic capacities and improve life quality. The message of this achievement is that we could rely on knowledge based-companies, reduce our dependency, or even omit our dependency in many parts," added the Minister of Roads and Urban Development.

In the past, 50% of wagon making was based on imports, he highlighted.

By branding Iranian wagon and locomotive in domestic markets, a larger market can be created in other countries in the region, he concluded.

Iran, Turkey to Talk on Border Closure This Week



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce Mehrdad Saadat Dehghan says Iran's relation with Turkey is strategic and important and the country should not damage it with hasty actions over the closure of Turkey's border.

Speaking to ILNA about the latest development about the closure of border by Turkey, Saadat Dehghan said that borders with Turkey are still closed and nothing has changed, adding that after talks with some related ministries in the country, they were urged to lift the pressure from the chamber's shoulder. He urged them to resolve the problem which has put the exporters and producers in limbo and they do not know about the future of their trades.

Saadat Dehghan added that the chamber said that officials of both countries are to have a video-conference talk on Monday to find a solution to resolve the problem.

He added that representatives of all organizations bodies which are involved in trade will participate in this video-conference.

Reacting to the letter written by Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei to the Road and Urban Development Minister, he warned about any hasty action, reiterating that Iran's relation with Turkey is strategic and important and hasty actions should not damage it and one should not forget Turkish businessmen and government's support and help during the sanctions era.

Saadat Dehghan reiterated that the problem is just in land border and both countries have no problem in rail transit of goods.

He said some 300 Iranian trucks have been stranded in the Turkish border which are to transport their cargos to this country and they carry agro products like date, water melon and dried fruits which may decay.

He further added that 160 Iranian trucks are also stranded in Turkey and they are unable to return to the country.

Loading Operation of Phase 11 Platform Jacket Begins

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The load out operation of Platform 11B jacket of the massive South Pars gas field has begun in a step to develop the long-sought project.

The 2,120-ton structure is 80.5 meters high and is planned to be installed in the 11B area of South Pars, 135 km off Assaluyeh coast.

The jacket has 15 26-inch diameter conductor guides.

"If the weather remains stable, we will start drilling wells in the South Pars Phase 11 development plan in June," the CEO of Petropars Group, Hamidreza Masoudi, told Shana about the timing of the drilling of wells in phase 11 of the South Pars joint field.

Petropars is developing the project alone after its partners, Total and CNPCI, pulled out of the plan due to the U.S. sanctions.

Meanwhile the head of the South Pars Phase 11 development plan announced that the installation process of Platform 11B of hte project would be completed by June.

According to Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), Rasoul Fallahnejad said Thursday that the SPD11B platform would be loaded from the yard of Naft Sazeh Qeshm (NSQ), adding the wellhead jacket of the platform and its accessories were loaded on an LB90 barge.

He said the jacket was 1,200 tons and was loaded by push-pull method.

Once operational, the platform will drill 12 offshore wells in phase 11 of the massive gas field.

The project aims to generate 2 billion cubic feet of rich gas, and transfer it to existing South Pars refineries and use the refinery's processing capacity.

Reacting to this achievement, Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh wrote in his Twitter account: "Iran is at the peak of its authority in the Persian Gulf with maximum production from South Pars."

Marking the Persian Gulf Day, the Iranian Oil Minister wrote on his Twitter account: "The Dear Iran, with maximum withdrawal from the South Pars gas field, is at the peak of its authority in the Persian Gulf."



Iran Ready to Expand Medical Cooperation With Turkmenistan

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Ashgabat Gholamabbas Arbabkhales on Thursday voiced Iran's readiness to further promote cooperation with Turkmenistan on health and medical sector.

The ambassador said that Iran enjoys abundant capacities in the area of medical cooperation with regional countries, the neighboring and Muslim country of Turkmenistan in particular.

Arbabkhales said that Turkmenistan has now taken good measures and provided appropriate infrastructure for the development of public health.

He said that Iran and Turkmenistan, with 1,200 km of joint borders and four border terminals, enjoy a good level of relations.

The level of Iran-Turkmenistan relations is satisfactory at different political, economic and cultural areas and therefore they need to develop new fields of cooperation, in health and medicine for instance, the ambassador said.

Iran's high medical capacity in the region and globally has encouraged other countries to seek further interaction with the Iranian medical sector, he added.

Arbabkhales said that different Iranian cities, particularly the northeastern city of Mashhad can render

medical services to health tourists from Central Asia.

He noted that the low costs and the quality of services have turned Mashhad and some other Iranian cities into hubs of health tourism.

In the name of God

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



ESCO
Esfahan Steel Company

Brief Notice of International Tender No. 9801307

Esfahan Steel Co. intends to purchase through international Inquiry» 3 Sets Unbalance Exciter
Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.'s Website at www.esfahansteel.ir to get the tender documents no later than 06 May 2020 and deliver their bids to the following address no later than official closing time (i.e.3.00 pm) on 17May ,2020.

Public Relation of Esfahan Steel Co.

Canadian Military Helicopter Crashes in Sea off Greece

OTTAWA (Reuters) - One body has been recovered and five people are missing after a Canadian military helicopter crashed in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece on Wednesday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Thursday.

The HMCS Fredericton, participating in NATO's Operation Reassurance meant to bolster security in Central and Eastern Europe, lost contact with a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter during a training exercise.

"All of them are heroes. Each of them will leave a void that cannot be filled," Trudeau said in a news conference.

"The cause of this accident is unknown at this time," Defense Minister Harjit Sajjan said. The aircraft's data and voice recorders have been recovered, he said.



Venezuela Refuses to Withdraw Diplomats From Brazil

CARACAS (AFP) - Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro's government stepped up a diplomatic spat with neighbor Brazil on Thursday, accusing it of putting Venezuelan diplomats under "undue pressure" to leave the country within 48 hours.

Brazil is one of around 60 countries to recognize Maduro's opposition rival Juan Guaido as Venezuela's acting president and announced on March 5 it was ordering Maduro-appointed diplomats to withdraw.

