

President Hassan Rouhani Says the U.S. Sanctions Have Caused Immense Pain and Harm to Iranians Over the Years, But They Also Led To Great Achievements Such as Self-Sufficiency in Many Products

IRAN NEWS

Government Spokesman Says the Government Has Approved Regulations According to Which Iranian Women Who Marry Non-Iranian Men Can Pass on Citizenship to Their Children

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Tenth Majlis Faces Strange Events In Its Tenure

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said the tenth parliament has acted with firmness and accuracy in the face of the very strange events of recent years, in which each of them could sometimes create a crisis in the region.

On the last day of this term of Majlis yesterday, Larijani wished the acceptance of the obedience and worship of the Parliament members during the holy month of Ramadan, saying: “We have reached the last public session of the 10th parliament.”

Larijani added, “Four years ago, on such days, the tenth parliament was formed. In those days, many Parliament members were not familiar with each other’s thoughts. Meanwhile, over the past four years, we have discussed various economic, political, social, and security issues together.”

He pointed to the important laws passed in the 10th Parliament, including the law on permanent judgments of the development plan; the law on the sixth five-year economic, cultural, and social development plan; the law on the protection, restoration, and management of the country’s wetlands; and etc.

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Tehran Rejects Claims of Harming Afghan Citizens at Border

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official has expressed congratulations on the reconciliation deal in Afghanistan and, at the same time, rejected Afghan media reports suggesting Iranian border guards were involved in a recent tragic border incident.

In a phone conversation with Afghanistan’s National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Vice Admiral Ali Shamkhani said the agreement reached between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his political rival Abdullah Abdullah is a key step toward the creation of stability and establishment of a powerful government in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

During the phone talk, Shamkhani said the United States is pursuing an unacceptable path in its political measures by ignoring Afghanistan’s interests.

Shamkhani reiterated that Iran, like in the past, stands ready to offer hygienic and medical treatment aid to Afghanistan free of charge.

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Zionists’ Occupation of Quds Will Not Last Long



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Israeli occupation of Palestine will not last long, said President Hassan Rouhani on the eve of Quds Day.

Speaking at the cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Rouhani said that Iranians will never accept the decades-long suppression of Palestinians.

The President said that this year, on International Quds Day, we will convey the voice of the oppressed people of Palestine to the world in any way possible, noting that we are always at contention with the oppressors and support the oppressed of the world.

“Quds Day this year will be marked by conditions in the so-called white zones, which are Friday prayers, and people will go to Friday prayers there to convey their call and the call of the oppressed people of Palestine to the world,” he added.

“Even those who are in non-white zones, again through cyberspace or real space within the framework that is possible will fulfill their responsibility, and we will not forget that main goal under any circumstances,” the president said.

Rouhani added, “One of the main pillars of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic of Iran is to stand against the oppressors and stand up for the oppressed.”

“The Palestinian people have been displaced from their homes for more than 70 years,” he said, adding “Their homes have been seized. They are oppressed every day by oppressors and the world’s arrogant powers, especially the United States, have always supported the oppressors, the Zionists, racism, apartheid, and worked against the oppressed, but we believe that the right will prevail over the wrong.”

The president noted, “There is a lot of pressure on the Palestinian people and every day a new conspiracy is being hatched by the United States against Muslims and the Palestinian people. But at the same time, the Palestinian people’s firm will and resilience will continue, and sooner or later, they will gain victory, and we will celebrate this very important day.”

He emphasized, “Quds will not be forgotten. Quds will not remain under the occupation of the oppressors. The land of Palestine will one day be liberated. By no means do we will accept the operation and aggression. Even today, this call is as loud as possible. We will celebrate this very important day of Quds.”

Rouhani further referred to the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan and said, “We should be happy with the situation that has happened to our two neighbors these days.”

“The Iraqi people were in trouble due to the conditions of the government and the formation of a new government. An agreement was reached in Iraq between Shia, Sunni, Kurdish and Arab groups, based on which a government was formed that this would be a good step for the stability of Iraq and the economic exhilaration of this country in these difficult days, and we as brother and neighbors have always been by Iraq’s side, and we will be,” Rouhani emphasized.

He added, “On our eastern border, the differences that existed in Afghanistan were solved and led to an understanding and agreement that we hope will establish stability and security in this country.”

“We are most sensitive to the fate of the Afghan people because we have made a great contribution to helping the people of this country during these 42 years and in the jihad of their Mujahideen during their jihad, and today we are with them as brothers and we have been serving even Afghan immigrants during this time and we are serving again,” the President noted. 101

Iran Warns U.S. Against Disruption of Legal Trade

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister has warned the United States against any disruption of legal trade, saying that Washington is not allowed to interfere with the Iranian tankers en route to Venezuela.

Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters on Tuesday lawful trade and business will go on across the globe and the US cannot stop it.

“Legal trade continues in the world, and the United States is not allowed to disrupt it. This policy of the U.S. government is not just a threat to one or two special countries; rather, it poses a threat to the whole world,” underlined Zarif.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of a funeral ceremony held for Iran’s former envoy to the OPEC who died a couple of days ago.

“If a country wants to make a decision based on its own wrong policies and take action to disrupt legal trade, it will certainly face an international backlash,” said Zarif.

In recent days, following the reports of threats by US government officials to make trouble for Iranian fuel tankers, FM Zarif sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres regarding the U.S. deployment of warships to the Caribbean, warning about Washington’s disruption of Iran’s fuel shipment to Venezuela.

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U.S. Sanctions On Shanghai-Based Company Illegal

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China on Wednesday condemned the sanctions imposed by the US on a Shanghai-based company, calling it “illegal,” local media reported.

In a news briefing, China’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian said: “China will firmly commit itself to safeguarding the legitimate rights of Chinese companies,” according to Daily Global Times.

Zhao urged the US to “immediately lift its illegal sanctions.”

On Tuesday, Washington blacklisted Shanghai Saint Logistics Limited for allegedly providing general sales agent services to an Iranian airline -- Mahan Air.

In a Twitter post on Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had alleged China was “one of the few countries” that still “welcomes Mahan Air”. Pompeo said the said airline “used to ferry Iran’s arms and terrorists.”

“Today’s designation of a China-based company exacts consequences for that decision. Anyone doing business with Mahan Air runs the risk of sanctions,” he added.

Mahan Air was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2011 for allegedly providing support to Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which US President Donald Trump designated a terrorist organization last year.

Vessels in Persian Gulf Urged to Stay 100 Meters Away From U.S. Warships

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The U.S. Navy has warned vessels in the Persian Gulf to stay 100 meters away from American warships or risk “lawful defensive measures,” in a move that appears to be aimed squarely at Iran.

“Armed vessels approaching within 100 meters of a US naval vessel may be interpreted as a threat,” according to the text of the notice issued on Tuesday.

The Bahrain-based U.S. Naval Forces Central Command claimed in a statement that its notice was “designed to enhance safety, minimize ambiguity and reduce the risk of miscalculation.”

Meanwhile, an unnamed U.S. official told Reuters the new notice was not a change in the U.S. military’s rules of conflict.

Issuing a specific distance is new for the U.S. Navy. Defensive measures typically include sounding a horn, shooting off flares and firing warning shots to force vessels away.

Iran, in response to the notice, said Wednesday its Navy will continue its “regular missions” in the Persian Gulf.

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UAE’s Etihad Airways Makes First Known Flight to Israel

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The United Arab Emirates (UAE)’s state-owned Etihad Airways has made a first known flight to the Israeli-occupied territories with the alleged goal of delivering aid to Palestinians as Arab regimes and Tel Aviv scale up their attempts to normalize relations.

Etihad, the flag carrier of the UAE, sent a cargo flight from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv on May 19 to “provide medical supplies to the Palestinians” amid a coronavirus outbreak, the airline told the Associated Press.

There were no passengers on board the commercial plane, it added.

The Israel Airports Authority also confirmed the flight’s landing at Ben Gurion Airport on Tuesday night.

An Israeli official, who was speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the flight was coordinated with the Tel Aviv regime and similarly claimed it would be delivering humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

Footage showed crew at Ben Gurion Airport offloading stacks of cardboard boxes with large banners over them reading, “UAE AID: for Palestine to fight coronavirus (COVID-19).”

The Palestinian Authority officials did not comment on the flight, while Gaza’s health officials said they had no knowledge of any aid shipment from Abu Dhabi.

Meanwhile, the office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process said that it had coordinated a 16-ton shipment of “urgent medical supplies” from the UAE to help curb the spread of COVID-19 in the Palestinian territories.

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Whispers of Zionist Regime's Death Can Be Heard

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri issued a message on the occasion of the upcoming International Quds Day, pointing to failures of Israeli-American plots for the region.

"Trumpism and the betrayal of some reactionary Arab states and some false and deceitful claimants of supporting Quds and the aspirations of the oppressed Palestinian people – who have sought to normalize political relations with the fake and usurping Zionist regime – have pushed the Palestinian intifada beyond the occupied territories," he said.

