

**Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan
Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian and
Taliban Political Bureau Officials
Held a Phone Talk on the Latest
Developments in Afghanistan**

IRAN NEWS

**Foreign Ministry Spokesman
Abbas Mousavi Said That Iran Has
Sent Medical Items to Afghanistan,
Lebanon, and Germany as a
Token of Solidarity and Will
Continue to Help Nations in Need**

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Iran Warns of Dire Consequences If Arms Embargo Extended

TEHRAN (IFO) – President Hassan Rouhani has warned the U.S. and its allies that Tehran will never accept any breach of UNSCR 2231 and that it will have dire consequences for them.

Speaking in a Wednesday cabinet session, President Hassan Rouhani said he has written to the heads of state of the P4+1 and told them that the return of arms embargo will lead to a historic failure for them.

He stressed that the United States and some other countries must know Iran will not accept any violation of the Resolution 2231 at all.

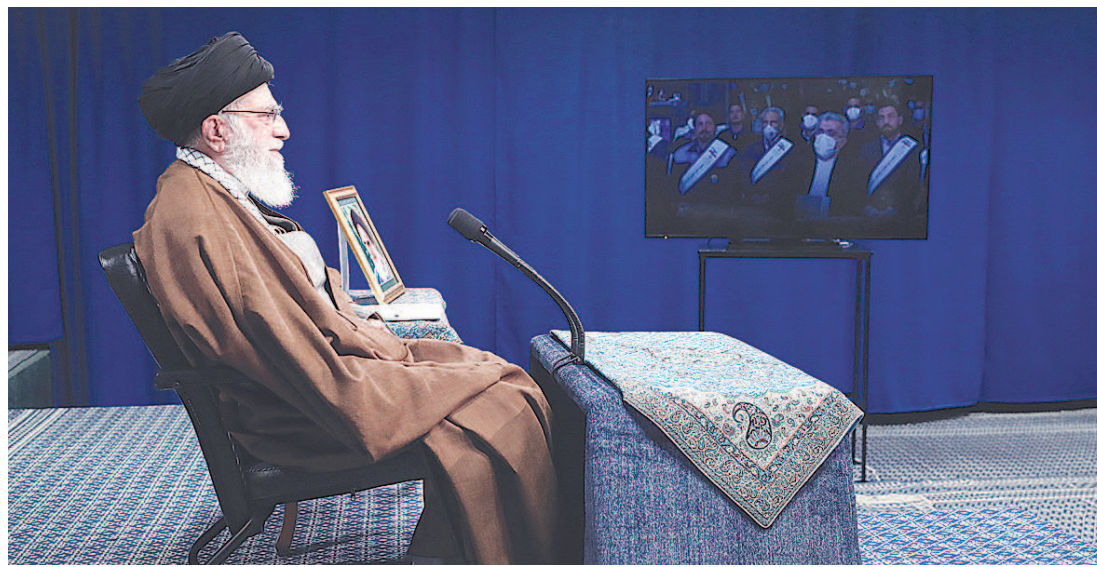
“Iran will not accept violation of UNSCR’s 2231 Resolution because it is the Islamic Republic’s absolute right to see arms embargo lifted.”

He went on to say that the US knows Iran will soon achieve success in lifting the arms embargo in the coming months.

“The United States has just come to its senses and regrets leaving the nuclear deal because the arms embargo will be lifted, and Israel and Saudi Arabia will soon tell [Donald] Trump it was wrong to leave the JCPOA. The JCPOA will no longer exist for the United States,” he reiterated.

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Surge in Production Accessible When Country Can Launch Satellite



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says this year’s target of a surge in domestic production would be totally achievable when the country has managed to launch a homegrown satellite into space.

Ayatollah Khamenei on Wednesday held a video conference with seven active manufacturers from different parts of Iran on the occasion of Laborers Week and as part of efforts to pursue the slogan of the year, “A Surge in Production”.

In the online meeting, the managers and a number of exemplary laborers delivered reports on the status of production and about their achievements, issues and problems. They also put forward solutions and proposals for settling the existing problems and realizing the slogan of the year.

In his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the need to protect the natural rights of laborers, including a fair salary, regular pay without delays, and job security. The Leader also praised the employers who have not laid off any employee after the outbreak of the coronavirus, describing it as a good approach.

“A key point is respecting workers’ rights. Fair and punctual payments and job security, which I’ve always stressed, are very important. Some of these gentlemen have mentioned that they haven’t fired any workers following the economic problems due to the coronavirus outbreak. This is very good,” the Leader said.

“Insurance, training, welfare and health services are workers’ rights and the responsibility of employers. Of course, if the needs of workers’ families including their children’s education are fulfilled, it will strengthen workers-employers relations, which is an auspicious thing,” Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

The Leader also highlighted the significance of domestic production in boosting the economy, saying, “Production can be compared to the body’s immune system. That is, if production is favorable and growing, invasive viruses like sanctions and oil prices cannot harm our economy.”

“Real cooperation between the labor force and employers can increase production and economic growth. The labor force should increase their skills and sense of responsibility; employers should increase the workers share from the income of the business,” the Leader emphasized.

“Some of our worker friends had complaints about legislation that overlooked workers’ opinions. Such regulations should definitely be designed justly, and business owners should take this into consideration,” Khamenei quoted the Leader as saying in the video conference.

“Some people keep saying it’s impossible and we can’t, but we can. When we can launch a satellite into space with a speed of 7,500 m/s, have put a satellite into orbit, and have made significant progress in the defense industry, then we can achieve a surge in production too,” Ayatollah Khamenei underscored.

“The Iranian wisdom and thought that can build a satellite and set a goal of a 36,000 km orbit for the next satellite, certainly enjoy the same spirit, innovation and creativity needed to produce cars with a consumption of 5 litres/100 km and for production in other sectors,” the Leader added.

Last month, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) successfully launched Iran’s first military satellite, dubbed Noor, into orbit. The homegrown satellite was launched with a three-stage satellite carrier, dubbed Qassed (messenger), from a launch pad in Dasht-e Kavir, a large desert in central Iran.

Russia Now Losing Out to China on Iranian Rail Route

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian government long assumed that Western sanctions on Iran would allow it to steal a march on the world by expanding its railroad connections to the south via the Islamic Republic while simultaneously ensuring that the South Caucasus remains a Moscow-dominated hub for both east-west and north-south rail transit. But China has responded by expanding its own westward rail connections through Central Asia—and not only across the Caspian Sea, as Moscow expected, but via Iran as well. As a result, Russia now appears to be losing out in the regional “railroad wars”. Illustratively, a subsidiary of Russian Railways has recently announced it is suspending its infrastructure projects in Iran, including critical portions of the north-south route.

Russian Railways claims this suspension “will not influence the development of partnership relations between Russian and Iranian railroads,” because other projects, including the electrification of the Garmsar-Inche-Burun line, are continuing. Clearly, however, Russia’s position in the Iranian railroad sector has weakened, to the alarm of officials in both Moscow and Tehran—but likely to the satisfaction of those in Beijing. Last week, Vlad Kondratyev, the well-connected editor of Kaspiskiy Vestnik reported that the Iranian ambassador to Moscow, Kazem Jalali, held a video conference with Sergey Pavlov, the first deputy head of Russian Rail, to talk about the future. According to the Iranian embassy, they discussed the project’s suspension.

According to the Iranian side, Pavlov stressed “the importance of multilateral cooperation for the activation of the north-south corridor and declared that the [Russian] government supports this project.” It is clear, however, that the Iranians are concerned about the Russian suspension of its infrastructure assistance program. The best result the Russians and Iranians could point to following the meeting was to say that “the sides have agreed on a continuation of contacts.”

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Iran Tops List in Accepting IAEA 2019 Inspections

LONDON (IRNA) – Iran’s Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna said by accepting 21 percent of total inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2019 and also accepting over 90 percent of inspections in its own group, Iran is now on top of the list.

Speaking to reporters, Kazem Gharibabadi said Iran is among 62 countries that implement additional protocols and safeguards agreements but still lack the IAEA’s broader aggregation of the articles and activities which have not yet been declared.

Based on the reports about implementing IAEA safeguards in 2019, from 466 inspections among member states, 432 ones were related to Iran which is equal to 92 percent of total inspections in its group, and 20 percent of them in the world, he added.

He noted that from 45 additional accesses among a 62-member group in 2019, 33 accesses have been made in Iran which is equal to 73 percent of the total accesses in this group and 24 percent total in the world.

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COVID-19 Kills 78 More in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iranian Health Ministry’s Public Relations Office Kianoush Jahanpour said on Wednesday that some 78 more Iranians died of coronavirus over the past 24 hours and that 81,587 people out of a total of 101,650 infected with the coronavirus have survived and recovered while unfortunately, the total number of dead people reached 6,418.

Jahanpour said that 1,680 new infected cases have been detected since yesterday.

Over the last 24 hours, 78 people died due to the deadly virus, he added.

He added that 531,275 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

Among those undergoing treatment in the hospital at present, 2,735 patients have critical health conditions because of more severe infection, he said.

The spokesperson also noted that more than 531,000 coronavirus diagnostic tests have been carried out in Iran so far.

The number of people infected with COVID-19 across the world surpassed 3,740,000 on Wednesday and the death toll exceeded 258,000.



