

Judiciary Chief Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi Says Both Producers And Consumers Are Unhappy About the Market and Urged Supervisory Bodies to Take Serious Measures to Control the Prices

IRAN NEWS

Head of Security Unit of Ministry of Tourism, Cultural Heritage, and Handicrafts Said That Safeguarding Historical Objects and Cultural Heritage of Iran Requires People's Help and Cooperation

VOL. XXVI, No. 6950 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY MAY 19, 2020 - ORDIBEHESHT 30, 1399

2

DOMESTIC

Majlis Endorses Anti-Israel Motion Ahead of Quds Day



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

China Is Still Main Destination For Iran Exports



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

Suicide Bomber in Eastern Afghanistan Kills 5



> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

Bayern Brush Union Aside On Bundesliga Return



> SEE PAGE 8

Tehran Urges Baghdad To Boost Bilateral Trade

TEHRAN (IFP) – President Hassan Rouhani has assured his Iraqi counterpart that Tehran will keep supporting the Arab country and its sovereignty, calling for plans to promote mutual economic cooperation and resume the trade exchanges in compliance with the health protocols.

In a telephone conversation with President of Iraq Barham Salih on Monday, President Rouhani gave an assurance that Iran's principled policy entails the enhancement of cooperation and relations with Iraq in all fields.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will stand by the Iraqi government and nation like the past, and calls for the protection of Iraq's sovereignty and non-interference from the foreign powers in the fate of this country's (Iraq's) nation and government," the Iranian president underscored.

He further stressed the need for the expansion of economic cooperation between Iran and Iraq, saying, "We must try to restore the trade exchanges between the two countries to the previous course in full conformity with the health instructions along the entire common borders."

[See Page 7](#)

69 More Iranians Die From COVID-19

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iranian Health Ministry's Public Relations Office Kianoush Jahanpour said on Monday that some 69 more Iranians died from coronavirus over the past 24 hours bringing the total death toll to 7,057.

He said that some 95,661 people out of a total of 122,492 infected with the coronavirus have survived and recovered.

Jahanpour said that 1,806 new infected cases have been detected since yesterday.

The Iranian official noted that 2,294 cases are in critical condition.

He added that 701,640 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

Among the new patients, 534 were hospitalized and 1,760 were outpatients. The health ministry spokesman warned people to implement the hygienic protocols and rules and said, "Nothing has changed on the virus conditions."

[See Page 7](#)

U.S. Forces to Be Expelled From Syria and Iraq



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says due to its support for terrorists, the U.S. is hated in most parts of the world and will be soon expelled from Syria and Iraq, where it is illegally present in the two Arab countries.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks while speaking in an annual Ramadan meeting with Iranian university students on Sunday, which was carried out through videoconferencing in the light of this year's coronavirus pandemic and in compliance with health officials' recommendations.

"The long-term performance of the United States, including warmongering, helping notorious regimes, harboring terrorist, [and] sparing no effort in supporting oppression, has caused this government to be hated in an important part of the world," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei added, "Today, the American society and political system are not attractive, but are a subject of hatred in an important part of the world too."

The Leader noted that part of the existing hatred for the United States emanates from the behavior of its current officials, including its president and its "talkative, illogical, and nonsensical" secretary of state.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted US warmongering in other countries, including in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria as another reason why the US regime is hated so much.

"Americans explicitly say 'we have sent military forces to Syria, because there is oil [in that country]'. Of course, they will not remain long neither in Iraq, nor in Syria and must certainly leave them and will undoubtedly be expelled [from those countries]."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader touched on the country's current situation from three different viewpoints, saying, "The Islamic Republic is currently engaged in a major struggle against the oppression and arrogance front."

"The country enjoys a very high potential for confrontation [with the oppression and arrogance front] and past experience with different issues shows this to us," Ayatollah Khamenei explained.

The Leader emphasized that the victory of the Islamic Revolution has "institutionalized a sense of power and dignity in our country and people."

"Of course, the enemy is looking for an opportunity to strip us of our sense of national self-confidence," Ayatollah Khamenei warned.

U.S. Mulls Pulling Supply Chains From China

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – U.S. lawmakers and officials are drawing up proposals aimed at encouraging American companies to move operations or major suppliers out of China.

There are widespread discussions currently underway about the proposals which will include tax breaks, new rules, and carefully structured subsidies, Reuters reported Monday citing interviews with a dozen current and former government officials, industry executives and members of Congress. The proposals, which also include the idea of a "reshoring fund" originally stocked with \$25 billion, aim to push U.S. companies to drastically revamp their relationship with China. The funding would encourage companies that produce essential goods to move production home, making it possible to make products far down the supply chain domestically, according to two administration officials.

U.S. President Donald Trump has long promised to bring manufacturing back from overseas, however, the coronavirus pandemic and concerns about US dependency on China in terms of medical and food supply chains are "turbocharging" new eagerness for the idea in the White House.

Trump takes an extraordinary step of calling on US companies to stop doing business with China in response to China. Meanwhile, Republicans and Democrats are both crafting bills to reduce U.S. reliance on Chinese products, which made up some 18% of overall imports last year. "The whole subject of supply chains and integrity of supply chains... does have a greater place in members' minds," Representative Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, told reporters earlier this month.

"Coronavirus has been a painful wakeup call that we are too reliant on nations like China for critical medical supplies," U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham said in a press release on Friday. He is likely to propose a new bill this week.

In addition, Republican Senator Josh Hawley seeks local content rules for medical supply chains, and "generous investment subsidies" to encourage domestic producers to increase their production of a range of goods and components. On May 10, Republican Senator Marco Rubio introduced a bill that would forbid sale of some sensitive goods to China, and increase taxes on US firms' income from China. Meanwhile, Democratic Representative Anna Eschoo and Republican Representative Susan Brooks have introduced a bipartisan bill that would commission a panel to come up with ways to decrease drug supply reliance on China.

"SOS Act" put forward by Republican Representative Mark Green also proposes funding takeovers of susceptible American companies that are critically important to US national security.

Zarif Warns U.S. Against Interference With Fuel Transfer to Venezuela

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran has warned the United States against any interference with the transfer of fuel by Iranian tankers to Venezuela.

Following the release of reports suggesting U.S. officials had threatened to harass Iranian tankers carrying fuel to Venezuela, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, warned the United States about sending troops to the Caribbean Sea with the aim of interfering with the transfer of Iran's fuel to Venezuela.

In the letter, Zarif dismissed the United States' illegal, dangerous and provocative move as a kind of marine piracy and a major peril to international peace and security.

Zarif stressed that the U.S. must give up bullying on the world stage and respect the rule of international law, especially free shipping in the high seas.

He recalled the U.S. government's responsibility for the consequences of any illegal action, and underlined Iran's right to adopt appropriate and necessary measures to counter these threats.

[See Page 7](#)

S. Korea Offers \$1m Worth of Virus Testing Equipment to Iran

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea said on Sunday that it has provided \$1m worth of coronavirus test devices to Iran to support its fight against the global pandemic.

The South Korean Embassy in Tehran said that the assistance was offered to Pasteur Institute, an Iranian state-run medical research institute, as a token of humanitarian support and friendship between the two countries.

Last month, South Korea provided about \$200,000 worth of assistance to Iran, including coronavirus test devices and spray disinfectant.

Iran's health authorities said the country has so far reported over 120-thousand cases of coronavirus, with its death toll standing at some seven thousand.

Iran Annual Non-Oil Exports Could Hit \$100b

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of the Export Promotion Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says Iran has the capacity to increase its annual non-oil exports to \$100b.

Speaking to ILNA news agency, Mr. Jamshid Nafar said, "If the government consults with the private sector in the export sector, we can achieve the last year's export figures and even more, otherwise reaching this goal will be very difficult."

Referring to the downward trend in the exports in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), Nafar said: "In Farvardin [the first Iranian calendar month], the figure has only reached \$1.6 billion, which is perfectly normal considering the problems caused by the coronavirus outbreak, the problem will be solved by the opening of the borders."

"Our main problems in exports are the lack of infrastructure, problems related to various directives and management issues, and if we want to increase the value of exports, we must find solutions to these problems," he said.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government is pursuing in the current Iranian calendar year.

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

Iran Backing Iraqi Leaders' Collective Decision

TEHRAN (FNA) – Majlis Speaker's Special Advisor for International Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian underlined that the Islamic Republic as always supports the decisions taken by all Iraqi leaders.

"The election of new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi is a purely Iraqi-Iraqi agreement and Iran supports the decision of the Iraqi political authorities and the Iraqi National Assembly," Amir Abdollahian said. He noted that the Americans are seeking to secure their interests in Iraq.

Majlis Endorses Anti-Israel Motion Ahead of Quds Day

TEHRAN (IFP) - Majlis has endorsed an anti-Israel motion which outlines the manner of confrontation on the national and international scale with the Tel Aviv regime's "atrocities".

According to the motion, which was unanimously endorsed by the Parliament in a Monday session, companies affiliated with Israel will be banned from participating in any international exhibition, conference, congress, and seminar held in Iran.

The use of any Israeli-made hardware and any software platform belonging to Israel will be prohibited in Iran.

No Iranian company will be allowed to offer services to these platforms. Any violation will result in prison term and other punishments, the motion said.

Any intelligence cooperation with or spy activity in favor of Tel Aviv will be regarded as "Corruption on Earth" and will be punished in severest form (death penalty).