The foreign ministry in Caracas accused Brazil of "attempting to force the premature departure of Venezuelan diplomatic and consular staff by May 2," and said no talks had taken place over the exit.



Arab League Deems Israeli West Bank Annexation a "New War Crime"



CAIRO (AFP) - The Arab League said Thursday Israel's controversial proposal to annex much of the West Bank constituted a "new war crime" against the Palestinians, during a virtual conference chaired in Cairo.

"The implementation of plans to annex any part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including the Jordan Valley... and the lands on which Israeli settlements are standing represents a new war crime... against the Palestinian people," Arab foreign ministers said in a joint statement.

The Arab League also urged the United States to "withdraw its support in enabling the plans of the occupying Israeli government".

U.S. President Donald Trump in January unveiled a controversial peace plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Rejected by the Palestinians and condemned by much of the international community, the plan gives Israel the green light to annex Jewish settlements and other strategic territory in the occupied West Bank.

An Israeli coalition government agreement reached last week includes a framework for implementing the annexations outlined in the plan.

Such annexations would violate international law and likely inflame tensions in the volatile region.

The Palestinians would be granted a sovereign but demilitarised state in the remaining parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, along with promises of major investment.

The Palestinian state's capital would be on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the contested holy city, which would remain fully under Israeli sovereignty.

Palestinians fear the Al-Aqsa Mosque and surrounding compound -- Islam's third holiest site -- would be effectively under Israeli control.

Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Malki cautioned against the annexation during the Arab League meeting, saying it would "end the two-state solution".

He said the move would "turn the battle from a political one to an endless religious war... that will never bring about stability, security or peace to our region".

On Monday, the United States said it was ready to recognise Israel's annexation of key parts of the West Bank, but also asked the new unity government to negotiate with the Palestinians.

Trump Says Evidence Ties China Lab to Virus, Threatens Tariffs

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened China with fresh tariffs as he stepped up his attacks on Beijing over the coronavirus crisis, saying he had seen evidence linking a Wuhan lab to the contagion.

The diatribe from the Republican incumbent came as data showed the United States shed more than 30 million jobs in six weeks, as lockdown measures began to bite across the nation.

The gloom in the world's largest economy found its parallel across the Atlantic, where experts warned of an unprecedented financial catastrophe in Europe. The outbreak of the novel coronavirus has so far killed more than 230,000 people and forced more than half of humanity to live under some kind of lockdown, which has crippled economies.

The virus is believed to have originated late last year in a market in the Chinese city of Wuhan that sold wild animals for human consumption, but speculation has swirled about a top-secret lab in the ground-zero city.



Beijing Has No Interest in U.S. Elections

ANKARA (Dispatches) - China on Thursday said it had "no interest" in upcoming U.S. elections, saying this was an "internal affair" of the country.

China's reaction came after reports claimed US President Donald Trump alleged that Beijing would "do anything" for him to lose his re-election bid in the ballot slated for November.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters that Beijing had "no interest in interfering in the U.S. election, which is their internal affair," the daily Global Times reported. "We hope U.S. politicians will not stick to the China issue. The global community has its own judgment on China's anti-pandemic endeavor," Shuang added.

China alleged that Washington has been "trying to pass the buck and shift focus from their poor performance on handling COVID-19."

"But this will not erase China's achievement in combating the virus. It will only expose the ulterior motives and problems of some U.S. politicians," added Shuang. Describing Washington as the "biggest pusher of militarization" in the South China Sea region, China's Defense Ministry said in a separate statement that regular military activities by the U.S. and Australia were "not conducive."

"Frequent U.S., Australian military activities in the South China Sea are not conducive to regional stability. U.S. is the biggest pusher of militarization in region. Chinese PLA [People's Liberation Army] is on high alert to safeguard national sovereignty and peace in the region," said the Chinese Defense Ministry.

The statement came amid a rift between China and Australia over Canberra's demand for a probe to investigate the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia has since accused China of threatening the country with "economic coercion" if it continued its demand. The Defense Ministry statement also dismissed claims that China recently "conducted underground nuclear tests" as "untrue."

"Unlike the U.S., China keeps its promises and puts its words into practice in international arms control," it added.

S. Korea Leads Virus Success in Asia as Drug Trial Raises Hope

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea, once one of the hardest-hit countries in the coronavirus pandemic, reported no new cases on Thursday, boosting hopes of an eventual return to normality as U.S. scientists hailed the results of a major drug trial.

The good medical news caused equities to rally, despite mounting deaths worldwide and abysmal economic figures caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

Data showed the pandemic, which has killed more than 224,000 people, has plunged the United States into its worst economic slump in a decade, and has left Germany expecting its biggest recession since the aftermath of World War II.

But for the first time since the new disease was detected there in mid-February, South Korea reported zero new infections.

The East Asian nation had the world's second-largest coronavirus outbreak for a period after the virus emerged in China late last year.

But with an aggressive test-and-trace strategy and widespread social distancing, it has managed to bring the spread of the pathogen under control.

"This is the strength of South Korea and its people," said President Moon Jae-in as he announced the milestone.

Meanwhile in the first proof of successful treatment, a clinical trial of the drug remdesivir showed that

patients recovered about 30 percent faster than those on a placebo.

"The data shows that remdesivir has a clear-cut, significant, positive effect in diminishing the time to recovery," said Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. epidemiologist.

South Korea's virus death toll is around 250 -- vastly lower than that of Italy, Britain, Spain and France, which have each recorded more than 24,000 fatalities, and the United States, topping the table with a third of global deaths.

Other parts of the region have seen similar success in their fight against the virus.

Infections have dwindled in China after it imposed extremely strict lockdown measures on millions of people earlier this year. Its official toll is around 4,600, although doubt has been cast on the figures' accuracy.

Hong Kong, a city of seven million where there have been just four virus deaths, reported no new cases for the fifth straight day on Thursday.