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Iran Saves €3.4m Currency in Domestic Parts Manufacturing

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran saved over €3.4 billion worth of foreign currency in the field of domestic manufacturing of parts last year [ended March 20, 2020].

Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Reza Rahmani made the remarks and added, “the objectives of domestic manufacturing of industrial parts were realized through the conclusion of separate Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with other ministries and organization and also knowledge-based companies for indigenizing some imported parts and equipment.”

Following the sublime recommendations of Leader of the Islamic Revolution in realizing objectives of ‘Booming Domestic Production’, the Ministry of Industry put the developing production and deepening domestic manufacturing of parts atop agenda, Rahmani stressed.

With the studies made in the current year [started March 21, 2020], €3.2 billion worth of foreign currency will be saved in domestic manufacturing of parts, he said, adding, “once projects defined by the ministry are put into operation by 2021, more than €10 billion worth of foreign currency will be saved in the field of manufacturing various types of goods and parts in the country.”

Rockets Strike Near Baghdad Airport, Cause No Casualties

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The Iraqi military says three Katyusha rockets have landed in the perimeter of Baghdad International Airport.

The army said on Wednesday that it had found a rocket launcher with a timer in a rural area in western Baghdad, and that there were no reports of damage or casualties.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Meanwhile, security sources said the rockets had been fired from the Bakriya neighborhood, about 6 kilometers northeast of the Baghdad airport.

They also noted that it was not immediately clear whether a military base which hosts American troops near the airport was the target of the attack.

Anti-U.S. sentiment has been running high in Iraq following Washington’s January 3 assassination of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and senior Hashd al-Sha’abi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, in addition to several other comrades, outside the Baghdad airport.

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Iranian, Georgian FMs Discuss Coronavirus

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Georgian counterpart David Zalkaliani in a telephone talk late on Tuesday exchanged views on ways of fighting the highly contagious coronavirus disease.

During the phone conversation, Zarif and Zalkaliani discussed latest situation of bilateral relations.

Iran's tally of confirmed coronavirus cases neared the 100,000 mark on Tuesday, after 1,323 new cases of the virus were identified overnight.

Tehran, Baku Move to Broaden Economic Ties

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Senior presidential officials from the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan have expressed satisfaction with the growing economic cooperation between Tehran and Baku and have weighed plans for the expansion of bilateral relations and interaction in various fields.

In a telephone conversation on Tuesday evening, Chief of Staff of the Iranian president Mahmoud Vaezi and Hikmat Hajiev, head of the Foreign Policy Affairs Department of Azerbaijan's Presidential Administration, called for the continuation of economic exchanges between the two neighbors in conformity with the health protocols, stressing that there is no obstacle to the enhancement of mutual cooperation.

In the conversation, the Iranian president's chief of staff commended the Republic of Azerbaijan for its timely decision to convene an online summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group, adding, "The Republic of Azerbaijan, as the holder of the NAM presidency, not only did not allow the coronavirus outbreak to prevent the summit meeting, but also took a valuable step in coordinating collective action among the countries in the battle with the disease by choosing the issue of coronavirus as the main topic of the conference."

Vaezi also expressed hope that the stances and solutions mooted in the NAM summit would help the countries to join hands to overcome such global challenge and



stand against the parties that seek to take advantage of these problems.

He further expressed satisfaction with the growing trend in the cooperation and relations between Tehran and Baku regardless of the coronavirus outbreak, saying Iran hopes that the relations would continue to grow with a rapid pace.

For his part, Hajiev conveyed Azeri President Ilham Aliyev's gratitude to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani for participation in the online summit of the NAM Contact Group and for the topics of his speech in the conference, saying it would strengthen the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Republic of Azerbaijan attaches great significance to the promotion of cooperation with Iran in all fields, Hajiev added, noting that President Aliyev has made it clear for all Azeri authorities that the outbreak of coronavirus should not obstruct the growing trend in cooperation between Baku and Tehran.

He finally expressed hope that the two neighbors would strengthen economic and trade cooperation and exchanges by observing the health protocols and sharing the experiences in the battle with COVID-19.

Iran Dismisses U.S. Claim About Mistreatment of Afghan Migrants

TEHRAN (PressTV) – Iran has dismissed as a "bitter joke" US claim of Iranian border guards' involvement in the tragic deaths of a number of Afghan migrants near the border, saying a "war criminal" and "state sponsor of terror" is in no position to level such allegations.

Last week, some claims surfaced in media reports that Iranian border guards had tortured and thrown as many as 57 Afghans into the Hari River (Harirud) in western Herat Province to prevent their illegal entry into Iran.

The Khaama Press News Agency said at least 23 of them drowned in Harirud. The Afghan Foreign Ministry later said it had launched a probe into the claims.

Tehran has roundly rejected the claims, saying the incident took place on the Afghan side of the border and Iranian forces had no role in the incident.

Reacting to the news, U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary for South Asia Alice Wells took to Twitter on Tuesday and described as "horrifying" Iran's "cruel treatment and abuse of Afghan migrants alleged in these reports."

Responding to the U.S. later on Tuesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry posted a tweet on its English-language page to denounce Washington's stance.

"What happened to Afghan nationals in Herat is tragic and unrelated to Iran, but the US regime's allegation against Iran is a 'bitter joke.' The regime is a war criminal in Afghanistan and the state sponsor of terrorism across the globe," read the tweet.

It hailed Tehran's "strong ties" with Kabul, saying the Islamic Republic "leads the way to help" Afghan leaders set aside their election-related differences and form an all-inclusive government.

Red Cross Hails Iran's Achievements in Coping With Coronavirus

TEHRAN (IFP) - The International Committee of the Red Cross has praised the Islamic Republic's fight against the spread of the coronavirus saying the actions taken by Iran's Red Crescent Society during this period have been very significant.

Barbara Rizzoli, Head of the ICRC Delegation in Tehran, says the Islamic Republic has covered a wide range of activities in various fields, including prevention and treatment.

She said the Iranian Red Crescent Society, along with the health ministry and other responsible institutions, has played an important role in dealing with COVID-19.

She noted the measures taken by Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) included rapid diagnosis and screening as well as providing health care and shelter to the patients, but the most important activity of this society has been informing the public about health care.

Speaking on a meeting with Head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society Karim Hemmati in Tehran, she noted the ICRC has supported the IRCS as much as it could.

"One of the contributions was the payment of CHF 500,000 to the Iranian Red Crescent Society to use in containing the disease."

Rizzoli also referred to the joint moves and other support of the ICRC for the IRCS, underlining that "supporting joint measures is one of our activities. For example, the committee has cooperated with the Iranian Red Crescent Society in educating people about the dangers of landmines and producing educational content about COVID-19 disease."

"In the eastern parts of the country, specifically in Mashhad, we support a non-governmental organization



in providing personal protective equipment because we believe during the outbreak some activities become more important; therefore, we should pay more attention to them."

Red Cross Hails Iran's Achievements in Coping with Coronavirus 2She further referred to the International Red Cross Movement communications network, including the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as more than 200 other

societies, saying this network is a guarantee for the national societies to be able to use the best methods, and at the same time communicate with each other.

The Head of the ICRC Delegation in Tehran also stressed the important role of national societies in dealing with the crises such as COVID-19.

Navy Industries Heart of Country's Marine Military

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said on Wednesday that the Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization is actually the heart of the country's marine military industry and has an important role in the strategic goals of the country.

Rear Admiral Khanzadi and Head of the Iranian Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization Rear Admiral Amir Rastegari inspected the organization's projects in progress in Bandar Abbas in southern Iran.

Thanking the organization, Khanzadi said that the Iranian Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization has a pivotal role in the strategic goals of Iran.

Less Than 0.5% Iranians Infected With COVID-19

TEHRAN (IP)- Iran's Head of Contagious Diseases Department at the Ministry of Health said that only less than 0.5 percent of Iranians were infected with by the coronavirus COVID-19, so no herd immunity is true in the country.

Hossein Erfani announced that herd immunity would likely kick in at 70 to 75 percent of the population, while just 1 in every 1,000 Iranians has been was infected with the coronavirus.

So far, 99,970 people in the country have been infected with the coronavirus among whom 80,475 recovered, according to the Iranian Health Ministry on May 06.

"We are 'a long way' from herd immunity of COVID-19 in Iran, so people should not think we can go back to normal," he stressed.

The health official warned, "Since the disease does not yet have a specific vaccine and drug, and herd immunity has not been occurred in the society, so the vast majority of the society is still at risk."

He described following all health protocols and recommendations as the best way to keep the nation safe from the COVID-19.

Iran, Turkmenistan Hold New Round of Political Talks

TEHRAN (IFP) - The deputy foreign ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkmenistan held a fresh round of political consultations via video conference on Tuesday.

In the online meeting co-chaired by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araqchi and Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Vepa Hajiyeve, the participants discussed the latest status of political, economic, trade, and consular cooperation between the two sides as well as the regional and international issues.

Both parties emphasized the importance of bilateral relations between the two friendly and neighbouring states, and stressed the need for mutual cooperation and adopting prompt plans to remove the obstacles and problems caused by the coronavirus crisis.