It is also illegal for Iranian officials to hold any political cooperation, deal, interaction or exchange of information with official or non-official figures and bodies affiliated with Israel. Any violation of this ban will result in imprisonment and permanent removal from official positions.

The motion also bans any direct or indirect intentional assistance for Israel – in security, military, political, cultural, media, and economic fields – which helps reinforce or recognize the Zionist regime.

Any transit of goods produced by companies affiliated with Israel through the Islamic Republic of Iran is illegal. Any Zionist living in the occupied territories will also be banned from entering Iran. Any violation of this article will result in imprisonment and deportation. Meanwhile, the Iranian Foreign Ministry is obliged to lay the groundwork for the creation of the Islamic Republic's Virtual Embassy in Palestine within six months, and submit the results for approval to the cabinet.



In so doing, the Ministry was required to conduct consultations with the countries that it saw fit, the motion said.

The Ministry was also asked to pursue Iran's initiative for "realization of nationwide referendum in Palestine" — a plan that the Islamic Republic has devised with emancipation of the territories from Israeli occupation in mind.

Iran's Attorney General was, meanwhile, tasked to work in cooperation with the Ministry and other relevant domestic and foreign bodies towards prosecution of Israeli officials at competent tribunals for their "atrocities".

The government was also required to try preventing the prospect of any normalization with Tel Aviv on the regional scale and among the world's Muslim countries, and outline the "Zionism worse than Apartheid" mindset across various international organizations.

The Islamic Republic's cultural bodies, including the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), were assigned the task of engaging in extensive cultural activity aimed at "exposing the Zionist regime's nature and atrocities."

Zionist Regime Disturbing Region by Its Hostile Activities

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Speaker of Iran's Parliament Ali Larijani said on Monday that the Zionist regime is disturbing the region by its hostile activities and Majlis has accordingly approved a motion which obliges the government to take certain measures against hostile moves of the Israeli regime.

"The approval of this plan was very important in the current situation because the Zionist regime is carrying out hostile behaviors and actions in the region," Larijani said. "The regime is disrupting the situation in the region, and therefore it was necessary for this plan to be approved."

Last week, the Parliament approved a double-urgency motion that outlines the manner of confrontation on the national and international scale against the Israeli regime. The document was then revised and approved in the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission before being endorsed by lawmakers today at the open session of the Parliament. The motion includes 16 articles.

The motion prohibits any direct or indirect cooperation with real or legal persons from the Zionist regime in exhibitions, conferences, and gatherings.

Iran Moving Towards Containing COVID-19

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Minister of Health and Medical Education Dr. Saeed Namaki said that the country has passed from controlling stage of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, and is moving towards containing the disease.

He made the remarks in a Sunday's Cabinet meeting.

While expounding a comprehensive report on the salient measures taken by the ministry in the fight against COVID-19, he said, "Presently, the country has passed from the stage of managing and controlling the coronavirus disease and is moving towards the containing it in most parts of the country."

Some parts of the country do not have a good situation in this field due to the lack of paying due attention to the health guidelines and instructions, Dr. Namaki criticized.

In this meeting, Minister of Education Mohsen Haji Mirzaei revealed the reopening schools and presence of all school managers at workplace and also booming the comprehensive process of e-learning at schools in the nationwide and added, "this trend has increased share of students and families in the learning process."

In addition, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) also elaborated on the constructive and positive role of e-government and private sector during the outbreak of COVID-19.

For his part, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani expressed his thanks to the doctors and medical staff as well as deepening electronic government as the basic and main policies of the government and added, "fortunately, we are now witnessing one of its fruits in comprehensive e-learning process in the education and academic centers of the country."

U.S. Urged to Avoid Entering a Dangerous Game With Iran

TEHRAN (ILNA) - An Iranian lawmaker says that America's dignity in the political arena is as high as of the "Pirates".

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a Member of Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee refers to some news in recent weeks about trade exchanges between Tehran and Caracas, saying that one of the habits of the U.S. government is "Piracy", and in the case of the coronavirus disease, this became clear to the world.

He said that the United States is well aware that it will get reciprocal response and it is not in America's interest to enter into such a dangerous game.

"Iran-Venezuela relations are perfectly legal," added the parliamentarian.

Boroujerdi further noted that U.S. sanctions have no legitimacy; because this sanction is not regarded in the UN Security Council. Unconfirmed reports over the past few days have suggested that at least five Iranian vessels are transporting fuel to Venezuela. Reports suggest four US Navy warships are in the Caribbean for a 'possible confrontation with Iran's tankers'.

Iran Enters Containing Phase of Virus Pandemic

TEHRAN (MNA) – Government Spokesman Ali Rabiei announced in a press conference on Monday that Iran has stepped out of the 'curbing phase' of the lethal respiratory coronavirus and entered the 'containing phase'.

Underlining the vitality of the nation's cooperation, the spokesperson announced that the number of districts with white conditions of infection have increased to 280 counties.

He expressed gratitude for Iranians who observed Laylat al-Qadr [Night of Destiny] rituals during the nights of the holy month of Ramadan via implementing the social distancing and health protocols.

"After China and Sweden Iran ranks first regarding the number of those recovered from Covid-19," he said. "94 percent of Covid-19 patients recover in Iran."

Rabiei noted that the implementation of the social distancing scheme is the pivotal key to reining the disease.

Iran started the social distancing plan after Nowruz Holiday and screened 72 million people under the Iranian Ministry of Health.

On Monday, Iranian Minister of Health and Medical Education Saeed Namaki also said that the country has passed from the controlling stage of the novel coronavirus.

Washington Cautioned Against Foolish Action on Venezuela-Bound Tankers

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry spokesperson warned the US to refrain from any foolish action against the Iranian oil tankers that are carrying fuel to Venezuela, stressing that there is no legal restriction to the legitimate trade between Tehran and Caracas.



In remarks at a press conference on Monday, Seyed Abbas Mousavi denounced the deployment of American warships to the Caribbean Sea with the purpose of disrupting the course of Iranian tankers carrying fuel to Venezuela, saying, "Free trade between independent countries is a legitimate affair, and what is illegitimate is the piracy and maritime banditry that is led by the US."

He also lashed out U.S. President Donald Trump's administration for disrupting the world order, ignoring the international norms, and seeking global anarchy. Mousavi warned the U.S. that any action against the Iranian tankers will draw a reaction from Iran, adding, "We hope that the Americans would not take such an unlawful measure."

On the Quds Day, he said, "As long as the Zionist occupation and crime exist, International Quds Day will be commemorated." Regarding the consultations and diplomatic measures taken during this period, Mousavi said, "There were incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan that gained political stability after a long time."

"As a neighbor, Iraq is very important to Iran, and it is now wrangling with the U.S. and terrorist conspiracies, and the current government is backed by Iran," Mousavi noted. Referring to the recent agreement between rival leaders Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah in Afghanistan, the spokesman expressed hope that the development would be a prelude to inter-Afghan talks. In response to a question, he said that less than 3,000 Iranians abroad are in prison for various crimes, most of which are drug-related and illegal crossings. Our embassies are closely in contact with the governments of the countries where Iranian citizens are imprisoned. We hope that one day there will be no Iranian prisoners abroad.

Mousavi said about the presence of Iranian asylum seekers in Greece that unfortunately, some people leave Iran for different countries due to the illusion of a better life, but after a while, they realize that these countries are utopia and they regret it. These people have bad conditions in the camps and are from different countries and ethnicities, and anything can happen to them. He added, "We have been following up with the Greek authorities and the police of that country who have not officially confirmed such a thing. However, the Iranian embassy is in contact and we will inform you if we find out anything new."

Envoy Terms China Int'l Import Expo as Opportunity for Iran

BEIJING (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzzadeh in a message described the upcoming China International Import Expo which is slated to be held on November 5-10 as a significant opportunity for Iran to participate in the time of COVID19 depression.

In his Twitter message which was released on Sunday, Keshavarzzadeh said China, the world's most populated country with a large middle class, has turned out to be the world's largest consumer market and as Iran's biggest export destination.

He added that over 30,000 companies attend the event every year and over \$120 billion worth of trade contracts were signed during the previous round of the event.

Keshavarzzadeh noted that the event is regarded as a gate for entering China's big market.

According to its official website, China International Import Expo (CIIE) is the first dedicated import exhibition in the world.

It is a historic opportunity for companies from around the world who can introduce themselves to the Chinese market and explore opportunities for local cooperation.

EU Slammed Over Impracticality Towards U.S. Hostile Anti-Iranian Actions

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Abbas Mousavi criticized Europeans for their impracticality against U.S. anti-Iranian policies including the debate over the extension of Iran's arms embargo.

"We do not disturb their thinking procedures, it is two years that Europeans are thinking," Mousavi said.

"We criticize their impracticality," he noted.

"We do our business and we are hopeful that Europeans take a step, too," he added.

"Presently, the EU is bullied by an arrogant power and it has no other option than obeying it," Mousavi said.

The European Union foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said recently the bloc still needs to consider the United States' demand of extending Iran's soon-to-expire arms ban and he cannot comment on their reaction before the due date.

"We have to think about it but for the time being I cannot explain to you something that hasn't happened," Wall Street Journal quoted Borrell as saying on Twitter.