And New Zealand has declared the battle won against widespread, undetected community transmission.

However the economic costs are beginning to mount, raising fears of an era-defining global crash and increasing pressure worldwide to ease lockdowns despite fears of a second wave of contagion.



Russian PM Has Coronavirus as Cases Surge Past 100,000

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Thursday announced he has tested positive for the coronavirus, as the country's number of confirmed cases surged past 100,000 after its largest daily increase.

In a televised meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Mishustin said he has to "observe self-isolation" to protect his colleagues, suggesting a temporary acting PM.

Putin swiftly signed a decree appointing First Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Belousov as a temporary replacement.

The president assured Mishustin that contracting COVID-19 "can happen to anyone" and that no major decisions would be taken without his input.

"I hope that you stay able to work," Putin told Mishustin, who is the highest Russian official to become infected.

"Call me as soon as you arrive to the hospital," said Putin, who appointed Mishustin in a surprise decision in January, picking the formerly obscure tax service chief to replace longtime premier Dmitry Medvedev.

Putin has not held any face-to-face meetings for weeks, according to the Kremlin website, and was last shown in the same room as Mishustin on March 24.

A spike of 7,099 confirmed infections in the last 24 hours brought Russia's total to 106,498 cases and 1,073 deaths, according to the government's daily coronavirus update.

With its number of cases increasing by several thousand each day, Russia is now the European country registering the most new infections.

But Russia's coronavirus death rate remains relatively low and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the country's actions had helped it avoid the catastrophic "Italian scenario".

Russia's success was down to "tough self-isolation decisions" and government measures "which convinced people to stay at home," Peskov told the RTVI television channel.

He also said Russia had quickly and efficiently increased the number of available hospital beds.



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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & yard
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

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S/p, S, J, F.F

(\$2200) Mahmoodieh
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Airbus First-Quarter Profit Plunges

PARIS (Reuters) - Airbus posted a 49% slump in first-quarter core profit and called for an industry-wide campaign to restore confidence in flying after the coronavirus pandemic triggered the “gravest crisis the aerospace industry has ever known”.

Europe’s largest aerospace group also highlighted plans to save cash after gushing 8 billion euros in the first quarter, including a record 3.6-billion-euro fine to settle corruption

investigations in Britain, France and the United States.

“All nature of costs are now being reviewed,” CEO Guillaume Faury told analysts.

Airbus has been unable to deliver more than a handful of aircraft since Europe-wide lockdowns began in mid-March and Faury said he expected similar difficulties in the second quarter before a clearer picture emerges in around June.



Half of Global Workforce at Risk of Losing Livelihoods

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nearly half of global workforce is at risk of losing livelihoods due to growing number of job losses amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The continued sharp decline in working hours globally due to the COVID-19 outbreak means that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy - that is nearly half of the global workforce - stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, warned the International Labour Organization (ILO).

According to the “ILO Monitor third edition: COVID-19 and the world of work”, the drop in working hours in the current (second) quarter of 2020 is expected to be significantly worse than previously estimated. Compared to pre-crisis levels (Q4 2019), a 10.5 per cent deterioration is now expected, equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week). The previous estimate was for a 6.7 per cent drop, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. This is due to the prolongation and extension of lockdown measures.

Regionally, the situation has worsened for all major regional groups. Estimates suggest a 12.4 per cent loss of working hours in Q2 for the Americas (compared to pre-crisis levels) and 11.8 per cent for Europe and Central Asia. The estimates for the rest of the regional groups follow closely and are all above 9.5 per cent.

As a result of the economic crisis created by the pandemic, almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers (representing the most vulnerable in the labour market), out of a worldwide total of two billion and a global workforce of 3.3 billion, have suffered massive damage to their capacity to earn a living. This is due to lockdown measures and/or because they work in the hardest-hit sectors.

The first month of the crisis is estimated to have resulted in a drop of 60 per cent in the income of informal workers globally. This translates into a drop of 81 per cent in Africa and the Americas, 21.6 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 70 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.

ILO Country Director in Bangladesh, Tuomo Poutiainen said, “Some sectors of the population such as women, youth, older workers, migrants and self-employed persons are disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.”

“Young persons, already facing higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, are more vulnerable to falling labour demand and losing their livelihoods. Older workers (55+) are also at risk from unemployment, underemployment and decreased working hours. Women are more likely to lack social protection and have more care responsibilities. Self-employed, casual and gig workers are also vulnerable as they do not have access to paid or sick leave mechanisms, and are less/not protected by conventional social protection mechanisms.” Without alternative income sources, these workers and their families will have no means to survive.

The proportion of workers living in countries under recommended or required workplace closures has decreased from 81 to 68 per cent over the last two weeks. The decline from the previous estimate of 81 per cent in the second edition of the monitor (published April 7) is primarily a result of changes in China; elsewhere workplace closure measures have increased.

Worldwide, more than 436 million enterprises face high risks of serious disruption. These enterprises are operating in the hardest-hit economic sectors, including some 232 million in wholesale and retail, 111 million in manufacturing, 51 million in accommodation and food services, and 42 million in real estate and other business activities. The ILO calls for urgent, targeted and flexible measures to support workers and businesses, particularly smaller enterprises, those in the informal economy and others who are vulnerable.

Measures for economic reactivation should follow a job-rich approach, backed by stronger employment policies and institutions, better-resourced and comprehensive social protection systems. International co-ordination on stimulus packages and debt relief measures will also be critical to making recovery effective and sustainable. International labour standards, which already enjoy tripartite consensus, can provide a framework.

Boeing to Cut Workforce and Production

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Boeing Co. said it would cut its workforce by about 10%, further reduce 787 Dreamliner production and try to boost liquidity as it prepares for a years-long industry recovery from the coronavirus pandemic that drove the planemaker to a net loss for the second straight quarter.

