

**IRAN NEWS** Felicitates Its Muslim Readers Over Auspicious Eid-ul Fitr. Due to Two Days of National Holidays, the Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands on Tuesday

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Health Ministry Spokesman Says 51 Patients Have Died of The Novel Coronavirus in the Past 24 Hours, Increasing the Overall Fatalities to 7,300**

VOL. XXVI, No. 6953 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY MAY 23, 2020 - KHORDAD 3, 1399

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## Tehran Scolds Europe For Stunning Captivity To Israeli Lobby

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has lashed out at Europe for its "stunning captivity" to Israeli lobby groups and its failure to stop Tel Aviv from violating the international law.

"Stunning is Europe's captivity to Zionist lobby," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi tweeted on Friday.

The spokesman said Europe has historically failed to stop Zionist regime's violation of the international law including its suppression of Palestinians and its annexation of lands, committed in the name of ensuring Israel's security.

"Why afraid of 'referendum' in Palestine as a lasting solution?" he asked.

Mousavi's comments came in reaction to a recent spate of propaganda by Western media about a poster that appeared on the website of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei proposing "referendum" as the best way to end Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and the final solution to the issue of Palestine.

Since the publication of the poster on Ayatollah Khamenei's website on Wednesday, some Zionist-sponsored international media have been trying to draw an analogy between the term "the final solution" on that poster and the Nazi idea of extermination of Jews during World War II.

Some Western and Zionist officials also moved fast to come up with such baseless charges, most prominent among them being U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who went as far as threatening Iran with destruction.

## Iran-Led Strategy of Resistance to Speed Up Israel's Collapse

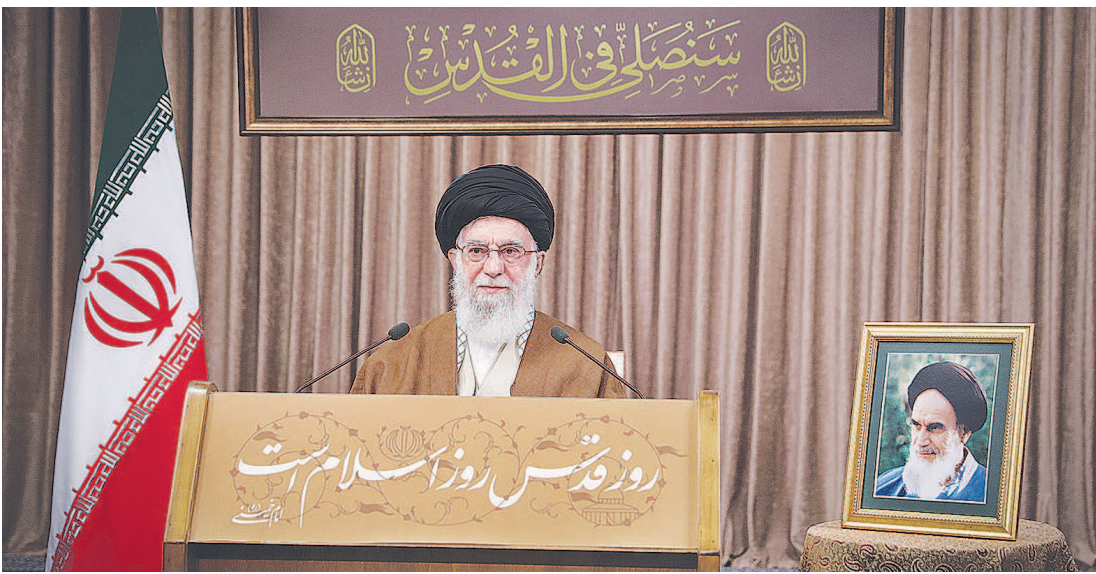
TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) hails the Palestinian people for not wavering in their struggles to end Israel's US- and UK-backed occupation of their homeland, saying the developments on the ground today show the strategy of resistance — pioneered by Iran — will speed up the downfall of the regime and liberation of al-Quds.

In a statement issued on the eve of the International Quds Day, the IRGC said the occasion — which is an initiative of late founder of Iran's Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini — played a decisive role in efforts to keep the Muslim world and the entire world community focused on the Palestinian cause over the past decades.

Palestine, the IRGC, added still tops the list of issues of prime importance facing the region, the Muslim world and the entire international community "72 years into the official occupation of the Palestinian land by the Zionists on the back of a conspiracy by evil Britain and criminal America."

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## Supreme Leader Says 'Virus of Zionism' Will Be Eliminated



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN — Supreme Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says the "virus of Zionism" will not last long and will be eliminated in the not-too-distant future.

In a Friday televised speech on the occasion of the International Quds Day, Ayatollah Khamenei said the 1979 Revolution in Iran and the subsequent emergence of the Resistance Front in the region are factors that have impeded the "Zionist virus."

The Zionist regime, the worst human evil, will be eradicated from the Middle East despite being supported by the United States and its minions in the not-too-distant future, the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that without a doubt, the Zionist virus, which is the record holder of human evil, won't last long, and will be uprooted.

The Leader further warned it is a "grave mistake" to reduce the issue of Palestine to an "Arab issue", saying that everyone must assist in the holy struggle to liberate Palestine.

He said regional conflicts are machinations to drive attention away from the resistance front.

He also slammed some Arab governments for preparing ground for normalization of ties with Israel.

The Supreme Leader denounced Israel as a "tumor" to be eliminated and hailed Tehran's supply of weaponry to Palestinian armed groups fighting against it.

"The uprising by Palestinians should continue ... fight to liberate Palestine is an obligation and an Islamic jihad ... The Zionist regime (Israel) is a deadly, cancerous tumor in the region. It will undoubtedly be uprooted and destroyed," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"Iran realized Palestinian fighters' only problem was lack of access to weapons. With divine guidance and assistance, we planned, and the balance of power has been transformed in Palestine, and today the Gaza Strip can stand against the aggression of the Zionist enemy and defeat it," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated the call in his speech on Quds Day held on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. The annual occasion was inaugurated by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, late founder of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

He suggested global attention on the coronavirus crisis had helped obscure wrongs done to Palestinians.

"The long-lasting virus of Zionists will be eliminated," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei also denounced what he called treason by "political and cultural mercenaries in Muslim countries" helping Zionists to downplay the Palestine issue, in an apparent reference to some Arab states.

He went on to say, "The dawn of the Islamic Revolution in Iran opened up a new chapter in the struggle for Palestine. From the first steps — namely, driving out the Zionist elements who considered Iran of the Pahlavi period to be one of their safe strongholds — to assigning the unofficial embassy of the Zionist regime to the office of the Palestinian representative, stopping the flow of oil, other great achievements and widespread political activities. All of these measures brought about the emergence of a front of resistance in the entire region. The hope of solving this issue flourished in hearts. The emergence of the resistance front presented the Zionist regime with increasing problems. God willing, the Zionist regime will encounter even more problems in the future."

## Venezuela Warns U.S. Its Navy Will Escort Iranian Oil Tankers

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela has said that its air and navy forces will escort Iranian oil tankers arriving with much-needed fuel after Tehran warned of 'consequences' if the U.S. tried to intercept the ships.

The tankers are carrying around 1.5 million barrels of fuel to the Latin American nation as it faces an acute scarcity of gasoline as the country endures the novel coronavirus pandemic. 'We're ready for whatever, whenever,' President Nicolas Maduro told state-run media, thanking 'all the support' from its Middle East ally in its confrontation with the United States.

His comments came after Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido said the shipment should 'alarm' Latin America. Both OPEC members are U.S. adversaries whose oil industries are under U.S. sanctions. Trump administration officials say Washington is considering a response to the shipment, Reuters reported. Venezuela said it would deploy naval vessels like these frigates - here on a 2019 exercise - to welcome Iranian tankers bringing much needed gasoline

'We're ready for whatever, whenever,' President Nicolas Maduro told state-run media

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, but its capacity to refine crude into gasoline is limited. U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has imposed unilateral sanctions aimed at ending oil exports from Iran and Venezuela, both major crude producers. Washington has also sanctioned individual Venezuelans and Iranians. In early April the U.S. military said it was increasing its vigilance and deploying warships in the ocean near Venezuela, arguing that there was an increase in organized crime. Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said that when the Iranian ships enter the oceanic economic zone - 200 nautical miles from the coastline - 'they will be welcomed' by Venezuelan naval ships and warplanes. Neither Maduro nor Padrino said when the ships, which according to press reports number five and sailed from Iran in the past days, will arrive.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Palestine Can Be Liberated With Military Capability

Yesterday Friday, May22, was the International Quds Day which also coincided with the anniversary of liberation of Khorramshahr during the eight-year Iraq war. So we can think and be optimistic about the liberation of Quds on next May 22. Today the world heartily and with all-out anger shouts for liberation of Palestine from the Zionism's claw.

The outbreak of Coronavirus did not let people pour into streets to mark the International Quds Day but it does not mean that people do not express their hatred against terrorist and evil occupier of the sacred Quds. Our noble and esteemed imam, Imam Khomeini (R) has said, "Quds Day is not merely a Palestine day and it is Islam's day; It is the Day of Islamic ruling. It is the day when the flag of the Islamic Republic should be hoisted in all countries. It is the day that we should make the superpowers understand that they cannot advance in the Islamic countries any longer."

Today this dream and slogan has come true and amid disbelief, Iranian oil tankers provide Venezuelan people with fuel strongly and proudly, and the imposed sanctions by the terrorist Trump government can't do a damn thing and stop it.