Croatian Envoy Calls for Upgrading Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Croatian ambassador to Tehran Drago Stambuk on Monday called for upgrading ties with Iran, saying, "I am proud of serving in Iran where according to scientific documents there are historical affinities between Iranians and the Croats."

In an interview with the Croatian daily, Večernji list, Drago Stambuk said that his diplomatic mission in Tehran was to strengthen bilateral relations between Croatia and Iran, to encourage, support and work together to promote peaceful policies, including through the European Union.

Regarding Iran's fight against the coronavirus, he said: "In general, Iran has fought well against the contagious coronavirus."

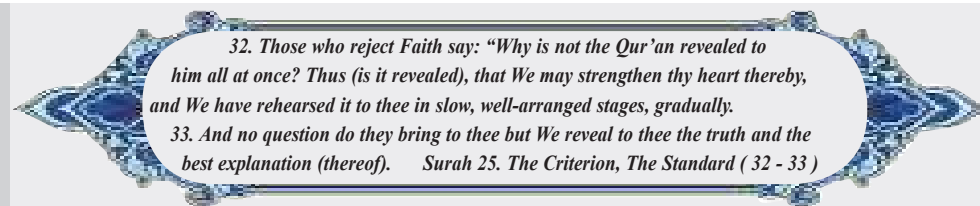
"Iran has good physicians and a strong health care system, and since the end of February, it has successfully faced a downward chart and good results in the fight against the Coronavirus Pandemic."

He explained how the global effects and consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic have affected the world, saying, "I think so far all the achievements and progress we have made and all the efforts that humanity has made have all been reversed. It's as if the world we've disappeared overnight. The heat turned to cold."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:26
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:15
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:55



China Is Still Main Destination For Iran Exports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Spokesman to Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Association says the slump in the oil price has affected Iran's exports in terms of value, and the lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic has worsened the condition.

Hamid Hosseini pointed to the statistics released by the Customs Administration, adding that the statistics show that Iran's exports in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (Farvardin) have declined by 39 percent in terms of weight and 36 percent in terms of value comparing to the same period last year. He further said the total trade volume of Iran stood as \$3.583b in the first month.

He added that China has been the major destination for Iran's exports in the first month as the value of the exports to China stood at \$523m which accounted for 32 percent of the total amount of exports in this month.

Hosseini further said the UAE was the second destination for Iran's exports as the figure showed \$355m. He added that the value of exports to the UAE accounts for 21.5 percent of the total value of exports.

He admitted that exports to Iraq declined in the first month and touched \$259m as the country slipped in the rankings with one place to the third place. The value of



exports to Iraq accounted for 19 percent of Iran's total exports last month.

Hosseini noted that Afghanistan was the fourth destination with exports worth of \$125m and 7.5 percent value of the total exports.

He admitted that the exports to Turkey fell significantly as the total exports to Turkey fell to \$72m and it ranked fifth. Exports to Turkey account for 4 percent of Iran's total exports volume.

He said oil and petrochemical products account for one-thirds of Iran's non-oil exports and the statistics indicate the decline in exports.

Hosseini added that statistics also indicate that the exports to China have also faced 50 percent decline, adding that actually, the outbreak of the Coronavirus has inflicted heavy blow on oil, gas and petrochemical industry.

He said on the whole, Iran whose major exports are oil and petrochemical products has suffered the most, noting that fortunately the condition has improved in the second month as the price of Iran's petrol has soared from \$15 to \$25 per barrel.

Hosseini added that the rise in the price has encouraged the producers to buy and store them in order to reduce the pressure from the plants.

Iran Fisheries Output Stable Year-on-Year in Late March

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian official says the fisheries output of the country was stable year-on-year in late March despite a growing number of issues faced by exporters as a result of U.S. sanctions on the country.

Head of Iran's Fisheries Organization Nabiollah Khunmirzaei said on Sunday that total aquaculture output of the country over the year ending March 19 was more than 1.28 million metric tons.

The figure shows a slight increase compared to the previous calendar year when Iran's total output had reached 1.26 million tons, according to government statistics.

Khunmirzaei said output figures over the past calendar year exceeded a target of 1.25 million tons defined by the government. That, he said, was a major success given the pressures felt by exporters over the American sanctions and the difficult economic situation in the country.

He said Iranian aquaculture products have become increasingly popular in the international markets mainly because of their high quality.

The official said Iran plans a major expansion of the fisheries sector in the current calendar years to reach a target of nearly 1.6 million tons of output and increased revenue of 270 trillion rials (nearly \$1.6 billion) from the exports.

Khunmirzaei said the government estimates that some 24,000 new jobs could be created across the aquaculture sector in Iran over the next 10 months.

Iran has become a major seafood producer in the region with trout, caviar and shrimp currently being the main export items of the fisheries sector.

Agriculture authorities said recently that rising aquaculture output and consumption in the country has helped cut down on imports of major food items like red meat by as much as 150,000 tons per year.

Iran Eyes Multi-Fold Increase In Seed Production by 2025

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian deputy agriculture minister says seed production in the country will grow by several times in the next five years as the government seeks to expand cultivation for strategic crops.

Hossein Shirzad said on Sunday that output for wheat seed is expected to increase by nearly a third to reach 200,000 metric tons per year by 2025.

Shirzad, who heads the Central Organization for Rural Cooperatives of Iran (CORC), said production for some crop seeds, including for barley and legumes, will almost double within the next five years.

He said Iran had launched a joint scheme with an American company to increase production for varieties like corn hybrids, saying output through the joint program could reach 1,000 tons

per year from a current 50-ton production for the hybrid seed.

The official said Iran also seeks to increase output for oil seeds, adding that production for canola hybrids will reach 1,200 tons while plans are in place to produce 3,000 tons of soybean and 400 tons of sesame per year by 2025.

Shirzad said total seed output for 28 out of 31 Iranian provinces for the calendar year ending in March 2021 is expected to top 190,000 tons.

He said the CORC plans to introduce new varieties in major seed production plants in Iran, including in facilities in Dezful and in Jiroft, located in southwest and southeast of Iran, respectively.

That, according to the agriculture official, would significantly increase capacity for production for canola and corn hybrids in the years to come.

Steel Ingot Production Exceeds 2.3m Tons

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Steel makers statistics shows 2,321,000 tons during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) which had 2% growth compared with the same period last year.

According to Iran's Steel Producers Association statistics, the total amount of steel production was 2,542,000 tons during the first month.

Meanwhile, slab ingots production reached 1,037,000 tons which experienced 12% rise compared with the same period last year.

Iran's steel industry, with a history of over half a century, today ranks first among competitors in the Middle East in terms of production and exports of this commodity and is expected to reach the 7th place the world until 2025.

Iran Electricity Export to Neighboring States Up 27%

TEHRAN (MNA) – The volume of electricity exported from the Islamic Republic of Iran to neighboring countries in the last Iranian calendar year [ended March 20, 2020] registered a 27.6 percent growth as compared to a year earlier.

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran exported more than 8 billion kW/hour electricity to neighboring countries, the volume of which is six times more than the electricity imported into the country in the same period.

According to the Specialized Parent Company for Construction and Supply of Water and Electricity Goods (SATKAB), Iran exported electricity to the neighboring countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan Republic, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, last year [from March 21, 2019 to March 20, 2020].

The total electricity exported to the aforementioned countries in last year hit 8.31 billion kW/hour, showing about 1.736 billion kW/hour growth as compared to a year earlier.

Iran imported about 1.329 billion kW/hour electricity last year, 1.294 billion kW/hour of which is related to Iran's import of electricity from Armenia.

In this regard, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Armenia accounted for 82.8, 9.7, 6.4 and 0.7 percent of Iran's total electricity export share respectively last year.

Price of KSC's Rebar Grows 6%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The basic price for offering the products basket of Khorasan Steel Company on Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) grew last week.



According to the reports, the basic price for basket of company's products equaled 53,320,000 rials last week but after huge demands for the products and during the last days of the week, the company's rebar was traded for 57m rials per ton.

The company could sell products worth 297.2b rials on the IME last week and the total sales of the company on the IME since the beginning of the year till end of last week exceeded 1280b rials.

The company offered 5.214 tons of rebar on the IME last week and it received demands for 44800 tons of rebar. The basic price for the rebar offered by the company was 53.32m rials and huge demand pushed up the price of the rebar per ton to 57m rials.

The figure shows 6 percent growth comparing to the preceding year.

Empowering Human Resources In Tourism Financial Group



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Talashgaran Andishe Karad Company says the company will materialize empowering and developing the human capitals of the Tourism Financial Group in the fields of banking and tourism this year.

Mr. Behrouz Sharifi Moqaddam said that regarding the existing grounds and capacities in the Tourism Financial Group as well as identifiable needs in other organizations and companies, fields of financial, banking, capital market, tourism, mines and mining industrial and hotelier will be put on the agenda to empower and develop human development in this group and other affiliated companies.

He noted that according to the new determinate missions and policies, developing the short term training courses and university educations, developmental projects and long-term specialized educations with approach on e-training methods both virtual or in presence are of the major programs of the company.

Sharifi Moqaddam further said the group will pursue all of its approved plans, missions, strategies, approved training and educational plans till getting favorable results.

He also added that 400 students have been admitted at Karad University of Applied Science and Technology, noting that the university is to admit new students in fields of tourism, banking, accounting, bank affairs, insurance and marketing.

Vice President Urges Development of Digital Economy in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri has called for plans to develop the infrastructures for digital economy in the country, highlighting the role that the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology plays in working towards that goal.