Chicago-based Boeing burned through \$4.7 billion in cash in the first quarter but said it was confident of getting sufficient liquidity to fund its operations, sending its shares up 5% to \$137.57.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that Boeing is working with investment banks on a potential bond deal worth at least \$10 billion. Last month it drew down its entire \$13.8 billion credit line and is also weighing seeking government aid.

Analysts said the cash burn was not as bad as feared and that the company might be able to avoid raising capital from the U.S. Treasury, although Seth Seifman of J.P. Morgan said the path forward for Boeing still remains “quite challenging.”

Planemakers, airlines and suppliers have been left reeling by the pandemic, which has crippled passenger travel, catapulted major economies into recession and forced major companies to scramble for cash to weather the downturn.



Germany Expects Record Recession in 2020

BERLIN (Reuters) - The coronavirus pandemic will plunge Germany’s economy into its deepest recession since World War Two, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said on Wednesday as the government cut its economic growth forecast for this year.

“We’re facing major challenges, both economically and politically,” Altmaier told reporters in Berlin, presenting the government’s updated growth forecast for Europe’s largest economy.

Berlin cut its estimate for gross domestic product growth in 2020 to -6.3% from +1.1% predicted in January. It expects the recession to bottom out in the second quarter and economic activity to pick up again after that.

For 2021, the government expects the economy to rebound with an expansion rate of +5.2%. The forecasts are based on the assumption that authorities can gradually unwind lockdown measures imposed to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Altmaier warned that authorities should not rush to ease the lockdown measures as this would increase the risk of a second wave of infections which could hamper the expected economic recovery in the second half of the year.

“Because only if we lift economic and social restrictions step-by-step, and with a sense of proportion, can we start with the slow recovery in second half of year,” Altmaier said.

The government expects consumer price inflation to drop to 0.5% in 2020 and rebound to 1.5% in 2021.

Unemployment is seen rising to 2.62 million in 2020 from an average 2.27 million in 2019, with the number of people working reduced or zero hours under the government’s expanded Kurzarbeit short-time work schemes expected to soar to 3 million.

Women Leaders Rise in Solidarity to Save Lives and Protect Livelihoods

TEHRAN (UNIC) – Supporting the UN Secretary-General’s call for solidarity and urgent action in response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, an initial group of prominent women have joined a global advocacy effort to save lives and protect livelihoods, urging leaders in all countries, across all sectors, to address the human crisis of the pandemic.

Convened by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Rise for All brings together women leaders to mobilize support for the UN roadmap to tackle the development emergency, as laid out in the United Nations Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19: Shared responsibility, global solidarity and urgent action for people in need, issued on Monday.

“Like no other time in recent history, women are on the frontlines of COVID-19 and bearing the brunt of this human crisis,” said the UN Deputy Secretary-General. “It is time for us to rise as women leaders, taking action to conquer the pandemic and come out stronger so as to keep the world on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.”

The first to join this cohort are the President of Ethiopia, Sahle-Work Zewde, the Prime Minister of Norway and Sustainable Development Goals Advocate of the Secretary-General, Erna Solberg, Sustainable Development Goals Advocate of the Secretary-General Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, Sustainable Development Goals Advocate of the Secretary-General Dia Mirza, UN Women Goodwill Ambassador of Pakistan Muniba Mazari, along with the Executive Directors of UNICEF, Henrietta Fore, of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and of UNFPA, Natalia Kanem.

Together, the women are supporting the United Nations’ call for an extraordinary scale-up of international support and political commitment to “build back better” and ensure that people everywhere have access to essential services and social protection. This includes support for the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, an inter-agency mechanism designed to help those countries and people most exposed to the economic hardship and social disruption the pandemic has caused.

The Fund aims to mobilize US\$1 billion over the first nine months, and US\$2 billion over two years, to support low- and middle-income countries, including Small Island Developing States and vulnerable groups such as women and children who are disproportionately bearing the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

The Netherlands has announced an initial contribution 15 million Euros (US\$16.6 million) to the Fund, following in the footsteps of Norway and Denmark, who have thus far pledged 150 million Norwegian Krone (US\$14.1 million) and 50 million Danish Krone (US\$7.3 million), respectively.

Over the coming weeks, more women leaders, including from the political, multilateral and business sectors, are expected to join Rise for All, adding their voices in support of the United Nations roadmap for social and economic recovery, and to advocate a fully funded COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.

Oil Demand Won't Return To 'Normal' Until End-2021

LONDON (Oil Price)

- Oil demand around the world will not return to the pre-virus levels of 2019 until the fourth quarter of 2021, as countries will be slowly emerging from the lockdowns and the economic recession, according to Morgan Stanley.

In addition, the post-coronavirus world could see some lasting structural changes in consumer behavior, Martijn Rats, head of oil research at Morgan Stanley, told Reuters.

“The demand recovery will be somewhat muted, and we could see some structural changes to people’s behavior,” Rats told reporters.

Analysts argue that oil demand is not set to stage a quick V-shaped recovery as restrictions and lockdowns will be eased gradually, while many economies will be in recession this year.

According to Morgan Stanley, WTI Crude prices are set to stabilize in 2021 at levels around \$40 per barrel, and Brent Crude prices could be around \$45 per barrel.

According to the International Energy Agency’s (IEA) latest monthly report for April 2020, the demand loss due to the coronavirus pandemic could result in a stock build of 12 million barrels per day (bpd) in the first half 2020, despite the OPEC+ decision to cut collective production by 9.7 million bpd in May and June. The historic OPEC+ production cut deal may have prevented a total disaster in the oil market, but it will be unable to stave off the impending global oil inventory build that is threatening to fill all the available storage in the world over the next few weeks, the IEA said in the middle of April.

According to Goldman Sachs, the oil market is set to test the limits of the global storage capacity within three to four weeks. As much as 20 percent of the world’s oil production needs to be shut in so that supply and demand could balance in the short term, Goldman Sachs said in a note this week carried by Bloomberg.

U.S. Economy Shrinks at 4.8% Pace, Signaling Start of Recession



LONDON (Bloomberg) - The record-long U.S. economic expansion is over after almost 11 years, with what’s likely to be the deepest recession in at least eight decades now under way.