On the condition of this year's Quds Day, Leader of Hamas Palestinian Resistance Movement Ismail Haniyeh says, "From Beit-ul-Muqadda, blessed Palestine land and surroundings or anywhere else that our hearts are there, we send our greetings with honor and proud to all Arab and Islamic nations on the international Quds Day. The day which links hearts to the promise and trust. The day which links the hearts to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Quds, this capital of great Muslim believers, the capital of Palestine government from sea to the river."

Today we hold international Quds Day in a condition that Quds is in its most dangerous and threatening condition of its all times. The Deal of Century is the deep and mischievous plot which has been planned by arrogant evils, but with hope in God, resistance of Palestine nation and sacrifice of Palestinian martyrs, this evil plot will be doomed to failure.

We consider aggression to Al-Aqsa Mosque as aggression to Muslim world and with God's help and prudence of esteemed Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei we will give a proper response to such violations and insults in due time. See Page 7

## U.S. Sanctions on Iranian Officials Show Its Desperation

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran says the latest sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Iranian officials indicate that the previous bans were totally inefficient, so much so that Washington has been forced to expand its sanctions regime to non-economic and non-military bodies.

In a statement on Thursday, Mousavi condemned the new sanctions, and said the U.S. regime's addition to imposition of sanctions is indicative of the country's unlawful and arbitrary behaviors against the integrity of the international law and order.

"The U.S. regime targets the legal bodies and officials of independent governments with its hostile policies," Mousavi noted.

"The futile, repetitive, and blind sanctions imposed by the U.S. regime against the interior minister, the commander of the Law Enforcement, and other officials of our country indicate the weakness, desperation, and confusion of the U.S. regime," the spokesman noted.

He said the new sanctions have been imposed based on Washington's usual delusions, under the influence of ill-informed advisors, and in reaction to the regime's failures vis-à-vis the strong resolve of the Iranian nation and government.

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# Iran Police Ready to Probe Death of Afghan Citizens

TEHRAN, May 21 (MNA) –Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NAJA) expressed its readiness to probe the death of Afghan citizens at the joint border.

The Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NAJA) issued a statement on the killing of several Afghan citizens at the joint border of the two countries, announcing that NAJA expects Afghan officials to pave the way for a probe to the incident without being influenced by distortions and inductions of common enemies of the two countries and their political intentions.

## Virus of U.S. Sanctions Failed to Halt Iran's Development

**TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani says the country's success in tackling the coronavirus epidemic and dealing with the "virus of U.S. sanctions" shows that Americans will never be able to bring the Iranian nation to its knees and will have to remain in despair over their wrong approaches.**

The Iranian nation may rest assured that the Islamic Republic will not allow a grin on the face of the arrogant rulers at the White House, President Rouhani said in remarks at a Thursday ceremony, held to inaugurate several development and energy projects in the southern provinces.

"We'll do something that they (US leaders) would remain in grief and sorrow in their wrong political approach forever," the president added.

President Rouhani emphasized that the "severe and unprecedented sanctions and pressures" have failed to impede the Iranian nation's progress.

"The U.S. cannot bring our nation to its knees, the evidence of which are these projects that we are implementing in year 1399 (2020) after two years and a couple of months of tough sanctions," he added.



Although the coronavirus and the "American virus" of sanctions have created problems for Iran, none of them can halt the country's progress and production, President Rouhani underlined, noting, "We will keep production and will do our utmost to achieve the goal that the Supreme Leader has set for a surge in production this year."

In the ceremony, the president inaugurated two major water management projects in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, including a running water project by the Energy Ministry and an irrigation project by the Ministry of Agriculture.

President Rouhani also inaugurated a project on the development of South Pars gas field's Phase 11 and installation of offshore platforms for gas extraction in the new phase.

## GC Approves Majlis Bill to Confront Zionist Regime's Plots

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Guardian Council approved on Thursday the bill presented by the Iranian Majlis (Parliament) to take proportionate measures towards Israeli plots against international and regional peace and security.

The approval was announced by spokesman for the Guardian Council Abbas Ali Kdkhodaei through a twitter message.

The bill was discussed on Wednesday and nothing found in it against the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kdkhodaei wrote.

On May 12, Iranian lawmakers approved a double-urgency bill that will take proportionate measures towards the Israeli plots against international and regional peace and security.

The bill with 43 votes in favor and no "No" votes includes 16 articles which have predicted measures to be taken against the Israeli acts putting international peace at jeopardy.

The legislation passed by the parliament needs the Guardian Council confirmation to come into law.

If the bill is confirmed by the Council, it will be sent to Presidential Office to take executive force. Otherwise, it should be re-discussed in Majlis.

Guardian Council's key duty is to interpret the Islamic Republic's Constitution.

## Abolishment of Israel Not Equal to Abolishment of Jews

TEHRAN (IFP) - Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says elimination of the Zionist regime of Israel does not translate into the abolishment of the Jewish people, but entails the eviction of aliens and thugs like Netanyahu.

The Persian-language Twitter account of Ayatollah Khamenei sent a post on Wednesday ahead of the International Quds Day, reiterating that the Islamic Republic has nothing to do with the Jewish people.

"The abolishment of the Israeli government does not mean the abolishment Jews. We have nothing to do with the Jewish people," the Leader said in the post.

Eliminating the Zionist regime doesn't mean eliminating Jews. We aren't against Jews. It means abolishing the imposed regime & Muslim, Christian & Jewish Palestinians choose their own govt & expel thugs like Netanyahu. This is "Eliminating Israel" & it will happen.#FlyTheFlag

"The abolishment of Israel means that the Muslim, Christian and Jewish people of Palestine should be able to choose their government themselves and oust the foreigners and ruffians, like Netanyahu," read the message.

"The abolishment of Israel means this, and this will surely happen," said the tweet.

The message included an excerpt of a speech that Ayatollah Khamenei had delivered on November 15, 2019, in a gathering of the heads of government branches, a group of government officials, ambassadors of Islamic countries and participants in the International Conference on Islamic Unity in Tehran.

## Full Realization of Palestinian People's Rights, Essential for Lasting Peace

TEHRAN (IP) – Judiciary Chief, in a message to the Justice Ministers of Islamic countries, stressed that full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people is the main condition for lasting peace.

Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi also announced the readiness of the Judiciary to pursue the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and address the Israeli regime's crimes and aggression in the national and international legal bodies with the cooperation of these countries.

In a part of the message, the senior official referred to the seven decades of U.S. and some European governments' efforts to keep the Zionist regime occupation ongoing with



money and coercion, emphasizing "the right to self-determination" as the undeniable right of every nation and considered the Quds Day, the day of the consolidation of Beit-ul-Moqaddas as the permanent capital of the Palestinian.

He also highlighted that "resistance" is the initiative of the Palestinian people to continue their lives, and termed the full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of justice

are the main conditions for lasting peace and stability and underscored the need to use all national, regional and international capacities of the Judiciaries of the Islamic countries in support of the oppressed and the fight against oppression.

## Tehran, London Trade Halted by Coronavirus

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - There has been a pause in trade between Iran and Britain due to coronavirus spread, Head of the British Iranian Chamber of Commerce Amir Houshang Amini said.

"All the commercial transactions were practically closed from the start of new Iranian year [began March 20, 2020] due to spread of Coronavirus, while all the visa offices have also been closed," he said. "The British Embassy has been closed during past three weeks and no negotiation meeting for bilateral trade has been held."

"UK has exported medical items to Iran but the volume was not significant and it was similar to other European countries," he said.

Iran import volume from the UK during last Iranian year (began March 21, 2019) was 141 million tons of goods valued \$69 million, he said adding that Iran has exported 267,400 tons of goods to Britain valued \$486,000 in the same period.

Trade turnover between the two countries has dropped following the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and re-imposing sanctions against Iran.

In first half of 2019, Iran's mainly exported petrochemical products, carpet, floor coverings and food items to the UK, while it primarily imported cosmetics and sanitary items, meat, clothes and fruit concentrate from Great Britain.

The Eurostat statistics show the two countries had €69 million trade during first half of 2019, which is 30-percent drop comparing the same time in 2018.

## Fighting COVID19 Needs All Countries' Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri in a phone conversation with Azerbaijan Prime Minister Ali Asadov stressed that fighting coronavirus requires cooperation of all countries and international organizations. Appreciating Azeri government for issuing permission for Iranian nationals to return home, Jahangiri referred to the effect of coronavirus on all countries and underlined the importance of maintaining cooperation among all countries and international organizations.

"It is necessary for all countries to exchange experiences in fighting coronavirus," he added.

He noted that Iranian and Azeri health ministers can establish more cooperation with regard to exchanging experiences in fighting COVID-19.

Jahangiri expressed hope for returning Iranian prisoners to Iran.

Fortunately, despite the outbreak of coronavirus, Iran and Azerbaijan have no problem in road and sea transportation and transit with Azerbaijan.

He hoped that after removing concerns caused by coronavirus, "we would observe implementation of agreements and investment. He wished for the implementation of agreements and joint projects such as joint oil projects in the Caspian and Rasht-Astara railway.

Meanwhile, Asadov hailed Jahangiri's offer of exchanging experiences in fighting coronavirus, saying he will issue necessary order to Azeri health minister in this regard.

He expressed happiness that 120 Iranian nationals have entered Iran through Astara border.

Asadov also urged Jahangiri to pave the way for extraditing convicts with Azerbaijan. He hailed developing cooperation between Tehran and Baku in energy field, saying both sides should try to develop relations.

Despite limitations caused by coronavirus, we have increase in transit volume in north-south and east-west corridors, he said, adding that Azerbaijan has put on its agenda transportation and transit.

