

**Head of Iran's Health Ministry
Public Relations Office Kianoush
Jahanpour Said Yesterday That
56 More Iranians Died From
Coronavirus Over the Past 24 Hours
Bringing the Total Deaths to 7,564**

IRAN NEWS

**Minister of Information and
Communication Technology Says
E-Health, E-commerce, E-banking
And Development of the National
Information Network Helped Iran
To Survive the COVID-19 Pandemic**

VOL. XXVI, No. 6956 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY MAY 28, 2020 - KHORDAD 8, 1399

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Iran Trade With Friendly Nations None of U.S. Business

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Iran's trade with friendly nations is none of the U.S. business and that the US sanctions are not compatible with International Trade Law.

The United States wants to interfere even in Iranian normal trade relations with a friendly country, President Rouhani said at the cabinet session held in Tehran today.

Iranian oil tankers are involved in docking at Venezuela's port after passing Caribbean Sea from two days ago to help the friendly nation of Venezuela deal with shortage of fuel caused after the US sanctions against the country.

If there were not unity between Iranian government, different branches of power and Armed Forces, the U.S. might be successful in its aggression in Caribbean Sea as it did last year and stopped a tanker carrying Iranian oil in Gibraltar, the president stressed.

Elsewhere, the president talked of the new Iranian Majlis (Parliament) which started work as of today after February 2020 parliamentary elections, saying that the government has duty to stand by Majlis to solve the people's problems as the country currently is fighting coronavirus pandemic and the sanctions. **See Page 7**

Sanctions Hindering Move Towards Sustainable Development

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Seventh Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development has been held as a virtual meeting chaired by the UN undersecretary general and the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

The meeting held on May 20, 2020 was themed "accelerating action for and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific."

The meeting where Iran's statement was also read out was a preamble to the 2020 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Present at the meeting was Nargess Saffar as the head of the seven-strong Iranian delegation. She is in charge of a centre tasked with handling international issues as well as conventions of the Iranian Department of the Environment.

In her speech, she touched upon emerging diseases such as the novel coronavirus and drew attention to the destruction as well as mismanagement of biodiversity. She underscored that the health of human beings and that of the earth go hand in hand. **See Page 7**

New Majlis Opens With Leader's Message



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's newly-elected lawmakers have held the first session of the Parliament on Wednesday with a message from Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

The inaugural session of the 11th Iranian Parliament after victory of the Islamic Revolution was attended by President Hassan Rouhani, Judiciary Chief Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi, and Secretary of the Guardian Council Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati.

At the opening of the new legislature, Ayatollah Khamenei's chief of staff took the podium to read a message from the Leader.

In the message, Ayatollah Khamenei has called on the newly-elected MPs to push for the settlement of the country's economic problems on the basis of the Resistance Economy policies.

Addressing Iran's new lawmakers, Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted culture and economy as the country's most pressing issues, which require the newly-inaugurated Parliament's highest-level of attention.

In the statement, the Leader said the new Parliament's inauguration displays the successful implementation of "Islamic democracy" in the country.

Ayatollah Khamenei thanked the Iranian nation for their "diligence and motivation" in electing the new legislature and congratulated the parliamentarians on securing the nation's approval.

Citing the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, the Leader said Majlis stands "at the forefront" of the country's affairs.

The legislative body, Ayatollah Khamenei said, is duty-bound to pave the way for the adoption of the laws that serve as the country's path towards its desired "pinnacles and destinations."

The Leader, therefore, urged the lawmakers to bring into force "the right, apt, and workable" legislation that would empower "the country to attain its sublime goals."

In order to correctly perform their duties, the lawmakers have to properly identify the country's priorities through expert analysis, maintain their active engagement, and avoid misusing the position and resources that have been trusted with them, the statement noted.

The legislators, it added, should not allow harmful, personal, and factional affairs to interfere with their performance. "You respectable representatives are the ones, who can grant Majlis a decent standing," Ayatollah Khamenei observed.

Ayatollah Khamenei said today's topmost priorities were "culture and economy," advising the Parliament to place the main planks of the national economy — including employment, production, and the national currency's value — high on its agenda.

"The general policies of the Resistance Economy serve as a credible guideline in this area," the statement added, referring to a well-known economic course of action devised by the Leader.

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed certitude that commitment to such principles and other momentous guidelines would "prove to the Iranian nation that they have made the right choices [by electing the parliamentarians]," and further motivate them to participate in upcoming elections.

This year, the elections were held on February 21, taking 279 lawmakers, including 17 women, into the legislature. A second round is expected to be held in September for the remaining 11 elective seats.

This parliament's lawmakers include 223 MPs from the Principlist camp, 18 Reformists, and 38 independents.

Qatar Optimist About Expansion of Joint LNG Field With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Saad al-Kaabi, Qatari energy minister and chief executive of Qatar Petroleum, announced that his country intends to expand the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) project, i.e. its North Field (known in Iran as South Pars) gas field, and expects investment opportunities overseas, despite a slump in global energy demand and the collapse of oil prices.

As Financial Times reported, Al-Kaabi said commercial bids for the project in the North Field, the planet's biggest natural gas field, would be delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic but insisted that all contracts would be awarded by the end of the year.

"The North Field expansion project is moving full steam ahead, no delay there. The only issue is because of COVID and suppliers and so on," Kaabi said in a briefing with the U.S.-Qatar Business Council. "In my view, you continue your plan and invest in the bad times because these projects are long term."

The North Field expansion project has attracted huge interest from the world's energy majors including Total, Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil, and ConocoPhillips, as well as others that see it as an opportunity to invest in a fuel expected to remain more resilient than oil because of its lower emissions. **See Page 7**

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



May 24, Reminder of Liberation of Khorramshahr

It is source of pride and honor that Khorramshahr, the city exuberant with red blood and sacrifice, was liberated on May 24, 1982. The city was liberated during the Beit-ul Moqaddas Operation which began on April 30, 1982 after ups and downs which are common in the wars. The operation liberated Hoveyze and Khorramshahr in a 23-day war and pushed away the enemy forces to keep cities of Ahwaz and Soosanger away from the range of Iraq Army's artillery fire.

During this battle, 9,000 divisions and 19 brigades of Iraq Army were involved and Iranian forces killed and wounded over 16,000 Iraqi troops and took 19,000 hostages. Iraq President Saddam Hussein after defeats in Hoveyze and Khorramshahr executed some of his army's commanders who had been several times decorated with order of merit and loyalty in the past. This victory boosted the morale of Iran's resistance so that both Army and IRGC forces claimed the victory and the founder of the Islamic revolution and ummah Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (R) cautioned them by saying "God liberated Khorramshahr."

And Iran with liberation of Khorramshahr changed its position in the world, and consequently views towards the country were totally changed. The rhetoric of the world mass media fully changed and May 24, 1982 once again showed the world Iranians as a "united nation". The word which never sounded pleasant for those who used to create separation, pan-Arabism or other "pans" as they used to show Iran as a multi-ethnic country with different mentality and races in order to divide the country by resorting to Iranian nationalism and pan-Iranism.

But Iranian people through the time and during thousands of proud events like liberation of Khorramshahr have shown that in the nick of time they rush to defend and support their sovereignty and country with a national consolidation and sacrifice.

So every year since May 24, 1982, as this year is 38th anniversary, the day is marked in order that we should not forget that many people have sacrificed their lives, and bloods have been poured for safeguarding the sovereignty of this hero-nurturing land as they have become eternal assets for the nation. **See Page 7**

Third Iranian Fuel Cargo Reaches Venezuelan Waters

MARACAY (Reuters) - The third cargo of an Iranian tanker flotilla carrying fuel for gasoline-thirsty Venezuela on Tuesday reached the nation's exclusive economic zone as the previous two were discharging at state run PDVSA's ports, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

The Iran-flagged tanker Petunia crossed the Caribbean Sea earlier on Tuesday, following the same route as vessels Fortune and Forest. The Fortune arrived on Monday at a port serving PDVSA's El Palito refinery.

President Nicolas Maduro said he would announce in the coming days a "plan" for fuel distribution. Gasoline is so heavily subsidized that it is essentially free, but shortages have forced Venezuelans to either wait in days-long queues or pay steep prices on the black market.

"Now we will be able to go in phases toward a new normal in terms of gasoline supply," Maduro said in a state television address.

The United States has criticized the shipment, as both OPEC nations are under sanctions. A U.S. official said earlier this month that President Donald Trump's administration was considering responses to the shipment, prompting the Iranian government to warn Washington against military action. **See Page 7**



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021-44253335-39

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info@irannewsdaily.com

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19 Iranian Prisoners Extradited From Azerbaijan

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The deputy minister of justice for human rights and international affairs, Mahmoud Abbasi, said on Wednesday that 19 Iranian prisoners in Azerbaijan were extradited by Azerbaijan and handed over to the justice system.