The world’s largest economy shrank at a 4.8% annualized pace in the first quarter, the biggest slide since 2008 and the first contraction since 2014, as the need to fight the coronavirus forced businesses to close and consumers to stay home.

The current quarter is likely to be far worse, with analysts expecting the economy to tumble by a record amount in data going back to the 1940s. Bloomberg Economics has projected a 37% annualized contraction, but UniCredit is the most bearish with a 65% estimate.

The first-quarter downturn, reported Wednesday by the Commerce Department, was led by the steepest drop in consumer spending since 1980 and the fastest decline in business investment in almost 11 years.

The worse-than-expected report reveals the wide-scale hit to U.S. output from Covid-19 and the subsequent freezing of economic activity.

“It’s kind of incredible when you think about the fact that the economy was running pretty much on a normal footing for over 80% of the first quarter,” Stephen Stanley, chief economist at Amherst Pierpont Securities LLC, said on Bloomberg Radio.

U.S. stocks gained amid renewed hopes for a drug to fight the coronavirus, helping investors shrug off the GDP data. The dollar slipped and Treasury yields were lower.

The report indicates an end to an expansion that began in mid-2009 when the economy began to recover from the financial crisis. Since then, gross domestic product swelled by \$7 trillion and unemployment had fallen to a five-decade low of 3.5%, although some have questioned how widely the benefits have been spread with an increasing concentration of wealth at the top and wages rising at a relatively tepid pace for most of the expansion.

The pain is being felt worldwide with China already reporting a sharp decline in output and the euro-area set to deliver grim figures Thursday.

As the U.S. government and states debate when and how fast to lift restrictions on companies and schools, there remains considerable doubt over the duration of the economic slowdown and the shape of the recovery.

Early hopes for a rapid rebound have faded with most analysts assuming a jump in activity once the virus passes will be followed by a slower resumption of growth. So far, many data points signal a deepening contraction, while others have shown slight improvement, according to a Bloomberg Economics tracker.

Warning of a Second Pandemic Wave

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - While admitting that the official death toll from the coronavirus outbreak in Iran has exceeded 6,000, the Islamic Republic Minister of Health warned of a heavy second wave of the disease next autumn and winter.

“A relatively heavy attack by a combination of flu and coronavirus is expected in the fall and winter”, the Minister, Saeed Namaki, reiterated.



“Life of Pi” Actor Irrfan Khan Dies at 53

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Acclaimed Indian actor Irrfan Khan, whose international movie career included hits such as “Slumdog Millionaire”, “Life of Pi” and “The Amazing Spider-Man”, has died aged 53, his publicist said Wednesday.

The Bollywood star, who was diagnosed with a neuroendocrine tumor in 2018, was admitted to a Mumbai hospital earlier this week with a colon infection.

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to the award-winning actor, tweeting “Irrfan Khan’s demise is a loss to the world of cinema and theatre.”

Funeral rites for the actor were under way at a graveyard in Mumbai, with only immediate family allowed to attend in keeping with India’s strict lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus.

Born in the Indian desert state of Rajasthan on January 7, 1967, Khan discovered an early passion for acting and studied at the elite National School of Drama.

But his training in Shakespeare and Chekhov did little to ease his entry into the Hindi film industry, which was then largely focused on churning out formulaic song-and-dance blockbusters. Even as he landed a role in 1988’s “Salaam Bombay” -- directed by first-timer Mira Nair -- his part was slashed to a cameo.

He sobbed for hours when he found out about the cuts, he told India’s Open magazine. “It changed something within me. I was prepared for anything after that,” he said.

Television roles followed, along with a handful of bit parts in Bollywood, where producers routinely dismissed him as looking too unconventional to play the lead.

By the time British director Asif Kapadia cast him as a mercenary in “The Warrior”, he was ready to quit acting, frustrated over the direction of his career.

But, in a sign of the global success that lay in wait, the 2001 film racked up awards and won Khan praise -- including in India, where a new generation of directors was eager to experiment with fresh storylines. His drama school training came in handy when he was cast in “Maqbool” and “Haider” -- contemporary Hindi adaptations of “Macbeth” and “Hamlet”.

But he also charmed audiences in lighter fare such as “Piku”, featuring Bollywood superstars Amitabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone, and “The Lunchbox”, in which he played a lonely accountant in love with a housewife.

Bachchan led tributes to Khan on Wednesday, describing him as “an incredible talent” whose death had left “a huge vacuum” in the industry.

His “Slumdog Millionaire” co-star Anil Kapoor called Khan “an inspiration for everyone, a remarkable actor, unmatched talent & a great human being”.

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, one of a handful of Bollywood stars to find success in Hollywood, tweeted: “Your talent forged the way for so many in so many avenues. You inspired so many of us.”



Khan consciously sidestepped traditional Bollywood tropes, focusing on the subtleties of his craft.

This allowed him to carve out a stellar career in Hollywood as well, where he collaborated with Oscar-winning directors such as Danny Boyle and Ang Lee and appeared in the HBO show “In Treatment”.

Filmmaker Colin Trevorrow, who directed Khan in the 2015 blockbuster “Jurassic World”, described the actor as “a thoughtful man who found beauty in the world around him, even in pain”.

“In our last correspondence, he asked me to remember ‘the wonderful aspects of our existence’ in the darkest of days,” Trevorrow tweeted.

In an interview with AFP in 2015, Khan said Western audiences “appreciate the elements and layers you bring to the character”.

But he added: “The informality and personal connections in Bollywood are nice. Things are too compartmentalised in Hollywood, and the system can be rigid.”

The father-of-two acted in almost 100 films, winning awards and the admiration of his peers.

Fitch Cuts Italy’s Credit Rating to One Notch Above Junk



LONDON (FT) - Fitch has downgraded Italy’s credit rating to a single notch above “junk”, saying the jump in debt levels resulting from the coronavirus crisis will increase doubts about the sustainability of Rome’s borrowings.