## Iran Calls on UN to Support Fight Against Drug Trafficking

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to International Organizations to Vienna sent a letter to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (UNODC) as well as other resident ambassadors, stressing that the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to lead the fight against drug trafficking, despite illegal and unilateral U.S. sanctions.

Referring to the effective, comprehensive and uninterrupted measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fight against drug trafficking, reaching the record of 950 tons discovery of various types of drugs in 2019, despite unilateral and illegal US sanctions and lack of international cooperation, Kazem Gharibabadi called on the United Nations and member states to act jointly in identifying these actions and supporting Iran's activities.

According to this letter, drug detections in Iran have increased by 20% in 2019 compared to 2018.

Over 3,000 Iranian people have been martyred in the fight against drug trafficking.

The United Nations has called Iran a leader in the fight against drug trafficking.

## Iran Population Growth Rate Below 1%

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hamed Barakat, who presides over health ministry's department of population, family and school's health, said in a video conference on Wednesday that for the first time since the victory of the Islamic revolution, i.e.42 years ago, population growth in Iran has fallen below one percent.

As he said in the beginning years after the Revolution population growth rate stood at 2.45 percent with an annual growth rate of 2.5 percent but the figure incrementally declined to 1.5 percent within the years and it, unfortunately, stands at less than one percent.

"The issue will become a challenge for Iran in the next 20 years," he expressed concern.

"Iranian population has entered its middle-ages as of four years ago and by 2050 the country will become an old one," Barakti said.

Population, development and their consequences are strategic issues that require short-term and long-term policies and planning to be addressed.

Due to the declining trend of population growth in Iran, it is needed for the government to focus on family-friendly policies.

A general population growth policy was announced on May 20, 2014, by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:11
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:53

38. As also 'Ad and Thamud, and the Companions of the Rass, and many a generation between them.  
39. To each one We set forth Parables and examples; and each one We broke to utter annihilation (for their sins). Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard ( 38 - 39)

# Oil Development Not to Stop in Face of Sanctions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Referring to the start of the installation of the first platform of phase 11 of South Pars, the Minister of Oil said: "Although this project is not a big project compared to other oil projects, it shows that the development of Iran's oil industry will not stop in the face of sanctions."**

At the inauguration ceremony of the first platform of phase 11 of South Pars, which was held on Thursday in the presence of the President and via video conferencing, Iran's Oil Minister, "Bijan Namdar Zangeneh" said that the huge oil field of South Pars is a divine gift for our nation and country.

Emphasizing that 10 phases of this field were completed by 2013 and Iran had 17 semi-finished phases, he continued: "Except one refinery, we have put all 14 phases into operation and all maritime activities will be completed this year.

Iran Oil Minister said the goal of this \$ 4 billion project was to increase the push for further extraction, as well as the conventional daily extraction of 56 million cubic meters of gas from Phase 11, which will be done by two oil platforms and sent to refineries.

Zangeneh continued, "Next year, production from this phase will reach 500 million cubic feet per day, and in the upcoming year to one billion cubic feet."

He pointed to the second leap in petrochemicals and the annual production capacity of 100 million tons of petrochemical products, adding: "Petrochemicals are active and new projects are on the agenda."

Zangeneh also announced completion of the South Pars Offshore Section as well as



17 phases of the massive gas field by the end of President Hassan Rouhani's second term in office to 2021.

The official said: "What is important in the current situation is that we will not stop operating under the sanctions and continue all our projects despite the sanctions especially in the joint fields, Goreh-Jusk Project, West Karoon Projects and the petrochemical sector."

Zangeneh said, "Fortunately, for the first time under this administration, what the Iranian nation wanted in terms of our share in this field has been achieved."

He noted that much of the development of the South Pars joint gas field had been achieved in recent years in face of the embargoes, adding: "Of course, we were able to import many of the goods we needed in the short period that the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal) was in force."

The official further noted that the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) had signed a contract for the development of South Pars Phase 11 with an international consortium of Total, CNPCI and Petropars back in July 2017, however, the French and Chinese companies pulled out of the deal in the wake of the reimposed U.S. sanctions on Iran later in 2018.

Zangeneh said Phase 11 was the last South Pars phase to be developed, adding the consortium spent 100 million dollars in the project, prior to Total and CNPC's departure from the plan. Petropars is now developing the \$4b project alone. Phase 11 is being developed for 56 mcm/d of gas production capacity.

## S. Pars Phase 11 Jacket Completely Iranian-Made

TEHRAN (IRNA)

- The managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company said on Thursday that the base of the first jacket of the Phase 11 of South



Pars Field is completely Iranian-made.

Hamid-Reza Masoudi made the remarks in the inauguration ceremony, in which President Hassan Rouhani and Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh participated through videoconference.

The installation of the first jacket of Phase 11 of South Pars Gas Field started in the Persian Gulf at the order of President Hassan Rouhani to drill 12 wells.

President Rouhani said in the videoconference that the job is being done in coronavirus time and holy month of Ramadan, indicating that the people engaged in the project have not stopped working hard.

The process of the installation will be completed in three weeks and drilling 12 wells will start at the border of Iran and Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

The structure weighs 2,200 tons and is 76 meters high. According to the schedule, the first well will be operational next year.

After France's Total and China's CNPCI withdrew from the project, Iran's Petropars undertook the project.

## 7,000-Year-Old Earthenware Found in Iran



TEHRAN (IFP) - Archaeologists have discovered six intact earthenware dishes in northern Iran dating back to the fifth millennium BCE.

Supervisor of a team of archaeologists said the six earthenware dishes have been found without any damages after excavation at 'Moshelan' archaeological site near Savojbolagh in Iran's northern province of Alborz.

Apart from the earthenware dishes, which had been buried in the fifth millennium BCE probably as part of a burial ceremony, ancient layers of soil, earthen objects and bones have been also discovered in the site, Siavash Saraqi added.

The new findings include footed dishes, clay vats, and dishes with red gutter-shaped spouts decorated with geometric patterns and drawings of animals, such as goats, dating back to the Cheshmeh-Ali era, he noted.

The Moshelan Hill, also known as Ismail Abad, is a major archeological site located in Savojbolagh in Iran's central plateau that dates back to the fifth millennium BCE, he added, saying the area was excavated for the first time in 1957-1958, and once again later in 1977 by Masoumeh Navai.

Considering the expansion of rural areas in the region, the historic hill has been poorly protected, he added, saying the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism has authorized a delegation to begin feasibility studies to determine boundaries for the Moshelan Hill archeological site.

The studies show that the historic area is much larger than what has been reported earlier, Saraqi said, noting that much of the site in the western wing has been sadly bulldozed and turned into gardens and private villas.

Human civilization in Iran dates back to the Lower Paleolithic era, over 800,000 years ago, which is proven by archaeological finds made in the Kashafrud Basin.

## Fighting COVID-19 as One

TEHRAN (UNIC) - During Ramadan, the United Nations in the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued efforts to assist the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I extend my warmest wishes Eid-al-Fitr and I am sure that for many observing Ramadan was very different this year. COVID-19 has claimed over 320,000[i] lives worldwide, left us with a virus we still do not fully understand, and thrown us into the worst socio-economic crisis in almost a century," said Ugochi Daniels, the UN Resident Coordinator in Iran.

Since the first COVID-19 cases were confirmed in Iran in February, UN agencies in the country quickly mobilized to support the national struggle against the outbreak. But the pandemic has caused a world crisis that will only be contained through large scale cooperation and collaboration. The UN in Iran is maximizing our global initiatives to sustain the Government's efforts to fight the virus.

UN response in Iran – brief overview: UN in Iran has provided technical guidance and in-kind assistance to the Government, including the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable. Assistance includes but is not limited to:

Test kits, arterial blood gas analyzers and other medical supplies to more than 100 laboratories and hospitals in Iran.

Medicines to enable Iran to contribute data to the Solidarity Trial, a global UN-led study to identify already approved medicines' effect on Coronavirus patients.

Over 76 tons of personal protective equipment for front line workers as well as professionals across Iran taking care of the elderly, children with disabilities, and other groups with special needs.

As Iran is the 6th largest refugee-hosting country in the world, the UN has provided hygiene items and food assistance to 31,000 most vulnerable refugees living in



settlements and protection items for humanitarian service workers. The UN continues to provide psycho-social counseling and legal advice through helplines, as well as targeted, one-off cash assistance when a helping hand is urgently needed.

Other UN initiatives are supporting government efforts to protect and assist women, girls, the elderly, people living disabilities, drug users, parents, teachers and others.

It is now clear that the long-term effects of the pandemic will negatively impact the world economy for many years to come. On May 14, the UN updated its plans[iii] on how to expand global efforts to mitigate the rampant effects of the pandemic. The UN, released the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, issuing a US \$6.7 billion appeal to stem the spread of the virus, distribute medicines and equipment, and protect millions of lives from the disease and accompanying impacts. As Iran is the tenth most COVID-19 affected country globally, it has been included in this global plan for continuous support.

UN in Iran acknowledges the Government's socio-economic initiatives which are already providing relief and support to vulnerable households and small businesses. The UN is currently reinforcing and scaling up programmes to sustain recovery efforts. Apart from immediate relief for the most vulnerable in COVID-19 affected families, we will focus on empowering local capacity as well as generating livelihood opportunities.

"Globally, we can see that poverty is on the rise for the first time in decades. The only way for us to get through this crisis and come out stronger on the other side, is by working together. The UN in Iran will partner with our extremely generous donors, to be able to support and contribute to the government's efforts. We will focus on inclusive, resilient and sustainable solutions and work hard leaving no one behind", added Ms. Daniels, the UN Resident Coordinator.