Abbasi said that extradition of prisoners took place in coordination with Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials.

The prisoners were charged with drug trafficking and they should serve their prison terms in the country's prisons, he added.

Gov't Ready for Close Coop With New Majlis

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani says the government is ready for close cooperation with the new Parliament within the frameworks of the Islamic Republic's constitution.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the 11th Iranian Parliament on Wednesday, Rouhani said, "Through close cooperation between the government and the Parliament, we can provide effective, correct and useful laws for the society, which will remain in memories for decades."

"Governments and parliaments come and go, but what remains is their services, as you can see the country's constitution has remained among the strongest regulations in society for more than a century," he added.

Rouhani expressed hope for constructive cooperation between the executive and legislative bodies during the remaining year of his government "within the Islamic Republic's constitution."

Noting that the Parliament belongs to the whole nation, he urged the newly-elected lawmakers to prioritize "the national interests, national security, and national identity" over party considerations and political tendencies.

The 11th Iranian Parliament after the victory Islamic Revolution officially started its mission in Tehran today with elected MPs and senior officials in attendance.



Meanwhile yesterday, President Rouhani appreciated Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani for his twelve years of efforts and services.

President Rouhani on his Twitter account thanked Larijani for three terms of membership and chairmanship of the Iranian parliament, as well as his "valuable role" in Iran's issues.

The Iranian president wrote that the memories of working with Larijani, especially in sensitive and decisive moments, will go on for a long time.

Ali Larijani (born 1957) is an Iranian politician, who has served the country in different positions, including the membership and chairmanship of the Iranian parliament (2008-2020). Under his management many influential bills and agreements were discussed and voted for, including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, aka Iran nuclear deal, and the bill to counter the Zionist regime.

Iran Is First Asian Country To Have a Parliament

TEHRAN (IP) - Head of interim presiding board Reza Taghavi said during the inauguration ceremony of the 11th round of Iran's Parliament that the country is the first one in Asia to have a parliament.

Head of interim presiding board Taghavi also stated, "Our country has had a parliament for 114 years and is the first country in Asia to have a parliament. The Majlis commemorates the memory of Martyr Hassan Modarres and intends to learn courage, frankness, politics, and religion from him."

During the inauguration ceremony of the 11th round of Iran's Parliament, Executive Deputy of Parliament Gholamhossein Nouri stated that "The administrative section of the Iranian parliament is among the top 10 parliaments in the world. One of the most important measures in this section is the elimination of paper and promoting electronic communication. Also, strengthening public relations and benefiting from the elites has always been the focus of this section."

He added, "During the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the executive deputy of the parliament was able to hold the meetings in a visual manner, and also hold the ceremony during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Magnitude 4.4 Earthquake Hits East Tehran

TEHRAN (MNA) – An earthquake measuring 4.4 on the Richter scale hit Damavand County in the east of the Iranian capital of Tehran on Wednesday noon.

The earthquake occurred at 13:41 p.m. local time on Wednesday at a depth of 10 kilometers in an area between Damavand and Rudehen.

No injuries or fatalities have been reported so far. The jolt has been felt in Tehran and some parts of the neighboring Semnan province as well.

Special teams have been dispatched to the areas to assess the possible damages.

This is the second earthquake in the past 20 days. The first came on May 08 when a 5.5 magnitude one jolted Damavand around midnight.

Iran's Non-Oil Exports Volume Up 13.5%

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Iran's Mine House Mohammad Reza Bahraman put the export volume of non-oil commodities in the last Iranian calendar year [ended March 20, 2020] at 133.9 million tons, showing a 13.5 percent hike as compared to the year before.

Under the tough U.S. sanctions imposed against Iran and the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in the country, it is expected that the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade would facilitate the process of exports and export activities.

He also called on responsible officials at the Ministry of Industry to make every effort to remove the barriers facing the exports sector of the country.

Based on the statistics of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration [IRICA], Iran's total trade value hit \$85 billion last year [ended March 20, 2020].

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran exported 133.9 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$41.3 billion, last year, showing a 13.5 percent growth as compared to a year earlier.

World Universities at Iran ISME 2020



TEHRAN (IRNA) - World universities have sent papers to the 28th Annual International Conference of Iranian Society of Mechanical Engineering (ISME) kicked off in Tehran on Wednesday.

About 10 percent of the papers dispatched to the conference belong to different world states including Britain and Turkey, Secretary of the ISME 2020 Salman Nourazar said at the opening ceremony on the international event.

About 560 out of 1,100 essays have been accepted, Nourazar said expressing satisfaction with the quality of papers.

Dean of Amirkabir University Ahmad Mo'tamedi said that the main aim of holding the ISME conference is to exchange views with participating researches and strengthen scientific basis.

The three-day ISME 2020 is being held online due to coronavirus pandemic worldwide.

Mo'tamedi said that 230 knowledge-based companies are currently active in Amirkabir University that will help further innovation and develop skill and entrepreneurship.

About the knowledge-based companies, Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari had said that country's asset should not be relied on oil but on knowledge and human resources.

Envoy Denies Receiving Tons of Gold From Venezuela

TEHRAN (IFP) - As Iran's third oil tanker sails into the Venezuelan waters to deliver its much-needed gasoline cargo, the Iranian envoy to the South American country dismisses the claims that Tehran has received nine tons of gold from Caracas in exchange for the fuel.

In an interview with Al-Alam TV Network, Iranian ambassador Hojjatollah Soltani said that the reports of shipping 9 tons of gold from Venezuela to Iran are completely false.

He said there is no need for such a thing because there are other ways, such as bartering food, including coffee and cocoa.

The envoy further noted that the first Iranian oil tanker "Fortune" has already unloaded its cargo in the port of El Palito and the other tankers are also moving towards their destination.

"The two tankers that have arrived in Venezuela – Fortune and Forest – were not bothered by any country," he said.

"The dispatch of tankers carrying fuel and raw materials to equip Venezuelan refineries was based on international protocols, as the tankers are moving towards Venezuela in accordance with international navigation regulations. The international organisations have been informed about the route and destination of these oil tankers."

Soltani underlined the arrival of Iranian oil tankers is a great and historic achievement for the two nations of Venezuela and Iran, which are under the US pressure and have independent policies. He also described it as a victory for the international community.

"The United States, as a country that violates international treaties, has clearly failed to impose restrictions on these tankers," Soltani said.

"The United States has a long history of breaching treaties and agreements. It has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, but claims it abides by international treaties, including the freedom of trade and seafaring. All countries, including the United States, can enjoy the benefits by respecting treaties and agreements. I believe this victory belongs to all countries."

Soltani said the U.S. unilateral sanctions against Venezuela, Iran and several other countries have lost their efficacy and are not as effective as before.

Further, the Iranian ambassador to Caracas noted that, for example, when the United States withdrew from the nuclear deal and imposed a unilateral embargo on Iran, even its allies opposed it and sought to bypass the sanctions in practice. The State Department also imposed unilateral sanctions on Venezuela, but some countries including Iran opposed the sanctions, and opposition voices grew.

FM Censures U.S. Police Brutality Against Black Men

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a tweet on Wednesday, Iran's foreign ministry once again criticized the brutality of the American Police against the black US residents, after an African-American man died on May 25 when U.S. cop knelt on his neck.

"6 years after 'I can't breathe' pleas of Eric Garner, #GeorgeFloyd, another black man, dies after a cruel inhumane arrest," the tweet said.

"It seems that the #USPolice brutality against blacks knows no boundaries," it added.

"And as always, the tweet to calls for justice is employing even more force," the tweet said.

A video of a handcuffed black man dying, George Floyd, while a Minneapolis officer knelt on his neck for

more than five minutes sparked a fresh furor in the US over police treatment of African Americans.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey fired four police officers following the death in custody of Floyd on Monday as the suspect was pressed shirtless onto a Minneapolis street, one officer's knee on his neck.

"Your knee in my neck. I can't breathe... Mama. Mama," Floyd pleaded.

Bystanders filmed the scene as Floyd, thought to be in his 40s, slowly grew silent and motionless, unable to move even as the officers taunted him to "get up and get in the car."

He was taken to hospital where he was later declared dead.

Huge Power Plant to Boost Iran's Electricity Capacity

TEHRAN (FNA) - A contractor with Mostazafan Foundation said that another 324 megawatts will be added to Iran's electricity generation capacity as the country is going to open a combined-cycle power plant worth nearly €310 million.

Mohsen Amiri said on Tuesday that the power plant will open on Thursday in the city of Khorramabad, the capital of the Western province of Lorestan.