The Zionist regime is now well aware that those who were main supporters of Israeli oppression and occupation are now caught in a quagmire and cannot ensure the survival of the Zionist regime, added the commander.

Iran Ready to Create Barter Mechanism With Kazakhstan

TEHRAN (MNA) – President Hassan Rouhani has expressed country's readiness to establish a barter system for trades with Kazakhstan.

Rouhani made the remarks in a phone conversation with his Kazakh counterpart Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Wednesday.

The Presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Kazakhstan described the development of relations between the two countries as friends, neighbors, and brothers, and said that Tehran and Astana have always been together during difficult days, emphasizing that they will do their best to deepen relations in areas of mutual interest, according to the official website of the Iranian President.

Both sides said that COVID-19 has created many problems for the world, and the exchange of experiences among countries in the fight against coronavirus is important, stating that the ministries of health of Iran and Kazakhstan will work more with each other in the field of fighting coronavirus, especially Iran's exports like ventilators, N95 masks, and serological test kits.

The presidents of Iran and Kazakhstan also referred to the continuation of the United States' illegal sanctions and stressed the importance of lifting sanctions, especially in the current situation of the outbreak of coronavirus and the effects of the sanctions on people's lives.

Rouhani and Tokayev also expressed satisfaction with the cooperation between the two countries in the field of rail and road, saying that they are ready to increase trade through the Caspian Sea and the ministers of roads of the two countries are responsible for pursuing this issue.



In this phone conversation, the President of Iran said that it is important to remove barriers to rail and road transit and banking cooperation and finalize the agreement on facilitating the issuance of visas and business visas between the two countries, saying, "A barter system can deepen trade relations between the two countries and Iran is ready to establish this mechanism."

"Economic relations between the two countries have been very good within the framework of bilateral relations and the Eurasian Union, and I hope that after the outbreak of coronavirus and in the current situation, we will develop the relations between the two countries well," added Rouhani.

The Presidents of Iran and Kazakhstan also congratulated the people of the two countries on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr and wished peace and prosperity for the two nations.

IRGC Forces Kill 2 Terrorists

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' (IRGC) forces attacked a team of terrorists in Iran's western province of Kurdistan, killing two of them and injuring a number of others.

The public relations department of Hamzeh Sayyid al-Shohada Base of the IRGC Ground Force said in a statement that the armed clash happened at 2:40 PM local time on Tuesday near the city of Marivan.

In the operation, launched in cooperation with the intelligence forces of Kurdistan Province, the IRGC troops clashed with an 8-strong team of anti-Revolution terrorists and killed two of them, it said.

Four other terrorists were injured in the operation, and the rest of them fled the scene, the statement said, adding that a manhunt is in progress.

The IRGC is tasked with protecting the country's northwestern and southeastern borders.

Only Palestinians Should Decide for Palestine

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Only Palestinians through a national referendum can and should decide for Palestine, Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a message ahead of the International Quds Day.

"For seven decades the international community failed to solve the question of Palestine since the plans proposed never corresponded with its historical facts and roots. Iran believes that only Palestinians whether Muslim, Christian or Jew with a national referendum can and should decide for Palestine," the Foreign Ministry said in a tweet late on Tuesday.

Every year, millions of Muslims hold demonstrations worldwide to underscore the plight of Palestinians, heeding a call by the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, who designated the last Friday of every Ramadan as the International Quds Day.

This year's Quds Day, however, will see no such street marches amid the coronavirus pandemic. The occasion is instead set to be commemorated mainly via online events.

The occasion underlines the Palestinians' right to return to their homeland after decades of displacement by Israel, which began alleging existence in 1948 after overrunning their lands during a Western-backed war. Still using Western patronage, the regime occupied more Palestinian and other territories in 1967 during a second war, and has ever since been propping up illegal settlements across the usurped areas.



French Envoy Pays Visit to National Library of Iran



TEHRAN (IP) - France's ambassador to Tehran paid a visit to the National Library of Iran (NLI) on Wednesday and held talks with the head of the NLI Ashraf Broujerdi to discuss several issues.

Philippe Thiebaud emphasized the importance of cultural interaction between Iran and France in the document area.

Pointing that he visited the library twice, France's ambassador said: "Iran has rich sources. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, our cooperation transformed into medical form and we helped Iran through WHO to defeat the virus."

France's ambassador went on to say that France is ready to host Iranian experts in France and is ready to exchange ideas and cooperate with Iran.

The head of the NLI Ashraf Broujerdi explained the activities of the national library, saying: "Apart from trying to provide researchers with rich sources, we believe that knowing about religions and ethnicities leads to a better understanding of human's culture."

Broujerdi added that the library aims to provide a digital format of the sources as well.

"We tend to exchange our thoughts between the two countries and taking care of these sources for the next generations as our responsibility," she noted.

The deputy of research and planning in the national library, Fariborz Khosravi stated that 35,000 French books are available in the National Library of Iran and the oldest one dates back to 1802.

"Iran is ready to hold common exhibition with France," he added.

At the end of the meeting, the head of the National Library of France was invited to Iran to sign an agreement between the two countries.

Iran Not to Tolerate Any Nuisance at High Seas

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Minister of Defense and Logistics of the Armed Forces said on Wednesday that Iran will not tolerate any nuisance at high Seas for its oil tankers and will respond strongly and decisively.

On the sidelines of the cabinet meeting, Brigadier-General Amir Hatami said that the Islamic Republic of Iran will react strongly against any nuisance for the Iranian oil tankers.

He said that the International Law of the Sea must be respected by the member states of the United Nations.

Such nuisances amount to piracy, Hatami said, adding that Iran's policies are clear in this regard and has openly announced that it will not create trouble.

He added that both the US and the others know that if the nuisances are repeated or become more, Iran will react strongly.

Zarif, NGOs Weigh Plans to Help Afghans in Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and representatives of non-governmental charities have discussed the ways to address the problems that Afghan citizens residing in Iran are facing.

A group of representatives of the non-governmental charities and voluntary groups, which are engaged in

humanitarian activities inside and outside Iran, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran on Tuesday evening. In the cordial talks, the participants discussed various topics, specifically the issues relating to the Afghan guests in Iran and the contribution to the settlement of their problems.

Security of the Caspian Sea on Agenda of Majlis

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In the open session of Majlis yesterday, MPs discussed the cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the interaction between border guards regarding the security of the Caspian Sea.

In this session, National security, and foreign policy issues regarding the protocol on cooperation in the fight against terrorism in the Caspian Sea and the interaction between border guards regarding the security of the Caspian Sea will be discussed.

North Isfahan province formation plan, Gachsaran province formation plan, program and budget Calculations, national security, and foreign policy issues are on the agenda of today's parliament session.

The draft amendments to Articles 1 and 10 of the Law on the Activities of Political Parties and Groups restored by the Guardian Council, referred to in Registration Number 390, which were referred to this Commission, were reviewed by inviting a member of the Guardian Council and in the presence of relevant officials, experts and consultants.

According to Article 23, in addition to handling the affairs of trade unions, pension centers, trade unions, and non-political associations that have been approved before this law, the Ministry of Interior has to update the manner and conditions of establishing activity licenses, as well as monitoring the activities of the organizations that intend to establish in accordance with the law.

Resistance Most Effective Way to Counter Zionist Regime's Plots

QOM (IRNA) - Advisor to Speaker of Parliament for International Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian said on Tuesday that Iran believes that resistance and withstanding

Zionist aggression is the most effective factor and deterrence against Israeli atrocities in the region.

Addressing International Quds Congress which was held online, he added that in addition to spiritual support for Palestine, Iran will never stop providing military advisory to the Palestinian people.

Over the past decade, the Palestinian resistance has stood on its feet and responded to the threats of the Zionist regime, Iranian diplomat said. Amir Abdollahian also said that a precise census of the Palestinian people must be conducted to decide the fate of Palestine.

International funds and institutions must conduct a thorough census of the people of this country and pay for the referendum, and the elected government must decide on the uninvited guests in the occupied territories, he said.

The International Congress of Quds was held on May 18 and 19, coinciding with the 24th and 25th of Ramadan, with speakers from 18 countries in attendance.

MP Sentenced to Prison at End Of His Term

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - An outspoken member of Majlis, Mahmoud Sadeghi, says a Tehran court of appeals has upheld a decision, sentencing him to 21 months in prison, and a 100 million rial (roughly \$2400) fine.

"The court had previously set a date for July 18, but it unexpectedly issued its ruling today," Sadeghi tweeted.

The lower court had sentenced Sadeghi last February.

Mahmoud Sadeghi (Sadeghi) had criticized the former head of the Judiciary and current Chairman of Expediency Discernment Council, Ayatollah Sadegh Amoli Larijani.

Meanwhile, the Judiciary Media Center said Mr. Sadeghi was not convicted for his allegations about Larijani's accounts, but on other unspecified charges raised by private plaintiffs and public prosecutors.

U.S. Cannot Extend Iran's Arms Embargo

TEHRAN (MNA) – A member of Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission in a verbal notice said that the United States cannot extend Iran's arms embargo under the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Mostafa Kavakebian made the remarks in today's open session of the Parliament and added, "despite many efforts, the United States cannot extend Iran's arms embargo."