## Tehran, Tbilisi to Resume Trade and Transit

Tehran (IP) - Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, and Georgia's Deputy Minister of Economy discussed the latest situation of transit and transportation of goods and passengers between the two countries in a virtual meeting.

At the virtual meeting, which was also attended by Iran's ambassador to Tbilisi Seyed Javad Ghavam Shahidi, the two sides presented a report on the latest measures taken to comply with health protocols at their borders with neighboring countries after the outbreak of the coronavirus and stressed the need to resume trade between the two countries by creating "green corridors".

Explaining the measures taken at Iran's borders with neighboring countries and the effective implementation of health care and services for reopening borders, Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Abdul-Hashem Hassannia called for facilitating the entry of Iran's transit fleet into Georgia in compliance with health regulations.

The Iranian ambassador to Georgia also stressed the importance of launching a "green corridor" for the two countries' trade and transit fleets as soon as possible and called on the two sides to work together to solve the problems of transporting goods, services, and passengers.

## Tehran to Resume Trade With Arab States

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran says it has agreed with five Arab nations to resume business relations while adhering to health protocols and enforcing them at the borders.

The Islamic Republic's Health Minister Saeid Namaki said Iran is interested in expanding trade relations with these countries, and has announced readiness to provide technical support in the field of disease management to Yemen, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman.

Speaking in a televised speech on Wednesday, he said in separate phone conversations he and his Arab counterparts have talked about various issues regarding the spread of the coronavirus in these countries and exchanged views on how to deal with these problems.

"I also thanked the friendly country of Qatar, for its cooperation in providing some equipment, especially masks, during this period," added Namaki.

## Iran Writes to IMO on U.S. Threats Against Oil Tankers

LONDON (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to UK Hamid Baedinejad sent a letter to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) regarding the US threats against Iran's oil tankers.

Baedinejad tweeted late on Wednesday, "In an official letter to the International Maritime Organization, we expressed our deep concern over reports that the U.S. intends to take action against Iranian oil tankers in international waters and endanger the security of international traffic."

Iran will respond to any threat, and the US is responsible for any consequences, he reiterated.

The U.S. move to disrupt Iranian oil tankers drew Iran's criticism, as Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to warn about the U.S. move to send troops to the Caribbean to intervene in Iran's fuel export to Venezuela.

He described the U.S.' illegal, dangerous and provocative threats as a type of piracy and a great menace to international peace and security, stressing that the U.S. must stop bullying in the international scene and respect the rule of the international law, especially shipping freedom in open waters.





## UK, U.S. Ministers Discuss Disinformation From Russia, China

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's defense minister Ben Wallace and his U.S. counterpart Mark Esper discussed the need to tackle disinformation coming from Russia and China on Thursday, the British government said.

Wallace and Esper "discussed concerns about Russian and Chinese disinformation and agreed to continue to work together to mitigate the effects of this malign activity," Britain's Ministry of Defence said in a statement.



## U.S. Flies Coronavirus Aid to Russia

MOSCOW (Reuters) - A U.S. Air Force plane delivered a first batch of medical aid including 50 ventilators to Russia on Thursday to help it cope with a rising number of coronavirus cases and deaths.

Russia's case tally, the world's second highest, rose to 317,554 on Thursday after 8,849 new infections were reported, while the death toll climbed past the 3,000 mark after 127 people died in the previous 24 hours.

Only the United States has more confirmed infections. At 3,099, Russia's death toll is much lower than many European countries however, something that has sparked debate about the methods it uses to count fatalities.



## Beijing Moves to Impose New National Security Law on Hong Kong



HONG KONG (Reuters) - China is set to impose new national security legislation on Hong Kong after last year's often violent pro-democracy unrest that plunged the city into its deepest turmoil since it returned to Beijing rule in 1997, a Chinese official said on Thursday.

The statement confirmed what three people with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters, potentially sparking fresh anti-China protests in the freewheeling former British colony, which enjoys many freedoms not allowed on the mainland.

Pro-democracy demonstrators have for years strongly opposed the idea of national security laws, arguing they could erode the city's high degree of autonomy, guaranteed under the "one country, two systems" formula put in place when it returned to Chinese rule. "In light of the new circumstances and need, the National People's Congress (NPC) is exercising its constitutional power" to establish a new legal framework and enforcement mechanism to safeguard national security in Hong Kong, Zhang Yesui, the spokesman for the legislature, said.

He was speaking at a late night briefing on the eve of the start of China's annual parliamentary session. Further details would be given on Friday, he added. Hong Kong media outlets reported that the legislation would ban secession, foreign interference, terrorism and all seditious activities aimed at toppling the central government and any external interference in the financial hub.

The legislation, which will be deliberated by the NPC, could be a turning point for its freest and most international city, potentially triggering a revision of its special status in Washington and likely to spark more unrest. Online posts had already

emerged urging people to gather to protest on Thursday night and dozens were seen shouting pro-democracy slogans in a shopping mall as riot police stood nearby. Opposition democrats said the move would gravely wound Hong Kong's reputation as a financial centre and its high degree of autonomy.

"If this move takes place, 'one country, two systems' will be officially erased," said democratic lawmaker Dennis Kwok. "This is the end of Hong Kong," added Kwok, flanked by other opposition democrats.

Hong Kong people took to the streets last year to protest a now-withdrawn bill that would have allowed extraditions of criminal suspects to mainland China. The movement broadened to include demands for broader democracy amid perceptions that Beijing was tightening its grip over the city.

"If Beijing passes the law ... how (far) will civil society resist repressive laws? How much impact will it unleash on to Hong Kong as an international financial centre?" said Ming Sing, political scientist at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

The Hong Kong dollar weakened on the news. A senior Hong Kong government official said technical details of the move and how it would be implemented remained unclear.

The NPC begins its annual session on Friday after being delayed for months by the coronavirus.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on May 6 he was delaying the report assessing whether Hong Kong was sufficiently autonomous to warrant Washington's special economic treatment that has helped it remain a world financial centre.

The delay was to account for any actions at the NPC, he said.

## Pakistan Passenger Plane Crashes in Karachi

KARACHI (Dispatches) - A passenger plane with at least 100 people on board has crashed in a residential area in the Pakistani city of Karachi, the country's civil aviation agency said on Friday.

"We are trying to confirm the number of passengers but initially it is 99 passengers and eight crew members," said Abdul Sattar Khokhar, the spokesman for the country's aviation authority. The flight from the eastern city of Lahore crashed near the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, the country's largest city, on Friday afternoon, officials said.

The PK8303 flight was due to land in Karachi at 14:45 local time (09:45 GMT). The Airbus A320 plane was operated by state-run Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). "Our plane A320 which was coming from Lahore to Karachi ... the last words for the pilot were that there is a technical problem and he was told on final approach that he has both runways available to him. But the pilot indicated that he wanted to go around," PIA CEO Arshad Malik said in a video message released after the crash.

There were no immediate reports on the number of casualties or survivors but a relative of a passenger on board the plane told Al Jazeera she was able to contact him after the crash.



## Trump to Withdraw U.S. From Open Skies Treaty

WASHINGTON (AFP) - President Donald Trump plans to withdraw the United States from the Open Skies Treaty, a key defense pact with Russia designed to improve transparency and confidence between the superpowers, the New York Times reported Thursday.

Trump plans to inform Moscow today that the United States will pull out of the pact, which is rooted in Cold War efforts to prevent a conflict between the two countries.

The Times said the move could be a prelude to Washington also withdrawing from the New START Treaty which limits the number of nuclear missiles the United States and Russia can deploy.

The 18-year-old Open Skies agreement between Russia, the United States and 32 other countries, mostly members of the NATO alliance, permits one country's military to conduct a certain number of surveillance flights over another each year on short notice.

The aircraft can survey the territory below, collecting information and pictures of military installations and activities.

The idea is that the more rival militaries know about each other, the less the chance of conflict between them.

But the sides also use the flights to examine vulnerabilities of their opponent.

The United States has been frustrated that Russia will not permit US flights over areas where Washington believes Moscow is deploying medium-range nuclear weapons that threaten Europe. In March, Defense Secretary Mark Esper accused Russia of violating the treaty by forbidding US and other foreign flights over the Baltic Sea city of Kaliningrad and near Georgia.

"We've also been denied access to military exercise overflights," he said. "I have a lot of concerns about the treaty as it stands now."

"This is important to many of our NATO allies, that they have the means to conduct the overflights," he said. The New York Times said Trump was also unhappy about a Russian flight over his golf resort in Bedminster, New Jersey three years ago.

## Hungary Tightens Asylum Rules

BUDAPEST (Reuters) - Hungary shut so-called migrant transit zones on its borders on Thursday, freeing some 300 refugees from prison-like conditions while at the same time hardening rules which will effectively bar future asylum applicants.

During the peak of Europe's 2015 migration crisis, Prime Minister Viktor Orban ordered Hungary's southern border to be sealed, blocking a route for hundreds of thousands of migrants.

Some have been stuck in the transit zones, areas of several hundred square metres on the border between Hungary and Serbia with shipping containers for lodging and surrounded by heavily-guarded barbed wire perimeters, for a year or more.

The zones, which are the subject of international lawsuits and have been criticised by human rights groups, were emptied after a European Union court ruled the practice unlawful, Orban's chief of staff Gergely Gulyas said.

Human rights groups said the migrants, who are mainly from the Middle East, were moved to other facilities after the top EU court ruled last week that two Afghans and two Iranians had effectively been detained and should be released.

"The Hungarian government disagrees with the ruling, we consider it a risk to European security, but as an EU member state, we will honour all court rulings," Gulyas said.

Government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs wrote in a blog post that future asylum applications would have to be submitted at consulates in neighbouring countries.