Among the major agreements Iran and Turkmenistan came to in the meeting were the reopening of the rail and road border crossings between the two countries in compliance with the health protocols, cooperation in dealing with the economic impacts of the coronavirus global crisis, resumption of expert meetings between various economic organizations of the two countries via video conference, resumption of trade exchanges, and settlement of the transit problems.

The two sides also talked about the regional issues, including the developments in Afghanistan, and the regional security in the meeting.

Iran's Cement Loses One of Its Export Markets

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Kazakhstan is among the main buyers of Iran's cement and after the import of this product was banned, our producers lost one of their target markets," the head of Iran's Export Confederation Mohammad Lahoti said.

The Iranian official said that despite a commitment to the World Trade Organization and after the outbreak of the coronavirus, 88 countries have banned its imports, and Kazakhstan was one of them.

"We are pursuing this matter and the Trade Promotion Organization is also trying to resolve this issue through consultation," he added. Mohammad Lahoti said that our cargos are exported to Kazakhstan through the borders of Turkmenistan, and this country has made these restrictions more on the transport of goods.

Over 17.5 million tons of clinker and cement were exported from Iran in the past Iranian calendar year.

Abdolreza Sheikhan, head of Iran's Cement Employers Association, reports that this shows a 32% growth compared with the previous year.

"Our main export destinations over the period were Iraq, Kuwait, China, Bangladesh, and India, the littoral states of the Persian Gulf and Central Asian countries". In total, last year Iran produced 60.3 million tons of cement and 66 million tons of clinker, showing a 9% and 6.9% rise year on year.

Tehran, Vienna Mayors Discuss Fighting COVID-19



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi and his Austrian counterpart from Vienna Laurie A. DiRocco in a video call reviewed sharing experiences in fighting coronavirus.

In line with his video calls with world mayors, Hanachi referred to the difficulties caused by sanctions in buying health equipment, despite problems, the Iranian government has put on its agenda providing masks and health items.

"We started the social distancing plan after Nowruz Holiday and screened 72 people with the cooperation of the Iranian Ministry of Health," he said, adding that only those who were in critical condition were taken to hospital.

The capacities of the hospital were controlled and by taking advantage of Iran-Iraq war experiences new COVID19 department was launched in hospitals and increasing the number of hospital beds was put on the agenda. Hanachi referred to disinfecting pedestrian areas and transportation system, saying medical centers' studies show that 50% of infection in metropolitan cities is related to public areas and transportation.

Accordingly, buses and subways were disinfected two times a day.

He also invited Vienna mayor to visit Tehran.

Meanwhile, DiRocco said mayors of metropolitan cities should be in touch regardless of political issues. She congratulated Tehran Mayor and people on the arrival of the Holy month of Ramadan.

DiRocco praised the efforts made by Iran in fighting coronavirus which have resulted in reducing death toll and number of patients.

Stressing the similarity of Tehran and Vienna with regard to infected cases and death toll, she said one of the most important measures taken by Vienna was that suspected cases and patients were not directly taken to hospital and only severe cases were hospitalized.

"We tried to take advantage of Italy's experience and took care of retirement home," the Vienna mayor added. Closing shops and restaurants damaged our economy and increased the number of jobless people, DiRocco said, adding, "We are trying to normalize the situation and to make the economic atmosphere attractive step-by-step."

Hanachi had earlier held online chats with mayors of London, Rome, Istanbul, Ankara, Seoul, and Muscat.

Iran has taken numerous steps to stop the spread of the disease, ranging from closing down schools and universities to cancellation of cultural and religious gatherings. It is also constantly disinfecting and sanitizing public places.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:15
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:28
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:04

17. The day He will gather them together as well as those whom they worship besides Allah, He will ask: "Was it ye who let these My servants astray, or did they stray from the Path themselves?"

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (17)

Iran-UAE Trade Drops By 35% Due to Coronavirus Pandemic

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-UAE Joint Chamber of Commerce Farshid Farzanegan says the outbreak of the Coronavirus has affected the trade between Iran and the UAE as the trade has plunged by 35 percent.

In an interview with IRNA, he said the outbreak of the virus has decreased direct consumption and has disrupted the provision chain in the UAE and especially in Dubai.

On transportation of goods to the UAE, he said currently Emirati launches are in charge of transporting foodstuff and fish into the UAE but soon Iranian launches will get licenses for carrying foodstuff to the UAE.

Farzanegan expressed hope that talks between officials of both countries would ease the commute of Iranian traders to the UAE, especially those who are UAE residents.

He added that the private sector expects the foreign ministry to solve this problem and currently only few Iranian airlines are in charge of taking Iranians back to the country.

Asked whether any change in the trade volume of both countries is expected, he said in the long term and due to potentials of both states and measures taken by related officials, the bilateral trade volume would boost.

He reiterated the UAE is far better than other states in the Persian Gulf in terms of economic infrastructure, transportation and the IT.



Farzanegan stated that it is necessary to prioritize economic relation with this advanced country because the UAE can be a gateway for exports of Iranian goods to East Asian states like China, India North Africa and Latin America and this has a key role for surge in production in the year of surge in production.

He said Iran should develop its infrastructural industries, adding that infrastructures of the UAE is ten years more ahead of countries like Oman and Qatar and the private sector should help for deepening economic trade between Iran and the UAE.

Farzanegan said currently fruits, vegetables and foodstuff are major items being traded between Iran and the UAE.

He said the foodstuff trade of Dubai has stood at \$3b in the first quarter of 2020, adding that agro products and foodstuff are priorities of the UAE.

He urged Iranian private sector activists to take advantage of the current condition and the UAE's market.

He noted that the trade between Iran and Dubai in the first month of the current year Farvardin (March 20-April 19) declined by 35 percent because of the outbreak of COVID-19.

Petropars, NIDC Ink Cooperation MOU

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The Petropars Group and the National Iranian Drilling Company have signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in implementation of oil and gas projects.



According to Petropars, the MOU was signed by Hamid Reza Masoudi, CEO of Petropars Group, and Seyed Abdullah Mousavi, CEO of the NIDC.

Accordingly, the two sides stressed the need to provide conditions for cooperation in the implementation of future petroleum projects.

Having implemented various projects in the field of oil, gas and petrochemicals, Petropars, an Iranian exploration and production company, has a massive capacity to use the services of Iranian contractors in order to strengthen domestic companies.

The National Iranian Drilling Company, on the other hand, while enjoying 75 land and offshore drilling rigs, has the largest fleet of drilling machinery and equipment that can provide the drilling services required for Iranian oil companies.

Foolad Shahr, Buin Sewage Treatment Systems to Come on Stream

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company says currently construction and development of seven sewage treatment plants in Isfahan Province with credit of 441b rials are on the agenda of the company.



Eng. Hashem Amini said currently construction of four new sewage treatment plants in the newly-built counties of Chadgan, Golpayegan and Tiran are underway and also developing sewage treatment plants of counties of Foolad Shahr and Buin as well as package of Toudshek sewage plant are underway, adding that it is predicted in the current year, development of sewage treatment plants of towns of Buin and Foolad Shahr as well as the Toudshak sewage treatment package will come on stream and joint the network.

He added that Isfahan Province has the most number of sewage treatment plants in the country, noting that currently 26 sewage treatment plants in the province are working in the network, indicating that the province has the most sewage treatment plants in the province.

Amini pointed to different methods of treatment of wastewater in Isfahan, adding that there are several treating methods which are used in the province. He added that currently 12 sewage treatment plants work based on aerated lagoon method, 110 plants based on activated sludge method and 9 other plants on waste stabilization pond method.

He emphasized improving the quality of wastewater, adding that currently over 171m cubic meters of wastewater per annum is produced in Isfahan province based on the defined standards which is allocated to the industry, green space and ultimately to the environment.

Amini reiterated that construction and development of sewage treatment plants is very necessary because it plays key role in environment protection and helping the agro system.

Butane Production Doubles in Phases 17, 18 of S. Pars Gas Field

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Manager of Refinery 7 of South Pars Gas Complex said on Tuesday that phases 17 and 18 the complex have increased butane production by 100%.

Hassan Asaadi said that the most distinguished achievement of the refinery was production of ethane, propane, and butane, as well as complete overhaul.

Asaadi said that propane production increased by 71% in phases 17 and 18, adding that this year production of ethane will increase in the two phases.

Phases 17 and 18 of South Pars Gas Field have been inaugurated in the past few years, and have had a good influence on increasing production and removing limitations.

Iran's Saffron Exports Fall



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's National Council of Saffron says the outbreak of the Coronavirus has caused a decline in Iran's saffron export especially in the countries which are Iran's export destinations.

Speaking to ISNA, Mohsen Ehtesham said that last year and despite all woes and restrictions, saffron exporters in the country did their best to protect their shares of saffron exports in the international market but in last months of the year, they faced serious problems.

He admitted that unfortunately the virus has had negative impact on the business and trade worldwide and saffron is an export commodity which is mostly exported by air transportation while all flights were almost cancelled.

Ehtesham who is also the chairman of Birjand Chamber of Commerce added that in March and April, there were no flights in the country or the number of flights was in the lowest level, hence, saffron exports in the country declined or even came to a halt because of lack of means of transportation.