In a meeting with ranking officials from the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology on Sunday, the Iranian vice president said the global economy is rapidly moving towards digital computing technologies.

"If we ignore the digital economy, our economy will lag behind the cycle of world economy, because the global economy is moving towards digitization with a rapid acceleration," Jahangiri added.

Pointing to the worst economic downturn in the world over the past 100 years in the wake of outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the vice president called for efforts to study various social, economic and cultural aspects of the rapidly-changing developments and to identify the relative advantages of the situation.

He further stressed the need to develop the necessary social and legal infrastructures for the post-coronavirus era, noting that the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology will be the epicenter of all plans and arrangements for the new age.

Paying tribute to the ICT Ministry and the private sectors affiliated with the ministry for their "stellar performance" after the outbreak of COVID-19, Jahangiri said, "All of the country's development plans and ongoing issues have been affected by the coronavirus today. In other terms, the coronavirus has turned into the main compass for policy-making and management of the country, because during the outbreak of the disease, serious attention must be paid to the health of people and a balance must be created in the other sectors as well, as in the economic sphere."

Highlighting the key role of the start-ups in fulfilling the digital economy goals, the Iranian vice president emphasized the need for good investment in the start-ups, knowledge-based companies and the private sector, which he said must regulate the economy in practice.

He also touched on the leading role of the ICT Ministry in providing distance learning programs after the coronavirus outbreak, saying the influential ministry must also conduct a detailed analysis of the economy in the coming years to devise plans for technical and vocational schemes to attain the digital economy objectives.

Jahangiri further praised the ICT Ministry for formulating space programs, including the recent launch of a homegrown satellite in cooperation with the domestic universities.

"The development and completion of the National Information Network, which is a basic need of the country, could usher in the era of modern governance and administration in the country, by relying on which we could introduce a new administrative system to the country," he added.

The vice president finally stressed the importance of implementing the electronic government scheme in Iran, saying the ICT Ministry has devised 23 projects with high priority to meet the requirements of an electronic government which is expected to fully come into force by March 2021.

"Development of the electronic government will provide all citizens with online access to broad services, will contribute to transparency and prevent corruption, and could also result in public satisfaction," Jahangiri concluded.



Trump Inspector General Firing Could Be Unlawful

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Donald Trump's firing of the State Department inspector general could be illegal if it was proven to be in retaliation, the top Democrat in Congress said on Sunday.

"The president has the right to fire any federal employee, but the fact is, if it looks like it's in retaliation for something the IG, the inspector general was investigating, that could be unlawful," Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, said in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation."



UK-Flagged Tanker Attacked in Gulf of Aden

ANKARA (Dispatches) - A British-flagged tanker came under attack Sunday in the Gulf of Aden.

In a statement on its official website, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said the attack took place off the southern coast of Yemen at 12:30 GMT.

The organization advised any vessels transiting the area to exercise extreme caution.

Additional information about the attack was not provided and no one has claimed responsibility so far. However, local media in Yemen reported that the attack was carried out by pirates.



Suicide Bomber in Eastern Afghanistan Kills 5



KABUL (AP) - A suicide bomber using a stolen military Humvee targeted an intelligence service base in eastern Afghanistan early Monday, killing at least five personnel, a provincial official said on Monday.

Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor in eastern Ghazni province, said at least 40 intelligence forces were wounded in the attack near Ghazni city, the capital of the province. A number of the wounded are in critical condition, he added.

Noori said the bomber used a stolen military Humvee and targeted the main entrance of the base, detonating his vehicle full of explosives as it had nearly passed the gate.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but Taliban are active in Ghazni and have repeatedly claimed attacks in the past.

The attack comes a day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his political rival Abdullah Abdullah signed a power-sharing agreement, two months after both declared themselves the winner of last September's presidential election.

The political deal would see Ghani remain president of the war-torn nation and Abdullah to lead the country's National Reconciliation High Council.

Ghani and Abdullah held parallel inauguration ceremonies in March. They have been locked in a power struggle since then and the discord prompted the Trump administration to announce it would cut \$1 billion in assistance to Afghanistan if the two weren't able to work out their differences.

A peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban signed Feb. 29 calls for U.S. and NATO troops to leave Afghanistan. It was seen at the time as Afghanistan's best chance at peace following decades of war.

Since then, the U.S. has been trying to get the Taliban and the Afghan government to begin intra-Afghan negotiations, but the political turmoil and personal acrimony between Ghani and Abdullah impeded talks. Negotiations that were to take place in March never happened.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke with the two leaders Sunday, saying he was pleased by their willingness to move toward intra-Afghan negotiations but "regretted the time lost."

Canada Air Force Pilot Dies After Jet Crashes

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - One member of Canada's Snowbirds, an elite air force aerobatics team, died and another was injured Sunday after their plane crashed in British Columbia during a performance to salute public efforts against the coronavirus, the military said.

According to local media, the plane crashed into the front yard of a house shortly after taking off from Kamloops Airport late Sunday morning along with one other plane.

"It is with heavy hearts that we announce that one member of the CF Snowbirds team has died and one has sustained serious injuries," the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) tweeted Sunday night.

They then updated the tweet, saying that the surviving member of the crash suffered injuries that "are not considered life threatening."

Provincial Health Minister Adrian Dix had tweeted earlier that one person had been taken to hospital.

Witnesses said the pilot managed to eject from the plane with a parachute before the crash. The pilot landed on the roof of a house and appeared to have suffered back and neck injuries.

India Extends Lockdown to May 31

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India on Sunday extended a nationwide lockdown to May 31, as cases exceeded 90,000 and further clashes erupted between police and stranded migrants.

Schools, malls and other public places will remain mostly closed, though rules will be relaxed in areas with low numbers of cases, according to an order from the interior ministry. "New guidelines have permitted considerable relaxations in lockdown restrictions," the ministry said in a tweet accompanying the order.

Large gatherings are still prohibited, but outside of containment zones with high numbers of active cases "all other activities will be permitted", it said, potentially allowing commerce and industry to reopen across much of the country.

Decisions on where to set containment zones would be decided by district authorities, the order said.

Several Indian states, some of which had lobbied the federal government for a relaxation in the lockdown, immediately said they would allow many businesses to restart. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said all industries and offices would

be allowed to operate, barring those in containment zones.

India also softened its stance on a contact tracing app, which it previously said was mandatory for all public and private sector employees returning to work.

While it once said that heads of companies and organizations needed "to ensure 100% coverage" of the Aarogya Setu app among employees, it now says employers should get employees to use the app on a "best effort basis".

India has now reported more cases than China, where the virus first emerged late last year, although deaths, at 2,872, remain much lower than China's 4,600. The death toll in the United States and some European countries is much higher.

India's lockdown, introduced on March 25 and extended several times, had been due to expire at midnight on Sunday.

The curbs have sparked a crisis for the hundreds of millions of Indians who rely on daily wages to survive.

With no work - and little public transport - many urban migrants attempting to return to their home villages have set out on grueling journeys on foot or hitched rides in the back of trucks.



Guterres Asks Bangladesh to Move Rohingya to Refugee Camps

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Hundreds of Rohingya rescued by Bangladesh and sent to a flood-prone island after being stranded at sea for weeks should be moved to existing refugee camps, the UN secretary-general said.

Antonio Guterres made the appeal to Bangladesh's foreign minister in a letter that was obtained on Sunday by AFP news agency.

The Rohingya were rescued in early May after floating adrift in the Bay of Bengal and sent to Bhashan Char island - a silty strip of land that is vulnerable to monsoon storms. Dhaka has said the 308 were sent to the island rather than the camps in Cox's Bazar because authorities were afraid they might have the viral disease, also known as COVID-19. Guterres said the refugees should be moved to the camps after their time in quarantine is completed.

Dhaka has not said how long the Rohingya will remain in isolation.

"While those rescued at sea may be quarantined for public health purposes, they must also be extended the protection they deserve as refugees," Guterres said in the letter to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen dated Friday.

"I trust that they too, will benefit from the humanitarian services offered to the Rohingya in Bangladesh and that, at the end of their quarantine period... they will be allowed to rejoin their families in Cox's Bazar."

Momen told AFP he had yet to receive the letter but said those concerned about Bhashan Char - where facilities for 100,000 people were built last year - should host the Rohingya in their own countries.

"We don't want any more Rohingya," Momen told AFP.

"We don't have any other place to keep them. If they (other countries) don't like Bhashan Char, let them take them back to their countries. (Or) else, let them return to Myanmar."

He said more pressure should be put on Myanmar to repatriate the Rohingya to their home state of Rakhine.

The foreign minister previously said the refugees would "most likely" have to live in the shelters on Bhashan Char until they return to Rakhine.

Burundi to Vote in Tense Poll Amid Virus Outbreak

BUJUMBURA (AFP) - Burundians will vote Wednesday in a tense general election, despite a largely-ignored outbreak of coronavirus which is set to be the first major challenge for the new president.

President Pierre Nkurunziza, who has been in power since 2005, shocked observers by deciding to step aside, five years after a controversial third-term run plunged his country into political and economic crisis.

While Ethiopia decided to delay its election this year due to the pandemic, Burundi has pushed forward with the vote at all costs, with heaving crowds of thousands attending political rallies, with only buckets of water and soap available as a nod to the virus.