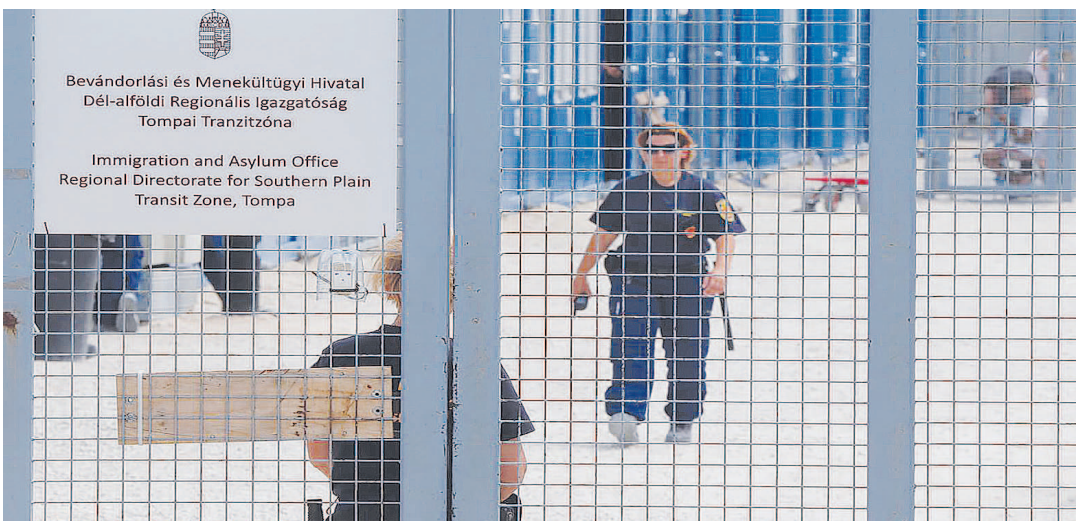
The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, which sued Budapest over the zones, welcomed their closure but said that it would now be even harder for refugees to gain asylum in the EU via Hungary. Consulates can reject asylum requests without allowing applicants any access to their territory, a violation of the Geneva Conventions, Helsinki Committee spokesman Zsolt Zadori said.

"So these 300 are better off now, but potential asylum seekers are a lot worse off," he said. "They can expect virtually no shelter from Hungary amid their persecution."

Kovacs said the government interpreted the Geneva Conventions differently.

"Hungary is surrounded by safe countries," he said.

"The Geneva Conventions stipulate refugees must apply for asylum in the first safe country. Nothing guarantees the right to choose where to apply, while breaking the law as an illegal migrant to boot."



## Palestinians Shun CIA After Declaring End to Security Coordination With U.S., Israel

GAZA (Reuters) - The Palestinians have suspended contacts with the CIA after announcing an end to security coordination with Israel and the United States in protest at Israeli proposals to annex territory in the West Bank, a Palestinian official said on Thursday.

Saeb Erekat, Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said Washington had been told of the move after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Tuesday his administration was no longer committed to agreements with Israel and the United States, including on security coordination. On cooperation with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Erekat told reporters in a video call: "It stopped as of the end of the (Palestinian) president's speech."

Intelligence cooperation with the CIA continued even after the Palestinians began boycotting U.S. peace efforts led by President Donald Trump in 2017, with the sides working together on heading off violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority is based.

Abbas has threatened before to end security ties, without following through. Israeli officials say he needs Israel's support in the face of domestic challenges from the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas.

But Erekat said: "Things change and we have decided it is time now to change." "Security cooperation with the United States is no more. Security coordination with Israel is no more," said Erekat. "We are going to maintain public order and the rule of law, alone."

The U.S. embassy in Jerusalem declined comment.

Palestinians worry that Israel, with the blessing of Washington, could carry out pledges to apply Israeli sovereignty to Jewish settlements and the Jordan Valley in the West Bank, which they see as annexation.

Palestinians seek statehood in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as their capital.







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## German Gov't Agrees Lufthansa Rescue Offer

FRANKFURT (AFP) - German ministers on Wednesday agreed final details of a rescue deal they will offer coronavirus-stricken airline giant Lufthansa, business daily Handelsblatt reported.

Berlin will take a 20-percent stake in the group, topping it up with a convertible bond worth five percent plus one share -- "putting the state in a position to build a blocking

minority in case of a hostile takeover", the newspaper said.

If confirmed, the solution would close weeks of wrangling between Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU conservatives and their centre-left junior partners the SPD.

Pro-business politicians among Merkel's ranks have long rejected excessive state involvement in Lufthansa, saying business decisions should be left up to managers.



## U.S. Regulators Open Door to Possible Tightening of Huawei Chip Curb

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. regulators are open to making changes to close what some see as a loophole in a new rule aimed at curbing global chip sales to blacklisted Chinese telecoms equipment maker Huawei Technologies Ltd, two U.S. officials said.

The new rule, unveiled by the Commerce Department on Friday, expands U.S. authority to require licenses for sales to Huawei of semiconductors made abroad with U.S. technology, amplifying the department's reach to halt exports to the world's No. 2 smartphone maker.

But the rule only includes chips designed by Huawei and does not cover shipments if they are sent directly to Huawei's customers. Some industry lawyers see this as a significant loophole.

Asked on Wednesday about the potential for adjusting the rule to close that gap, State Department official Christopher Ashley Ford said the rule itself would provide regulators with the insight to determine if it should be altered.

The rule will "give us a great deal more information upon which to base export control decisions as we move forward and try to find the right answer to these challenges including by adapting, if we need to, if Huawei tries to work around our rules in some way," Ford said.

He added that regulators would watch and "certainly make any changes that we think are necessary."

Huawei declined to comment.

The company was added to Commerce's "entity list" last year due to national security concerns, amid accusations it violated U.S. sanctions on Iran, stole intellectual property and could spy on customers, allegations Huawei has denied.

Frustration among China hawks in the administration that the entity listing was not doing enough to cut off Huawei's access to supplies prompted a crackdown effort, first reported by Reuters in November, that culminated in Friday's rule.

An industry lawyer who declined to be named said one way to change the rule would be to tweak the language to capture chips sold "to the benefit of" Huawei, but noted such a change would pose its own challenges.

Speaking as part of the same briefing with Ford, Cordell Hull, a Commerce Department official, said the agency's enforcement arm "will be looking at efforts to circumvent the rules."

## UK Inflation Slumps to Lowest Since 2016 as Coronavirus Hits

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's inflation rate sank in April to its lowest since August 2016 as the coronavirus pandemic pushed down global oil prices and clothing stores slashed prices, bolstering the prospect of more Bank of England stimulus next month.

Consumer price inflation dropped to an annual rate of 0.8% from 1.5% in March, official data showed on Wednesday. That was the sharpest one-month fall in over a decade and took inflation further below the BoE's 2% target. Deputy Governor Ben Broadbent has said it could drop below zero by the end of 2020.

The BoE increased its bond-buying programme by a record 200 billion pounds in March as the COVID-19 crisis escalated, and many economists expect another increase on June 18.

Markets see a chance the BoE could cut interest rates below zero for the first time by the end of the year.

Ruth Gregory, an economist with Capital Economics, said underlying price growth would stay subdued as weak demand more than offset any inflationary impact from the pandemic.

"Against this background, we expect the Bank to expand its quantitative easing programme further," she said.

The Office for National Statistics says inflation readings were likely to be volatile because the coronavirus shutdown has kept its price-checkers from getting prices on more than a fifth of goods and services, forcing the ONS to estimate them or use substitutes.

Declining prices for energy bills, transport - which includes petrol - and clothing and footwear, causing biggest drop in inflation.

The ONS said clothing retailers, hit by the government's stay-at-home orders, resorted to more discount sales and prices dropped

by the most since 2010, down an annual 2.9%.

Household utility bills dropped by the most since 2009, reflecting previously announced price caps.

But there was upward pressure from the price of video games and consoles, board games and children's toys, as well as fresh vegetables, the ONS said.

Core inflation, which excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco, held broadly steady at an annual rate of 1.5%.

Retail price inflation - an older measure which the ONS says is inaccurate, but is widely used in bond markets and for other commercial contracts - dropped to 1.5% from 2.6%.

The dip in the CPI below 1% will require BoE Governor Andrew Bailey to explain to the government how the central bank will attempt to push it back up.



## World Bank Names Reinhart as Chief Economist

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The World Bank on Wednesday named former Bear Stearns executive Carmen Reinhart as its chief economist, tapping a financial crisis expert who also currently serves on advisory boards of the IMF and the New York Federal Reserve.

World Bank President David Malpass said in a statement Reinhart's experience and insights would prove invaluable as the coronavirus pandemic heaps economic pain on developing countries. She starts at the bank on June 15.

Reinhart, a professor at Harvard University, published a book entitled "This Time is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly," together with economist Kenneth Rogoff of Harvard University in 2009.

The book called for stricter regulations and an early-warning system to sound the alarm about financial bubbles, arguing that central bankers, policy makers and investors tended to ignore the telltale signs of a bubble.

In an article here she wrote on the pandemic in March, Reinhart said: "Clearly, this is a 'whatever-it-takes' moment for large-scale, outside-the-box fiscal and monetary policies."

Reinhart has a Ph.D. from Columbia University and teaches international economics at the Harvard Kennedy School. She has also worked at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the International Monetary Fund and the University of Maryland and the former Bear Stearns investment bank.



## China Trade Growth Unsustainable If Virus Not Controlled

BEIJING (Dispatches) - A recovery in China's trade growth is not sustainable unless the coronavirus pandemic is brought under control globally, the minister of industry and information technology warned.