Amiri said that two units of the power plant will both run on natural gas and will generate 162 and 160 MW of electricity each.

He added that a steam unit of the power plant is expected to be operational till March 2021.

The contractor said the combined-cycle power plant has been classified among the least polluting plants in Iran because of observing high standards of environment protection.

As a major electricity producing nation, Iran has continued to expand its thermal power sector while introducing measures to diversify power generation sources.

Tehran, Kabul Discuss Border Accident in Harirud

KABUL (IRNA) - Iranian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Mohsen Baharvand in a meeting with Afghan diplomats discussed issues related to recent border accident.

According to Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry, a high-ranking Iranian delegation arrived in Kabul on Tuesday morning to review the border accident with Afghan Hanif Atmar.

It added that the Iranian delegation also delivered anti-COVID19 consignment, including medical equipment to Kabul.

Atmar appreciated Iran's cooperation with Afghanistan people and government in the time of coronavirus outbreak.

He presented documents on the recent accident and urged the Iranian government to pay more attention to joint research.

Atmar noted that such research is aimed at finding facts, legal proceedings against its perpetrators, and taking necessary measures to

prevent such tragedies in the future.

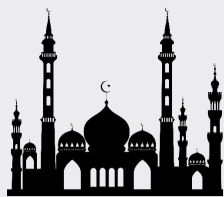
Meanwhile, Baharvand expressed regret over the accident and condemned it.

Referring to brotherly relations between Iranian and Afghan governments and people, he said such an accident is not acceptable for Iran.

Iran is committed to address the issue in partnership with Afghan delegation, he noted.

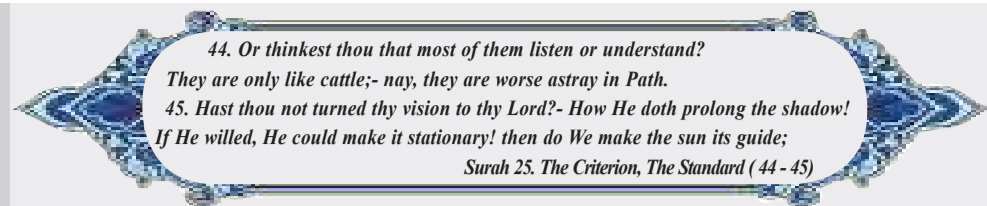
Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Hanif Atmar in a phone conversation reviewed issues related to human tragedy that happened for Afghan immigrants in Harirud.

Some media have released a video in which a person claimed that some people who entered Iran illegally were arrested and forced them to go into the river by the Iranian border guards.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:33
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:07
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:50



Iran Exports to Oman Quintupled in 5 Years

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Oman Chamber of Commerce Mohsen Zarrabi says after imposition of the U.S. sanctions, Oman's ports replaced ports of some countries which stopped cooperation with Iran and it helped the Iran-Oman trade to increase significantly.

Speaking to ILNA, Zarrabi said that the volume of imports from Oman stood at \$70m in 2016 and the figure reached \$260m in 2017 and it was raised to \$413m in 2018 but this does not mean that Iran's imports from Oman have increased, instead Oman's ports have acted as transshipment ports for Iranian goods.

He reiterated that the political relation of Iran and Oman has been good even before the Islamic Revolution, and Oman has been the only country in the region which has always stood beside Iran either during the imposed war or sanctions but the economic relation of both states has not been acceptable in the past years especially till 2012.

Zarrabi noted that despite good political relation, the trade volume is not satisfactory and Iran accounted only for 0.7% of Oman's imports due to lack of proper infrastructures.

He added that in 2012, the Iran-Oman Chamber of Commerce was established to facilitate bilateral trade between both states and the chamber could solve issues like visa, direct marine line and flight.

Zarrabi added that when the chamber was set up, the total trade volume of both states was \$221m while the export volume was around \$149m.



He further said fortunately the bilateral trade volume has become fivefold in five years, reiterating that once getting Oman visa was difficult and expensive but it was eased for Iranians.

Zarrabi also pointed to the launch of 9 direct flights between Muscat and Iranian cities of Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Chabahar, Qeshm, Kish, Mashhad, Lar and Lamard before the outbreak of the Coronavirus, noting that because of the virus pandemic, all air connections of Oman with the world were cut.

On the marine transport, he said after the virus pandemic and closure of borders, Oman enhanced its marine transportation with Iran because it was the cheapest way for imports of goods and medicines.

Zarrabi added that during the U.S. sanctions, Oman has always increased its trade with Iran and currently Iran's share of Oman's imports has moved from 0.7% to 3.6% and Iran can enhance the figure to 10 percent but first, the necessary infrastructures in Oman should be boosted.

Iran Promoting Maritime Security at Waterways

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Head of Ports and Maritime Organization referred to the promotion of maritime security at waterways and Iranian-flagged fleet during the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), saying the organization has put on its agenda modern method for analyzing sea accidents.

Elaborating on the major objectives and operational plans of Ports and Maritime Organization during the currents Iranian year, Jalil Eslami said in line with promoting maritime security in the Iranian waterways and implementing the international conventions to 20 percent, the organization has put on the agenda reviewing instructions in the training field, giving the test and issuing documents for sailors, monitoring the implementation of the international documents, IMO membership and suggesting legal problems with regard to implementation of the requirements of Maritime Labor Convention (MLC).

He also referred to defining growth in international professional affairs management through maritime culture development by 2.1 percent, holding World Maritime Day Ceremony, as well as maritime coordination conference.

He noted that the body is to review planning, monitoring dredging commercial ports, controlling entrance and exit of passenger ships, upgrading communication system, searching in Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), facilitating executive affairs, repair and maintenance of maritime signs identified by international communities, monitoring and assessing radio stations, maritime rescue search and drawing a comprehensive electronic navigation plan.

Iran Eyes 100 mt Petchem Output This Year



TEHRAN (Shana) - Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh said the country's petrochemical production capacity was planned to cross 10 million tons per year in the current Iranian calendar year which began on March 20.

Speaking to Eqtesad Radio Channel, Bijan Zangeneh underlined the most important plans of the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum in the year of "production leap", saying: "We must all take steps in the current difficult situation with interactive and jihadist spirit to solve the problems of the people and ensure the development of the country. Now is not the time to deal with marginal issues."

He said continued development of West Karoon fields, operation of the second petrochemical industry leap projects, completion of South Pars offshore sector and implementation of phase 11 operations, implementation of crude oil transfer pipeline from Goreh to Jask and the completion of rural gas supply projects were among the main plans of the Ministry of Petroleum in the year.

The official also said that Iran's petrochemical revenues were projected to reach 25 billion dollars in the calendar year of 1399 which began on March 20.

He said, "One of the other programs of this ministry is that gas condensate should not be placed directly on the export track and according to the plans made, it should be refined and turned into products in Persian Gulf Star and Siraf refineries."

Zangeneh said that the Siraf refinery produces products such as naphtha that are again used to feed petrochemical units. "Siraf refinery is a refinery that can produce valuable products at the lowest cost. Other refineries typically need an investment of \$30,000 per barrel of oil, while Siraf needs only \$7,000 to \$8,000 of investment if it is to produce gasoline. If the refinery just produces naphtha, it doesn't need more than \$5,000 to \$6,000 in investment."

Iran Trade May Shrink Day by Day

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-China Chamber of Commerce says if the current condition continues in the world economy, in the upcoming months shortage of forex resources will show itself sharply and Iran's trade will shrink day by day.

Speaking to ILNA, Mr. Majid Reza Hariri said that Iran's exports to China have fallen by about 50 percent in the past four months.

He further said, "New data from China's customs administration show that Iran's trade with China has fallen 34 percent."

Noting that this is an important event for both countries, he added that the outbreak of coronavirus was the major factor and that's why world trade has likely to decline 25-30%.

"If this trend continues, our exports and trade with the world, as well as trade with China, will shrink sharply

but its ratio will be more than 30 percent."

He noted that global oil prices have fallen sharply over the past seven months and said "China mainly imports oil from Iran and the drastic fall in oil prices has been the main reason for the devaluation of Iran's exports to China during this period."

Iran's exports to China totaled \$1.81 billion in the Q1 2020, indicating a 52.7 percent year-on-year decrease.

In return, China exported \$2.13 billion worth of commodities to Iran during the period under review, up by 15.9 percent year-on-year.

Iran and China have had a long history of cultural, political, and economic exchanges along the Silk Road since at least 200 BC, and possibly earlier. To this day, China and Iran have developed a friendly economic and strategic partnership.

Approximately 80 percent of China's total imports from Iran are oil and the rest is the mineral and chemical products.