Burundi has so far officially recorded only 42 cases and one death from the virus, but doctors and the opposition accuse the government of hiding the true extent of the outbreak.

The government has expelled the four top World Health Organization (WHO) officials steering the response to the epidemic, with no explanation. They left the country on Saturday.

Officials in Burundi have cited divine protection for the country's ostensibly low infection rate and urged citizens to go about their daily lives without fear.

Burundi has not taken any measures to confine or limit the movement of the population, unlike most other countries in the region with the exception of Tanzania -- where many fear the virus is also spreading out of control.

"Do not be afraid. God loves Burundi and if there are people who have tested positive, it is so that God may manifest his power in Burundi," said General Evariste Ndayishimiye, the presidential candidate for the ruling CNDD-FDD party.

With a possible major health crisis looming, the nation with a population estimated at roughly 11 million people is preparing to turn the page on Nkurunziza's long rule, marked by widespread human rights violations.

At least 1,200 people were killed and more than 400,000 displaced in violence between April 2015 and May 2017 that the UN says was mostly carried out by state security forces. Less than a quarter of those displaced have returned to their homes.

No official death toll has been released since, but UN investigators have said crimes against humanity in the country were ongoing, citing summary executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and sexual violence.



UAE Equipped Mercenaries to Raid Ships off Libya

NEW YORK (Dispatches)

- A United Arab Emirates (UAE) company purchased six helicopters and two

boats to raid ships off Libya in a move to support Libyan renegade commander Khalifa Haftar, a UN panel revealed.

According to confidential letters by a Panel of Experts, under the Security Council's Libya Sanctions Committee, the sale of at least \$18 million in military equipment was made through a Jordan-based company that was founded by Fulcrum Holding in the UAE. A source familiar with the letters, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the committee got a tip-in mid-January that the UAE was trying to fund a special team of mercenaries to back Haftar, the leader of illegal armed forces in eastern Libya, in Benghazi.

The Fulcrum Holding set up the company allegedly to carry "geographical researches" and used it to purchase three Puma helicopters from South Africa. The helicopters were transported to Jordan and then to Libya.

The source said it was unclear if South Africa's Starlite Aviation company sold the helicopters or mediated the transportation process.

The UAE-based company also purchased three French-built SA 341 attack helicopters from Gabon to deploy to Libya and two 20-person MRC1250 boats via Malta-based Sovereign Charterers for the mercenaries to use.

Bloomberg reported Friday that two Dubai-based companies sent 20 Western mercenaries to Libya to help Haftar forces seize Tripoli.

The source said the letter revealed 20-25 mercenaries went to Benghazi to receive the helicopters and boats, and the purchase of six helicopters and two boats were actually made to carry out raids on vessels off Libya, pull them to the coast and search them for military equipment.

Against the risk of being noticed by satellite, the source said a logo of the Jordan-based company was embroidered on the helicopters and boats to give the impression they were doing "geographical researches."

Following the ouster of late ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya's government was founded in 2015 under a UN-led political deal. Since April 2019, the government has been under attack by warlord Khalifa Haftar's forces, based in eastern Libya, and more than 1,000 people have been killed in the violence.

UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Libya in 2011.





Zaferanieh Apt (\$3000)
300sq.m, 5bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Jordan Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

Velenjak bldg (\$10000) 5storey, 20bdrs, S/p, pkgs

Aghdasieh (\$1800) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, balcony, F.F
Farmanieh (\$2300) 240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, balcony, F.F

Darrous Apts
(\$1500) 2bdrs, S/p, & F.F
(\$2400) 3bdrs, S/p, & F.F

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

Vanak offices
(\$20per sq.m) 150sq.m, pkg
(\$40per sq.m) 300sq.m, pkg



IRAN NEWS ADVERTISING
44253401

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

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



IRAN NEWS
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS
ADVERTISING

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

China Opposed to Latest U.S. Rules Against Huawei

BEIJING (Reuters) - China's commerce ministry said on Sunday it is firmly opposed to the latest rules by the United States against Huawei and will take all necessary measures to safeguard Chinese firms rights and interests.

The ministry said in a statement that it urges the United States to immediately stop the wrong actions.



China Urges Food Companies To Boost Supplies

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - China has asked trading firms and food processors to boost inventories of grains and oilseeds as a possible second wave of coronavirus cases and worsening infection rates elsewhere raise concerns about global supply lines.

Both state-run and private grain traders as well as food producers were urged to procure higher volumes of soybeans, soyoil and corn during calls with China's Ministry of Commerce in recent days, three trade sources told Reuters.

"There is a possibility of a breakdown in supply pipelines due to the coronavirus infections. For example, a port of origin or destination might shut down," said a senior trader at one of China's leading food processors, which was on a call last week with authorities to discuss purchases. "They have advised us to increase stocks, keep supplies higher than we usually have. Things are not looking good in Brazil," he added, referring to China's main supplier of soybeans and a key meat exporter where the number of coronavirus cases has surpassed those in Spain and Italy.

A second source in China who was briefed by a person who attended one of the meetings said China's Ministry of Commerce met with some state companies on Tuesday to discuss how to guarantee supplies during the pandemic.

"One of the main concerns is how the epidemic in South America might impact supplies (of beans) to China," the source said.

China's Ministry of Commerce did not respond to a fax seeking comments on plans to increase food stocks. Brazilian shipments of soybeans were delayed in March and April due to a combination of heavy rains and reduced manpower as coronavirus containment measures took effect, leading to a plunge in Chinese soy inventories to record lows. Arrivals from Brazil have since rebounded, but authorities remain wary of fresh disruptions.

China's state-owned agriculture conglomerate COFCO and grain stockpiler Sinograin have been stepping up purchases of U.S. soybeans and corn in recent weeks. Chinese importers bought at least four cargoes, or about 240,000 tons, of U.S. soybeans on Monday for shipment beginning in July, two traders familiar with the deals said.

Beijing has also increased its allocations of crop import quotas to major grain buyers, paving the way for further potential purchases.

China is under pressure to buy more U.S. farm products under a trade deal signed between Washington and Beijing in January, and trade sources expect more of China's crops to come from the United States once the South American export season ends and the North American harvests approach in the autumn.

"The effort is to build supplies, not just from Brazil, but from all over," said the senior trader at the food processing company. "U.S. beans are looking attractive from September onwards," he added.

U.S. crop export sales data show that Chinese buyers have accelerated soybean purchases of the upcoming crop, with new crop bookings of 374,000 tons already registered, compared with an average of 60,000 tons for this period since 2016. China is also a top meat importer and is facing a large domestic supply shortfall following an outbreak of African swine fever which has decimated its pig herd, the world's largest. Imports from the United States - the top global pork exporter - had been expected to surge as a result, but widespread COVID-19 outbreaks at U.S. slaughterhouses and processing plants have cut national meat output.

World Bank Provides Egypt With \$50m

CAIRO (Dispatches) - The World Bank has approved \$50 million for Egypt as an emergency response under the World Bank Group's new Fast Track COVID-19 Facility, a global effort to help strengthen the COVID-19 response and shorten the time to recovery, according to the World Bank statement released on Sunday.

The project aims to strengthen the prevention, detection and response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt.

The project will focus on the immediate and critical areas of support identified by the government of Egypt's national COVID-19 response plan, according to the statement.

The project funds will support procuring and distributing medical equipment and supplies necessary for the COVID-19 response, health worker training, operations of specifically designated quarantine, isolation and treatment centers; mobilization of rapid response teams in contact tracing of COVID-19 cases, development of contextualized messaging platforms and tools to improve public awareness of COVID prevention, according to the statement.

In addition, it will support innovative Monitoring and Evaluation of social distancing strategies including community mobilization. Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat said that Egypt acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the World Bank Group at the current unprecedented times.

"This project supports the preparedness efforts and governance of Egypt's healthcare system. Increased coordinated action to expedite healthcare spending and pave the way for an inclusive post-COVID economic recovery is a national priority," she added. Meanwhile, Marina Wes, World Bank Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti, said that the World Bank is quickly mobilizing to help Egypt strengthen its pandemic response and health care systems.



Japan, U.S. to Set Up Economic Security Dialogue

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan and the United States will set up a dialogue on economic security that will discuss 5G mobile-phone networks and the export of civilian technology that also has military use, the Yomiuri newspaper reported.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on Friday moved to block global chip supplies to Chinese 5G equipment giant Huawei Technologies.

Japan's Cabinet Secretariat, the U.S. National Security Council and the U.S. Commerce Department are expected to participate and could hold their first meeting by the end of the year, the Yomiuri said, citing unnamed sources.

Officials at Japan's Foreign Ministry could not immediately be reached for comment on Saturday.

The United States has blacklisted Huawei, saying the company's 5G equipment could provide a back door for Chinese government espionage. Huawei, the world's largest telecom equipment maker, has denied this claim.

The U.S. government has also discouraged other countries from using Huawei's gear to build their 5G mobile phone networks as part of a larger battle for global technological dominance between the world's two largest economies.

Japan's government has decided to effectively exclude Huawei and rival Chinese telcom equipment maker ZTE Corp from public procurement, and the country's top three telcos have followed suit.

Kuwait May Revise Soft Loan Terms for SMEs

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - Banks have recently opened discussion with the Central Bank of Kuwait, pushing for a review of funding controls for entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises SMEs and affected economic entities, well-informed sources said.