China's exports saw a surprise increase in April, partly because of rising medical product shipments, as production resumed after months of closures to control the outbreak, while imports and exports fell less than expected in renminbi terms during the first four months.

But Miao Wei told a news conference that "although our imports and exports in renminbi terms from January to April have increased moderately, I think that if the global pandemic cannot come under effective control, this is unsustainable". To drive economic growth, the country will "rapidly activate domestic demand" to make up for weakness in the international markets, he said.

China had already been trying to boost consumption as a key driver of domestic growth in a drive to recalibrate the economy from one driven by exports and state investment.

Miao also said companies have experienced a fall in production since work resumed because of falling demand after governments went into lockdown to contain the spread of the disease, effectively strangling their economies. China's key markets have been reeling from the virus fallout, with more than 30 million jobs destroyed in the United States, where the Treasury Secretary has warned of "permanent damage" to the economy if strict stay-at-home measures are not lifted soon enough.

Asked about the possibility that firms have to stop work again after resuming production, Miao said the "general policy direction is still to... use domestic demand and consumption to drive economic growth".

## Japan Exports Fall Most Since 2009

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's exports fell the most since the 2009 global financial crisis in April as the coronavirus pandemic slammed world demand for cars, industrial materials and other goods, likely pushing the world's third-largest economy deeper into recession.

The ugly trade numbers come as policymakers seek to balance virus containment measures against the need to revive battered parts of the economy, with the risk of a second wave of

infections only complicating this challenge.

The central bank will hold an emergency meeting on Friday to work out a scheme that would encourage financial institutions to lend to smaller, struggling firms. Policymakers are also considering cash injections for companies of all sizes.

Ministry of Finance (MOF) data on Thursday showed Japan's exports fell 21.9% in April year-on-year as U.S.-bound shipments slumped 37.8%, the fastest decline since 2009, with car exports there plunging 65.8%.

Global automakers are struggling to cope with the health crisis, which has pummeled car sales due to lockdowns in many countries. Toyota Motor Corp expects an 80% drop in full-year operating profit while Mitsubishi Motors Corp has reported an 89% drop in annual profit.

The fall in overall shipments was the biggest since October 2009 during the global financial crisis, but slightly less than a 22.7% decrease seen by economists in a Reuters poll. Exports fell 11.7% in March.

"It's still far from a fully-ledged resumption of economic activity," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute. "As exports and imports remain stagnant for a prolonged period of time, global trade will remain contractionary for the time being."

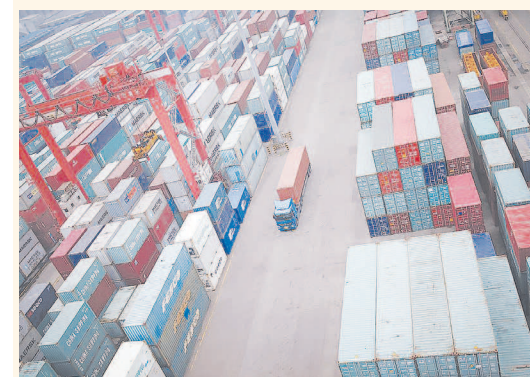
Exports to China, Japan's largest trading partner, fell 4.1% in the year to April, due to slumping demand for chemical materials, car parts and medicines.

Shipments to Asia, which account for more than half of Japanese exports, declined 11.4%, and exports to the European Union fell 28.0%.

Other trade-reliant economies in Asia have also been hit with data on Thursday showing South Korea's exports slumping by a fifth in the first 20 days of May, year-on-year.

Industry data released last week showed Japan's machine tool orders in April fell to their lowest level in more than a decade, a sign of deteriorating business spending.

## S. Korea's May 1-20 Exports Tumble 20.3%



SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korean exports for the first 20 days of May tumbled 20.3% from the same period a year earlier, as U.S.- and E.U.-bound shipments continued to collapse, highlighting the damage on global demand from the coronavirus pandemic.

But that decline was milder than the 27.6% drop over April 1-20, and analysts are predicting that trade data may have bottomed out as the country's trading partners ease coronavirus lockdowns.

Monthly trade data from Asia's fourth-largest economy is considered a bellwether for world trade as it is the first to be released among major exporting nations.

Imports sank 16.9% - versus 18.5% a month earlier - resulting in a provisional trade deficit of \$2.68 billion for the period, the Korea Customs Service data showed on Thursday.

"Exports look like they're faring better than last month. It's possible exports bottomed out in April," said economist Chun Kyu-yeon at Hana Financial Investment. "Quick recovery in China and Korea is pushing up production."

Shipments to South Korea's biggest trading partner, China, fell only 1.7% on year as factories there resumed operation, while those to the United States and the European Union dropped 27.9% and 18.4% respectively.

By item, overseas sales of semiconductors - the nation's top-selling product - soared 13.4%, whereas exports of mobile devices and cars collapsed 11.2% and 58.6% respectively.



## U.S. Unlawful Sanctions Threaten Global Public Health

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran’s Permanent Representative to the UN office in Geneva said that the U.S. unlawful sanctions threaten global public health.

He made the remarks on the 73rd meeting of the World Health Assembly which was held online on 18-19 May in Geneva, Switzerland.

“U.S. coercive measures against Iran, which are being implemented in the form of illegal and unilateral banking and financial sanctions, are a violation of basic human rights, especially the right to health and the right to life,” he said.



## IEA Calls for Economic Recovery to Be Driven by Renewables

PARIS (Dispatches) - The International Energy Agency (IEA) on Wednesday called on governments to put clean energy at the heart of their coronavirus economic recovery plans, as it forecast the first slowdown in new renewable power installations worldwide in two decades.

The IEA warned that lockdown measures — which at their peak affected more than half the world’s population — would have “far-reaching” consequences, as the world grapples with a crisis that has sent energy demand plummeting and threatens a deep economic contraction.

The agency, which had expected 2020 to be a bumper year for green energy, slashed its two-year forecast for growth in renewable capacity by nearly 10 percent.

It cited supply chain disruptions, construction delays, social distancing and financing challenges.

While sectors supplying electricity — solar, wind and hydropower — would be largely resilient in the crisis, it said, the market for biofuels used mainly in transport would be “radically” altered as global travel is frozen and oil prices plummet.

Many countries have pledged to increase their use of renewables to meet tough climate targets and the IEA urged governments to redouble those efforts as they plan for post-virus economic recovery.

It cautioned that a predicted reduction in global CO2 emissions of up to 8 percent in 2020 — the largest contraction since World War II — was nothing to celebrate.

“Putting emissions into a structural decline needed renewables to grow much faster across all sectors even before the COVID-19 crisis,” the report said.

“To regain and exceed the growth rates seen in the years before the pandemic, policy makers need to put clean energy at the center of recovery efforts.”

In its updated forecast, the IEA said that overall demand for renewables was expected to increase this year, bolstered by their use in the electricity sector, where green energy has accounted for record shares of power in some countries.

This is partly down to their priority access to the grid in many markets, and declines in energy demand during lockdowns.

It has also been boosted by record increases in capacity in 2019, which saw 192 GW of new installations connected to the grid — a 7 percent increase from 2018.

Revising down a prediction made in October, the IEA now expects some 167 GW of renewable capacity to become operational this year — a decline of 13 percent from 2019 and the first downward trend since 2000.

However, this will still add 6 percent to the global renewable capacity total this year — more than the combined size of power systems in both North America and



Europe — with solar and wind accounting for the vast majority.

Meanwhile, both the US and China are expected to boost their renewable capacity as firms rush to complete projects before the expiry of government incentives.

The IEA also predicted a “rebound” in 2021, nearing 2019 levels, as most of the projects delayed this year come online.

Technologies with long lead times — like hydropower and offshore wind — were not expected to see significant impacts.

But the report said the economic downturn is expected to deal a severe blow to transport biofuels, like ethanol and biodiesel, which are mostly consumed blended with gasoline and diesel.

Total transport biofuel production is expected to contract by 13 percent in 2020.

But the IEA said the crisis opens a window of opportunity in aviation if governments include environmental conditions in bailout packages, noting the 2 percent sustainable aviation fuel requirement in a rescue proposal for Air France-KLM.

Experts said the crisis could provide an opportunity for green energy to permanently take the place of highly polluting fossil fuels like coal.

“We may come out of COVID with emissions going down, since renewables have been able to take more relative space, pushing out some of the worst of fossil fuels,”

Glen Peters, research director, at the Center for International Climate Research told AFP.

### Palestine Can Be Liberated...

FROM PAGE 1

The Supreme Leader yesterday in his seven-article guidelines on the International Quds Day said, “Palestine will not be separated from the body of Islam. Arrogant powers have lost their power of supporting the Zionist regime.” He then said the main and necessary thing for all freedom-seeking nations is to keep the flag of Palestine hoisting. He further said, “The main policy of the Arrogant Powers and Zionism is to push aside the issue of Palestine in the minds of Muslim communities and to cause it to fade into oblivion. The most urgent responsibility in this regard is fighting this treachery, which is conducted by the enemy’s political and cultural mercenaries in Islamic countries. The truth is that an issue as important as Palestine is not something that the pride, self-esteem and increasing intelligence of Muslim nations will allow to sink into oblivion, even if the Americans, other domineering powers and their regional minions use all their money and power to achieve this goal.

This means the great Muslim nation has taken a big step towards materializing objectively the liberation of Quds, and the ground for countdown for materializing the big dream of Muslim nations has begun.



### Iran-Led Strategy of...

FROM PAGE 1

Preparations are underway in Muslim states and elsewhere to mark the International Quds Day, which is commemorated every year on the last Friday of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in a show of support for the Palestinians against the Tel Aviv regime’s occupation and atrocities.