Contaminated Corns From Brazil to Be Turned Into Ethanol

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian authorities say a large Brazilian cargo of corn stuck for nearly a year in a port south of the country because of contamination will be turned into simple alcohol to help a national fight against the new coronavirus pandemic.

Head of Iran's standardization office (ISIRI) said on Tuesday that a bulk of more than 120,000 corn shipments that had been planned to be annihilated because of contamination will be processed to make ethanol.

Nayerreh Pirouzbakht said that a part of the consignments had been sent to other countries where they have less strict standards on using corns either as animal feed or in other industries.

Pirouzbakht did not elaborate on the name of the countries but said that none of them were Iran's neighbors.

The dossier for contaminated corns has been under the spotlight in Iran since the summer of last year when reports suggested that the large cargo that had arrived from Brazil was contaminated with aflatoxin, a highly dangerous poison produced by certain molds which can cause cancer. The ISIRI said at the time that the corns would not be allowed to enter the country from customs offices in Imam Khomeini Port, where they had been unloaded.

Tehran Receives FAO's First Batch of Desert Locust Control Equipment

TEHRAN (FAO) - As part of an ongoing support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to Iran for controlling desert locust infestation, the first consignment of pest control equipment supplied by the Organization, was delivered to the country's plant protection authority. According to a press release published by the FAO Representation in Iran, this delivery includes 25 vehicle-mounted Ultra Low Volume (ULV) sprayers worth around \$125,000.

Iran is now experiencing the worst desert locust outbreak in the last 50 years. The latest tracking data shows that seven out of 31 provinces of the country have been invaded by this pest so far and the new projection implies that this number might be increased to 10.

Although, last year Iran managed to conduct pesticide spraying operations in more than 700,000 hectares of its rangelands, this year, as the infestations have occurred in larger scales, the country needs to expand the control operation and treat at least one million ha of surface areas.



In this regard, FAO has financed a \$500,000 emergency Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) project to further enhance Iran's national technical capacity for early warning, monitoring and management of desert locust.

In the framework of this project, FAO assists the Plant Protection Organization of the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad with increasing its technical capacity through training workshops and learning programs for 320 pest and agriculture officers in the locust affected provinces of the country.

This project also provides the country with additional handheld and knapsack sprayers, Personal Protective Equipment, chemicals (pesticides), and data management and communications software and hardware equipment.

FAO, being the UN specialized agency dedicated to increasing food and agricultural development, has implanted similar project in other affected countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and East African nations, all aimed to support its Member States in managing the threat posed by the desert locust.

ESCO's Blast Furnace In Its Last Stage

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) Mr. Mansour Yazdizadeh says the blast furnace of the company is in its last stage, expressing hope it would come on stream very soon.

During his visit of blast furnace project of the company, Mr. Yazdizadeh said that the only concern of the company is provision of raw material and the company is planning to resolve it, expressing hope that needed iron ore for activities of three blast furnaces of the company would be provided.

He further said despite the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the company has progressed in its rebuilding, admitting that concerns for the health of the staff forced the company to change its plan a little but due to good endeavors of the staff, the progress in the projects has been good and they have compensated the delays.

Yazdizadeh noted that the biggest significance of rebuilding the blast furnace No. 1 of the company is that all activities regarding the rebuilding and its designing have been done by the staff of the company, adding that in fact, all designs for repairs in different phases have been made by the company's staff and experts.

He then pointed to some actions and activities regarding the rebuilding the blast furnace like full replacement of carbon blocks amid sanctions and changing the cooling systems.

Yazdizadeh reiterated by gaining enough experience during design and rebuild of three blast furnaces, ESCO now can design and launch fully a blast furnace.



NIDC Drills 23 Oil, Gas Wells Since March

TEHRAN (Shana) - The National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has successfully drilled 23 oil and gas wells in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year which began on March 20.

According to NIDC, Babak Zangeneh the company's director of consolidated planning, said of the spudded wells, 12 were appraisal/development wells and 11 others were workover projects.

He said 19 wells were in the fields operated by the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), 2 were in the fields operated by the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) and one was drilled as a project and was ordered by other companies.

Mr. Zangeneh said during the period, 59 rigs belonging to NIDC operated in offshore and land projects, adding a total of 17,297 meters of well had been drilled since the beginning of the new Iranian calendar year. NIDC possesses 70 offshore and onshore drilling rigs, he went on to add.



Hungarian PM's Power to Rule By Decree to End on June 20

BUDAPEST (Reuters) - Hungary aims to lift a state of emergency spurred by the coronavirus crisis on June 20, its justice minister said on Tuesday, as the government prepared a bill ending the power to rule by decree which drew international condemnation.

Right-wing nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban obtained the powers without a time limit in a vote by parliament where his party holds a two-thirds majority, drawing European Union criticism about democratic backsliding in Budapest. Orban said earlier that parliament could at any time cancel the special powers to manage the country without parliament's consent, which he said were necessary to curb the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fall-out.



Kosovo President Rejects EU Mediator for Talks With Serbia

PRISTINA (Reuters) - Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said on Tuesday he would not take part in talks on normalizing ties with Serbia led by a European Union special mediator, calling instead for an increased U.S. role in the dialogue.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, almost a decade after a guerrilla uprising by its ethnic Albanian majority, and agreed to an EU-sponsored dialogue with Belgrade in 2013 to resolve all outstanding issues.

Normalisation is among key conditions the EU has set for admitting Kosovo as a member state, and by Russia, a traditional ally of Serbia, to lift its veto on Kosovo joining the United Nations.



Both Koreas Broke Armistice in DMZ Shooting



SEOUL (AFP) - An exchange of gunfire between North and South Korean forces in the Demilitarized Zone dividing the peninsula was a violation of the armistice agreement, the United Nations Command (UNC) said Tuesday.

The two sides remain technically at war, since fighting in the Korean War ended with an armistice in 1953 that was never replaced with a peace treaty.

North Korean gunfire hit a Southern guard post on May 3, prompting Seoul's soldiers to return fire a few minutes later and broadcast warnings.

The UNC -- which monitors compliance with the ceasefire -- opened an investigation into the shooting and concluded that "both sides committed Armistice Agreement violations", it said in a statement.

The probe found the North's Korean People's Army fired four 14.5mm small-arms rounds, which were responded to by two volleys from South Korea.

But the investigation was "unable to definitively determine" whether the North's gunshots were fired "intentionally or by mistake", the UNC said.

The North's military did not offer a "formal response" when the UNC invited it to take part in the investigation, it said, adding that the South's forces provided "full cooperation".

Seoul's defence ministry expressed regret over the announcement of the findings and said its troops were following their response manual.

Despite its name, the Demilitarized Zone is one of the most fortified places on earth, replete with minefields and barbed-wire fences.

The last time the two sides exchanged fire on the border was in 2014. North Korean soldiers also shot at a defecting soldier in 2017, but the South did not fire back.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in agreed to ease military tensions on their border at a summit in Pyongyang in September 2018, among other agreements.

But most of the deals have not been acted on, with the Pyongyang largely cutting off contact with Seoul following the collapse of the Hanoi summit between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump, which left nuclear talks at a standstill.

Biden Calls Trump Absolute Fool For Not Wearing Face Mask

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden on Tuesday called his Republican rival Donald Trump an "absolute fool" for not wearing a mask at a series of recent public events, saying his lack of leadership on the issue is "costing peoples' lives."

The decision whether to wear a face mask in public has emerged as a national political battle, and the two presidential candidates have adopted very different approaches.

Biden's decision to wear a mask outdoors on Memorial Day at his first public event since March caught the attention of Trump, who retweeted an image of Biden at the event accompanied by a comment: "This might help explain why Trump doesn't like to wear a mask in public."

The president has resisted wearing masks in front of cameras at series of public events, including on Memorial Day.

"He's a fool, an absolute fool to talk that way. Every leading doc in the world says you should be wearing a mask in a crowd," Biden said in a taped interview with CNN.

U.S. Military Claims Russia Deployed Fighter Jets to Libya

TUNIS (Reuters) - The U.S. military said on Tuesday that Russia has deployed fighter aircraft to Libya to support Russian mercenaries fighting for eastern forces, adding to concerns of a new escalation in the conflict.

"Russian military aircraft are likely to provide close air support and offensive fire," the United States Africa command said in a statement it posted on its website and on Twitter.

Libya's civil war has drawn in regional and global powers with what the United Nations has called a huge influx of weapons and fighters in violation of an arms embargo.

Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt support the eastern-based Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army, which launched an offensive last year to seize the capital Tripoli. However, in recent weeks the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) has with extensive Turkish backing pushed Haftar back from his foothold in southern Tripoli and from some other parts of the northwest.