He added that now the country also faces fall in exports in the international markets and domestic demand for this commodity has also faced serious drop. He pointed to the lockdown of city of Mashhad which is the major religious tourism destination in the country hosting some 6m people annually and saffron is the major souvenir of the city. He said for this reason the domestic demand has declined by 80 percent.

Ehtesham noted that European countries like Italy, Sweden, Germany and France as well as China and the U.S. are the major markets for export of saffron which all have faced lockdown, and in exporting saffron to Arabian countries like the UAE as well as India, exporters have faced problem.

He admitted that although Iran is the biggest producer of saffron in the world, unfortunately nobody knows it because the country has not promoted this commodity properly in the world.

He expressed hope that in June and after relaxing restrictions and lifting lockdowns in the world, flights would resume and exporting saffron may be eased.

KSC Highlights Priorities in Year of Surge in Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Khuzestan Steel Company, as the second pole of raw steel production in the country and top exporter, plays an effective role in the national economy and earning forex as the company was one of the most successful industrial companies of the country in steel sector last year.

The CEO of Khuzestan Steel Company in an interview highlighted the priorities of the company for the current year which has been named year of surge in production.

Mr. Ali Mohammadi said that the main priority of the company this year is to safeguard the current trend of production quality and implementing the projects in fixed duration.

He said that fortunately the company could cover its predetermined schedule last year and it produced 3.7m tons of steel ingots and exported half of its production while the U.S. sanctions were getting tougher and tougher. He reiterated that this amount of production concurrent with international restriction as well as observing social responsibility means that the company marched on the path of the last year's slogan of the year.



Mohammadi added that the priority of the company for this year, year of surge in production, is to keep the current trend of production quality as well as implementing projects which should come on stream in a fixed duration. He noted that of course this policy has started years ago like construction project of mega iron sponge module plant with 1.7m ton capacity as well as construction project of 400-kilowatt substation. He further said that the company exported half of its products last year and it is determined to continue exporting at least the same amount this year because it can replace the country's oil exports for earning forex.

He stated because of high quality of products, the company has a say in pricing of products in the international market.

Mohammadi further said the company moves in direction to boost production capacity to 55m tons of steel ingot per annum, 89m tons of iron ore, 50 million tons of sponge iron and 80m tons of pellets, reiterating that the achievement needs boosting the transportation capacity.

AMF Secretary General Urges Traveling to Shiraz

SHIRAZ (IRNA)- Secretary General of the Asian Mayors Forum in a message on Tuesday congratulated Shiraz mayor and citizens on the city's commemoration day (15th Ordibehesht), recommending all tourists worldwide to visit the city after defeat of coronavirus.

In his message, Goshtasb Mozaffari described Shiraz as city of history, poetry, literature and of course city of warm and hospitable people, as well as a city which houses the capital of Achaemenids and tomb of Cyrus.

Shiraz is a city where the tomb of Sa'adi, the renowned Persian poet, social philosopher and famous thinker of the East, and Hafez, the poet who loves elevation and passionate love, is located, he said.

Who doesn't love Shiraz and isn't interested in seeing this beautiful city? And I highly recommend tourists from all over the world to travel to Shiraz during the post-corona period, the message said.

Mustafa Science, Technology Foundation to Convene Virtual Summit

TEHRAN (MNA) – Focusing on South-South collaboration to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Science and Technology Exchange Program, organized by Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation of Iran, together with its partners, is organizing the 7th STEP summit virtually May 18 and 28, 2020.

Online registration is now open for the virtual thematic summit on the Coronavirus.

The first day of the summit will be focused on "Sharing Experiences and Observations of the

Islamic Countries' Medical Staff in Dealing with COVID-19".

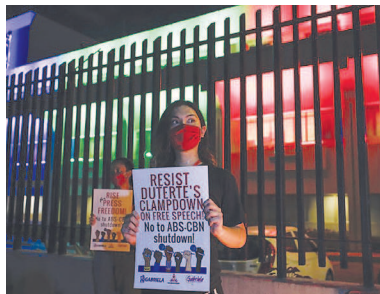
The second day will be focused on "Scientific discoveries, Technological innovations and Strategies Facing Coronavirus Challenges".

Participants at the summit will emphasize the importance of sharing knowledge, experiences, and achievements in this critical time to synergize the capacities and capabilities of scientists and experts in the Islamic world to help solve this global crisis.

Philippines Orders Leading TV Network to Shut Down

MANILA (AP) — A Philippine government agency on Tuesday ordered the country's leading broadcast network, which the president has targeted for its critical news coverage, to halt operations after its congressional franchise expired, sparking shock over the loss of a major news provider during the coronavirus pandemic.

The National Telecommunications Commission ordered ABS-CBN Corp. to stop operating after its 25-year congressional franchise ended Monday. The network's application for a renewal has been pending in Congress, which is controlled by President Rodrigo Duterte's allies, but hearings have been delayed, in part by a coronavirus lockdown.



Samsung Heir Apologizes Over Corruption Scandal

SEOUL (AFP) - The heir to the Samsung empire bowed in apology Wednesday for company misconduct including a controversial plan for him to ascend to the leadership of the world's largest smartphone maker.

Lee Jae-yong is vice-chairman of Samsung Electronics and was jailed for five years in 2017 for bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with the scandal that brought down South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

The 51-year-old was released a year later on appeal but is currently undergoing a retrial.



UK Has Now Europe's Highest Official Coronavirus Death Toll



LONDON (Reuters) - The United Kingdom has overtaken Italy to report the highest official death toll from the new coronavirus in Europe, figures released on Tuesday showed, increasing pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson over his response to the crisis.

Weekly figures from Britain's Office for National Statistics (ONS) added more than 7,000 deaths in England and Wales in the week to April 24, raising the total for the United Kingdom to 32,313.

Only the United States, with a population nearly five times greater, has suffered more confirmed fatalities from the virus than Britain, according to the data so far.

Tuesday's figures are based on death certificate mentions of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, including suspected cases.

While different ways of counting make comparisons with other countries difficult, the figure confirmed Britain was among those hit worst by a pandemic that has killed more than 250,000 worldwide.

"The UK has been hit very hard in this wave of COVID-19 and each death will (have) brought sadness to families," said Professor James Naismith of Oxford University, who is director of the Rosalind Franklin Institute of medical research.

Opposition politicians said the figures proved the government was too slow to provide enough protective equipment to hospitals and introduce mass testing.

"I'd be amazed if, when we look back, we don't think: yep we could have done something differently there," the government's chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance, said in response to lawmakers' questions on testing.

Responding to the ONS figures, a Downing Street spokesman pointed to Johnson's recent comments that Britain had passed the peak of the disease but remained in a "dangerous phase".

He also cited the advice of England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty: "Different countries are recording different things in relation to deaths."

Italy and Spain, the next worst-hit European countries, have smaller populations than Britain, further complicating comparisons.

"Putting a graph out with the United States at the top and UK second is not helpful, but once you start to break it down by looking at the population we should be seriously asking questions about what's different," said Carl Heneghan, professor of evidence-based medicine at Oxford University.

"Why are six countries disproportionately affected?" Heneghan added, referring to a list dominated by Europe.

Ministers dislike comparisons of the headline death toll, saying that excess mortality - the number of deaths from all causes that exceed the average for the time of year - is more meaningful because it is internationally comparable.

Trump Denies U.S. Role in Mysterious Venezuela Sea Invasion

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States on Tuesday denied involvement and alleged propaganda by leftist-led Venezuela after two Americans were said to have been arrested following a mysterious, deadly sea invasion.

President Nicolas Maduro, whom the United States has been unsuccessfully trying to topple for more than a year, appeared on state television Monday with the U.S. passports of a pair he said belonged to U.S. security forces.

While the imagery was straight from the CIA's disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, President Donald Trump's administration scoffed at involvement in such an apparently clumsy operation.

"It has nothing to do with our government," Trump told reporters, remarks echoed shortly afterward by Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

A State Department spokesperson, expanding on their denials, accused Maduro of cooking up a "melodrama,"

possibly with the help of Cuban intelligence, in hopes of distracting from problems inside crisis-hit Venezuela.

"There is a major disinformation campaign underway by the Maduro regime, making it difficult to separate facts from propaganda," the spokesperson said.

"The record of falsehoods and manipulation by Maduro and his accomplices, as well as their highly questionable representation of the details, argues that nothing should be taken at face value when we see the distorting of facts."

Maduro tied the alleged plot to Juan Guaido -- the opposition leader considered interim president by the United States and some 60 other countries -- and President Ivan Duque, the right-leaning president of neighboring Colombia.

The passports shown by Maduro identified the arrested Americans as Luke Denman, 34, and Airan Berry, 41.

The State Department, which routinely demands the release of Americans arrested overseas, said only that it was looking into their activities.



Poland's Solidarity Union Backs President Duda Reelection

WARSAW (AFP) - Polish President Andrzej Duda, who is running for reelection, on Tuesday won the support of the present-day incarnation of the government-friendly Solidarity trade union that brought a peaceful end to communism at home in 1989.

The election by postal vote only is scheduled for Sunday, but its organisation has been stymied by countless legal, constitutional, technical and safety issues.

The ruling right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party has for weeks been under intense pressure to postpone the vote because of the coronavirus pandemic, with calls for a delay coming from the liberal opposition, medical workers, the majority of the public and even certain government allies.