It 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.

This year’s Quds Day is, however, different. Street rallies, a trademark of the annual occasion, have been cancelled in many world countries, including Iran, due to a deadly coronavirus pandemic, and replaced mainly with online events.

The IRGC further hailed the crucial role of its martyred commander of its Quds Force, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, in strengthening the resistance front with an ultimate goal of eliminating the “cancerous tumor” of Israel.

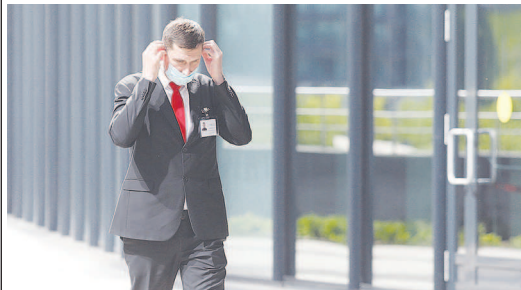
The statement highlighted the coincidence of this year’s Quds Day with an Israeli scheme to annex parts of the West Bank as part of U.S. President Donald Trump’s self-proclaimed “deal of the century.”

The two “dangerous” plots are the outcome of the terrorist and criminal U.S. regime’s backing for the Zionist entity as well as the silence of the reactionary regimes in the region, said the IRGC, but stressed that the schemes will lead nowhere and only help Israel’s “death clock tick faster.”

The realities on the ground and the developments unfolding behind the scenes indicate that “the resistance axis’ strategy, pioneered by the Islamic Republic of Iran in supporting the Palestinian Intifada (Uprising) until the end of occupation, has brought about decisive achievements” and will, in the future, accelerate the collapse of the Israeli regime and failure the “deal of the century,” the statement added.

It said although the coronavirus pandemic has affected this year’s Quds Day events, there are signs that the “promised” liberation of al-Quds from Israeli occupation is imminent, and that the formation of a new Middle East free from “Israeli virus” and the “deadly microbe of America” will grab the headlines in the future, God willing.

## Russia’s Unemployment Rate Jumps 30%



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia’s official level of unemployment has risen by 30% since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, deputy prime minister Tatiana Golikova said.

The jump takes the number of those registered out of work to 1.7 million — although economists say the real numbers could be three to four times higher.

The Russian government has made preserving jobs its top economic priority in its response to the coronavirus, but support for companies has been limited.

Businesses in the most-affected sectors are able to access interest-free loans to cover part of every employee’s salary, which are then written off if employment is maintained at 90% of pre-crisis levels. However, the scheme is only available to firms the Kremlin designates as operating in a severely affected industry, and the maximum loan amount is capped at the equivalent of one minimum wage payment — 12,130 rubles (\$169) — per employee per month.

Some economists believe that with the peak of financial volatility seemingly having passed, the Russian government may feel more inclined to boost its economic response.

“The size of the fiscal response remains smaller than in most major countries, but is gathering pace. The recent recovery in the oil price to \$30 a barrel also supports this, allowing for a more material fiscal response without risking the depletion of Russia’s national welfare fund (NWF) reserves,” economists at Deutsche Bank wrote in a recent research report.

Russia had \$165 billion in its NWF at the beginning of April — equal to 11.3% of GDP. When oil prices are below \$42 a barrel, funds are transferred from the NWF to the government’s daily budget to make up for the loss in tax revenues from oil exports. Ministers have been reluctant to dip into the NWF to support a more substantial economic response to the crisis for fear it would drain the reserves too quickly.

Various economic reports have shown that living standards are set to be the main victim of the economic crisis without more significant intervention from the Kremlin.

In a reversal of what happened during the 2008-9 global financial crisis, Moscow’s Higher School of Economics (HSE) showed disposable incomes would fall at 1.5 times the rate of overall economic output in 2020 — a 12% drop in spending power compared to an 8% fall in GDP under its pessimistic scenario.

## Qatar Triples Swap Line With Turkey

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - As the coronavirus pandemic continues to rattle global economies, Turkish banking officials have been seeking fiscal support from a number of countries and Qatar was the first to respond.

On Wednesday, Qatar expanded an existing swap deal to \$15 billion, raising the prior limit from \$5 billion to help bolster depleted Turkish

central bank reserves and help steady the lira. The move underlines strong relations between the two nations, which opened swap arrangements during a 2018 currency crisis in Turkey and continue to cooperate amid a Saudi Arabia-United Arab Emirates-led economic blockade on Qatar.

In a statement, the Turkish central bank said the expansion sought to “facilitate bilateral trade in respective local currencies and to support financial stability of the two countries.” The deal will allow the trade of Turkish liras for Qatari riyals, which are pegged to the US dollar.

Selva Demiralp, a professor of economics at Koc University and director of the Koc University-TUSIAD Economic Research Forum, said the swap line could balance the increase in domestic money supply with foreign currency and help stem the depreciation of the lira, but noted Turkey’s central bank will face difficulties in stimulating the economy amid the global downturn.

“This [situation] is more challenging in emerging markets because the local money that is injected into the system may feed the dollarization cycle,” Demiralp told Al-Monitor, adding, “Swap lines can calm down the markets by meeting the demand for [foreign exchange].”

News of the deal saw the Turkish lira make initial gains on the dollar before falling back about 0.25% to 6.79 liras per dollar at 2 p.m. GMT. In recent weeks, the lira recovered losses after hitting a historic low on May 6 that saw Turkish banking regulators temporarily ban lira trading with BNP Paribas, Citigroup and UBS Group AG.

Turkish officials remain in talks with China, Japan and the United States to expand or open new swap lines to secure further economic support, and their appeals may now be aided by the Qatari deal, said Sinan Ulgen, chairman of the Istanbul-based Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies.

“Turkey can use this example to strengthen its negotiating position when it’s talking to other central banks,” Ulgen told Al-Monitor. “Other countries might be more enthusiastic about moving forward.”

Wolf Piccoli, co-president and political risk analyst at Teneo Intelligence, was less optimistic, saying Turkish officials were “back to the usual tricks” and that he expected the announcement of a new rate cut on Thursday from Turkey’s central bank, which has cut



key interest rates eight times in the last year to keep credit flowing.

“The increased size of the swap line may allow Turkey to gain time, but it is certainly no solution,” Piccoli told Al-Monitor. “As usual, authorities prefer some escamotage over dealing with real structural problems,” using a French word meaning “juggling” or “sleight of hand.”

The swap line expansion comes amid a myriad of measures by Ankara to mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic that to date has logged 152,587 confirmed cases and 4,222 virus-linked deaths in Turkey, according to the nation’s Health Ministry.

In March, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan introduced a \$15.4 billion economic stimulus package to help businesses and individuals weather the crisis. After a nearly two-month lockdown, malls and hair salons reopened May 11, though Turkish consumers remain wary of crowded spaces and business owners continue to face difficulties.

On Wednesday, seeking to bolster domestic demand, authorities imposed additional tariffs of up to 30% on more than 800 imported items, including agriculture machinery as well as steel and iron products.

Questions linger over how much foreign support Turkish officials will seek amid the pandemic, as political leaders maintain negotiations with the International Monetary Fund are off the table.

Ulgen said the Qatar swap line will help stem inflationary pressure on Turkey’s lira in the short-to-medium term, but authorities in Ankara will continue to seek ways to reel back the economic slowdown in the months ahead.

### U.S. Sanctions on...

FROM PAGE 1

“The recent sanction is considered another blatant violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the U.S. government’s commitments under the international law,” Mousavi said, urging the international community to hold the U.S. accountable for such blatant violations.

“By imposing and implementing such sanctions, the United States has ignored deep-rooted internationally-accepted decency and conventions, and has directly targeted individuals and bodies who are closely intertwined with the order and security of the Iranian nation, and the security of the region in a broader sense,” he concluded.

Mousavi’s comments came after the United States imposed sanctions on eight Iranian officials, including Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli.

The U.S. treasury announced the sanctions Wednesday amid the Trump administration’s anti-Iran campaign.

Iran’s Law Enforcement Force Commander Hossein Ashtari is among the seven others sanctioned.

The measure was said to be aimed at holding “accountable Iranian officials and institutions” over the November 2019 unrest in Iran.



## Giroud, Caballero Pen One-Year Contract Extensions

LONDON (Reuters) - Chelsea forward Olivier Giroud and goalkeeper Willy Caballero have signed one-year contract extensions until the end of the 2020-21 season, the Premier League club have said.

Giroud joined Chelsea from London rivals Arsenal in January 2018 and the 33-year-old has scored three goals in 13 matches in all competitions this season, featuring more prominently at the start of the year when Tammy Abraham was injured.

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Editorial Board: 44253449	<b>P.O. Box:</b> 15875-8551
<b>Public Relations Fax:</b> (+98)(21) 44253395	<b>Address:</b> No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
<b>Advertising Department:</b> Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234	<b>Printed by:</b> Honar Sarzmin Sabz
<b>Website:</b> http://www.irannewsdaily.com	<b>Distributed by:</b> Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute
	<b>Managing Director:</b> Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Coronavirus Costs LPGA Another 2020 Tournament

LONDON (Dispatches) - The LPGA cancelled the Meijer LPGA Classic on Wednesday, axing a tournament that had already been postponed from June to October amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The cancellation of the tournament in Grand Rapids, Michigan, will allow for the ShopRite LPGA Classic, originally scheduled for May in Galloway, New Jersey, to take place October 2-4.

# FIFPro Chief Warns Against Punishing Players To Train Over Virus Fears

LONDON (Dispatches) - The head of global players' union FIFPro has given his backing to footballers who do not want to return to training because of coronavirus fears and cautioned that it would be "inhumane and unacceptable" if they were to be punished for taking such a stance.