He seized this opportunity to express his special thanks to the media companions and the press that covered the important news of the 10th Parliament.

Kavakebian reiterated, "I would like to say leaders of the United States that, despite their efforts, they cannot extend Iran's Arms Sanctions Act."

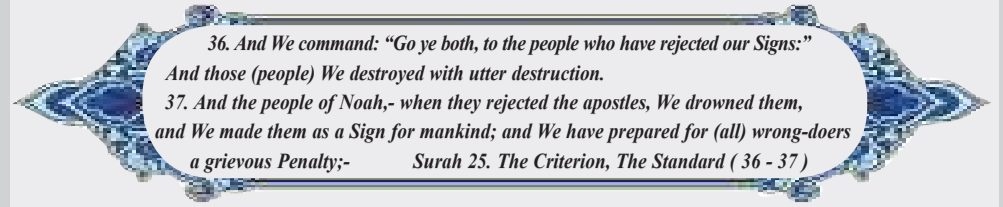
Two years after the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, the Trump administration is looking to extend a UN ban on conventional arms sales to and from Iran, a strategy designed to kill the deal for good.

In a May 9 statement marking the second anniversary of the Donald Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged to "exercise all diplomatic options" to extend the UN ban on conventional arms sales to and from Iran beyond its current expiry date on October 18.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:27
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:13
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:54



Oil Sector Had No Layoffs During Pandemic

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh says the massive oil industry in the country has managed to survive the economic impacts of the new coronavirus pandemic without laying off a single worker.

Zanganeh said on Tuesday that Iran had been spared extensive job cuts seen in many oil producing nations around the world since March when a massive supply glut which was exacerbated by the pandemic caused the prices to hit historic lows.

"We did not lay off any worker and God willing we will lay off no one," said Zanganeh, adding "One cannot deny the fact; hundreds of oil rigs have become idle in the United States and many companies around the world have cut their development projects."

Zanganeh said Iran will try to keep operations going at its oil and gas rigs despite "extraordinarily big problems" that the oil sector in the country is faced with.



He said avoiding any halt to operations across the oil and gas installations in Iran had come despite the harsh impacts of the pandemic on an oil industry which was already affected by the American sanctions.

The minister said building out various phases of the giant South Pars gas field, the world's largest which is shared with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, will continue as planned.

Zanganeh denied reports that Iran had indefinitely halted development operations for Phase 11 of the South Pars, a massive project which began earlier this year two years after major foreign companies withdrew under American pressure.

He said other development projects, including those in the petrochemical sector and refineries, will go on after a short suspension that came because of the pandemic.

Iran Non-Oil Exports Rising

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Governor of the Central Bank of Iran said the country's export of non-oil products has begun to grow as the coronavirus outbreak is easing.

Abdollah Hemmati said on Tuesday that the export of Iran's non-oil goods is beginning to revive and rise as the outbreak of the coronavirus is tailing off.

He also noted that participants in a Tuesday meeting of the administration's economic coordination headquarters made good decisions about plans to boost the non-oil exports and supply the currency for the imports in the current Iranian year.

The caretaker minister of Industry, Mine and Trade has prepared a report on the non-oil exports, which focuses on the neighboring countries as target destinations, Hemmati added.

He also noted that the CBI is considering diverse methods to repatriate the currency from the exports.

"A good opportunity is available for a surge in national production, preventing unnecessary imports, and promotion of non-oil exports," the top banker underlined.

All Products Needed To Deal With Corona Produced Inside Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iranian Vice President says the Islamic Republic does not need to import equipment to deal with the coronavirus, as all the needs are met inside the country.

Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari said on Tuesday that except for the first few days of the outbreak, Iran has not imported any equipment to deal with the virus.

All hospital equipment, ICU room stuff, and other facilities are now being manufactured by Iranian knowledge-based companies, he noted.

He further noted Iran is now exporting testing kits, saying eight knowledge-based companies have been able to receive the necessary permits for the export of the kits.

According to Sattari, significant projects are currently being implemented by these companies in the fields of medicine, vaccines and medical equipment.

"These companies have played an important role in the production of masks, and protective equipment for nursing staff to deal with COVID-19," Fars News Agency quoted him as saying during a ceremony in the southern city of Bushehr. He said the Islamic Republic can produce one million cellulose diagnostic kits per day, and 1.5 million PCR diagnostic kits a month.

Tehran Ready to Reinforce Cultural Ties With Beijing

BEIJING (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzadeh said Tehran is ready to develop cultural, social and women affairs relations with Beijing.

Speaking in a meeting with Deputy Head of All-China Women's Federation Mu Hong, Keshavarzadeh

referred to 50,000 face-masks which had been donated by Chinese body to Iran, saying Iranian and Chinese women have so far held five rounds of expert cultural talks and we are ready to resume these negotiations after controlling coronavirus.

He also expressed readiness for holding these meetings online. Referring to the role and position of women in Chinese society, he said family has significant position in Iranian society and the vice president is responsible for women affairs.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Keshavarzadeh pointed to Alzahra University's activity as female-only in Iran, saying the university is ready to maintain cooperation and sign MoU with China Women's University aiming at promoting cultural and art cooperation between Iranian



and Chinese women.

Diplomat referred to Iranian women's role in the society, saying doctors and nurses in Iran made sacrifice in controlling coronavirus.

Iran and China have helped each other since the beginning of the outbreak and Iran was the first country which sympathized

with Chinese people and government.

In spite of U.S.' cruel sanction, Iran sent some masks for Chinese people, Keshavarzadeh noted.

In the wake of coronavirus outbreak in Iran, Chinese government and people send donation to Tehran.

Despite U.S.' sanctions on Iran, good achievements have been made with regard to fighting coronavirus. Chinese people in less than 24 hours, donated half a million dollar to Iran for fighting coronavirus epidemic and called for launching a channel for collecting non-cash contributions.

Iranian embassy in China on March 5 released a message in 'Weibo' which is a leading social media in China and introduced a bank account for Chinese people's cash contributions to fight COVID-19 and people of China helped 4 billion Yuan (\$576,000).

Measuring of Over 2.15m Water Branches in Isfahan Province

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of subscribers' affairs and revenues department of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company says the company has carried out the comprehensive project of measuring and monitoring water supply in 93 towns and 953 villages in the province.

Mr. Reza Rezaee said that by implementing the project with cooperation of 270 meter-readers as well as identifying and cutting illegal branches, the company can identify subscribers who overconsume water or have changed the water application and can upgrade them.

He added that during this project, the company reviews verification of subscribers and their phone numbers in order to issue the e-bills for users.

On checking the consumption of water in gardens, recreational and industrial centers, he said the company will carry out its monitoring, and in case it finds out any user consumes water more than defined consumption pattern, he will be cautioned and this act is very important in control of excessive water consumption.

Rezaee also pointed to the water consumption per capita in Isfahan, adding that the drinking water consumption per capita is 150 liters per day and implementation of the project will be effective in lowering the figure.

He added that currently, 676,000 subscribers enjoy wastewater services and the company is to increase it and those who are interested in subscription can contact with tel no. 1522.

Minister Orders Reopening of Outdoor Recreational Centers

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Ali-Asghar Mounesan ordered the reopening of open-air recreational centers, parks and mountaineering sites in compliance with the health protocols.

Mounesan announced on Tuesday that people in Iran can visit open-air places of recreation as well as hiking and mountaineering sites while observing the health protocols.

He said the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism places no more restrictions on those sites as long as visitors conform to the health regulations, the Iranian government's official website reported.

However, the minister added, it is still illegal to pitch tents and make public camps in the parks for overnight stays in a way that would lead to the gatherings and a crowd of travelers and campers.

He advised campers to use the official sites operating under authorization from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism.

Mounesan also noted that he has asked the Interior Ministry to order the provincial officials, the Police and the security authorities to endorse the new decision and allow people to enjoy the ecotourism attractions and the open-air recreational centers easily, considering that the current situation in the society after the coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent problems have mounted mental pressures on the citizens.

Tehran, Astana to Expand Legal Cooperation

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Majlis of the Kazakhstan Parliament has approved the bill «On ratification of the Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Iran on mutual legal assistance in civil matters», Kazinform correspondent reports.

The purpose of the agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Iran on mutual legal assistance in civil matters is to strengthen bilateral cooperation on



legal issues between the two countries.

Ratification of the agreement will give a new impetus to bilateral partnership in the provision of legal assistance to citizens of the countries in the field of civil proceedings. This agreement is aimed at developing legal collaboration between Kazakhstan and Iran, resolving and providing legal assistance in civil matters, creating an effective bilateral mechanism for protecting rights and interests of individuals and legal entities of both states», deputy Minister of Justice Natalia Pan said presenting the bill during the plenary session of the Majilis.

Int'l Language Exams to Re-Start in Iran as of May 21

TEHRAN (IRNA) - National Organization of Educational Testing announced on Wednesday that the international language exams which had already been postponed due to coronavirus pandemic will restart in Iran as of May 21.