The PiS has so far refused to budge on the timing -- with analysts saying its calculus is that ally Duda has better chances of winning sooner rather than later -- but holding the vote on Sunday is increasingly looking untenable.

On Tuesday, Duda and the Solidarity union, which has several hundred thousand members and is close to the PiS, agreed a platform including a pledge to provide financial help to those who lose their jobs because of the pandemic.

The program also outlines a change to the retirement law that would allow people to leave the workforce after a certain number of years on the job as opposed to a certain age.

Over the last five years, "we've always been able to count on the president in tough situations," said Solidarity leader Piotr Duda, who is not related to the president.

The Solidarity leader also recalled that the incumbent's main rival Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz -- the head of the conservative PSL farmers' party -- was instrumental in raising

the retirement age in 2012 to 67 years for everyone. After coming to power in 2015, the PiS lowered it to 60 for women and 65 for men in 2017.

Putin Awards Commemorative WWII Medal to Kim Jong Un

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin has awarded Kim Jong Un a commemorative war medal marking the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, the Russian embassy in Pyongyang said Tuesday.

The medal was awarded to the North Korean leader for his role in preserving the memory of Soviet soldiers who died on North Korean territory, the statement said.

Russia's ambassador in North Korea, Alexander Matsegora, presented the award to the country's Foreign Minister Ri Son-gwon on Tuesday. Kim, who was rumored earlier this month to have fallen ill,

didn't attend the ceremony.

Photos of the meeting in Pyongyang showed Russian and North Korean officials wearing face masks despite the fact that North Korea so far has not reported a single case of the new coronavirus.

Last year Russia invited Kim to visit Moscow on May 9 and attend the military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the victory. Putin announced the decision to postpone the parade indefinitely last month because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In 2015, the North Korean leader rejected a similar invitation to the 70th anniversary, citing domestic affairs.



China Launches New Space Rocket Successfully

BEIJING (AFP) - China on Tuesday successfully launched a new rocket and prototype spacecraft, state media said, in a major test of the country's ambitions to operate a permanent space station and send astronauts to the Moon.

The Long March 5B rocket took off from the Wenchang launch site in the southern island of Hainan and eight minutes later an unmanned prototype spaceship successfully separated and entered its planned orbit, according to the Xinhua news agency. A test version of a cargo return capsule also successfully separated from the rocket, Xinhua added.

The spaceship will one day transport astronauts to a space station that China plans to complete by 2022 -- and eventually to the Moon.

It will have capacity for a crew of six.

The mission will test its "key technologies", including the control of its re-entry into the atmosphere, its heat shielding and recovery technology, Yang Qing of the China Academy of Space Technology and designer of the spaceship was quoted as saying by Xinhua in March. The United States is so far the only country to have successfully sent humans to the Moon.

But Beijing has made huge strides in its effort to catch up, sending astronauts into space, satellites into orbit and a rover to the far side of the Moon.

The successful maiden flight of the 54-metre Long March 5B -- which has a takeoff mass of about 849 tons -- should reassure China, following failures of the 7A model in March and 3B model in April.

"The new spaceship will give China an advantage in the area of human spaceflight over Japan and Europe," said Chen Lan, an independent analyst at GoTaikonauts.com, which specialises in China's space program.

The U.S. no longer has its own spaceship since retiring the space shuttle in 2011 and relies on Russia to send astronauts to the International Space Station. Beijing has launched several spacecraft since 1999 and the previous vessel, the Shenzhou, was modelled after Russia's Soyuz.

"It depends how ambitious the Chinese space programme is at the moment but missions beyond the Moon will be possible," said Carter Palmer, space systems analyst with US-based Forecast International consultancy.





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J, L.balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Elahieh Villa (\$4000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

Zaferanieh Apt
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S/p, S, J, pkg
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General Electric to Cut 10,000 Aviation Jobs

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - General Electric announced it will cut an additional 10,000 jobs from its aviation sector as the coronavirus pandemic decimates the industry, forcing companies to cancel orders.

The cuts will be a mix of voluntary departures and layoffs and come after an initial wave of

2,600 job cuts in March, GE said in a statement.

The company aims to reduce its aviation employment base by 25 percent, or some 13,000 employees.

The austerity program, which will affect all geographic zones, is reflective of the rough time the entire aviation sector is going through.



U.S. Trade Deficit Widens, Services Sector Contracts

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. trade deficit increased by the most in more than a year in March as a record drop in exports offset a shrinking import bill, suggesting the novel coronavirus outbreak was upending the global flow of goods and services.

Other data on Tuesday showed the tough measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus, pushed the nation's vast services sector into contraction in April for the first time in nearly 10-1/2-years.

The reports were the latest indication that the economy was sinking deeper into recession and that a sharp rebound was unlikely even as parts of the United States started to reopen. "Trade between locked-down countries all over the globe will continue to falter in what looks like a second Great Depression and it could be years before the globalization trend reasserts itself as the world grows more cautious during this unprecedented health crisis," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York.

The Commerce Department said the trade deficit jumped 11.6%, the largest rise since December 2018, to \$44.4 billion. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade gap increasing to \$44.0 billion in March.

Global lockdowns have severely disrupted supply chains and also weighed on demand for goods and services, shrinking economic output. In the United States gross domestic product declined at a 4.8% annualized rate in the first quarter, the steepest pace of contraction in output since the fourth quarter of 2008. Economists believe the economy entered recession in the second half of March when the social distancing measures took effect.

The National Bureau of Economic Research, the private research institute regarded as the arbiter of U.S. recessions, does not define a recession as two consecutive quarters of decline in real GDP, as is the rule of thumb in many countries. Instead, it looks for a drop in activity, spread across the economy and lasting more than a few months.

Though some parts of the country have started reopening, economists did not see the economy quickly returning to pre-pandemic levels, which they said would take years. Reopening the economy also involves the risk of a second wave of infections and further lockdowns.

A survey on Tuesday from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) showed its non-manufacturing activity index fell to a reading of 41.8 last month, the first contraction since December 2009. It was also the lowest level since March 2009 and followed a reading of 52.5 in March. A reading below 50 indicates contraction in the services sector, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity. The ISM survey's measure of new orders for the services industry dropped to a record low in April.

"We continue to expect that the apex of the impact of COVID-19 on the U.S. economy occurs this quarter, with GDP falling around 30% at an annualized rate," said Ryan Sweet, a senior economist at Moody's Analytics in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher as investors ignored the data, focusing instead on recovering oil prices and an easing of travel restrictions in several countries. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices were mostly lower.

Australia Losing \$2.5b a Week in Virus Shutdown

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's economy is losing Aus\$4 billion (US\$2.5 billion) every week its virus shutdown continues, with GDP forecast to plunge 10 percent in the June quarter, according to figures announced Tuesday.

The country has enjoyed success in curbing the spread of COVID-19, with new daily cases slowing to single digits or zero across most regions. But Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said measures to curb coronavirus were dealing a heavy blow to the economy, with GDP forecast to fall 10 percent in the June quarter.

"For every extra week that the current restrictions remain in place, the Treasury estimates that close to \$4 billion will be reduced in economic activity, from a combination of... reduced workforce participation, reduced productivity, and reduced consumption," he said. The estimate came as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported a 7.5 percent drop in jobs -- which it said was equivalent to about 700,000 workers out of an active workforce of some 13 million -- in the five weeks to April 18.

A third of workers in the worst-affected hotel and hospitality industries lost their jobs, along with 27 percent of people in the arts and recreation sectors.

The Treasury has previously estimated the unemployment rate will double to 10 percent by the middle of the year because of the coronavirus shutdowns, leaving about 1.4 million people out of work.

The ABS also reported that 31 percent of households nationwide had seen their finances worsen.

Frydenberg said the figures showed Australia "must get people back into jobs, and we must get people back at work" but the country had only met 11 of the 15 health conditions for lifting restrictions -- though work was ongoing to fast-track the remaining four.

Among those conditions is a greater take-up of the government's contact tracing app, COVIDSafe, which to date has been downloaded by almost five million smartphone users.

Australia has recorded more than 6,800 cases of COVID-19 and 96 deaths. Despite progress in some parts of the country, large clusters

of cases have emerged at an abattoir in Melbourne and a Sydney care home.

Some Australian states and territories have begun gradually easing some restrictions, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he hoped to lay out a "roadmap" on Friday for a return to business.

"Let's not forget when we ease these restrictions you will see numbers increase in some areas, you will see outbreaks occur in other places, that is to be expected," he said Tuesday after a meeting with regional leaders from around Australia. "What matters is how you deal with it, and how you respond to it."



IATA Backs Face Masks For Safe Flying

LONDON (Reuters) - The body representing global airlines came out in favour of passengers wearing masks onboard on Tuesday, as debate intensifies over how to get airlines flying while respecting social-distancing rules following the coronavirus crisis.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) told reporters that wearing masks would help protect passenger health but came out against leaving middle seats empty on aircraft, a measure it had previously said was likely. European flights have all but come to a standstill during the coronavirus pandemic. While there is no visibility on when travel restrictions will ease, airlines are considering how to safely restart services and give passengers confidence to fly.

Months without revenues is threatening to force some airlines out of business.