Jonas Baer-Hoffmann's comments came after Troy Deeney of English Premier League side Watford refused to restart training ahead of a possible resumption of the season because he does not want to put his young child, who has breathing difficulties, at risk of catching the virus.

Deeney has also cited fears his family could be in danger because of figures that show black and ethnic minorities in the UK -- which has the highest recorded death toll in Europe -- are more likely to become seriously ill with COVID-19.

Deeney is "a player who has very legitimate concerns and wants to protect his family", Baer-Hoffmann said in a conference call with reporters on Wednesday.

"If these players are being pressured or potentially facing disciplinary actions, we feel that is very much unacceptable.

"The idea that somebody may be punished in a pandemic for trying to protect his family's health is inhumane and unacceptable."

However, there is no suggestion that Watford are planning to take disciplinary action against Deeney. Several players in England have voiced concerns about returning to training, even in small groups.

## UEFA Chief Hopes Champions League Will Finish by End of August

PARIS (Dispatches) - UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin is aiming to finish this year's Champions League by the end of August as football in Europe slowly starts to bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic.

"Our plan is to finish it between now and the end of August," Ceferin said in an interview with Portuguese sports daily Record, published on Wednesday.

"I think that will work. You never know what's going to happen but things seem to be calming down.

"Eighty percent of European leagues are going to restart, I don't see why the Champions League and Europa League shouldn't take place."

That end date for UEFA's European tournaments was widely reported but never officially confirmed by the continent's football governing body.

Ceferin's desired deadline gives clubs a chance to finish their domestic competitions -- halted across Europe in mid-March -- before the Champions League restarts in early August.

In an interview with British daily The Guardian, Ceferin added that he would be prepared to bet a million dollars on Euro 2020 being played next year following its postponement to 2021.

"Yes, I would," he told the newspaper "I don't know why it (the tournament) wouldn't be (played).

"I don't think that this virus will last forever. I think it will (change) sooner than many think.

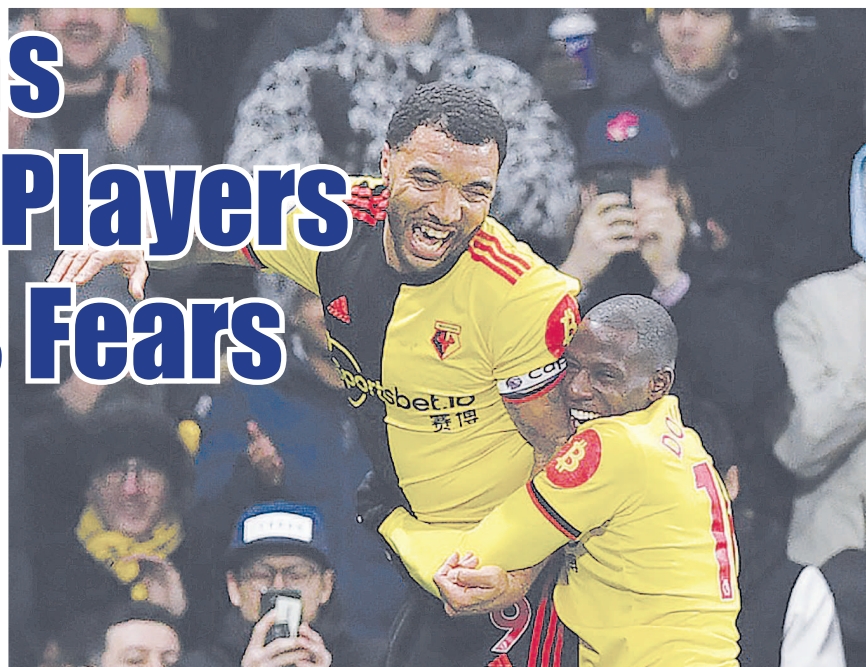
"I don't like this apocalyptic view that we have to wait for the second and third waves or even a fifth wave."

Ceferin said football would follow the recommendations of the authorities but he was optimistic that fans would return to the stands quicker than many observers think.

"I'm absolutely sure, personally, that good old football with fans will come back very soon," he said.

And Ceferin said he did not expect the game to be profoundly changed by the coronavirus.

"Football didn't change after the Second World War, or First World War, and it will not change because of a virus either," he said.



"No system can actually exclude the risk of infection, so it is a question about the probability by which you minimise that risk and many of the systems that we are seeing and reading about -- not particularly England -- still leave many, many gaps and many risks," Baer-Hoffmann said.

Baer-Hoffmann admitted that plenty of players around the world were keen to get back playing despite the potential risks involved, but said FIFPro recommended that players undertake three to four weeks of training before beginning matches again due to the risk of injuries.

In England the Premier League has been suspended since March 13.

The financial consequences of not restarting would be potentially very serious for clubs, although players at the top level in England are in a better position than some of their counterparts around the globe.

Baer-Hoffmann highlighted the case of players in several Latin American countries, including Colombia and Uruguay, as well as in Botswana and Egypt, who are now relying on food packages from their local players' union "because they cannot even provide for their own basic needs and are being stranded in terms of income".

## Neuer Renews Contract With Bayern



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has signed a new deal with Bayern Munich that ties him to the club until 2023, the Bundesliga champions said.

The announcement ends weeks of speculation over the Bayern captain's future, with widespread reports that talks between player and club had hit the rocks.

"During the weeks of the shutdown for the coronavirus pandemic, I didn't want to make a decision because nobody knew if, when and how Bundesliga football would continue," Neuer said in a statement.

"I look to the future with great optimism. I feel very comfortable and at home in Bavaria."

Last month the Bild daily reported that Neuer and his agent Thomas Kroth were demanding a five-year deal with a salary of 20 million euros (\$22 million) per season.

Neuer had revealed his irritation both at the status of the talks and that details were being leaked to the media.

A World Cup winner in 2014 with Germany, Neuer joined Bayern from Schalke in 2011 and has won almost everything with the Bavarian giants, with seven Bundesliga titles, five German Cups and the 2013 Champions League to his name.



## Solskjaer Not to Tolerate Personal Agendas

LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says he will not tolerate players with personal agendas and would rather leave positions in the squad vacant than have them upset the appereat.

Solskjaer, who was appointed permanent manager in March last year, said there were players who did not put the team first resulting in a loss of form towards the end of the season.

"In March, players were physically tired, mentally tired and we had injuries," Solskjaer told the United We Stand. "There were other things I didn't like last year -- some personal agendas which couldn't be sorted out until the summer, He added.

"That's when I saw who I could build a long-term, successful squad around. You need some egos in football, but it has to be team first... If a team is to be successful then players have to be available at different times.

"I'd rather have a hole in the squad... You want players to have a bit of ego and edge but they have to be able to adapt."

Manchester United were fifth in the Premier League with 45 points, three behind fourth-placed Chelsea when the season was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## IOC Chief Says Games Would Be Cancelled If Not Held in 2021

LONDON (Reuters) - International Olympic Committee (IOC) chief Thomas Bach says the Tokyo Games would have to be scrapped if the event cannot be held next year due to the COVID-19 crisis.

In March, the IOC and Japanese government took the unprecedented decision to delay the Games, which had been due to start in July, for a year due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

However, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said the multi-sports event cannot take place in 2021 unless the virus is contained and Bach said he understood his position.

The novel coronavirus has infected more than 17,100 people in Japan, causing 797 deaths.

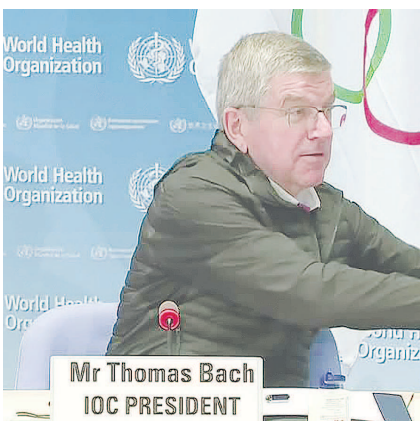
"Quite frankly, I have some understanding for this, because you can't forever employ 3,000 or 5,000 people in an Organising Committee," Bach told the BBC.

"You can't every year change the entire sports schedule worldwide of all the major federations. You can't have the athletes being in uncertainty."

Bach said the IOC was committed to holding the Games next year though it had to be prepared for various scenarios including quarantining athletes.

"What could this mean for the life in an Olympic Village?" he said.

"All these different scenarios are under consideration and this is why I'm saying it's a mammoth task, because there are so many different options that it's not easy to address them (now).



## U.S. Open Without Fans Would Devalue Title Win

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Marin Cilic thinks winning the U.S. Open in front of empty stands at Arthur Ashe Stadium would be forever remembered as a Grand Slam triumph with a very big asterisk, the former champion told Reuters.

The tennis season came to a halt in March due to the coronavirus pandemic and the shutdown will continue at least until the end of July with many countries in lockdown and air travel bans in place.

The U.S. Open is scheduled to take place from Aug. 31 and organisers are looking at a wide range of scenarios to get the show on, including keeping fans out.

Cilic, who held the silver trophy aloft at Flushing Meadows in 2014 in the biggest achievement of his career, felt a crowd-free environment would devalue the accomplishment.

"I just feel that it's going to more or less feel like practice matches," the former world number three said in an interview from Croatia.

"It's always going to be ... in the years to come, 'oh, you know that guy won a U.S. Open in 2020 without fans'. I don't think it's going to have that weight..."

"It wouldn't be the best scenario."

Cilic thinks the international travel required to get professional tennis up and running again means the issue might end up being academic in any case.

"Tennis season is slightly different than football, than basketball," he added.