The international language exams, including TOEFL, GRE General, GRE Subject, IELTS, Life Skills and UKVI, will be taken according to the timetable, the Organization said on Wednesday.

Health protocols and smart social distancing will surely be followed during the exams, the Organization added.

On February 26, National Organization of Educational Testing stated that all international language exams were postponed due to preemptive measure to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

The deadly coronavirus radiating from Wuhan, China, in December 2019 has affected near 5,000,000 people across the world and killed over 322,000 people; meanwhile, the number of the dead in Iran is over 7,100.



U.S.-Canada Border to Remain Closed Through June 21

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Canada and the United States have agreed to extend a ban on non-essential travel between the two nations by another 30 days as part of the fight against the coronavirus, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday.

Trudeau said the border is a source of vulnerability, so the agreement will be extended by another 30 days. The restrictions were announced on March 18 and were extended in April.

Trudeau said Canada's provincial leaders clearly wanted to continue the measures. "This will keep people in both of our countries safe," he said.



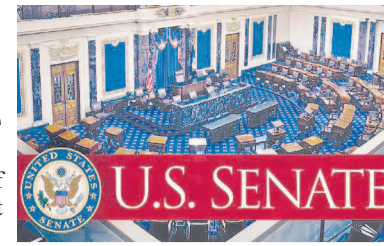
U.S. Senate Panel OKs Trump's Spy Chief Nominee

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The U.S. Senate endorsed the confirmation of John Ratcliffe to be the nation's top intelligence official in a straight party-line vote.

The Republican congressman from Texas is now one step closer to serving as the country's next spy chief after he was approved for a full Senate confirmation vote.

Virginia Senator Mark Warner, the top Democrat of the Senate Intelligence Committee, informed reporters about the vote after a closed-door meeting, according to the Politico news website.

Ratcliffe would be the first permanent spy chief in the Trump administration since Dan Coats stepped down last August.



Palestinian President Says Accords With Israel, U.S. Are Void



GAZA (Dispatches) - Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced on Tuesday that his administration considers all agreements signed with Israel and the United States null and void, after Israel declared it would annex parts of the occupied West Bank, according to local media reports.

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that Abbas made the announcement during an emergency meeting held in Ramallah to discuss the Israeli plans. "The Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine are absolved, as of today, of all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the obligations based on these understandings and agreements, including the security ones," Abbas reportedly said.

"The Israeli occupation authority, as of today, has to shoulder all responsibilities and obligations in front of the international community as an occupying power over the territory of the occupied state of Palestine."

Abbas threatened to withdraw from agreements back in February, after U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled his Middle East plan, which included the possibility of annexation. Al Jazeera correspondent Nida Ibrahim said the implications of the move remained unclear.

"While he said that the PLO is no longer bound by agreements signed with Israel, he did not say that he is dissolving the Palestinian Authority," Ibrahim said from Ramallah.

During his address, which was broadcast on Palestinian television, Abbas also said he was still ready to negotiate with Israel and remains committed to ending the conflict on the basis of a two-state solution.

Speaking from Chicago, Ali Abunimah of Electronic Intifada was sceptical about Abbas' announcement.

"Mahmoud Abbas has announced I can't remember how many times that he's suspended this agreement or that agreement and the fact is that he's never (actually) done that. He's never (actually) suspended an agreement," he said. "The reality is that the Palestinian Authority cannot move a salt shaker from one side of the table to another without the permission and help of the Israelis."

Annexing parts of the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley as part of Trump's Middle East plan was a central promise of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's latest re-election campaign. His former political rivals-turned-allies Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi have also expressed their support of the plan.

Netanyahu was sworn into office for another term on Sunday, after more than 500 days without a stable government and three inconclusive elections.

Addressing the parliament before the vote, Netanyahu said his incoming government should apply Israeli sovereignty over Jewish settlements, which are illegal under international law.

GNA Recaptures Towns From Haftar

TRIPOLI (Dispatches) - Forces allied with Libya's internationally-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) say they have recaptured two towns near the Tunisian border from eastern-based renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar's forces.

"Our heroic forces have entered the towns of Bader and Tiji amid welcome from their residents," the media office of the Burkan Al-Ghadab (Volcano of Rage) Operation, the government-led counteroffensive launched last April, said in a statement on Facebook on Tuesday.

On Monday, forces allied to the GNA retook the strategic al-Watiya airbase south of the capital, Tripoli. The base had been under Haftar's control since 2014.

Analysts say losing the base, one of the main strongholds for Haftar's forces in western Libya, is a significant blow to Haftar's year-long campaign to seize the capital from the GNA.



Gunmen Attack Afghanistan Mosque Killing Many Worshippers

KABUL (Dispatches) - Gunmen have opened fire in a mosque in central Afghanistan, killing at least seven worshippers and wounding five others, officials said.

Parwan province's police chief Haroon Mubarez said on Tuesday the gunmen stormed the mosque when worshippers were offering evening prayers after breaking their Ramadan fast.

"Seven people have been killed and 12 wounded. The gunmen fled the area," he told the AFP news agency.

It was unclear how many gunmen were involved in the attack.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior confirmed Tuesday's attack in Parwan's capital Charekar, blaming it on the Taliban. The armed group denied responsibility.

The United Nations has warned of an alarming uptick in violence against civilians in Afghanistan. Last week, a shocking attack on a Kabul maternity ward killed 24 people, including newborn babies.

Violence increased around the country even after a February 29 United States-Taliban pact on the withdrawal of U.S.-led foreign forces in exchange for Taliban security guarantees.

Elsewhere in the country, Afghan security forces on Tuesday clashed with Taliban fighters near the city of Kunduz, a strategically important centre that has been one of the Taliban's main targets and which the group has briefly captured twice in recent years.

Security forces largely repelled the Taliban offensive with the help of air support. Assadullah Khalid, acting Minister of Defence, said during a visit to the city that more than 50 fighters and eight security force members had been killed.

The Taliban has rejected repeated calls for a ceasefire by the Afghan government. It denies any involvement in the maternity ward attack and the U.S. believes the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) was responsible.

The U.S. has sent its special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad to Doha and Kabul to press the Afghan government and the Taliban to start the stalled peace talks.

Russia Awaits U.S. Ventilator Aid as Coronavirus Cases Near 300,000

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The United States said on Tuesday it would start delivering 200 medical ventilators this week to Russia, which has the world's second highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases.

Russia reported 9,263 new infections on Tuesday, pushing its total to 299,941, and 115 more fatalities, taking the total death toll to 2,837. Only the United States has reported more cases.

It was the fourth successive day that the number of new cases was below 10,000. Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said on Monday Russia had halted the growth in infections and there were other positive signs.

Mishustin, one of four government ministers to catch the coronavirus, has been discharged from a clinic and is working normally, Interfax news agency quoted his spokesman as saying.

But the mayor of Moscow, Russia's worst hit-region now in its eighth week of lockdown, said it was still too soon to let people out for walks or exercise and new infections would have to fall sharply before that happened.

Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said the shutdown had spared Moscow the worst-case scenario mapped out by authorities, but 18,000 patients were still in a bad way in hospitals and thousands of new cases were reported daily.

The U.S. embassy in Moscow said Russian President Vladimir Putin had requested assistance from the United States and President Donald Trump had offered to send 200 U.S.-made ventilators.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the United States would cover the costs.

A first batch of 50 ventilators should be ready for shipment on Wednesday, while the remaining 150 will be ready shortly after, the embassy said.

Russia sent a batch of its own ventilators to the United States in early April, but U.S. officials say they were not needed in the end.

The Russian ventilator in question, the Aventa-M, was reported to have caused fires in hospitals in Moscow and St Petersburg. Russia then suspended use of Aventa-M ventilators produced after April 1.



Left-Wing Rebels Deprive Macron of Outright Parliament Majority

PARIS (Dispatches) - Left-wing defectors from Emmanuel Macron's governing party announced the creation of a new group in France's lower house of parliament on Tuesday, depriving the president of an outright majority.

Seven legislators from Macron's La République En Marche (LREM) to join the new "Ecology, Democracy, Solidarity" group, which will count 17 parliamentarians in its ranks, in a move that raises pressure for more left-wing policies.

That means Macron's party now only has 288 members of parliament, one short of an absolute majority, and down from the 314 Macron had after he redrew the political landscape in 2017.

However, 17 is less than the 58 members of parliament suggested by media reports earlier this month, indicating that party bigwigs had managed to stem the flow.

"The pressure from the executive, the party and the group was such that we had to move the announcement forward," one defector told Reuters News Agency. "Many eventually decided not to take the plunge."

Macron's party, formed by the former banker to propel him to the presidency in 2017, had already suffered a string of defections by legislators frustrated by his tight grip on decision-making and his pro-business policies. Macron can still count on the support of a smaller alliance partner, the centrist MoDem. However, the arithmetic may now give MoDem more leverage over policymaking in the final two years of Macron's mandate.

His reform drive has been stalled by the coronavirus pandemic, just as he was seeking to regain momentum after weeks of pension reform and "yellow vest" protests.