In an unscheduled update on Italy’s creditworthiness, the rating agency said it expected the country’s ratio of debt to gross domestic product to rise by about 20 percentage points this year to 156 per cent, as a surge in spending combined with an 8 per cent contraction in the economy.

“The downgrade reflects the significant impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic on Italy’s economy and the sovereign’s fiscal position,” Fitch said in a statement on Tuesday evening as it moved the country’s rating to BBB minus.

“According to our baseline debt dynamics scenario, the [debt] to GDP ratio will only stabilise at this very high level over the medium term, underlining debt sustainability risks.”

The Italian government provided additional information that resulted in a decision that was “different than the original rating committee outcome”, said Fitch, adding that the current crisis had caused it to bring forward its scheduled rating review from July.

Roberto Gualtieri, Italian finance minister, responded to Fitch’s decision by saying that “the fundamentals of Italy’s economy and public finances are solid”.

In a statement reported by Italian newswire Ansa, Mr Gualtieri said the decision did not take into account decisions taken by the EU, its member states or its institutions. “In particular, the strategic orientation of the European Central Bank does not seem to be adequately valued,” he added.

The downgrade comes just days after Italy’s reprieve by Standard & Poor’s on Friday, which held its rating at BBB. Fitch joins Moody’s in rating Italian debt at a single notch above junk. Italy would see its bonds thrown out of widely followed indices if two of the three agencies were to strip it of its coveted investment-grade status, forcing some investors to offload the country’s debt.

Italian bonds, which have rallied since the S&P announcement, came under modest selling pressure on Wednesday. Italy’s 10-year yield climbed 0.09 percentage points to 1.81 per cent in morning trading, having hit a one-month high of more than 2.2 per cent last week.

Malaysia Stuck in Middle-Income Trap

KUALALUMPUR (Dispatches)

- Malaysia now faces the challenge of maintaining its competitive edge against both ends of the value chain namely low-wage countries on one side and advanced and more innovative countries on the other, said Moody’s Analytics.

Moody’s Analytics said Malaysia ranks as the third richest country in Southeast Asia, successfully transforming its economy from an agricultural-based one to a manufacturing hub with one of the busiest ports in the world.

“Income inequality has been a growing issue between Malaysian states, particularly the richer manufacturing hubs and states that rely on agriculture and other natural resources like palm oil and mining.

“Although crude oil as a share of exports has decreased steadily from a high of 6.5 per cent in 2008 to 3.7 per cent in 2018, palm oil has increased from 3.6 per cent in 2005 to a peak of 8.5 per cent in 2011, before falling back to 3.9 per cent in 2018.”

There has also been a move from Malaysia’s key trading partners towards more environmentally friendly products.

“The EU, for instance, is looking at imposing new limits on food contaminants in refined fats and oils, including palm oil. The crude oil industry is also challenged by demand for cleaner energy,” it said.



Besides that, Moody’s Analytics said there had also been concerns over the country’s relatively low foreign direct investment (FDI) to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio hampering its economic potential. “While Malaysia ranked above most ASEAN countries as well as China and India in 1990, it had struggled to maintain its FDI lead of the past 10 years,” it said.

Moody’s Analytics said moving forward, as a longer-term projection, Malaysia needs to adapt to broader trends.

As a net exporter of petroleum and palm oil, Malaysia is heavily dependent on volatile commodity prices and changes in global demand.

“Although crude oil as a share of exports has decreased steadily from a high of 6.5 per cent in 2008 to 3.7 per cent in 2018, palm oil has increased from 3.6 per cent in 2005 to a peak of 8.5 per cent in 2011, before falling back to 3.9 per cent in 2018.”

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“The EU, for instance, is looking at imposing new limits on food contaminants in refined fats and oils, including palm oil. The crude oil industry is also challenged by demand for cleaner energy,” it said.

Economy Could Contract 3.1% If Lockdown Is Extended

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - As India contemplates an exit strategy from the nationwide lockdown, Swiss bank UBS on Wednesday projected the country’s economy to contract 3.1% if mobility restrictions largely stay in place until end-June and economic activity returns to normal by end-August.

However, for the base case scenario, assuming current mobility restrictions are lifted by mid-May, and economic activity is largely back to normal by end-June, it projected growth to shrink to -0.4% in FY21, moving its earlier estimate of 2.5% down to negative growth territory.

“The challenges for India vs its peers are starker if infections spread rapidly considering India’s higher population density per capita, weaker health infrastructure and limited resources for intensive testing,” UBS said in India Economic Perspectives report.

U.S. Will Not Let Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

He also argued since the United States is named in the deal it has the power to induce an extension, stating the agreement “is very clear.”

“It’s unambiguous and the rights that accrue to participants in the U.N. Security Council resolution are fully available to all those participants,” He said. “We are going to make sure that come October of this year, the Iranians aren’t able to buy conventional weapons.”

Meanwhile Russia’s permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna has lambasted the US for trying to present Washington as still a participant to Iran’s nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), saying such attempts have “no future.”

“The U.S. attempts to present itself as ‘JCPOA participant’ have no future. It is like common sense mockery. Those who invented this idea gave bad advice to US authorities. Cynical approaches must have their own limits in order not to compromise the national policy to the worst extent,” Mikhail Ulyanov said on Twitter.

The U.S. attempts to present itself as “JCPOA participant” have no future. It is like common sense mockery. Those who invented this idea gave a bad advice to US authorities. Cynical approaches must have their own limits in order not to compromise national policy to the worst extent

Enforcing the Biggest Quarantine...

FROM PAGE 1

The grounds for preparing making decisions for materializing this belief of fight with Re-Appearance can be the main goal of this theory and even making it a tool for its implementation because the West during the Renaissance era with magnifying the mistakes of the deviated Christian and Jewish clerics weakened humans’ connection with divine science, and comparatively cut it and they just limited human to rely on experimental and materialistic sciences and their effort resulted in severing man’s relation with God. Maybe in those days the issue of the End Time, which has been highlighted today, might not have been in the minds of Western, Eastern and Zionists theoreticians like what is today, and after the emergence of the Islamic Revolution, this theory of how to fight with the Islamic Revolution is getting more highlighted than ever.