Britain's Virgin Atlantic said earlier on Tuesday that it would cut 3,150 jobs as it battles to survive, adding to the up to 12,000 jobs British Airways said last week it could shed and putting pressure on regulators to agree rules to help a quick restart when the health conditions allow.

IATA said it was working with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the United Nations aviation agency, governments and the World Health Organisation on new rules which would apply internationally.

ICAO could make an announcement on mandatory face masks on flights and other measures in June, IATA Director General Alexandre de Juniac said at an online news conference.

In April, de Juniac had said leaving the middle seat empty was among the likely conditions for a resumption of air travel to be discussed with governments around the world.

But Brian Pearce, chief economist at IATA, told the news conference on Tuesday that most airlines would have been unable to make money last year if a third of the seats had been removed on the industry's most-flown models.

De Juniac denied that IATA had changed its stance because of the damage flying two-thirds full would do to airline profitability. "The point is to see whether it is necessary to implement measures," de Juniac said.

The switch away from leaving the middle seat empty was based on scientific evidence, IATA's medical advisor David Powell said. "Nobody has demonstrated that having the middle seat empty reduces the chance of transmitting covid-19 from one person to another," he said.

IATA would instead be recommending wearing masks and face coverings onboard as part of a range of measures including screening passengers before flying to make sure they did not have a fever, plus enhanced cleaning procedures and limited movement in the cabin, as the basis for restarting flying safely.

Turkish Inflation Dips While Manufacturing and Trade Tumble



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish annual inflation fell to 10.94% in April as oil remained cheap and the coronavirus pandemic hit economic activity, while separate data showed manufacturing and trade fell in April.

Measures adopted to contain the pandemic are expected to tip Turkey's economy into a mid-year recession, pushing inflation lower in the coming months and clearing the way for the central bank to extend an aggressive easing cycle.

Yet a nearly 15% drop this year in the Turkish lira is curbing that downward momentum in prices, and propelling a sharp recent drop in the central bank's buffer of FX reserves, analysts say.

Turkey is almost entirely dependent on imports to meet its energy needs, and the recent plunge in oil prices had already pushed annual inflation down to 11.86% in March after four consecutive months of rises.

Transportation and recreation gauges -- which are sensitive to cheap oil and Turkey's partial lockdown, respectively -- nudged down the year-on-year measure of consumer prices, the Turkish Statistical Institute said.

Month-on-month inflation rose 0.85% in April, a bit more than a Reuters poll forecast of a 0.6% rise, due in part to rises in clothing and food prices.

After the data, the lira was 0.2% weaker at 7.02 against the dollar.

Reflecting rising risks in Turkish markets, 5-year credit default swaps jumped in the last two trading days and stood above 600 basis points.

"The weaker lira is a reason why Turkish inflation is unable to cool down quickly," said Tatha Ghose at Commerzbank. "The inflation rate needs to now decline swiftly in order to justify the central bank's actions and restore a positive real interest rate. But progress is slow, which is multiplying the risks."

The poll forecast annual inflation would fall to 10.88% in April and would stand at 9.6% at year-end.

EU to Add Panama to Money-Laundering List, Spare Saudi Arabia

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Commission is set to add Panama, the Bahamas and Mauritius to its list of countries that pose financial risks to the bloc because of failings on money laundering and terrorism financing, a draft document shows.

The document, seen by Reuters and expected to be published on Thursday, expands an existing blacklist but spares Saudi Arabia and U.S. territories that had been added to a previous listing before being shelved following foreign pressure. The Commission is also set to put Barbados, Botswana, Cambodia, Ghana, Jamaica, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe on the European Union list.

Countries on the list "pose significant threats to the financial system of the Union," says the draft document, which is still subject to changes. Under EU law, banks and other financial and tax firms are obliged to scrutinise more closely their clients who have dealings with these countries. Companies in listed states are also banned from receiving new EU funding.

The draft decision brings the current list from 16 to 22 states which will be closely monitored, although the higher scrutiny will only apply from October, the document says - a lenient approach the Commission said was due the disruptions caused by the current coronavirus pandemic.

Countries who were already on the list are Afghanistan, Iraq, Vanuatu, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Uganda, Trinidad and Tobago, Iran and North Korea.

All countries but North Korea have committed to changing their rules in order to better tackle money laundering and terrorism financing. The EU listing left out Saudi Arabia, the current holder of the G20 presidency. The Saudis were included in an EU draft list last year until that document was struck down by EU governments after pressure from the oil-rich kingdom. That was an exceptional case as EU member states only rarely interfere with listings which are largely a competence of the Commission, the bloc's executive arm.

Among other countries who were included in last year's draft list, but have now been spared, are Libya and the four United States territories of American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Guam. The listing of the U.S. territories had drawn criticism from Washington.

Malaysia Cuts Key Rate by Most Since 2009

KUALA LUMPUR (Bloomberg) -- Malaysia cut its benchmark interest rate by 50 basis points, the most since early 2009, as it seeks to bolster its newly reopening economy amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Bank Negara Malaysia slashed its overnight policy rate to 2%, as predicted by 14 of 20 economists surveyed by Bloomberg. Five had forecast a 25 basis-point cut, while one expected no change.

The central bank's "outlook on the economy remains gloomy as Covid-19 and lockdowns continue to squeeze demand and economic activity," said Maximilian Lin, emerging-markets Asia strategist at NatWest Markets in Singapore. "After the oil price collapse in April, Malaysia must now grapple with a weaker commodities export outlook on top of the impact from domestic social distancing measures. Further BNM cuts are likely."

The decision comes as Malaysia joins nearby India, Singapore and Vietnam in easing movement curbs to revive an economy battered by the virus. Most sectors were allowed to reopen Monday as the government lifted curfews and dismantled roadblocks around the country.

Some states including Selangor, which borders the capital Kuala Lumpur, are still keeping most businesses closed as the country continues to register new infections. The lockdown has cost Malaysia an estimated 63 billion ringgit (\$14.6 billion), according to Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, and is set to end fully by May 12.

"Economic conditions would be particularly challenging in the first half of the year," the central bank said in its statement. "Economic activity is projected to gradually improve" as restrictions are eased, the central bank said, while noting "a high degree of uncertainty" about the outlook.

Ten-year government bonds extended their gains after the policy statement, while the ringgit was steady at 4.3160 per dollar. Malaysia's stock index extended gains, climbing 1.4% as of 3:44 p.m. in Kuala Lumpur.

Direct Flight From Madrid to Tehran Resumes After 16 Years

TEHRAN (ILNA) - First group of Iranian expatriates in Spain demanding return to the country, including students, returned home amid coronavirus spread, and this was the first direct flight from Madrid to Tehran after 16 years.

According to Iran's Embassy to Spain, the first group of Iranians residing in Spain comprising 170 people returned home on Monday.

Applying for return tickets still continues and the second group of Iranians were to return to Tehran on Wednesday.



Total Barely Stays in Profit Amid Economic and Oil Crisis

PARIS (Dispatches) - Total barely managed to stay in profit for the start of 2020 as oil prices took a nosedive due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The French energy giant posted consolidated net income of £1.6m for the first quarter of 2020, compared to a £2.4billion profit in the same period a year ago.

It comes as the firm said commodity prices dropped 30% on average, leading to the decision to cut investments by 25% this year to £11.2bn, down from the £14.5bn forecast at the start of the year.

Meanwhile, the firm said its \$5bn (£4bn) divestment plan, which was due to be focussed on its exploration and production portfolio, will shift towards infrastructure and real estate, "given the less favourable context for upstream assets".

Total maintained a dividend of 0.66 euros per share.

Meanwhile production from upstream increased 5% during the quarter compared to Q1 2019, partly due to the Culzean gas field in the UK, but Total expects its output across the business to reduce in light of the oil crisis.

Chief executive Patrick Pouyanne has also agreed to a 25% cut in salary for the year.

However, the firm also announced plans to become a net zero emitter by 2050, following similar ambitions from BP and Shell.

The three-step plan includes going net zero by 2050 or earlier for Total's own operations, as well as energy products used by customers in Europe within that timeline or sooner.

Total is aiming to extend this to 60% reduction in emissions for energy products used globally by its customers by 2050. This will be done in stages, starting with a 15% average reduction by 2030 and 35% by 2040.

Mr Pouyanne said: "Energy markets are changing, driven by climate change, technology and societal expectations. Total is committed to helping solve the dual challenge of providing more energy with fewer emissions."



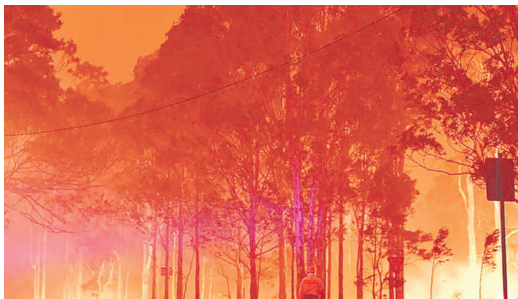
"We are determined to advance the energy transition while also growing shareholder value."

"We recognize that the trust of our shareholders, and society more widely, is essential to Total remaining an attractive and reliable long-term investment."

"And only by remaining a world-class investment can we most effectively play our part in advancing a low carbon future."

"This is the reason why our people are already in action across Total, seeking opportunities to reduce our emissions, improve our products and develop new low-carbon businesses."