The defectors do not consider themselves as opposition, but will push the government to adopt more workers - and environment-friendly reforms to prevent voters from switching to the far right, they said. "If we don't show results quickly, the risk is that the French choose the worst in 2022, that's what we want to avoid at all cost," Aurelien Tache, one defector, said.



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J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Niavaran Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
green yard

Parsian

((\$2600)
Darrous Apt
3bdrs, 300sq.m
S/pool, Sauna, J
balcony, pkg, & F.F

Farmnieh Apt (\$1800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
L.balcony
pkg, F.F

((\$10000)
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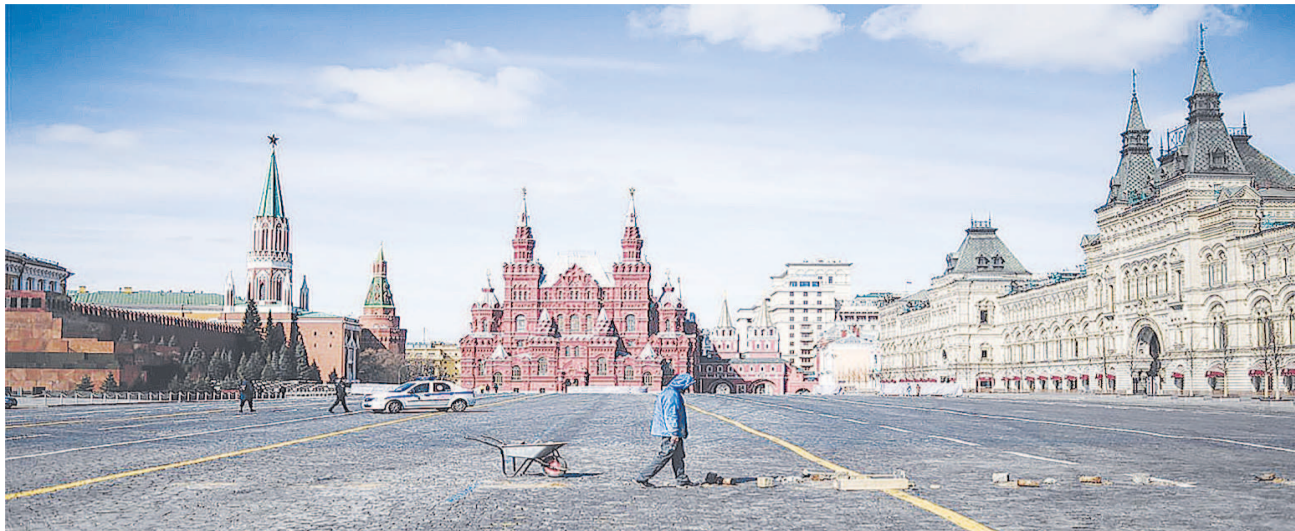
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PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS

World Bank Has Provided Coronavirus Aid to 100 Countries

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - World Bank Group President David Malpass said on Tuesday that the development lender has launched emergency coronavirus aid programs in 100 developing countries, with commitments for concessional financing and grants of about \$5.5 billion so far.

Malpass told reporters on a conference call that the global pandemic and associated economic shutdowns could push as many as 60 million people into extreme poverty, erasing the previous three years of poverty alleviation, with a global economic contraction of perhaps 5% this year.



Russian GDP Falls 28% in April

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian economy contracted by more than a quarter in April, calculations based on official government statistics have shown.

Using the first batch of official data on the damage from the coronavirus and Russia's nationwide shutdown of the economy, Russia's GDP in April was 28% smaller in nominal terms than in the same period last year, economists said.

The figures come from Russia's Finance Ministry's monthly budget update. Although the ministry does not explicitly state the extent of the slump in output, it can be calculated from the other data provided, such as government tax revenues. The numbers were first

crunched by Victor Tunyov, an analyst at Agidel Asset Management, Russian news site RBC reported.

The hit amounts to a 2.4 trillion ruble (\$33 billion) fall in Russian output in April 2020 compared with April 2019. Around a third of the loss can be attributed to the crash in oil prices, while two-thirds comes from the effects of Russia's "non-working" period, Tunyov added.

Meanwhile, an official estimate for GDP growth in the first quarter, which captures only a few days' impact of the coronavirus on the Russian economy, came in at 1.6%, Russia's state statistics agency Rosstat said Tuesday.

President Vladimir Putin ended Russia's "non-working" period, instituted at the end of March, on May 12. Most regions — including Moscow and St. Petersburg — have maintained stay-at-home orders, and large parts of Russia's service industry such as bars, restaurants, hair salons and shops remain closed. Other centers of production, including Russia's vast oil fields and natural resource extraction sites have remained open throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

In a televised meeting of top officials Tuesday, prime minister Mikhail Mishustin said the government would propose a "national action plan for economic recovery" in the near future, while the Economy Ministry said economic activity was already beginning to pick up.

Russia is bracing for its sharpest recession in the past two decades, with GDP expected to fall by at least 10% in the second quarter, a survey of 28 economists from Moscow's independent Higher School of Economics (HSE) published Monday showed.

German Investor Morale Improves on Hopes for Economic Turnaround

BERLIN (Reuters) - German investor sentiment improved much more than expected in May as concerns about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Europe's largest economy eased and hopes for a recovery in second half of the year grew, a survey showed on Tuesday.

The German economy is facing its deepest recession since World War Two, even as authorities have started to ease lockdown measures put in place to contain the spread of the disease.

The ZEW research institute said its monthly survey showed economic sentiment among investors rose to 51.0 from 28.2 in April. Economists had expected a reading of 32.0.

"Optimism is growing that there will be an economic turnaround from summer onwards," ZEW President Achim Wambach said in a statement.

A separate gauge measuring investors' assessment of the economy's current conditions edged down to -93.5 from -91.5 in the previous month. Analysts had forecast a reading of -88.0.



Investors expect the German economy to pick up pace again in the fourth quarter, Wambach said, but he added that the recovery would probably take a while. "Only in 2022, will economic output return to the levels of 2019," he added.

Financial markets on Tuesday continued to welcome German- and French-led plans for a 500 billion euro (\$547.60 billion) EU recovery fund to help European countries and business sectors hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic.

However, the DIHK chambers of industry and commerce said earlier on Tuesday that it expected the German economy to shrink at least 10% this year, a much more pessimistic view than the government's forecast.

Turkey's Central Bank To Slash Rates for 9th Consecutive Time

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's central bank is expected to continue its rate-cutting cycle and lower its policy rate for a ninth straight time when its monetary policy committee meets this week, polls showed.

The development comes after the bank just recently trimmed its inflation forecast.

The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) has cut its benchmark one-week repo rate by 1,525 basis points to 8.75% since July last year in a muscular bid to stimulate the economy and, more recently, to counter the economic downturn brought on by the coronavirus outbreak.

With the COVID-19 outbreak hammering domestic demand, tourism and exports, the bank last month lowered its inflation forecast for end-2020 to 7.4%, from 8.2% earlier, opening the door to more rate cuts. In a Reuters poll of 15 economists, the median estimate was for a cut in the policy rate to 8.25%. Estimates ranged from a 25-point cut to 8.5%, to a 100-point cut to 7.75%. The median estimate of 10 economists for the policy rate at year-end stood at 8%. Some respondents said the bank would hike rates again by then while others said it would continue the easing cycle, with forecasts ranging between 8.75% and 7.75%.

The central bank has slashed rates by 200 basis points and provided some funding below the policy rate, in order to stimulate the economy since Turkey recorded its first COVID-19 case on March 11.

According to Anadolu Agency (AA) survey, 15 out of 17 economists expected a 50-basis-point drop on average — ranging between 25 and 100 basis points. The remaining two economists predicted no change. The fifth meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) this year will be held on Thursday to announce the bank's decision on interest rates.

ING also expects the bank to continue its easing cycle, with another rate cut of 75 basis points, to 8%, as it said Monday the recent revision to the inflation forecast provides room to deliver.

"Many emerging market economies have reduced their policy interest rates to support growth in recent months, including Turkey, as the CBRT swiftly responded to COVID-19-related developments with a series of measures and maintained its cutting cycle," the bank said.

It noted that the bank would be likely to continue with additional moves given the extent of the pandemic effects.

"The current stance complements a policy mix that aims to mitigate the downside risks to growth, and this does not rule out further rate cuts, in our view. Currency developments that could risk price and financial stability will also be closely watched, though a recent recovery in the Turkish lira after decisions by the Banking Regulation and Supervisory Agency should also be encouraging for the CBRT," it added.

The lira, which hit a record low of 7.269 on May 7, strengthened as far as 6.8350 against the dollar on Monday, its strongest level since mid-April.

Plummeting global oil prices have pushed inflation down in import-dependent Turkey, while on the other hand, the lira's depreciation has raised import prices.