The sources said the COVID-19 prompted urgent need to ease the terms of soft loans, with the local banks showing willingness to fully finance the program, without requiring the partnership of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development. Sources said banks demanded a government guarantee of 80 to 90 per cent of the total portfolio of these funds.

The Kuwaiti banks have allocated KD 2 billion (\$ 6.5 billion) to the soft loan portfolio expected to be granted to small and medium enterprises, as well as companies and clients affected by the consequences of the coronavirus.

The SME loans will hold between 15 and 20 per cent of the total two billion dinars, while the rest of the sum will be directed to financing companies and clients affected by consequences of coronavirus.

The SMEs will obtain soft loans from local banks and the National Fund for a period of two to 3 years, including a grace period of one year, provided that the interest rate does not exceed 2.5 per cent annually.

Kuwait's general budget will bear interest for the first two years, then share it equally with the clients in the third.

The National Fund will bear the responsibility of managing the debt and the credit risks of the financing provided by it, and verify the customer's use of the financing in the specific aspects.

Some 150 entrepreneurs applied for soft loans, the majority of which are concentrated in three banks, although the data indicate that there are about 37,000 SMEs licensed locally.

The sources noted that the government guarantee for these loans is not expensive, because they will be similar to those approved by the Law to Promote Financial Stability of Bank Deposits, pointing out that this formula guarantees an increase in the frequency of targeted funds, and reduces the risk rates that banks may face in the future.

Last month, Kuwait announced measures aimed at shoring up its economy against the coronavirus pandemic, including soft long-term loans from local banks, and the central bank asked banks to ease loan repayments for companies affected.

The sectors most impacted by the pandemic include aviation, hospitality and real estate, a government source told Reuters.

The stimulus package approved by the cabinet aims to provide liquidity for small- and medium-sized enterprises to meet their obligations, a government spokesman said.

India to Privatize State-Run Companies

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India said on Sunday it would privatize state-run companies in non-strategic sectors and stop fresh insolvency cases for a year, as the country battles with the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

A list of strategic sectors will also be announced in which only one to four public sector enterprises will remain, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, as part of a slew of measures to kickstart the economy.

Indian officials said most of the privatizations would happen in the next fiscal year, starting April 2021.

India has been trying to divest parts of state-run companies in sectors ranging from aviation to power to fill its coffers, but it has confronted weak investor sentiment and limited demand.

"Such measures have to be done at times the government can get the right price," said Shriram Subramanian, founder of proxy advisory firm InGovern, adding that the intention was good.

He said that in order to attract private investors, the government needed to improve the efficiency of state-run companies by freeing boards from interference by bureaucrats and "shed lot of flab" by cutting their labor force and hiring the right talent.

The government's revenues have been hit hard as a nationwide lockdown imposed in March to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus has ground the economy, Asia's third largest, to a halt.

The finances of Indian states have also been tipped into disarray, barring a few well-managed ones, because of the losses of tax revenues from fuel to stamp duties.

Indian states would be allowed to borrow 5% of their gross domestic product, up from 3% earlier, Sitharaman said on Sunday, adding that it would allow states to raise an additional 4.28 trillion rupees (46.64 billion pounds) in the year ending March 2021. "The move" will help to absorb the expected plunge in their revenue receipts, and avoid a severe cutback in capital expenditure," said Jayanta Roy, group head of corporate sector rating at ICRA.

The minister also said no fresh insolvency cases would be initiated for up to a year, in a move to avoid a wave of bankruptcies from companies hit by the coronavirus outbreak. Debt incurred by companies due to the economic fallout of the coronavirus outbreak would not be considered a default under the country's insolvency and bankruptcy code (IBC), she added.

Introduced in 2016 to address India's burgeoning bad loans, the code helped lenders and operational creditors drag defaulters to court, which in some cases even led to promoters losing control over their companies. "Lenders will certainly become more cautious now, considering the impact IBC had on debt recovery, and the fact that debt recovery through IBC will be restricted for at least the next one year," said Atul Pandey, a partner at law firm Khaitan & Co.

OECD Leading Index for S. Korean Economy Edges Up in April



SEOUL (Dispatches) - A leading economic index for South Korea inched up in April, with Asia's fourth-largest economy being the only country among OECD member states to see such a trend, data showed Sunday.

The composite leading indicator (CLI) of economic activity for South Korea stood at 99.9 last month, up 0.1 percentage point from the previous month, marking the rise for eighth consecutive month, according to the data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

A reading below 100 means the economy is expected to contract going forward.

The CLI gauges how an economy will fare four to six months ahead, based on industrial output, gross domestic product and housing and financial market conditions.

South Korea was the only country among members of the Paris-based club of major economies that saw its leading economic index edge up in April.

But the uptick in the country's leading economic index does not indicate the economy may improve down the road in the face of the new coronavirus outbreak.

South Korea's economy shrank 1.4 percent on-quarter in the first quarter of the year, marking the sharpest quarterly contraction since the last three months of 2008.

The country has promised relief packages worth some 240 trillion won to ease the economic fallout from the virus, with many analysts expecting the Bank of Korea (BOK) to cut its key rate again in the coming months.

In March, the BOK delivered its first emergency rate cut in over a decade, by slashing the policy rate by half a percentage point to send it below the 1 percent mark for the first time in its history.

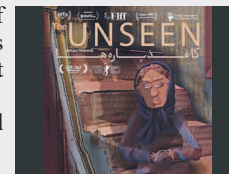
“The Unseen” to Go on Screen at Krakow Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Animation Documentary ‘The Unseen’ by Behzad Nalbandi will take part in the 60th edition of Krakow Film Festival (KFF) in Poland.

Directed and written by Behzad Nalbandi, ‘The Unseen’ is about a time when Tehran hosts foreign dignitaries, the local authorities clean up Tehran’s urban image through an ‘urban

beautification’ process which includes the rounding up of unsavory characters from the city streets; i.e. drug addicts and prostitutes. The men are released after a few days but the women are kept as wards of the state in perpetuity.

‘The Unseen’ also took part in the 35th International Documentary Film Festival Munich in Germany.



Energy Dispute Deepens Between Mexico and Foreign Allies

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - The European Union and Canada have formally raised concerns to Mexico about rules they say endanger renewable energy projects, escalating tensions with its government, which late on Friday moved to tighten its control over the power industry.

In letters that were leaked to Mexican media on Friday, the same day they were sent, the foreign powers said the rules threatened foreign investment in the energy sector. Diplomatic sources confirmed the letters were genuine on Saturday.

The Mexican government has not commented publicly in response to the letters. In a statement issued Saturday, the energy ministry said industrial and commercial demand for electricity had fallen sharply during the pandemic and “corrective measures” were in the works.

The highly unusual diplomatic intervention by Canada and the European powers, some of Mexico’s closest allies, underlines the frustration felt by foreign governments over President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador’s handling of energy policy.

“It’s very worrying,” said Duncan Wood, director of the Wilson Center’s Mexico Institute in Washington. “This comes at the end of a series of signals that have been sent by this administration over the last 18 months that they do not welcome private investment in the energy sector and that they don’t really care what international investors think.” Lopez Obrador has pledged to make Mexico more self-sufficient and strengthen the state’s role in energy.

The letters raise concerns about rules issued by electricity regulator CENACE last month that suspended the operation of new renewable energy plants in Mexico, arguing it was necessary to safeguard power supply during the coronavirus outbreak.

Late on Friday, Mexico’s energy ministry published additional rules in the government’s official gazette that give the public sector more control over the national electricity system.

The measures would face legal challenges under Mexico’s commitments not just under the outgoing North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) but also its successor, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, an industry source said.

Legal experts are confident the measures are in breach of a number of existing laws and would be struck down in court, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because steps to fight the rule changes were still being drawn up.

Foreign governments and international investors are worried Mexico is eroding the legal foundations of contracts worth billions of dollars with the previous administration, in what they see as a creeping squeeze-out of their interests.

Canada’s ambassador-designate to Mexico, Graeme Clark, said in the Canadian letter that the new CENACE regulations would imperil Canadian renewable energy projects and requested a meeting with Mexican authorities to discuss the measures.



“This agreement joins a host of measures, legal and policy changes that attack investment in renewable energy in the country,” Clark said in the letter addressed to Energy Minister Rocio Nahle. Companies such as ATCO, Canadian Solar, Cubico Sustainable Investments and Northland Power could be affected, the Canadian embassy added.

A spokeswoman for the embassy confirmed the authenticity of the letter.

In its letter to Nahle, the European Union’s delegation in Mexico said the CENACE rules would “negatively impact” 44 renewable energy projects in Mexico and jeopardize investment from EU companies, which totals more than \$6.4 billion.

Two diplomatic sources confirmed the authenticity of the EU letter.

When asked by Reuters for comment on the letter, the EU’s delegation said whenever the bloc had important issues to discuss with Mexico’s government, it did so in private, and had nothing further to add. Asked about the CENACE regulations last week, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Christopher Landau said American officials had expressed their concerns about Mexico’s energy policy to the Mexican government.

“Our message has always been that once you set the rules of the road ... you have to respect the existing rules,” Landau said during a Wilson Center discussion earlier this month. “You can’t keep changing them.”

Spending More Is Key to Oman’s Economic Revival



MUSCAT (Dispatches) - Financial experts in Oman have suggested people to spend more to help grow the country’s economy following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the ideas mooted are more flexible plans for services offered, discounts at stores, and increasing the purchasing power of people, so that the consumer confidence remains strong, which would make them contribute more to the economy.