With some pessimistic view let’s have a look at the performance and measures taken by our own Information and Telecommunications Minister. Exactly at the time when people stayed at their homes during the lockdown, he doubled the speed of internet and even gave free internet service. This means that human does not feel tired and uselessness at home as custodians of the cybernetic capacity theory want it, those who planned to push people into the house quarantine, and imposed the biggest maneuver of active presence of people in the virtual world under the pretext of the Coronavirus, at least for now. This very perilous phenomena can make the human community more attached and reliant on the virtual world in the post-Coronavirus era. The world which is run by the superpowers and ready-to serve internet users account for 99 percent of the world.

So placing the Noor-1 Satellite in the orbit is considered as a source of concern for the West who fear that Zionist current may lose its monopoly and control over of world cybernetics.

So spending and financing on this topic is more necessary than bread for the pious and those who believe in resistance and Re-Appearance and today in such a highway for accurate information dissemination, we are more responsible.

Iran to Cut...

FROM PAGE 1

The Bushehr power plant started operating in 2011 and reached its full capacity the following year.

Russia and Iran signed a number of documents in November 2014, expanding cooperation in the field of peaceful use of atomic energy and opening the possibility of construction in Iran of up to eight power units.

The contract for construction of the second line of Bushehr NPP consists of two units of Russian design with a total capacity of 2,100 megawatts. Russia is one of the signatories to the 2015 landmark nuclear accord between Iran and the world powers. The other parties to the contract were Britain, France, China, and Germany.

Iran Will Target U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

According to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), American vessels had 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.

Rezaei described Trump’s threat as “mere propaganda,” but warned the US that its “bases in the region are under surveillance, and we will hit them with missiles if our national security is threatened.”

Elsewhere in his comments, Rezaei referred to a United Nations arms embargo on Iran, which will be lifted in October. “The international arms embargo imposed on us will end soon, and no one can prevent us from buying weapons from international markets following that date,” he said. “The position of Washington and the European Union on the arms embargo on Iran is not binding for Iranians and we will not adhere to it.”

Elsewhere, Rezaei criticized certain Arab countries for surrendering to American “blackmail” and keeping up their enmities towards Iran. “They reject all initiatives and insist on hostility towards Iran,” he added.

Former U.S. Gymnastics Suspended for Eight Years

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Former U.S. Olympic gymnastics coach Maggie Haney has been suspended for eight years for verbal abuse and mistreatment of athletes, media reports said.

On its online list of suspended and restricted persons, USA Gymnastics said Haney, 42, was "suspended from all contact" from Thursday until April 30, 2028.

Haney was accused of verbally abusing and mistreating gymnasts, forcing them to train even if injured, media reports said.

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Women's PGA Championship Postponed

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Women's PGA Championship has been rescheduled for October as the US-based LPGA Tour announced on Wednesday it plans to restart its 2020 season in mid-July.

The major, one of five in the women's game, was due to take place at Aronimink Golf Club in Pennsylvania in late June but has now been moved to October 8-11.

Other tournaments set to take place in Michigan, Arkansas and Ohio in June and early July have also been postponed.

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SPORTS

SATURDAY MAY 2, 2020

Lopez Warns Early Return of Tours Could Be Unfair

MADRID (Reuters) - Spanish veteran Feliciano Lopez says he is "not very positive" about the chances of the ATP and WTA Tours returning to normal within three months and believes it would be unfair to resume if some parts of the world remained in isolation.

Professional tennis was shut down in mid-March because of the COVID-19 pandemic and will not return until at least mid-July, but Lopez believes that might be too optimistic.

Wimbledon has been cancelled for the first time since World War Two while the French Open has been put back to September after the U.S. Open which still hangs in the balance.

"Right now it's more about U.S. Open — when they are going to announce if eventually we can play there, maybe the Tour will be able to resume," Lopez told Eurosport's Tennis Legends podcast which will be released on Thursday.

"But, I'm not very positive to be honest. I think tennis is a very global sport where players come from all over the world. There are tournaments everywhere in the world as well and I think the fact that some countries have different restrictions than others is going to make things very, very difficult."

Lopez fears a situation where certain players would not be able to compete, depending on the situation in their country.

"In order to resume, I think the Tour is going to be open when the world is completely open, and everybody can travel freely," said the 38-year-old, tournament director of the Madrid Open which is this week holding an Esports version.

"If, for example, in September, me being Spanish I am not able to go to America or let's say I have to be in quarantine as soon as I get there. It's not fair that some players would have the chance to compete, some other players wouldn't."

"I don't see the Tour resuming if this doesn't happen in two or three months time."

Even when tennis does resume, Lopez worries that the economic impact of the



pandemic will hit the sport hard and potentially lead to tournaments folding.

"The situation is really bad. All over the world, we will see a lot of tournaments struggling to survive and I think our focus in general has to be to survive from 2021 onwards," he said. "Because the crisis is going to be huge."

"Maybe the Slams, the bigger tournaments somehow have to contribute by supporting. I think instead of thinking about playing four, five or six tournaments at the end of this year, we have to start thinking about 2021."

"The first thing that's cut in a company are the sponsors because they have to fire thousands of employees in many companies around the world. If we don't have sponsors, how can we survive?"

From a playing perspective, Lopez says a sudden return after such a long break could potentially be dangerous.

"This has been the longest period without hitting a ball in my life," Lopez said.

"I see a big risk because when tennis is going to resume, there's going to be a lot of injuries. I think this is something that we have to keep in mind to have at least two months to prepare and to work on your fitness condition to be ready."

Pochettino Wants to Manage Spurs Again



LONDON (AFP) - Former Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino says he wants to return to the Premier League club one day to finish the job he started.