IMF Approves \$375m for Uzbekistan

TASHKENT (TCA) — The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on May 18 approved the disbursement of US\$375 million under the Rapid Credit Facility and Rapid Financing Instrument to support Uzbekistan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The crisis has adversely affected Uzbekistan's macroeconomic outlook, the IMF said. Growth is projected to slow to 1½ percent this year and lower revenues and additional crisis-related expenditures—on healthcare and to support households and firms—are expected to widen the fiscal deficit to about 4 percent of GDP. IMF and other donor support will help cover the resulting financing needs, support the economy, and provide assistance to affected households and firms. The Uzbek authorities will increase the accountability and transparency of expenditures to improve the efficiency and safeguard the use of public resources.

The authorities' policies are expected to maintain macroeconomic stability and fiscal and balance of payments' sustainability over the medium-term. They have expressed their strong commitment to continue economic and structural reforms. The IMF says it stands ready to provide policy advice and further support, as needed.

Following the Executive Board discussions, Mr. Tao Zhang, IMF Deputy Managing Director and Chair, made the following statement: "The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted Uzbekistan's economy. Growth is projected to slow significantly while lower exports and remittances will widen the current account deficit.

The fiscal deficit is expected to increase on the back of a fall in revenues and crisis-related expenditures. These have generated significant balance of payments and fiscal financing needs.

"IMF financial assistance under the RCF and the RFI, along with support from other multilateral institutions, will help cover Uzbekistan's fiscal and balance of payments needs and mitigate the impact on its foreign exchange reserves. It will also provide resources to support increased crisis spending for healthcare, social protection, and public support for affected firms and households.

"As the higher fiscal and external financing needs primarily arise from the COVID-19 shock, a temporary loosening of fiscal and monetary policies is appropriate. As the crisis subsides, the focus should revert to ensuring medium-term fiscal and external sustainability. Fiscal policy should aim for a return to moderate fiscal deficits and limit external borrowing so that public sector debt stays on a sustainable path.

"On monetary and financial sector policies, the authorities should continue developing their inflation targeting framework focused on price stability while allowing the exchange rate to move in line with fundamentals. They should also continue to provide appropriate liquidity support to the financial system, while continuing rigorous financial supervision and maintaining capital requirements and loan standards.

Thyssenkrupp Could Sell Steel Business in Historic Shift

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Thyssenkrupp could sell most of its steelmaking division, its CEO said on Tuesday, marking a historic reversal in strategy for the German conglomerate which has built its 200-year-old legacy as an industrial champion on the business.

"Nothing is off-limits anymore," Martina Merz said when asked by Reuters if Thyssenkrupp could sell a majority stake in

the steel business. She warned, however, that any disposals would be difficult to pull off in the current environment.

"M&A markets are almost dead," she said.

Merz was speaking hours after announcing that the group was in talks with steel industry peers about consolidation options. She said the coronavirus pandemic was opening up new possibilities for cooperation.

"We are drawing on the full range of options," she said. "That means all forms of consolidation are being looked at, including mergers, takeovers, us acquiring peers, and us developing the unit independently."

The fact that the steel division is no longer deemed an essential part of Thyssenkrupp represents a fundamental shift for a company that started off life in 1811 when Friedrich Krupp set up a factory to make cast steel.

The steel business, the second-biggest in Europe by sales, is reeling from weakening demand, cheap Chinese imports and a botched attempt to merge it with the European division of Tata Steel (TISC.NS), a deal blocked on antitrust concerns.

Shares in Thyssenkrupp have lost nearly two-thirds of their value over the past 12 months after a raft of profit warnings.

The announcement accelerates Thyssenkrupp's dismantling, a process that started last year when the group decided to sell its crown jewel: its elevators unit. Some investors say the vast conglomerate, which makes everything from car parts to submarines, should be broken up to maximise value.

Sources previously told Reuters that contact between Thyssenkrupp and Tata Steel never broke off and that both were still in talks about consolidation. Thyssenkrupp is also in discussions with Sweden's SSAB and China's Baoshan Iron & Steel, sources familiar with the matter said.

India Resumes Purchases of Malaysian Palm Oil



MUMBAI (Reuters) - Indian buyers have resumed purchases of Malaysian palm oil after a four-month gap following a diplomatic row, with buying spurred by a fall in domestic inventories and discounted prices, trade sources said.

The renewed purchases come amid improving trade relations between the two countries after the formation of a new government in Kuala Lumpur, with Malaysia signing a deal last week to buy a record 100,000 tons of Indian rice.

Leading Indian importers last week contracted up to 200,000 tons of crude palm oil (CPO) from Malaysia, the world's No.2 producer after Indonesia, to be shipped in June and July, the sources told Reuters.

"Port stocks have dropped sharply in India because of lower imports," said a Singapore-based trader who sells Malaysian and Indonesian palm oil.

Ship-tracking data compiled by Refinitiv showed that India's total palm oil imports for the first four months of 2020 fell by more than 50% from the same period in 2019 to 1.11 million tonnes.

A restart to buying by India, the world's biggest edible oil importer, could further support Malaysian palm oil prices FCPOc3, which have edged up from 10-month lows in recent days. India early this year restricted imports of Malaysian palm oil after then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad criticized policies by New Delhi affecting the country's Muslim minority.

The renewed buying has been spurred by low stocks, while India's relations with Malaysia have been improving since a new government was formed in early March, said an Indian edible oil refiner who contracted "a few vessels" for June shipment.

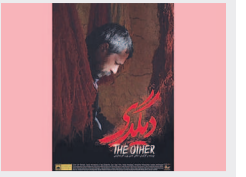
"I think the Indian government will allow unloading of upcoming shipments. We can't rely on one seller (Indonesia) indefinitely, especially when you have to build inventory," the buyer said.

“The Other” Wins at Venice Intercultural Film Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian short film ‘The other’ by Saman Hosseinpour has won the best short film award at Venice Intercultural Film Festival in Italy.

‘The other’ is a joint production of Iran and India, narrates the story of a man whose life is being stolen by the other.

The festival wants to reward those productions that highlight significant aspects of local or national cultures. It talks about “inter-culture” that is the relationship between two or more cultures characterized by the mutual enrichment of values, customs, and traditions.



WHO Members Agree to Independent Investigation of Covid-19 Response

GENEVA (Dispatches) - World Health Organization member states agreed Tuesday to an independent probe into the UN agency’s coronavirus response as US criticism mounted over its handling of the pandemic.

Countries taking part in the WHO’s annual assembly, being held virtually for the first time, adopted a resolution by consensus urging a joint response to the crisis.

The resolution, tabled by the European Union, called for an “impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation” of the international response to the pandemic, which has so far infected more than 4.8 million people and killed over 318,000.

It said the investigation should include a probe of “the actions of WHO and their time-lines pertaining to the Covid-19 pandemic”.

The United States did not disassociate itself from the consensus as some had feared after Washington chastised the WHO on the first day of the assembly Monday and lashed out further against China over its role in the outbreak.

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened late Monday to pull the United States out of the WHO, accusing it of botching the global coronavirus response and of being a “puppet of China”.

His comments, which drew a harsh rebuke from Beijing, came after his health secretary Alex Azar earlier in the day insisted the WHO’s “failure” to obtain and provide vital information on Covid-19 had proved deadly.

“We must be frank about one of the primary reasons this outbreak spun out of control: there was a failure by this organization to obtain the information that the world needed, and that failure cost many lives,” Azar said in a video address to the WHO’s assembly.

He demanded an independent review of “every aspect” of the UN health agency’s response to the pandemic.

While WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Monday welcomed the call for a review, he insisted there was no need for a dramatic overhaul of the organization.

What the global community needs to do, he said, is to “strengthen, implement and finance the systems and organizations it has — including WHO”.

Trump has been locked in a bitter spat with Beijing, alleging it covered up the initial outbreak in China late last year before the disease unleashed death and economic devastation across the planet.

With more fatalities and cases in the United States than any other country by far,



the under-pressure US president has blamed the WHO for not doing enough to combat its initial spread.

Trump had already suspended US funding to the UN body, and after his White House comments Monday, he tweeted a letter he had sent to Tedros threatening to make that freeze permanent and withdraw from the organization.

This in turn prompted a harsh reaction from Beijing, which accused Washington on Tuesday of “shirking responsibility”.

On the sidelines of the escalating row, the EU on Tuesday stepped up its support for the WHO.

“This is the time for solidarity, not the time for finger-pointing or for undermining multilateral cooperation,” EU foreign affairs spokeswoman Virginie Battu-Henriksson told reporters in Brussels.

Tuesday’s resolution at the WHO assembly — which is not binding and mentioned no countries by name — also called for nations to commit to ensuring “transparent, equitable and timely access” to any treatments or vaccines developed against Covid-19.

And it addressed the controversial issue of the origin of the virus, which first emerged in China late last year, urging the WHO to help investigate “the zoonotic source of the virus and the route of introduction to the human population”.

Electric Car Sales to Fall, But Not as Much As Other Vehicles



FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Worldwide electric car registrations are set to fall 18% this year, but those of combustion engine cars are set to drop even faster, analysts BloombergNEF (BNEF) said on Tuesday, as the automotive sector is hammered by the coronavirus crisis.

In a report, BNEF forecast registrations of combustion engine cars would drop 23% in 2020.