The United States has played a less prominent role in the Libyan war than it did at an earlier stage, when NATO helped rebels overthrow the country's autocratic ruler Muammar Gaddafi. The statement said the aircraft had arrived from an airbase in Russia after transiting via

Syria, where they were repainted to conceal their Russian origin. There was no immediate response from the Russian Defence Ministry to a request for comment.

On Saturday, Russian fighters in Libya were flown out of a town south of Tripoli by their Libyan allies after retreating from frontlines in Tripoli, the town's mayor said. The LNA has denied any foreigners are fighting with it, but the United Nations said this month that Russian private military contractor Wagner Group had up to 1,200 people in Libya.

"Russia has employed state-sponsored Wagner in Libya to conceal its direct role and to afford Moscow plausible deniability of its malign actions," the U.S. statement said.

It quoted U.S. Air Force General Jeff Harrigan as warning that if Russia seized bases on Libya's coast, it would "create very real security concerns on Europe's southern flank". The statement said neither the LNA nor mercenaries would be able to "arm, operate and sustain these fighters" — meaning fighter aircraft — without the support they had from Russia. Last week the LNA announced it would be launching a major new air campaign against the GNA and said it had refurbished four war jets.



Afghanistan Frees Hundreds More Taliban Prisoners During Ceasefire

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghan authorities freed hundreds more Taliban prisoners on Tuesday, as calls grew for the militants to extend a ceasefire on its third and final day.

The historic pause in fighting -- only the second in nearly 19 years of war -- has mostly held across Afghanistan, providing a rare respite from the conflict's grinding violence.

Authorities said they had released about 900 Taliban prisoners across the country on Tuesday, approximately 600 of them from the notorious Bagram jail near Kabul. The release is part of a pledge by the Afghan government to free up to 2,000 insurgent prisoners in response to the Taliban's three-day ceasefire offer, which began Sunday to mark the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

Abdul Wasi, 27, from Kandahar province, much of which is under Taliban control, said he was a "holy warrior" when he was detained eight years ago.

"I was told ... to do jihad until all foreign troops are driven out of our country," Wasi, sporting a long beard and wearing a traditional baggy shirt-and-trouser shalwar kameez, told AFP moments after he was freed.

Brazil Leads Daily Virus Deaths for Fifth Straight Day

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) - Brazil reported the highest daily COVID-19 death toll in the world Tuesday with 1,039 people killed, the fifth straight day the country has topped the list.

Latin America's largest country, which has emerged as a new epicenter in the coronavirus pandemic, has seen its daily death toll surge past that of the United States, the hardest-hit country so far.

The U.S. recorded a death toll of 657 in the past 24 hours, said the Johns Hopkins University tracker. That was the third day in a row it had come in under 700, bringing the country's overall toll to 98,875 deaths.

Meanwhile, Brazil's daily death toll has passed 1,000 four times since the pandemic accelerated in the country a week ago.

Brazil has now confirmed a total of 24,512 deaths, according to health ministry figures.

Experts say under-testing means the real number is probably much higher.

With a population of 210 million people, Brazil has recorded 391,222 infections, second only to the US, which has confirmed more than 1.68 million.

Brazil is torn over how to respond to the pandemic.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro has downplayed the virus and railed against stay-at-home measures, arguing the economic fallout risks causing more damage than the virus itself.

But most state governments have stuck to the World Health Organization's guidance and closed non-essential businesses.

Bolsonaro has meanwhile pinned his hopes on the medication hydroxychloroquine, which -- like US President Donald Trump -- he has touted as a potential wonder drug against COVID-19.

Brazil's health ministry recommends doctors in the public health system prescribe hydroxychloroquine or a related drug, chloroquine, from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

Spain Wants Common EU Rules On Cross-Border Movement

MADRID (Reuters) - Spain on Tuesday urged its European Union partners to set up common rules, including potential health checks for passengers, to open up borders and reestablish freedom of travel as national coronavirus lockdowns are phased out.

The government also declared a 10-day official mourning period from Wednesday to honor the country's dead from the coronavirus pandemic.

Flags will fly at half-mast on all public buildings and naval ships. The mourning period will end with a ceremony led by the head of state, King Felipe, in remembrance of the dead.

Spain has recorded 26,834 fatalities from the coronavirus, one of the world's highest tolls. It has had 235,400 confirmed cases and is just emerging from a strict national lockdown imposed in mid-March.

On Monday, the government urged foreign holidaymakers to return from July in a bid to restart the tourist industry, a vital source of revenue.

Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez said on Cadena Ser radio station that even though EU countries have set different dates for reopening internal and external borders, they must agree on common measures for all the 26-country Schengen Area.

In a discussion paper submitted by Spain to a consultation process between EU states, Madrid called for the monitoring of tourists' health via individual checks as part of a common EU-wide procedure.

"The definition of a safe and operational passenger transit system is key to restoring the normality of tourist flows in a sustainable manner," the document read.

A diplomatic source told Reuters that one option being considered was to test passengers for coronavirus before boarding flights.

Kick-starting tourism before the end of summer will be crucial to reanimating the flagging economy, which the Bank of Spain predicts could contract by as much as 12.4% this year.

In an effort to minimize debt taken on to fight the crisis, Spain will seek the maximum amount in grants from EU coronavirus funds, government spokeswoman Maria Jesus Montero said. The European Commission was to propose yesterday its blueprint for the bloc's budget, including plans for a coronavirus recovery fund.



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J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Velenjak Villa (\$5000)
1500sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

Kamranieh (\$2400)
240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, pkg
marble fl, & F.F

(\$1600)
Sa'adat abad
170sq.m, 3bdrs
balcony, pkg
Nicely Furn

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Global Airlines Slam Tit-for-Tat Quarantine Rules

PARIS (Reuters) - Global airlines have urged governments to keep politics out of coronavirus border controls after Britain and France became embroiled in a row over reciprocal quarantine rules.

France has signalled it will impose equivalent measures after Britain announced a 14-day quarantine for people arriving from mainland Europe, including France, from June 8.

Alexandre de Juniac, director general of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), said any border restrictions related to the epidemic should be driven purely by science.



IEA Says Global Oil Demand Has Yet to Peak

LONDON (Bloomberg) -- Global oil consumption hasn't peaked, the head of the International Energy Agency warned, throwing cold water on hopes the coronavirus will cap demand and reduce climate-changing emissions.

"In the absence of strong government policies, a sustained economic recovery and low oil prices are likely to take global oil demand back to where it was, and beyond," Fatih Birol said in an interview. The world consumed last year nearly 100 million barrels a day of oil, and some in the energy industry believe that could mark the peak for global demand. Their hypothesis is that the coronavirus outbreak will trigger changes, like widespread working-from-home and less overseas travel, reducing consumption permanently.

"Could it be peak oil? Possibly. Possibly. I would not write that off," the head of British oil major BP Plc, Bernard Looney, told the Financial Times.

If true, that would have huge implications for climate change as burning less oil would permanently reduce greenhouse emissions, easing the way to meet the goals of the Paris climate agreement. But Birol warned governments that the coronavirus will only reduce oil demand briefly, with consumption dipping in 2020 to about 91 million barrels a day, before rebounding in 2021 and beyond.

"Behavioral changes in response to the pandemic are visible but not all of them are negative for oil use. People are working from home more, but when they do travel, they are more likely to be in cars than public transport," he told Bloomberg News from Paris. "Videoconferencing will not solve our energy and climate challenges, good government policies might." Birol is urging governments to use their economic recovery packages to fight climate change, spending on green energy to help to achieve the goals set in the 2016 Paris accord.

The more ambitious target set under the Paris climate agreement -- limiting the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius -- will require annual global emissions to be reduced by about half by 2030 and to hit net-zero around the middle of the century. Without deep structural changes, emissions are expected to rise again when economies recover.

The oil industry is making sweeping changes in an effort to adapt itself to the Paris climate goals, with major companies including BP, Royal Dutch Shell Plc and Total SA promising to cut emissions significantly and investing more into renewable energy as they come under pressure from more ecologically conscious shareholders. Still campaigners warn the cuts are unlikely to be enough to keep temperatures from raising to dangerous levels.

"If there's a strong economic recovery, American business consultants using Zoom will not compensate for 150 million new urban residents in India and Africa traveling, working in factories and buying products transported by trucks," Birol said. Birol drew parallels with the 2008-09 crisis, when oil demand also suffered a major annual drop, before consumption increased again. The economic recovery packages didn't focus back then on green energy and savings, missing an opportunity to tackle the challenge of climate change.

The IEA, which advises the world's richest countries on energy policy, is sticking to its view that global oil demand will continue to increase over the next decade or so, before reaching a plateau around 2030. In a report published in November 2019, the agency said global petroleum consumption was likely to reach about 105 million barrels a day by 2030 and about 106 million by 2040 in the absence of new government policies.