Shahswar Al Balushi, the head of the country’s Tanfeedh Labour Labs, said: “The emphasis here is to increase the purchasing power locally, create efficiency so that businesses can become profitable and grow. There should be more flexibility for businessmen who want to set up their businesses locally.”

Ahmed Al Hooti, the head of economic research at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that stores now needed to ensure customers brought business back to them.

“I think the shopkeepers and the businesses selling goods should create a new marketing plan,” he said. “Right now, there are many items that have been with them for three, four or even five months, and they have not been able to sell them because of the current situation. The customers also know that these goods are a little old, so if you sell it to them at full price, they will not like it.

“However, if you offer them discounts on these goods, then people will buy them. I feel that stores should have some sort of strategy that will encourage people to come and buy the things there,” he added.

“It is okay if they do not make profit for one month or so. After two or three months, the sales will pick up again and they will be okay. It is better that they do this for month, because if they don’t, they might suffer for a longer time.”

Al Hooti said that it was time for shops in the country to get creative and take the initiative to attract customers, so that they could quickly resume business and work towards again becoming profitable

“When it comes to making these kinds of schemes, there is not a lot the government can do to help, because this is between the shop and the customer, but maybe the government can help in other areas, such as asking for a reduction in rents or fees, to help the shopkeepers,” he added.

China Aims to Boost Ties With Japan

BEIJING (Kyodo) -- While China’s tensions with the United States and Australia have been sharply intensifying over its handling of the new coronavirus outbreak, the Asian power has been apparently aiming to bolster ties with its neighbors -- Japan and South Korea.

As relations with Washington are expected to worsen at least until the U.S. presidential election later this year, Beijing has been making friendly overtures toward Tokyo and Seoul with an eye on economic revival after the pandemic passes, diplomatic sources said.

Many foreign affairs experts are carefully watching what kind of foreign policy China will adopt at the postponed annual session of the country’s parliament, the National People’s Congress, scheduled to be convened next Friday.

Recently, the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has accused Beijing of failing to curb the spread of the virus, first detected late last year in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, and of not sharing relevant information in a timely manner.

Trump has said the United States could even “cut off the whole relationship” with China, while threatening to impose tariffs as punishment for Beijing’s alleged mishandling of the epidemic in the critical early months.

Globally, more than 4.5 million cases of infection with the new virus have been confirmed, with the number of deaths exceeding 300,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Canberra has, meanwhile, asked for an independent investigation into the origins of the new coronavirus, prompting China to suspend beef imports from four major Australian meat processors, citing labelling and certification issues, in an apparent retaliatory move.



“We will need an independent inquiry” to “learn the lessons,” Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters on April 23. Australia is one of China’s largest trading partners.

“Now people are aware of my view about having the sort of authorities that would enable independent public health inspectors to be able to go into areas

where a virus of potential pandemic implications can be understood quickly,” Morrison added.

The Chinese Embassy in Canberra released a statement on April 28 saying Ambassador Cheng Jingye has “called on Australia to put aside ideological bias, stop political games and do more thing to promote the bilateral relations.”

The Chinese Commerce Ministry has indicated that, following an 18-month investigation, it will impose anti-dumping tariffs on Australian barley. The punitive step would deal a stunning blow to Australia’s agricultural sector.

“If an independent inquiry is conducted, China may be blamed for the virus outbreak. China is worried that the proposal will be raised at the WHO’s general assembly that will begin Monday,” a diplomatic source said, referring to the World Health Organization.

China is also at odds with the United States, Europe, New Zealand and others over Taiwan’s participation in the WHO as an observer. Beijing has long considered the self-governing, democratic island a renegade province awaiting reunification.

The WHO has been criticized by the United States and some of its allies for having turned a blind eye when China allegedly withheld information that could have helped limit the epidemic. The global body’s director general, Tedros Ghebreyesus, has strenuously rejected such accusations.

Pakistani Businessmen Urge Further Interest Rate Cut

KARACHI (Dispatches) - Businessmen have criticised the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for a mere 1% reduction in the benchmark interest rate on Friday despite clear message by all segments, particularly trade and industry, for a sizeable cut.

In a statement, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Mian Anjum Nisar expressed serious reservations against slight reduction in the interest rate.

“Given the current deteriorating economic situation, all central banks are supporting their economy by significantly cutting the interest rate along with stimulus packages,” he said. “The current decision is not based on forward looking inflation.” He underlined that the chamber agreed with the condition of external account detailed in the monetary policy statement where the current account deficit (CAD) was expected to remain in control just like it was in April.

However, in May and June, imports will be even lower than \$3 billion per month on account of fewer orders placed by importers due to depressed demand under worldwide lockdown. Nisar said that since SBP expects external situation to be manageable, there was sufficient information available on the inflation front to forecast a much lower rate than 7-9% forecasted for next year by the central bank.

Tehran Urges Baghdad...

FROM PAGE 1

President Rouhani also expressed hope that the joint plans by the two neighbours would raise the level of bilateral economic ties.

Congratulating his Iraqi counterpart in advance on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, President Rouhani expressed satisfaction with the fact that the political processes in Iraq have yielded positive results, all Iraqi groups and tribes have joined hands, and the new Iraqi government has been formed after being approved by the Parliament. “Political stability in Iraq is important for the region, and this process will be surely a prelude to restoration of Iraq’s prominent role in the region,” the Iranian president noted.

The region is currently struggling with a host of problems, such as the plummeting oil prices, the coronavirus pandemic, the security challenges, and, above all, the American interference in the internal affairs of the countries, President Rouhani noted, adding, “The promotion of relations and cooperation between the friendly governments and nations in all fields could help overcome the problems.”

For his part, the Iraqi president tendered congratulations on Eid al-Fitr at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, hailed the suitable level of ties between Baghdad and Tehran, and stressed the need for the officials of the two countries to push for the expansion of relations in various fields. Highlighting the significance of political relations between the two neighbors, President Salih said. “Stability and security in Iraq requires cooperation from the friendly and neighboring states, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

Pointing to the political efforts and activities for bringing various Iraqi groups, parties and tribes together to elect a new prime minister, the president emphasized, “Ensuring Iraq’s sovereignty and supremacy is an undeniable necessity that must be recognized in making decisions about the future of this country.”

“The foreign powers must not interfere in deciding the fate of this country,” the Iraqi president underlined.

Deploing the “destructive acts of interference” from the outsiders in the region, President Salih noted, “The Middle East region cannot withstand new crises, so that the interference from the aliens in the region must end immediately.”

69 More Iranians Die...

FROM PAGE 1

He also by referring to the dire conditions of some Iran’s cities mainly Khuzestan and some part of Kermanshah, Lorestan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari added, no one can claim the disease will be contained in a short term neither in Iran nor in the world. Please follow the Stay-home strategy and do not leave in case necessary he said.

Meanwhile yesterday Deputy Health Minister Iradj Harirchi said, “In the future, like now the whole process including screening, the diagnosis will be done via cyberspace.” In response on how the internet, telecommunication, and information technology have helped the Ministry of Health to manage COVID-19, Harirchi said, “The truth is the whole steps and measures are taken under this ministry supervision such as screening, a diagnosis which is all done by Sib and Mask apps.”

Highlighting World Communication Day and responding to questions via video conference, Harirchi said the main sent licenses are approved by the cyber systems which if it was supposed to be done manually, it really was energy and time-consuming plus polluting the environment.

In the future, like now the whole work processing will be done via cyberspace, he stated.

“The Geneva annual summit right now will be convened via video conference and cyberspace, which really indeed is very beneficial and economical,” he added. “Just imagine in the past it was terrible if any country could not have made to join the summit by taking a long trip there,” Harirchi said.

Zarif Warns U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

After the letter was sent. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araqchi summoned the ambassador of Switzerland, which represents the US interests in Iran, and asked the top diplomat to relay to Washington officials Iran’s serious warning over any possible threat by the US against Iranian tankers.

Araqchi described Iran-Venezuela relations as completely legitimate and legal, and said any resort to coercive measures or other bullying behavior by the US amounts to a threat to free shipping and international trade and the free flow of energy, and is a clear manifestation of international law and runs counter to the principles and objectives stipulated in the UN Charter.

Araqchi warned that any threat against Iranian tankers will be met with Iran’s immediate and firm response, and the U.S. government will be responsible for its consequences.

The Swiss ambassador also said he will immediately inform U.S. officials of Iran’s stance.

Arsenal Investigating Lacazette for Balloon Incident

LONDON (Reuters) - Arsenal striker Alexandre Lacazette is being investigated by the club after a video emerged online where he is seen inhaling gas from a balloon, British media reported on Sunday.

The video circulated online showed the French striker, 28, appearing to inhale from the balloon and sitting back as his eyes close.

"This is a private matter which we are taking seriously. It will be handled internally," the club said in a statement, reported by Sky Sports.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE	
Switchboard: (+98) (21) 44253448	E-Mail Address: info@irannewsdaily.com
Public Relations Tel: (+98)(21) 44253450	ISSN 1024-6053
Editorial Board: 44253449	P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Public Relations Fax: (+98)(21) 44253395	Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Advertising Department: Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234	Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz
Website: http://www.irannewsdaily.com	Distributed by: Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute
	Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Sisto Fined for Driving Home to Denmark

MADRID (Dispatches) - Celta Vigo attacker Pione Sisto was fined a club record 60,000 euros (\$65,000) for driving 3,000km home to Denmark by breaking strict coronavirus measures, local media reported on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Danish international made the journey on March 27 as Spain was under lockdown and returned on May 6 to Galicia before refusing to train, regional television claimed.