The Argentine left Spurs in November, six months after leading them to the Champions League final, and has been linked with Newcastle in recent days.

Reports claim he is the main target of the Magpies' prospective new Saudi Arabian owners should they complete a takeover, but Pochettino could not disguise his desire to return to north London at some stage in his career.

The ex-Southampton boss, who spent more than five years at Spurs, told BT Sport: "It was an amazing journey that finished the way no one wanted it to finish."

"But deep in my heart I am sure our paths will cross again. From the day I left the club, my dream is to be back one day and to try to finish the work we didn't finish. We were so close to winning the Premier League and Champions League."

Pochettino said he felt motivated for his next job but still felt the pull of Tottenham.

The 48-year-old transformed Spurs' fortunes after arriving from Southampton in 2014 but failed to win a trophy.

Formula One Has A 50-50 Chance of Going Racing

LONDON (Reuters) - Formula E founder Alejandro Agag reckons both his electric series and Formula One have a 50-50 chance of getting races run due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has stalled both championships.

The Spaniard, whose city-based series started last November and completed five races before the virus forced it off the streets, said it was unclear how much was going to be possible as restrictions eased.

He said Formula One bosses, who have plans to start their season without spectators at Austria's Red Bull Ring in July before racing behind closed doors at Silverstone in Britain, were doing "the right thing trying".

"We are going to try the same thing. We are going to try to put some races behind closed doors," the Spaniard told Reuters in an interview via Zoom.

"I guess it's a 50-50 chance. The same for us," he added when asked whether he felt Formula One would manage to get races held.

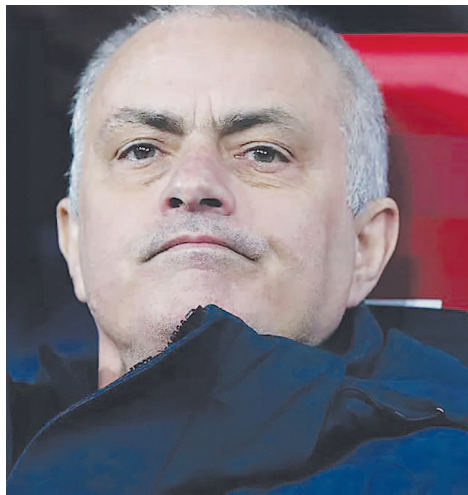
Formula E has a logistical advantage in that it has far smaller teams and controls all the cars, which are currently stored in Valencia in Spain, after the most recent race in Morocco at the end of February.

It also needs only a few more races to have a valid championship, with the normal season due to end in July but expandable into August and September.

"We will try and make at least two or three more races in a closed circuit. I think that should be possible in the month of August. But again, who knows?," said Agag.

"I'm thinking 90% they will be in Europe. We still have an option outside of Europe that we're looking at, that is still alive, but we will decide later on."

Agag reckoned Formula E needed between 950-970 people to put on a race, including broadcasters and safety staff, which would allow them to get under the limit of 1,000 imposed by some countries.



Football's Return Good for Everyone

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho believes bringing football back, even behind closed doors, would be a much-needed morale boost for fans starved of action during the coronavirus crisis.

No Premier League games have been played since March 9 due to the pandemic, which has claimed more than 26,000 British lives.

Dutch football chiefs have called an end to the Eredivisie season while French sports minister Roxana Maracineanu on Thursday called for the French league to end the Ligue 1 season.

England's top-flight clubs are due to meet on Friday with "Project Restart" at the top of their agenda. They will discuss how they can complete the season despite the logistical difficulties.

"I miss football," Mourinho told Sky Sports from the Tottenham Hotspur stadium, which has been transformed to house a testing centre, outpatient services for a local hospital and a food distribution hub. "But I prefer to say I miss our world, like I think we all do. Football is just part of my world. But we have to be patient, this is a fight that we all have to fight."

Even if matches can return, they will be played behind closed doors for the foreseeable future to minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

Mourinho, though, believes players will still be putting on a show for millions watching around the world.

Austrian GP Urged To Be Held Behind Closed Doors



VIENNA (Dispatches) - The Austrian Grand Prix, now set to be the first race of the coronavirus-hit Formula One world championship, will only be given the green light on condition it is raced behind closed doors.

Organizers of the July 5 grand prix at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg were told by the country's health minister on Wednesday that certain guarantees have to be met.

"Authorization to stage the event depends entirely on the security plan that the organisers present," Rudolf Anschöber told Radio O1.

"We will only allow such events under very strict conditions and of course, I think it goes without saying, without a crowd."

He told the Austrian Press Agency (APA): "We have done our part."

The government wants the race weekend to be organized on a "closed circuit" with the only people outside of the teams allowed being Austrians involved in the management of the race.

Earlier this week, Formula One boss Chase Carey targeted the season starting in Austria after the French Grand Prix was cancelled and fans barred from the British race at Silverstone on July 19.

The French Grand Prix, which was to have been held on June 28, was the 10th race of the season to be scrapped or postponed.

Postponing Games To Cost IOC Several Hundred Million Dollars

LONDON (Dispatches) - The postponement to 2021 of the Olympic Games in Tokyo because of the coronavirus pandemic will cost the International Olympic Committee (IOC) "several hundred million dollars", its president Thomas Bach said.

"We already know that we have to shoulder several hundred million US dollars of postponement costs," the German wrote in a letter to the Olympic movement, warning that, while the IOC would honour its financial obligations to Tokyo, it would probably have to make cuts.

"We also need to look into and review all the services that we provide for these postponed Games," he said.

"The IOC will continue to be responsible for its share of the operational burden and its share of the costs for these postponed Games."

The IOC, which has approximately \$1 billion (926 million euros) in reserves, took the historic decision to postpone the Games, scheduled to open on July 24, until July 23 to August 8, 2021.

If the coronavirus pandemic is not brought under control within a year, the Games cannot be postponed again and will be cancelled, the head of the organising committee (COJO) Yoshiro Mori warned on Tuesday.