In its 2019 long-term analysis, the IEA assumed significant oil savings from the sale of new vehicles over the next two decades. The use of more fuel-efficient engines would knock out 9 million barrels a day of demand, while the growth of electric cars would displace about 4 million a day. But the current economic crisis is likely to reduce car sales for a while, keeping less efficient clunkers on the road.

"Fewer car sales means older cars stay on the road," he said.

Latin America's Largest Airline LATAM Files for Bankruptcy

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Latin America's largest airline LATAM filed for bankruptcy in the U.S. on Tuesday, the company said in a statement, following a drastic slump in business caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The world's travel and tourism sectors have been hammered by the contagion, as they are directly affected by border closures and population lockdowns.

"Given the impact that the COVID-19-generated crisis has had on the aviation industry, LATAM has been forced to make a series of extremely difficult decisions in the past few months," said the airline's chief executive Roberto Alvo in a video statement.

"LATAM Airlines Group and its affiliates in Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia entered into a voluntary reorganization under Chapter 11 protection in the United States," he added.

Chapter 11 proceedings allow a company that is no longer able to repay its debt to restructure without pressure from creditors. Last month, the Chilean-Brazilian airline said it was scaling back its operations by 95 percent in response to the global health crisis. It also announced hundreds of job cuts earlier in May.

The airline said there would be no immediate impact on passenger or cargo flights.

"The U.S. Chapter 11 financial reorganization process provides a clear and guided opportunity to work with our creditors and other stakeholders to reduce our debt, address commercial challenges that we, like others in our industry, are facing," its statement said.

It came just two weeks after Latin America's second largest airline, Colombia's Avianca, also filed for bankruptcy in the U.S. to reorganize its debt "due to the unpredictable impact" of the pandemic.

The International Air Transport Association has forecast a \$15 billion loss in revenue for Latin American airlines this year. Before the pandemic, LATAM -- a merger of Chile's LAN and Brazil's TAM -- flew to 145 destinations in 26 countries, operating around 1,400 flights a day.



Singapore Warns of Worst Economic Contraction Since Independence

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Singapore's virus-hit economy could shrink by as much as seven percent this year -- the worst reading since independence -- the government said Tuesday, as it unveiled a fresh multi-billion dollar stimulus package.

The city-state is seen as a bellwether of the global economy, and the forecast historic contraction highlights the extreme pain being wrought on countries by the killer disease. The warning came as Singapore's deputy prime minister unveiled a fresh support package worth Sg\$33 billion (\$23.2 billion) for the troubled city, which has been crippled by months of lockdowns around the world.

The trade ministry's forecast -- which was a downgrade from the maximum four percent contraction predicted in March -- came as official data showed the economy shrank 0.7 percent on-year in the first three months of the year, while it reduced 4.7 percent from the previous quarter.

The financial hub is one of the world's most open economies, and is usually hit hardest and earliest during any global shock.

The ministry said the new estimate was made "in view of the deterioration in the external demand outlook" and the partial lockdown imposed domestically. A contraction of seven percent would be the worst since the city's independence in 1965.

Shutdowns in major markets such as the United States, Europe and China have crippled demand for exports, and a halt in international air travel has hammered Singapore's key tourism sector.

Singapore has ordered the closure of most businesses, advised people to stay at home, and banned large gatherings. While officials say they may start relaxing the rules from early June, many restrictions will remain in place.

Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, who is also the finance minister, announced in parliament the new package largely aimed at helping companies save jobs.

The government has so far earmarked more than Sg\$90 billion, or 20 percent of GDP, to cushion the economic fallout from the virus, which has infected over 32,000 people in the city-state, the highest in Southeast Asia. "It has been an unprecedented crisis that is still changing rapidly," Heng said, adding Singapore has the "fiscal resources to mount this response".

Song Seng Wun, an economist with CIMB Private Banking, said he expects the second quarter to bear the full brunt of the fallout, with GDP expected to contract 15-20 percent. "Singapore is a small and open economy whose trade is three times the size of GDP. The sharp contractions are a reflection of its external vulnerability," he told AFP.

The trade ministry also said "significant uncertainties" remain despite the opening up of some economies as they slowly emerge from lockdowns.

"First, there is a risk that subsequent waves of infections in major economies such as the US and eurozone may further disrupt economic activity," it said.

"Second, a growing perception of diminished fiscal and monetary policy space in many major economies could damage confidence in authorities' ability to respond to shocks."

EU Frees Up Export of Coronavirus Protection Equipment



BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Union ended its controls on the export of coronavirus protective equipment on Tuesday after concluding that supplies for European medical and other workers were now adequate.

It's the latest phasing down of coronavirus restrictions in Europe as the health crisis eases, with a growing number of EU countries confident that they are far better placed to deal with any so-called second covid-19 wave.

The bloc introduced an export authorization scheme on March 15 for all personal protective equipment, which could only then be exported to a non-EU nation if approved by individual EU countries.

The scheme was revised a month ago, limiting the products under control to masks, protective glasses and visors and garments such as gowns. It also exempted western Balkan countries from the restrictions. EU countries needed then to consult the European Commission on whether to authorize exports.

The Commission, which oversees trade policy in the 27-nation EU, said that exporters had made more than 1,300 requests for authorizations in the past month and that 95% of them had been approved.

This resulted in EU countries exporting 13 million masks, 1 million protective garments and 350,000 spectacles and visors.

The restrictions came in after a number of countries, including France and Germany, introduced their own export controls, angering fellow members such as Italy that were most in need of such equipment.

The EU-wide controls on exports largely restored flows of protective equipment within the bloc.

Swiss Foreign Trade Hit by Coronavirus Measures in April

ZURICH (Reuters) - Switzerland's foreign trade activities suffered in April as strict measures to rein in the spreading COVID-19 pandemic hit exports as well as imports of the Alpine country.

Exports fell 11.7% to 16.7 billion Swiss francs (14.04 billion pounds) when adjusted for seasonal factors, their highest monthly decline on record, while imports slid 21.9% to 12.4 billion francs, their lowest level in almost 15 years, the Swiss customs office said in a statement on Tuesday. Jewellery and watches recorded the biggest declines with 1.6 billion francs wiped off their export value in April, but exports of machines and electronics, precision instruments and metals were also down.

Switzerland imposed lockdown measures from mid-March and has forecast the worst economic downturn in 45 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The seasonally adjusted trade surplus widened to 4.3 billion Swiss francs in April, from 3.1 billion in March, the customs office said. Without adjustments, the surplus stood at a nominal 4.0 billion francs.

Exports to Switzerland's three biggest export markets, North America, Europe and Asia, declined. Exports to Italy and France that were severely hit by the pandemic fell to their lowest monthly levels in around 20 years.

On the import side, jewellery, chemical and pharmaceutical goods and cars took the biggest hit, accounting for 70% of the decline in imports, the office said.

The Swiss watch federation said in a separate statement that the collapse of watch exports was the result of a standstill in production, distribution and sales and reflected "an exceptional situation rather than a trend in demand".

Lufthansa Hopes for Speedy EU Nod for Bailout

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Lufthansa is hoping for a quick nod from the European Commission for its 9 billion euro (7.94 billion pounds) bailout agreed on Monday to make sure the cash arrives in time for the company to stay afloat.

"This should be a matter of days", one of the people said.

Lufthansa's supervisory board was expected to meet later yesterday to sign off on the rescue deal and the invitation for an

extraordinary shareholder meeting is expected shortly thereafter, the sources said.

Lufthansa's owners need to agree to the bailout, which includes Germany taking a 20% stake in the carrier and the injection of 5.7 billion euros in non-voting capital. The vote is not expected to take place unless the EU has signed off on the rescue deal.

The European Commission has asked Lufthansa to waive landing rights for 6 out of 300 planes altogether at Frankfurt and Munich airports, where Lufthansa has a two-thirds market share.

The number of planes and corresponding numbers of airport slots can differ as planes on short-haul flights may have 5-6 slots a day compared to just one for planes on long-haul.

Lufthansa's total fleet comprises 760 aircraft, although Chief Executive Carsten Spohr has said that 100 will remain grounded due to lower demand following the COVID-19 pandemic.

NordLB analyst Wolfgang Donie said giving up slots amounting to 3 planes per hub would be manageable. The airport slots could then be given to rival airlines, increasing competition, which the EU does not want to see compromised by state bailouts.

"State aid rule do allow to support the aviation sector while ensuring that competition and consumers are not at a disadvantage", a spokeswoman of the European Commission said, declining to comment on details of the Lufthansa case.