Bayern Brush Union Aside on Bundesliga Return

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski bagged his 26th league goal this season as leaders Bayern Munich resumed their Bundesliga title chase with a 2-0 win at Union Berlin behind closed doors in their first match in two months on Sunday.

Lewandowski netted a first-half penalty and defender Benjamin Pavard scored a late header for Bayern in Berlin. The Bundesliga on Saturday became the first top European league to restart during the coronavirus pandemic.

Poland star Lewandowski, who missed two games with injury before the league was interrupted in mid-March, reached 40 goals for the campaign in all competitions as Bayern restored their four-point lead over Borussia Dortmund.

Dortmund, who thrashed Schalke 4-0 in the Ruhr derby on Saturday, host Bayern in a pivotal fixture on May 26, another game that will be behind closed doors in line with the league's strict hygiene guidelines.

"I have to say, each minute is very long when there are no fans and no noise," said Bayern captain Manuel Neuer.

"It was a different atmosphere to what you would expect at the Alten Forsterei, but, okay, it's about motivation and attitude.

"We still have a bit of work to do, but are happy to have dominated the game and can head home with the three points."

Union had shocked previous leaders Dortmund and Borussia Moenchengladbach earlier in the season, backed by passionate home support at their Alten Forsterei stadium.

With players' voices echoing around the empty ground, Thomas Mueller looked to have given Bayern the lead on 18 minutes only for the goal to be disallowed for offside.

Bayern eventually broke through when Union defender Neven Subotic fouled Leon Goretzka in the area on 38 minutes, with Lewandowski stepping up to slot home the resulting penalty.

Bayern coach Hansi Flick brought on French winger Kingsley Coman for his 100th Bundesliga appearance as the visitors sought to make the points safe.

It was Coman's countryman Pavard who grabbed the second goal on 80 minutes when he headed a Joshua Kimmich corner inside the far post.

Saturday's restart attracted over six million viewers in Germany, a new record for broadcasters Sky, according to specialist website DWDL.de.

And while millions tuned in to watch, a significant portion of match-going supporters are livid at the idea of games going ahead without the noisy



backdrop provided by German fans.

On Saturday, Augsburg fans left a banner inside their team's ground which read "Football gives life -- your business is sick".

Second-division St Pauli meanwhile published a picture on Twitter of a banner that read "Football lives through its fans! Without you, it's all nothing!"

With clubs having agreed to draconian hygiene guidelines in a plan approved by the German government, Hertha Berlin defender Dedryck Boyata denied planting a kiss on team-mate Marko Grujic during their 3-0 win over Hoffenheim.

"I apologize for putting my hands on (Grujic's) face," Boyata wrote on Instagram, explaining that "it wasn't a kiss" or "a celebration" when he grabbed the Serbia midfielder.

"I was giving him instructions about a set piece."

"We must definitely be careful now that we play under this situation," he added.

In Cologne, striker Mark Uth said that the absence of fans was no excuse for throwing away a two-goal lead in Sunday's early game -- a 2-2 draw with struggling Mainz.

"If you're up 2-0, you have to finish things off -- with or without spectators," fumed goalscorer Uth.

Games Without Spectators Only a Short-Term Solution

LONDON (Reuters) - Staging football matches without spectators must only be a short-term fix during the COVID-19 pandemic as the prolonged absence of fans could damage the game, former Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has said.

The German Bundesliga became the first major soccer league to resume since the novel coronavirus outbreak shut down sports earlier this year, and its return behind closed doors is being closely watched by other leagues.

"Will it survive long-term? Will it damage the show long-term without supporters? I am convinced of that," FIFA's head of global development Wenger told beIN Sport.

"You cannot imagine a whole season without any spectators. That's why I believe it a short-term solution.

"It is still the best possible way to get a verdict for the end of the season. It's better than any other decision."

England's Premier League is hopeful 'Project Restart', which envisages a return to action in June, can gain momentum after clubs hold a conference call on Monday to vote on a return to group training but matches will be played in empty stadiums.

Jordan Memorabilia Soars in Value

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The immense global success of the documentary "The Last Dance" amid the coronavirus lockdown has boosted sales of collectibles related to NBA icon Michael Jordan, some of which are trading in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Timing is everything," says Jordan Geller, a collector who on Sunday will be richer by at least \$240,000 thanks to the sale at Sotheby's of a pair of Air Jordan 1 sneakers -- the first model created especially by Nike for Michael Jordan, who made his NBA debut in 1984.

The game-worn pair could set an auction record for sneakers set last year by Nike's Moon Shoe, a pair of which sold for \$437,500.

The various Air Jordans have been popular with collectors for 30 years, along with jerseys and trading cards featuring Jordan -- who won six NBA titles with the Chicago Bulls and is widely considered the greatest player in league history.

Many specialists consider Jordan a key figure in creating the market for collectible sneakers, with only non-sports personalities such as Kanye West or Travis Scott able to compete with him today.

But ESPN's 10-part documentary "The Last Dance" which weaves details of Jordan's entire career through the narrative of the Bulls' pursuit of a sixth NBA title, has ramped up interest in all things Jordan.

"I think this is a game-changer," Chris Ivy, director of sports collectibles at Heritage Auctions, said of the documentary series that was carried globally by Netflix.

Ivy predicted the interest fueled by "The Last Dance" will continue.

On the StockX shoe resale platform, the Air Jordan 1 Chicago model now sells for up to \$1,500, compared to \$900 in March. The first episode of "The Last Dance" aired on April 19.

"That could be largely attributable to the documentary because that's a sneaker that's been on the market for years," says StockX economist Jesse Einhorn.

Likewise, a 1986 Fleer collector's card sold for \$96,000 in early May at Heritage, an item that was worth \$20,000 to \$30,000 at the beginning of the year.

Sainz Could Surprise Ferrari



LONDON (Reuters) - Carlos Sainz could be a surprise package when he teams up with Charles Leclerc at Ferrari next year, according to the Spaniard's former F3 boss Trevor Carlin.

The Briton, who has had a string of Formula One drivers including Sebastian Vettel and Daniel Ricciardo race for him on their way up, told Reuters on Friday that Sainz might even have the advantage.

"Ferrari, if they thought they were hiring a number two, might have underestimated Carlos," he said. "I hope they haven't done that."

"I know there's this story going around that Red Bull have got a number one, Mercedes have got a number one, Ferrari have got a number one. But I don't see that with Carlos."

"I think given the same kit and treatment and cars, he can run him close," added Carlin.

"I think Carlos is bloody good. Maybe Charles might edge him in qualifying but when it comes to the race, I think Carlos will be all over him. I think he's going to be fighting to earn his stripes there, he really is."

Sainz, 25, was introduced on Thursday as Leclerc's future team mate, replacing four-times world champion Vettel whose departure at the end of 2020 had been announced two days earlier.

Australian Ricciardo will move from Renault to take Sainz's place at McLaren.

Leclerc, 22, won two races for Ferrari in his debut season at Maranello last year and outperformed Vettel, 32, on just about every reckoning.

Supermarket or Petrol Station More Dangerous Than Football

LONDON (Dispatches) - Newcastle manager Steve Bruce believes going to the supermarket or petrol station could pose a greater risk of coronavirus than a return to football given the strict measures put in place to protect players.

However, Bruce warned his squad could "fall down like a pack of cards" with injuries if they are not given enough preparation time to get back up to speed before matches restart.

The UK government gave the go ahead for sport behind closed doors from June 1 this week.

Newcastle last played on March 7 and Bruce believes his players will not be fit to return until the end of June.

The Premier League is reportedly hoping for a restart on June 12.

"You have to remember that they have had eight weeks off and that is probably the longest break some of these players have had in their careers," he told the Sunday Telegraph.

"If we were doing pre-season, we would have six weeks and probably have six friendly games to get them ready for the first league match."

"We need enough preparation to get these players into shape or they are just going to fall down like a pack of cards. "Most of the managers have the same concerns. We would need at least six weeks. I don't see how we can play games until the back end of June."



League Without Fans Like "Old Man's Football"

BERLIN (AFP) - Thomas Mueller joked that the Bundesliga without fans feels like "old man's football, 7pm, under floodlights" after Bayern Munich brushed aside Union Berlin 2-0 behind closed doors on Sunday.

A first-half Robert Lewandowski penalty and a late Benjamin Pavard header sealed Bayern's win in front of empty terraces in Berlin.

The result leaves defending champions Bayern four points clear as the German league restarted this weekend after a two-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 virus.

However, Mueller admitted it was strange to play Union behind closed doors at their compact Alten Forsterei stadium, which is usually packed with 22,000 passionate home fans.

"It felt a bit like the atmosphere you get for old man's football, 7pm, under floodlights, but as soon as the ball started to roll, the game took our focus," said Mueller.

The Bundesliga became the first top European league to resume this weekend, using draconian hygiene guidelines, regular testing of players and insisting on games in near-empty stadiums.

Hugging, embracing and handshakes were also banned.

"There were a few butterflies before the restart, wondering how it would go, like before the first game of the season in August," said Mueller.