The temporary closure of showrooms amid lockdowns to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus has disrupted sales and undermined consumer confidence, BNEF said in its annual global outlook for electric vehicles.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is set to cause a major downturn in global auto sales in 2020,” said Colin McKerracher, head of advanced transport at BNEF.

“The long-term trajectory has not changed, but the market will be bumpy for the next three years,” he added.

BNEF forecast electric models would reach 31% of the overall car fleet by 2040 and account for 58% of new passenger car sales by that date, as combustion engine cars gradually decline from their peak in 2017.

Electric car sales this year were forecast at 1.7 million, adding to the 7 million already on the road.

The figures have implications for oil and electricity markets.

The electrification of transport, driven by anti-pollution legislation, is forecast to remove 17.6 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil demand by 2040, up from 1 million bpd currently, while electric cars could add 5.2% to power demand by that date, BNEF estimated.

It also forecast the world would need around 290 million charging points by 2040, of which 12 million would be in public places and the rest at home, workplaces, or private commercial sites.

The report also saw prospects for growth of fuel-cell vehicles using hydrogen. These could account for 3.9% of heavy-duty commercial vehicle sales and 6.5% of municipal bus sales by 2040, it predicted.

World Carbon Pollution Falls 17% During Pandemic Peak

KENSINGTON (AP) — The world cut its daily carbon dioxide emissions by 17% at the peak of the pandemic shutdown last month, a new study found.

But with life and heat-trapping gas levels inching back toward normal, the brief pollution break will likely be “a drop in the ocean” when it comes to climate change, scientists said.

In their study of carbon dioxide emissions during the coronavirus pandemic, an international team of scientists calculated that pollution levels are heading back up — and for the year will end up between 4% and 7% lower than 2019 levels. That’s still the biggest annual drop in carbon emissions since World War II.

It’ll be 7% if the strictest lockdown rules remain all year long across much of the globe, 4% if they are lifted soon.

For a week in April, the United States cut its carbon dioxide levels by about one-third. China, the world’s biggest emitter of heat-trapping gases, sliced its carbon pollution by nearly a quarter in February, according to a study Tuesday in the journal Nature Climate Change. India and Europe cut emissions by 26% and 27% respectively.

The biggest global drop was from April 4 through 9 when the world was spewing 18.7 million tons (17 million metric tons) of carbon pollution a day less than it was doing on New Year’s Day.

Such low global emission levels haven’t been recorded since 2006. But if the world returns to its slowly increasing pollution levels next year, the temporary reduction amounts to “a drop in the ocean,” said study lead author Corinne LeQuere, a climate scientist at the University of East Anglia.

“It’s like you have a bath filled with water and you’re turning off the tap for 10 seconds,” she said.

By April 30, the world carbon pollution levels had grown by 3.3 million tons (3 million metric tons) a day

from its low point earlier in the month. Carbon dioxide stays in the air for about a century.

Outside experts praised the study as the most comprehensive yet, saying it shows how much effort is needed to prevent dangerous levels of further global warming.

“That underscores a simple truth: Individual behavior alone ... won’t get us there,” Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann, who wasn’t part of the study, said in an email. “We need fundamental structural change.”

If the world could keep up annual emission cuts like this without a pandemic for a couple decades, there’s a decent chance Earth can avoid warming another 1.8 degrees (1 degree Celsius) of warming from now, study authors said. But getting the type of yearly cuts to reach that international goal is unlikely, they said.

If next year returns to 2019 pollution levels, it means the world has only bought about a year’s delay in hitting the extra 1.8 degrees (1 degree Celsius) of warming that leaders are trying to avoid, LeQuere said. That level could still occur anywhere from 2050 to 2070, the authors said.

The study was carried out by Global Carbon Project, a consortium of international scientists that produces the authoritative annual estimate of carbon dioxide emissions. They looked at 450 databases showing daily energy use and introduced a measurement scale for pandemic-related societal “confinement” in its estimates.

Nearly half the emission reductions came from less transportation pollution, mostly involving cars and trucks, the authors said. By contrast, the study found that drastic reductions in air travel only accounted for 10% of the overall pollution drop.

In the U.S., the biggest pollution declines were seen in California and Washington with plunges of more than 40%.

Hackers Access Details of Millions of EasyJet Passengers

LONDON (Dispatches) - British budget airline easyJet said on Tuesday hackers had accessed the email and travel details of around 9 million customers, and the credit card details of more than 2,000 of them, in a “highly sophisticated” attack.

“There is no evidence that any personal information of any nature has been misused, however ... we are communicating with the approximately 9 million customers whose travel details were accessed to advise them of protective steps to minimize any risk of potential phishing,” it said.

The airline, which has grounded most of its flights due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is locked in a long-running battle with its founder and biggest shareholder, said it did not look like any personal information had been misused.

“We take issues of security extremely seriously and continue to invest to further enhance our security environment,” it said in a statement to the stock exchange.

The company said it had engaged leading forensic experts to investigate the issue. It has also notified the Information Commissioner’s Office and the National Cyber Security Centre.

Tenth Majlis...

FROM PAGE 1

Larijani said that the 13th Conference of the Union of Councils of Member States of Islamic Cooperation Organizations was held in 2018 by the Parliament in Tehran; terrorism and US involvement in creating security turmoil in Islamic countries and attacking the holy city of Quds was the subject of the conference.

He described the adoption of the law of reciprocity measures against the designation of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps as a terrorist organization as a manifestation of the will of the nation.

The official said that the secretariat for the protection of the rights of the Palestinian people, which operates under the supervision of the parliament, has held regular meetings to pursue the rights of the oppressed Palestinian people.

The 11th Majlis will start open next week.

Tehran Rejects...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Shamkhani underlined that Iranian border guards had nothing to do with the tragic event in which a group of Afghan nationals lost their lives in the common border area between the two countries. However, he expressed surprise and regret over a “heavy and undocumented news atmosphere” created by some Afghan media outlets and officials.

He said there is documented evidence which refutes claims made against Iran. He noted that if the Afghan side is willing, the issue can be investigated in a joint fact-finding committee without being affected by “unconstructive” media hype.

The Afghan national security advisor, in turn, expressed gratitude to Iran for its determining role in the agreement reached between Ghani and Abdullah.

Mohib said Afghanistan will not allow the cordial relations between the two countries to be affected by unwarranted alarmism. He further said illegal movements across the common borders between the two countries is an old challenge, expressing hope the tragic incident will turn into an opportunity to work out a permanent solution in that regard.

He added the evacuation of some border checkpoints by Afghan forces has created some problems along the common borders. He said Afghanistan is prepared to work with Iran to find a fundamental solution with regards to border control.

Iran Warns U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

In his letter, Zarif described the U.S.’s illegal, dangerous and provocative threats as kind of piracy and a major threat to international peace and security, stressing that the United States must stop bullying and respect the rule of international law, especially the freedom of the seas.

After sending this letter, the Islamic Republic’s Foreign Ministry summoned the Swiss ambassador, warning Washington of serious consequences in case of any possible threats against its vessels. The foreign ministry also described trade relations between Iran and Venezuela as fully legitimate and legal, saying the United States’ use of coercion or bullying is a threat to freedom of shipping, international trade and free flow of energy.

Vessels in Persian Gulf...

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“The naval units of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman will continue their regular missions in accordance with professional principles as in the past,” the ISNA news agency quoted an unnamed military official as saying.

The notice comes one month after President Donald Trump tweeted that he had directed the U.S. Navy to “shoot down and destroy” Iranian gunboats that “harass” American ships, following a confrontation between U.S. warships and Iranian military boats in the Persian Gulf.

Iranian military officials have warned the Islamic Republic will give a crushing answer to any aggressor when it comes to defending its national security.

“The Americans have certainly experienced this [in the past] that they will receive a harder slap than before upon perpetrating the slightest action or infringement against the Islamic Republic’s territorial waters and our people’s interests,” senior spokesperson for Iran’s Armed Forces, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said in April.

UAE’s Etihad...

FROM PAGE 1

However, it was not immediately clear whether the Palestine-bound aid supplies had been transported on the Etihad cargo flight.

Israel and the UAE do not have formal diplomatic relations, but have long had clandestine contacts, according to widespread reports. In recent years, the UAE — along with other Persian Gulf Arab states — has made several overt moves hinting at warmer ties with the Tel Aviv regime, including letting in Israeli athletes and officials.

Last year, Israel’s then foreign minister Israel Katz visited Abu Dhabi. A year earlier, the regime’s sports minister also flew to the UAE capital where she went on a public tour of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. An Israeli cycling team races through Dubai cycling park, taking part in the UAE Tour for the first time in the latest sign of thawing ties between the two sides.

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Ronaldo Back Training at Juventus After Two Months

TURIN (AFP) - Cristiano Ronaldo returned to training with Juventus in Turin on Tuesday after an absence of over two months because of the coronavirus pandemic. The 35-year-old arrived at the Juventus Training Centre in a Jeep with tinted windows around 09:20 (0720 GMT), leaving three hours later with a smile and thumbs up for waiting photographers. Ronaldo underwent medical and physical tests before joining up with his teammates for the first time in 72 days for individual training, according to media reports.