Lufthansa called for fair treatment compared with other bailed-out peers and also declined to comment on specifics.

In a sign that rivals do see Lufthansa getting an unfair advantage, Ryanair Chief Executive Michael O'Leary spoke out on Tuesday. "Ryanair will appeal against this latest example of illegal state aid to Lufthansa, which will massively distort competition," he said in a statement.

Galena Goes to Sheffield Doc Fest in UK

TEHRAN (MNA) – The documentary ‘Galena’ directed by Ezzatollah Parvazeh is accepted at the 26th Sheffield Documentary Festival.

Galena directed by Ezzatollah Parvazeh and produced by Ebrahim Moradi is accepted in the “Into the World” section of the 26th Sheffield Documentary Festival which will be held in the United Kingdom from June 7 to 12.

The Sheffield Festival is one of the three largest documentary film festivals in the world and is the most prominent in the UK. More than 3000 films from 75 countries have been submitted to the event. Galena will compete for the Grand Prize with the selected applicants and will go the 2121 Oscar in case of winning.



Turkey-U.S. bilateral Trade to Strengthen With COVID-19 Normalization Process

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Although Turkey’s exports to the U.S., which increased by more than 10% in the first quarter of this year, declined during the COVID-19 pandemic that halted world trade, bilateral trade is expected to strengthen again with the cooperation and opportunities to be developed as economies undergo the normalization process.

The foreign trade volume with the U.S., which stayed at an average of \$18 billion to \$20 billion annually after 2013, increased by 28.8% in the first quarter of this year to \$6.1 billion, according to the data of Turkey’s Ministry of Commerce.

In the first quarter, exports to the U.S. amounted to \$2.3 billion, while imports from the U.S. amounted to \$3.7 billion. In this period, the increase rate was 10.7% in exports and 43.5% in imports.

However, when the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic became evident with the figures from April, exports to the U.S. dropped by 20.7% year-on-year, according to data by Turkey Exporters Assembly (TIM), with \$595.6 million.

The 10.7% increase in exports in the first quarter, combined with the 20.7% decrease in April due to the COVID-19 outbreak, caused the exports to the country in the first four months of the year to increase by only 0.1% with \$2.6 billion.

In the first four months of the year, the sector that made the most exports to the U.S. was the automotive industry with \$291.9 million. This sector was followed by defense and aviation with \$247.9 million, while chemical materials and products took third place with \$224.6 million. The sector that experienced the highest increase in exports in the period in question was tobacco, the export volume of which doubled to \$34 million.

Speaking on the developments regarding Turkey-U.S. bilateral economic relations, the Foreign Economic Relations Board’s (DEIK) Turkey-U.S. Business Council (TAIK) Chairman Mehmet Ali Yalçındağ said that bilateral trade, which has stayed at the level of \$17 billion in recent years, has increased and broken a record by exceeding \$20 billion following Donald Trump’s election as the U.S. president.

Saying that they were already working on developing those relations prior to the coronavirus and were making intensive efforts to increase bilateral trade, Yalçındağ noted that they believe the trade relations between the two countries will grow stronger with the normalization process following the pandemic.

He highlighted that the two planeloads of protective supplies sent to the U.S. by Turkey to fight the virus were seen as a meaningful gesture and elicited a significant response from the U.S., from both members of the State Department and Congress.



“Now is the time to reinforce the climate of cooperation and solidarity,” Yalçındağ added.

Yalçındağ further noted that with the outbreak, “China-dependent firms in the supply chain are now turning their eyes to different countries, Turkey being among them.”

These companies carrying out activities in various sectors no longer maintain supply in the medium and long term and aim to diversify their supply channels, Yalçındağ said, noting that the world’s largest retail brand Walmart, which has an annual turnover over \$500 billion, is one of the latest examples of this as the retail giant has already begun ordering products such as packaging goods from Turkish firms.

Turkish firms came to the fore in many areas, from building materials to the aerospace industry,” he said, noting that in short, in order to reposition Turkey as an alternative to China “we need to maintain our confidence in the Turkish industry and workforce.”

Germany Considers Lifting Travel Warnings For 31 Countries



BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German government wants to lift travel warnings for 31 European countries as of 15 June if the health situation allows it, the DPA press agency reported on Tuesday.

Great Britain, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are on the list, along with the 26 EU countries, according to DPA. The German government is due to make a decision on Wednesday.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas had issued a worldwide warning for tourist travel on 17 March due to the rapid spread of the new coronavirus.

This global travel warning would make way for advice per destination, with the risk addressed country by country. Germany wants to establish a number of common criteria in consultation with the European Union in order to maximally protect German tourists from getting infected with the new coronavirus (Covid-19).

The lifting of the travel warning should boost cross-border tourism in Europe. Germany’s plan reportedly states that “the resurgence of tourism is important for travellers and the German travel industry, as well as for the economic stability of the countries they visit.”

Iran Trade With...

FROM PAGE 1

Further, he said that 800 important projects and plans are to open up to end of the Iranian calendar year on March 20, 2021.

The President congratulated the Iranian people on Eid al-Fitr, saying: “In these months, along with the difficulties that existed with the people, but unity, cooperation, support of the people, self-sacrifice and devotion of the country’s medical sector and the presence of the armed forces to help the people had many positive effects and improved Iran’s position in these conditions.”

Referring to the achievements of the medical staff, the support of the people, the country’s management, and the presence of producers in various sectors in recent months, Rouhani said: “Today, there has been a great development in cyberspace and we have strong cyberspace in the country. This makes it easy for us to do our business without leaving home, including banking and shopping.”

He said that one of the important tasks of the government is to complete the e-government by the end of the year, adding, “Fortunately, good steps have been taken in this direction and tomorrow offices related to the development of cyberspace will be opened in the country.”

“This trend could help us control the disease in the future,” he said, referring to the impact of cyberspace development and e-health records on treatment and screening.

Referring to the outbreak of coronavirus, the President said: “Despite these conditions, according to the report of the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance the export of our essentials grew by 21 percent in weight and

accounted for \$1.7 billion in foreign exchange compared to last year.” Rouhani added: “People can be confident that the government’s economic sector will make every effort to export goods, import foreign currency into the country and distribute goods fairly to the target sectors.”

Pointing out that it is not easy to finance the country this year, given the situation we are in, the President said: “With the good planning that has been done, we will be able to implement this year’s budget well without borrowing from the central bank.”

Rouhani added: “Apart from the tax and revenue sector, we will also have an active stock market, and all government departments must sell their shares in the stock market in order to strengthen the stock market.”

Stating that the central bank’s move to anticipate and target inflation is very important, President Rouhani said: “The central bank plays a key role in controlling inflation and creating financial discipline in the country.”

Pointing out that the country’s non-oil exports had problems in the first two months of this year due to the spread of coronavirus, the President said: “Fortunately, this disease is somewhat controlled in our country and the region and the borders are gradually opening and export is being carried out.”

Expressing hope that we will see the control of coronavirus in the country in the future by observing health protocols, Rouhani said, “Of course, we must continue to follow the instructions and maintain the distance as long as the country’s health officials emphasize it.”

May 24, Reminder of...

FROM PAGE 1

When we talk about sovereignty, it does not mean only political and military dominance over the land but it covers all values and honors of all provinces, cities and waters. Iranians living in the West Asia may have different dialogues but all are Iranians and they are proud



of being Iranian because Iran is the cradle and host of Imam Mahdi (A) and they are proud of it. We still do not forget that from October 26, 1980 till May 24, 1982, and almost for 18 months Khorramshahr was under occupation of Iraqi Baath Army forces. On October 26, 1980 and when Iraqi forces entered the city, they arrogantly wrote on the walls of the city that they had come to stay but their words did not last more than two years and they suffered heavy casualties and were pushed back out of the city with humiliation and their forces were forced to escape or they were killed or taken hostages.

Some of Iraqi troops after being taken as hostages begged Iranians by saying they wanted to have Imam Khomeini’s protection. Of course their beg discredited what they had written earlier on the walls. Undoubtedly, Saddam Hussein did not know Iranians well. Iranians love foreigners till they do not think of any aggression and harm, as they have never left any aggression unanswered and for this reason their land and sovereignty has remained intact to date. The Greek, Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs and Mongols all had invaded Iran but when they wanted to leave, they were not as before because they burned in Iranian culture furnace. They either became Iranian or suffered humiliating defeats and returned to their countries like Saddam Hussein and Baath Party forces exactly did on May 24, 1982 as the wretched commander of Qadisiyyah and his troops, after 575 days of battle during the Beit-ul Moqaddas operation, were expelled out of Khorramshahr with humiliation. Of course they had earlier suffered another defeats in Dehlaviyeh, Bostan and Soosangerd. This victory is congratulated to Iran’s armed forces, both Army and IRGC, and the nation whose sweetness will be as sweet as honey for ever in the history.