April 2020 Tied for Warmest on Record



PARIS (AFP) - Last month tied 2016 for the hottest April on record worldwide, with particularly high temperatures over western Europe and north-central Asia, the European Union's climate monitoring network said Tuesday.

Temperatures were also well above average over parts of Greenland and Antarctica, accelerating the disintegration of kilometres-thick ice sheets that have become the main drivers of sea level rise, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported.

April 2020 was a statistically insignificant 0.01 degrees Celsius cooler than the same month in 2016, the warmest April registered since the late 19th century, when reliable records began.

"The average temperature for the 12 months to April 2020 is close to 1.3C above the pre-industrial level," the benchmark by which global warming is often measured, Copernicus said.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nearly 200 countries have pledged to cap the rise in Earth average surface temperature to "well below" 2C, and to 1.5C if possible.

The country that probably saw the warmest April compared to the past was Switzerland, where the thermometer last month rose a blistering 5C above the 1871-1900 average.

Siberia, central and northwest Africa, western Australia and Mexico all saw a warmer-than-usual April, as did the Arctic Ocean and the coast of Alaska.

By contrast, southern and southeast Asia were cooler than usual, while temperatures were especially chilly in central Canada.

The five last years have been the hottest on record, as was the decade from 2010-2019.

2019 -- the second warmest year ever -- was only 0.04C below 2016, when temperatures were boosted by a powerful El Nino, a periodic natural weather phenomenon over the Pacific Ocean.

Overall, global temperatures have risen more than one degree Celsius since mid-19th century levels, driven mostly by the burning fossil fuels. They have increased by about 0.2C per decade since the 1970s.

Atmospheric concentrations of CO2 -- which causes global warming -- are now at their highest level in at least 800,000 years.

The United Nations said last year that manmade greenhouse gas emissions needed to tumble 7.6 percent annually over the next decade to cap global warming at 1.5C.

Current pledges to cut emissions put Earth on a path of several degrees warming by the end of the century.

UK, U.S. Kick Off Post-Brexit Free Trade Talks

LONDON (AP) — After a delay caused by the coronavirus pandemic, British and American negotiators have opened negotiations on a trade agreement that the U.K. government hopes will bring a post-Brexit economic and diplomatic boost.

U.K. International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer held a video conference call Tuesday at the start of the two-week round of negotiations.

The two sides, which each have about 100 officials involved in the talks, said in a statement that a trans-Atlantic free trade agreement would "contribute to the long-term health of our economies, which is vitally important as we recover from the challenges posed by COVID-19."

Britain left the European Union on Jan. 31 after almost half a century of membership and now must



forge a new trade relationship with the 27-nation bloc, and with other countries around the world.

Britain and the United States promised to work at "an accelerated pace" to strike a deal.

The British government attaches great symbolic and political importance to

securing a free trade agreement with the U.S., though the economic benefit would be relatively modest. It said in March that eliminating tariffs on trans-Atlantic trade in goods would increase the size of the U.K. economy by only 0.16% over the next 15 years.

Many economists say those figures pale in comparison to the negative economic impact of leaving the EU. And critics of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government claim that striking a deal with Washington will require Britain to accept looser U.S. food and environmental standards, a claim the government denies.

Foreign Workers Feel the Pain of Corona Job Cuts in Japan

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Eight years after arriving from Brazil, Rennan Yamashita sat in a government office in central Japan, filling out forms for unemployment insurance after losing his job for the ninth or 10th time - he has lost count.

Some weeks earlier, he was laid off from his job at a car parts factory. He only held that job for four months.

"If they need you, they hire you; if they don't need you, they'll fire you. It's simple like that," said Yamashita, 31.

The coronavirus pandemic has hit Japan's economy hard and many factories, including those of carmakers, are scaling back production. Foreign workers are particularly vulnerable, with a weaker support network and language barriers that prevent them from seeking government help.

Union groups, labor lawyers and nonprofit organizations say foreign workers such as Yamashita are the first to lose jobs in "corona cuts", which they fear may expand to the kind of mass layoffs seen in the 2008 financial crisis.

Last month, the Japan Center for Economic Research estimated that if Japan's GDP contracted by 25 percent this year, the unemployment rate would reach 5% and about 2 million people could lose their jobs.

Russia...

FROM PAGE 1

Yet, in his assessment of this meeting, Kondratyev is far blunter. He says that "by all appearances, Russia and Iran are ending cooperation on one of the most important joint projects, the electrification of the Garmsar-Inche-Burun rail sector." That outcome, he suggests, is clearly being driven by the current economic crisis: only two months ago, Russian and Iranian officials were saying that Russian aid would be forthcoming and the project would take off. Obviously, that is not happening.

The Kaspiisky Vestnik editor insists that all is not lost—Russia has not backed out of its support of the Rasht–Astara portion of the Iranian rail network. This portion's completion would make possible, "at long last," the direct railway connection of Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran. Moreover, he suggests that the line Moscow has decided to stop funding upgrades on is, "to a certain extent," a competitor of the Rasht–Astara route. Therefore, Kondratyev argues, "it is not excluded that under conditions of the growing worldwide economic crisis, Moscow and Tehran will agree to concentrate their resources on the Rasht–Astara line, which," he insists, "more fully corresponds to the mutual interests of the two sides."

That is, of course, possible; but a more likely outcome is that Iran will turn to the Chinese for financing, fearful that Russia, having withdrawn from one project, will withdraw from others. Beijing has signaled it is quite prepared to do so, given that trade between China and Europe would be quicker and cheaper if it could go by rail through Iran rather than have to be offloaded onto ships to cross the Caspian and then be reloaded onto trains in the Caucasus. Tehran may feel it has no choice but to accept Chinese funding, even though it has made clear that its interests lie more in the development of the north-south route that Moscow backs than in the east-west one that Beijing prefers.

If this happens, as now seems likely given Russia's increasing economic difficulties, it will have three potentially major geo-economic and therefore geopolitical consequences. First, it will almost certainly end Chinese interest in using Russian routes for its trade with Europe, thus eliminating one of the pillars Moscow had relied on to cement a new alliance with Beijing. Moscow may still move toward such an arrangement, but it will have less to bring to the table and may have to make more concessions to China. Second, it is likely to mean that China will be even more capable of guaranteeing its dominance over rail traffic in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. This outcome will challenge Moscow's position in both regions and possibly reorient the foreign policies of at least some of those countries away from Russia (and from the West as well) and toward China. And third, and not unimportantly, it will give China greater opportunities to project its rising power into the Middle East.

These are all developments that many not only in Moscow, but also in the West, do not want to see; and consequently, it is likely Russia may try to revive its cooperation with Iran by focusing on other issues, including the sensitive nuclear deal, as Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov did in his talks with his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, at this year's Munich Security Conference. The West, in turn, has fewer levers—after all, Western sanctions are what prompted Tehran to turn first to Moscow and then to Beijing. But Europe and the United States will likely seek other means to block this latest manifestation of the rise of China as well as the associated return of Iran to active geopolitics.

Iran Warns of...

FROM PAGE 1

Rouhani added that on May 8, 2018, the US withdrew from the JCPOA under pressure from domestic extremists, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. "It was a foolish act," he said.

"They imagined if they leave the nuclear deal, we will withdraw from it too, but we didn't, and Trump's dream did not come true. Trump's first shot missed and they got very angry. All of Trump's advisers said Iran would leave the same day and they would take the case to the Security Council the day after."

"Then, we gave P4+1 a deadline and extended it. In total, it took a year. On May 8, 2019, we terminated the deadline announcing we will start reducing the commitments step by step. In five stages, we reduced the commitments. Now we are even; that is, we have stepped back from our commitments, and the P4+1 has largely stepped back," he noted.

"Whenever they are willing to fulfill their obligations in full, we will return to our commitments on the same day," underscored Rouhani.

Since one or two months ago, the Americans have come to their senses and realised they have made a big mistake, said Rouhani, noting the Americans are caught between and if they continue, the arms embargo will soon be removed.

"If they decide to return to the nuclear agreement to use the snapback mechanism, there is no nuclear deal anymore (for them). For the United States, the JCPOA is over, unless they make up for all their mistakes and set aside sanctions," he added.

Iran Tops List...

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Referring to Iran's full transparency in its peaceful nuclear program and that a significant volume of the agency's inspections is carried out under the influence of Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Gharibabadi said thanks to unfavorable conditions of the JCPOA, Europe's lack of commitment and the US' plans to carry out other destructive measures in the UNSC and out of it, cooperation is not the only option for Iran.

Iran has a range of options like establishing cooperation, returning to safeguards commitments, and revising these commitments that it will adopt one of them based on other parties' acts, he reiterated.

In the wake of the U.S. unilateral and illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran tries to preserve the deal on the condition that other parties comply with their commitments. But after about two years and due to the Europeans' inability to be committed, Iran started reducing JCPOA-related commitments aiming to preserve Iran's economic interests.

Britain, France, and Germany initiated a process that could lead to the United Nations' sanctions being re-imposed on Iran and the collapse of the 2015 nuclear deal despite the fact that they did not fulfill their commitments to the JCPOA after the US withdrawal since May 2018.

Rockets Strike...

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Iraqi resistance groups have vowed to avenge the assassinations, but denied any role in such rocket attacks.