Premier League Confirms Six Positive COVID-19 Cases After Testing

LONDON (Reuters) - The Premier League said on Tuesday that six people from three different clubs had tested positive for COVID-19 out of a sample of 748 individuals. The novel coronavirus tests were taken on Sunday and Monday ahead of the return to small group training. "Players or club staff who have tested positive will now self-isolate for a period of seven days," the league said in a statement. "The Premier League is providing this aggregated information for the purposes of competition integrity and transparency."

Bautista Agut Still Eyeing Elusive ATP Finals Spot

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Qualifying for the season-ending men's ATP Finals, which features the world's top eight singles players and doubles teams, is one of the goals for Roberto Bautista Agut before he retires, the Spaniard has said.

The 32-year-old came close to ticking that off his wish list when he rose to a career-high world ranking of ninth last year and served as a reserve player for the 2019 edition of the event in London.

"It is one of the goals I would like to achieve before retiring," Bautista Agut told ATPTour.com. "I know how difficult it is, I know that I have been very close some seasons. It's not something I'm obsessed about, but it remains a goal I'd like to achieve some day."

Bautista Agut was ranked 12th when the tennis season was suspended in early March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tennis shutdown will continue at least until the end of July and the fate of the 50th edition of the ATP Finals, scheduled for Nov. 15-22 in London, is expected to be decided later.

The Spaniard made a strong start to the season by winning all six of his singles matches for Spain in the ATP Cup before reaching the third round of the Australian Open, where he fell to Croatia's Marin Cilic after a gruelling five-setter.

In November, Bautista Agut, who has 11 career wins against top 10 opponents, returned to Spain's Davis Cup squad a day after his father's funeral and delivered an emotional win over Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime to help his country to a sixth title.

"What keeps me motivated is my competitiveness. I'm very competitive both as an athlete and person," he said. "I'm always trying to improve and win, adding minor details to my game, because it's a feeling I love."

Meanwhile Matteo Berrettini thinks tennis players should not be put in a position where they have to provide financial aid to fellow professionals and it should be the responsibility of those governing the sport, the Italian world number eight has said.

World No. 1 Novak Djokovic had urged players to contribute to a fund set up by the sport's governing bodies to help the lower-ranked professionals affected by the tennis shutdown which began in March and will continue at least until end of July.

"I took a moment to reflect on my priorities, not because I don't respect the other players, because I believe that no player - in any kind of sports - should be put in the position of helping another player financially," Berrettini told Eurosport Italy's Call-azione show.

"They have to take care of us. The real problem is deeper."



The governing bodies recently raised over \$6 million to help the lower-level players, who depend solely on tournament winnings to earn their living, during the shutdown caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic. The International Tennis Federation has said it is working on additional measures, including a new relief fund, to help players ranked between 501 and 700, and are not covered under other relief programmes.

World No. 3 Dominic Thiem had earlier rejected the notion that top tennis players should chip in to help the lower-ranked competitors, saying he felt there were sections of society that needed more urgent help. "We need to invest money in a different way in order to help lower-ranked players," the 24-year-old Berrettini said. "Personally, I prefer to help other more specific causes. I spoke with Djokovic and he told me 'don't worry Matteo, the donation is not mandatory. It's something that you can agree on if you feel like it. If you prefer to buy masks for hospitals like Spallanzani or helping families in need, I respect you'."

"That's an important message, it should be spread outside of our players' circle." "I think that this responsibility belongs to the federations, ITF, ATP, WTA... they are the ones who make tournaments happen, and us, the players, pay them back with our performances."

Marseille Offer Coach Villas-Boas New Contract

MARSEILLE (AFP) - Marseille have offered coach Andre Villas-Boas a two-year contract extension, the French club announced on Tuesday, amid widespread reports that the Portuguese is set to leave after just one season in charge.

A Marseille statement said the club wished to put right "erroneous" media reports about a new contract offer and confirmed Villas-Boas - whose existing deal runs until the end of next season - had been offered the extension which would tie him to the Velodrome until 2023.

It would also carry the option of a further season if they qualify for the Champions League in that campaign.

It comes after the 42-year-old led the former European champions to second place behind Paris Saint-Germain in the Ligue 1 season which was ended early because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Marseille, who are owned by American tycoon Frank McCourt, are therefore set to feature in the Champions League next season for the first time since 2013/14.

The statement said the contract offer showed "the club's willingness to create stable conditions without which nothing solid can be built for the long term" as well as the "confidence of the club in the qualities of Andre Villas-Boas as a coach".



Man United Urge Fans to Stay Away From Stadiums

MANCHESTER (Reuters) - Manchester United have urged fans to stay away from their Old Trafford stadium should the venue be used for behind closed doors games during the Premier League's resumption of play.

The league remains in talks with the government about whether matches in closed stadiums will be held at neutral venues or, as many clubs prefer, on the usual home and away basis.

In an email to supporters, United confirmed they will refund season ticket and ticket holders for games held behind closed doors and made a plea for supporters to stay away from matches.

"We share your disappointment that you will not be able to watch United in person from within the stadium, but we would encourage you to give your continued loyal support from the comfort and safety of your home. To help with that, the Premier League and their media partners will work to deliver the very best broadcast coverage of our games," the club said.

"We also ask for your co-operation not to travel to any stadiums at which we are playing on matchdays. By supporting from home and following government guidance, you will be playing your part to keep your friends, your family and all United fans safe."

The Premier League is exploring a number of options for broadcasting of behind closed doors games including use of audio effects and computer generated "fans".

Curtailed French Season Could Have Been Completed in August

PARIS (Dispatches) - An August 3 deadline to complete the suspended football season was only a recommendation and "not official", according to a letter written by UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin amid an ongoing row over the decision to call a premature end to the campaign in France.

In a letter sent to the Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas on May 14 -- revealed by French daily Le Parisien and of which AFP has obtained a copy -- Ceferin explains that European football's governing body had indeed discussed setting an August 3 deadline for countries to finish their domestic leagues.

Real, Bayern, Inter Join Forces to Boost Healthcare in Italy and Spain

MADRID (Reuters) - Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan have announced a mini tournament called the 'European Solidarity Cup - Football for Heroes', to raise funds for health care resources in Italy and Spain which have been depleted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In separate statements, the clubs announced that the matches would take place at each of their stadiums and would raise money for boosting healthcare resources in Italy and Spain, but not in Germany. "The net proceeds from all three games will be donated to medical facilities in Italy and Spain," said Bayern's statement.

"FC Bayern sees its contribution as a symbol of support for a united Europe, in which everyone takes responsibility for each other."

Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge added: "Despite all the suffering and all the problems, we in Germany are perhaps fortunate that our healthcare system is proving resilient in this crisis. "But we have also seen horrifying images from Italy and Spain, both countries among those hardest hit in Europe by the pandemic."

Italy is the second-worst affected country in Europe behind Britain by the coronavirus, with a death toll of more than 32,000. Spain is the third-worst affected, with over 27,000 people dying from the virus.



Button Shocked Vettel Will Not Be at Ferrari Next Season

LONDON (Reuters) - Former world champion Jenson Button says he is shocked Sebastian Vettel will not drive for Ferrari next season and that it would be "madness" if the team had pushed him out.

Ferrari said last week that four-times world champion Vettel would leave them at the end of the 2020 season, after talks on a new contract ended without a deal.

They then replaced the German with Spaniard Carlos Sainz to race alongside Charles Leclerc. German media had reported that Vettel, who won 14 races with Ferrari and is their third-most successful driver, had rejected a one-year extension with a reduced salary but the 32-year-old said financial matters played no part in the joint decision.

"If he was pushed, for me it's madness," Button, the 2009 world champion, told Sky Sports. "He showed his speed last year. He had a tough moment in the season when Charles was performing really well and that hurt him a bit mentally. But he came back strong ... he's somebody you'd definitely choose to put in your car if you had an F1 team."

"There must be more to it. I don't know if Ferrari are going down the route of not wanting two number one drivers or what but it's a really strange choice for me and I'm still shocked that Sebastian (won't be) in a red car."

The 2020 season is yet to start due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



German FA, Bayern Want Salary Cap for Credible Football

BERLIN (AFP) - German FA president Fritz Keller and Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge want to propose a salary cap to UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin, it was revealed on Tuesday.

"There are absurd salaries and transfer fees that are no longer credible," Keller, boss of the German Football Association (DFB), told reporters.

"We have to talk about salary caps. I am glad that I agree with Karl-Heinz Rummenigge on this point. "Therefore we will write a letter to UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin."

Rummenigge touted the idea at the weekend in an interview with broadcaster Sky. "(Former UEFA president) Michel Platini had the idea years ago to introduce a salary cap in Europe based on the American model," Rummenigge said.

While the Frenchman allegedly had the support "of all the big clubs in Europe. However, we were told from the outset that this could not be brought into line with competition laws," Rummenigge added.

Now Keller wants to write a combined letter to persuade Ceferin.

The restricting of wages, which are currently "partly from another world", can only be achieved with UEFA's help, he added.