Two days after the assassinations, the Iraqi parliament voted for a resolution that called for an end to the presence of all foreign forces, including the Americans.

Washington, however, has threatened sanctions should U.S. troops be expelled from Iraq instead of ending the occupation of the Arab country.

Barca Players Set For COVID-19 Tests

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Barcelona's players will return to their training ground on Wednesday for the first time since early March to undergo testing for the coronavirus as La Liga clubs begin the path back to activity ahead of a planned return to action in June.

"The first team will return to the training ground on Wednesday to do the necessary tests before starting individual training in the next few days," the Spanish champions said in a statement on Tuesday.

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England Men's Team Make Significant Donation

LONDON (Dispatches) - The England men's team have made a "significant donation" to the National Health Service to help the fight against the coronavirus.

Gareth Southgate's squad have used match fees dating back to September 2018 to make the donation.

The cash will go to NHS charities and the move comes in conjunction with the 'Players Together' movement involving Premier League stars from a host of clubs.

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SPORTS

THURSDAY MAY 7, 2020

WTA Chief Backs Federer's ATP Merger Suggestion

NEW YORK (AFP) - The head of the WTA Tour has voiced support for a merger with the ATP Tour following calls led by Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal to integrate the men's and women's circuits.

In an interview with the New York Times published Tuesday, WTA chief executive Steve Simon said a unified circuit made sense.

"I'm not afraid of the full merger; I never have been," Simon told the Times.

"I would certainly be the first to support it ... Obviously it's a long and winding road to get there, but I think it makes all the sense in the world."

Simon's remarks came after Federer and Nadal voiced support for a merger last month.

"Just wondering... am I the only one thinking that now is the time for men's and women's tennis to be united and come together as one?" Federer asked in a posting on Twitter.

Federer's statement drew enthusiastic support, with Nadal and trailblazing women's tennis legend Billie Jean King among those aligning with the Swiss ace.

"I agree, and have been saying so since the early 1970s. One voice, women and men together... Let's make it happen," King tweeted.

"I completely agree that it would be great to get out of this world crisis with the union of men's and women's tennis in one only organization," Nadal added.

PFA Chief Suggests Shorter Matches to Lighten Load on Players

LONDON (Dispatches) - The head of the English Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) has raised the possibility of playing shorter matches to lighten the load on players if the season can restart.

English clubs remain committed to completing the campaign despite severe concerns over player welfare.

Players could be tested up to three times a week and be forced to stay quarantined in hotels away from their families for a number of weeks to help limit the risk of them becoming infected with coronavirus.

With 92 matches in the Premier League season still to be played, players could have little preparatory time to work on their fitness in group training before being rushed back into playing twice a week.

FIFA have proposed increasing the number of substitutes allowed per side from three to five to also lessen the risk of fatigue and injuries for players on their return.

"Safety has to be paramount," PFA chief executive Gordon Taylor told the BBC.

"We don't know the future. What we do know is what propositions have been put, what ideas have been put, the possibility of having more substitutes, games possibly not being the full 45 minutes each way.

"There's talks of neutral stadiums. There's been lots of things being put forward.

"Try and wait and see what the proposals are, and then have the courtesy to let the managers and coaches and players also assimilate all those and come to a considered view." The Premier League's "Project Restart" has been met with some resistance over plans for all remaining games to take place at up to 10 neutral venues.

The remaining matches would need to be played behind closed doors, but there are fears fans could congregate around stadiums.

Some top-flight clubs have argued that under those circumstances there should be no relegation as the sporting integrity of the competition is compromised.

However, chairman of the English Football League (EFL) Rick Parry said denying promotion to three Championship clubs would end up in legal battles.

"The lawyers are going to get wealthy if that happens," Parry told the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committee on Tuesday.

In his interview with the Times, Simon said that any unification was still some way in the distant future.

However, the climate of uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic could provide the impetus to reach agreement on a merger.

"This is a unique time," Simon said.

"Crisis and challenges can sometimes provide opportunity as well.

"There's going to be no shortage of accountants, tax attorneys, attorneys and everybody else that is involved with it. It would take time, but conceptually it may not take as long.

"If you agree on the goal, you can usually get things done quicker."

Both the ATP and WTA Tours have been forced to take cost-cutting measures since the COVID-19 pandemic erupted. Both tours have been on hiatus during the crisis, with several tournaments either canceled or postponed.

Simon told the Times that a merger was not necessary to ensure the WTA Tour's survival.

"This isn't about trying to save the WTA," Simon said.



Meanwhile with sports clubs closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, tennis enthusiasts in Munich have taken to the Bavarian capital's deserted landmarks to play.

Christoph Hanke, who in 2015 founded World Club Tennis to enthuse people for the sport, wanted to find a way to keep members interested and give them something to look forward to.

So he and fellow World Club Tennis member Susanne Wildgruber set off to play on as many of Munich's famous sites as possible.

"To be able to come off the tennis courts and play in the middle of the city on these public squares was a really special experience and was a lot of fun," Wildgruber told Reuters TV. "Some places worked better than others."

So-called urban tennis is flourishing under lockdown, with members taking video of themselves playing all over the world.

"We'll be fine, but look, if we're going to do the right business thing and we're finally going to bring the sport together, I think the WTA would be very supportive of this concept."

Nadal Pessimistic About Return to Action Before 2021



MADRID (Reuters) - Rafael Nadal does not expect to return to play competitive tennis until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has decimated much of this year's calendar.

"I hope we can return before the end of the year but unfortunately, I don't think so," the world number two told Spanish newspaper El Pais on Tuesday.

The pandemic has led to the cancellation of Wimbledon and the postponement of the French Open to September, while the status of the U.S. Open, scheduled to take place as usual in late August, is still unclear.

Nadal, however, said he had practically written off the remainder of the year and was looking to the Australian Open in January 2021 as the next tournament he will play.

"I would sign up to being ready for 2021," the Spaniard added.

"I'm more worried about the Australian Open than what occurs at the end of this year. I think 2020 is practically lost. I hope we can start up again next year, I really hope that's the case."



Ramsey First Back at Training, Ronaldo in Quarantine

MILAN (Dispatches) - Welsh international Aaron Ramsey was the first Juventus player to return to individual training at the team's sports centre in Turin on Tuesday as Cristiano Ronaldo began two weeks' quarantine after returning to Italy.

Ronaldo flew back to northern Italy by private jet on Monday night after almost two months in coronavirus lockdown in his native Portugal.

Midfielder Ramsey joined Juventus this season after 11 years with Arsenal, and scored his fourth goal in their last game against Inter Milan behind closed doors before the championship was suspended on March 10.

Champions Juventus are leading Serie A, one point ahead of Lazio, as they target a ninth consecutive Scudetto.

Captain Giorgio Chiellini followed shortly after Ramsey, with fellow Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci, wearing a black face mask, arriving later in the afternoon. Italy's interior ministry has given the go-ahead for players to return to club training facilities two weeks ahead of schedule, offering a glimmer of hope that the 2019-20 season might yet be saved.

But sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora warned that training in groups must wait until May 18, and it remains uncertain whether matches can restart as the country battles a pandemic which has killed over 29,000.

"A realistic prediction can be made in mid-May," Spadafora said in an interview with Corriere della Sera on Tuesday, denying that he wanted to call a halt to the season.

"It would be surreal for a sports minister to demonize football," he said.

Premier League Return Would Lift Morale

LONDON (Dispatches) - Restarting the Premier League would be a boost to Britain's morale amid the coronavirus crisis, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said on Tuesday.

Premier League chiefs have targeted a June return to action as they bid to finish the season over the summer.

England's top-flight has been suspended since March 13 and there are still 92 matches remaining, with the title, relegation and Champions League qualification all to be resolved.

Some critics have questioned whether the Premier League is trying to return too soon after the top tier seasons in France and the Netherlands were abandoned.

But Raab sees merit in the Premier League's 'Project Restart'.

"I think it would lift spirits of the nation and people would like to see us get back to work and children can go to school safely but also past times like sport," he said during a government press conference. "I know the government has had constructive meetings with sports bodies to plan for athletes return to training when it's safe."

However, Raab emphasised sport in Britain could only resume once it can be done safely.

"I can tell you that the Culture Secretary has been working on a plan to get sport played behind closed doors when we move to second phase so that is something we are looking at," he said.



Bundesliga Set To Be Given Green Light for Restart

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's Bundesliga is set to be given the green light for a restart, probably from May 15, as part of measures to further ease the country's coronavirus regulations, two people familiar with the preparations told Reuters.

The Bundesliga would be the first of the five major European domestic soccer leagues to resume play after a stoppage which has seen almost all football put on hold around the world since mid-March.

German states are set agree on the restart in a teleconference with Chancellor Angela Merkel scheduled for Wednesday, the sources said. Matches would take place under strict conditions - and with no fans in stadiums.

So far Portugal, Poland and Hungary have given dates for restarting their national leagues, all towards the end of May. Germany's professional teams have been training since mid-April, divided into small groups and under strict conditions which include extensive testing of all players and coaching staff.

The German Football League (DFL) has submitted a health safety plan for games without spectators which includes regular testing of players but no quarantines for entire squads in cases of positive tests. However, it says that if a player is infected, decisions on the measures to be taken lie with the local health authorities.