Sanctions Hinder...

FROM PAGE 1

“Given the consequences of this disease which get in the way of sustainable development as well as a change in countries’ priorities due to the economic harm they have suffered as a result of the disease, it is suggested that a strategic plan be drawn up in order to make up for the losses following the coronavirus outbreak and that efforts be made to create green jobs and also green financial and tax packages be defined,” she said.

She noted that a shortage of financial resources and a lack of required technology and knowhow will affect efforts to achieve the desired objectives. She called for reports to be drawn up and presented at the regional level.

Saffar also expounded on the measures adopted by Iran in the domains of welfare, health, education and agriculture despite economic challenges caused by sanctions. She also enumerated Iran’s environmental problems as well as unstable situation in the region has affected decision-making by the Department of the Environment.

She further referred to the problems caused by sanctions in the way of pursuing sustainable development objectives.

The Iranian official called on all countries to move toward sustainable development regardless of certain countries’ move to capitalize on their political power to put pressure on others.

Third Iranian Fuel...

FROM PAGE 1

The vessels did not appear to encounter interference during their journey.

The second tanker in the flotilla, the Forest, docked Tuesday at a port serving PDVSA’s second largest refinery, Cardon, in western Venezuela, according to two sources and the Eikon data.

As the tankers discharge the imports, which include gasoline and components for motor fuel production, PDVSA is working to recover some of the domestic refining capacity it has lost in recent years due to mismanagement, lack of qualified personnel and delayed maintenance due to limitations under the U.S. sanctions.

PDVSA’s refining network has 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) of capacity, but processed just 215,000 bpd of crude for fuel production this month, up from 110,000 bpd in March.

Qatar Optimist...

FROM PAGE 1

Qatar Petroleum is seeking to secure partnerships for projects overseas with the same companies and is leveraging the North Field development to boost its international expansion plans.

In mid-April, Qatar Petroleum announced the start of drilling operations for the development of its North Field (known in Iran as South Pars) gas field, in which the company plans to drill 80 new wells to increase the country’s liquefied natural gas (LNG) production capacity by 43 percent to reach 110 million tons per annum (Mtpa).

Sharing the world’s biggest gas reserve with Iran, Qatar currently accounts for 33 percent of the global LNG production capacity and this increase will boost the Persian Gulf country’s market share even more. Iran, on the other hand, is not benefiting from the field as much as Qatar.

Iran and Qatar share the South Pars gas field (known as North Dome field in the Qatari side) in the Persian Gulf waters, it is by far the world’s largest natural gas field.

The field was discovered in 1990 and Qatar immediately started developing

its share which was called North Dome and began gas production in 1997; Iran, however, started the development operations eight years after Qatar in 1998.

It should be noted that, of the field’s total 9,700 square kilometers, only 3,700 square kilometers is in the Iranian waters and the Arab nation holds almost two-thirds of the reserves, so the Qataris were ahead of Iran in terms of both time and reserves.

Since the beginning of the development project in 1997 up to 2005, Qatar Petroleum, the Arab country’s National Oil and Gas Company, drilled 401 wells in the field and was producing nearly 565 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas per day.

In 2005 the country halted all the development operations in the field, under a self-imposed development ban. At the time Iran had about 50 wells drilled in the field.

By 2013, the number of drilled wells in the Iranian side reached 110 and later on in 2017, the figure hit 252, resulting in the country’s gas production to exceed 570 mcm/d.

UEFA Gives Romania Another Week to Submit Restart Plan

BUCHAREST (Reuters) - European soccer's governing body UEFA has given the Romanian football federation (FRF) until June 1 to submit plans on how it intends to complete the domestic season, the FRF has said.

UEFA last month had given European leagues an initial May 25 deadline to submit plans but the FRF requested an extension after the Romanian government said it was assessing the COVID-19 situation every two weeks.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Poulsen Out for Foreseeable Future

BERLIN (AFP) - RB Leipzig forward Yussuf Poulsen could be out for the rest of the season after the Bundesliga club said on Tuesday he had damaged ligaments in his right ankle.

Leipzig said an MRI scan on Monday showed the Denmark international "suffered ligament damage to his right ankle in yesterday's win at Mainz and will be out for the foreseeable future".

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY MAY 28, 2020

Bayern Down Dortmund to Close On Bundesliga Title

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Joshua Kimmich described his winning goal as "brutally important" after Bayern Munich took a huge step towards an eighth straight Bundesliga title on Tuesday with a 1-0 win at Borussia Dortmund to leave them seven points clear at the top with just six games left.

Kimmich's brilliant effort came just before half-time behind closed doors at Signal Iduna Park as hosts Dortmund missed the chance to turn up the heat on the Bavarians without the backing of their huge support.

"It was brutally important: I looked around to see if everyone understood how important it was," Kimmich said of his deft chip.

Kimmich's captain Manuel Neuer echoed the defensive midfielder's thoughts.

"That was a very important sign," said Neuer.

Bayern won 4-0 when the teams met in Munich in November and they kept up their excellent recent record against second-placed Dortmund.

"Now only Bayern can decide what happens," said frustrated Dortmund captain Mats Hummels.

"Sometimes, games are decided by brilliant moments and that was the case today."

Dortmund's star teenage striker, Erling Braut Haaland, who had scored ten goals in as many league games, failed to make an impact against Bayern's watertight defense before going off injured in the second half.



midfield enforcer Emre Can at the start of the second half and added the pace of Jadon Sancho on the wing.

The home side had a shout for a penalty just before the hour mark when a Haaland shot was deflected wide by the arm of Boateng, but nothing was given.

Shortly after, Haaland limped off to be replaced by 17-year-old Giovanni Reyna.

In the dying stages, Favre brought on 2014 World Cup winner Mario Goetze, who is out of contract next month and set to leave, in the vain hope of grabbing an equalizer.

With time running out, Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski hit the post.

The league's top scorer then had a strong appeal for a late penalty waved away after a push in the area by Dortmund defender Manuel Akanji.

But the roars of celebration at the end came from the Bayern bench and echoed around the near-empty stadium.

Elsewhere, Bayer Leverkusen dropped to fifth after being routed 4-1 at home by Wolfsburg, whose defender Marin Pongracic claimed two goals.

It was a shock defeat at home for Peter Bosz-coached Leverkusen who had won their previous 12 games.

Borussia Moenchengladbach climbed over Leverkusen into fourth with a goalless draw at second-from-bottom Werder Bremen, who are two points from safety.

Eintracht Frankfurt took a point at home in a 3-3 draw with Freiburg thanks to late goals by Timothy Chandler and Japan striker Daichi Kamada.

Third-placed RB Leipzig can draw level on points with Dortmund if they win on Wednesday at home to Hertha Berlin, who have won both games so far under new head coach Bruno Labbadia.

Bale Questions Critics of Golf Hobby



MADRID (Reuters) - Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale says he is still confused that his love for playing golf has caused such a stir in Spain and questioned why other elite sportsmen are not criticized for playing the game.

Despite winning four Champions League titles with Real and scoring crucial goals in three finals, Bale still divides opinion in Spain due to a perceived lack of commitment as well as a poor injury record, which the Spanish media have often blamed on his passion for playing golf in his spare time.

Last year he celebrated Wales' qualifying for Euro 2020 by posing in front of a banner reading 'Wales. Golf. Madrid. In that Order', causing a vicious backlash and leading to Real fans booing and whistling him in his first game back for the club.

"A lot of people have problems with me playing golf," Bale told U.S. golf podcast The Eric Anders Lang Show.

"I don't know what their reason is because I've spoken to doctors and everybody's fine with it. The media has this perception that it's not good for me, you should be resting, it can cause you injuries."

Medical Staff Are The Special Ones

LONDON (AFP) - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes the protocols he and his players must follow for football to return are a small sacrifice compared to those risking their lives on the frontline of the coronavirus crisis.

Guardiola's mother died at the age of 82 in April after contracting COVID-19.

"We follow the rules, the protocol. We have to. That's the most important thing. We don't do anything special," Guardiola told the City website.

"The special ones are the doctors, nurses, scientists, cleaners — they put their own lives at risk to save ours."

"When it's a special situation around the world, you have to adapt." Premier League players returned to training last week, whilst maintaining social distancing guidelines.

The UK government has now given the green light for contact training to resume, with clubs set to vote on the protocols.

Should the Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League all be completed, City could face 17 games in little over two months once the action gets underway.

But Guardiola is pleased with the fitness of his players given they have not played competitively since March 8.

"I think they were looking forward to coming back and to train again and do what they like," he added. "They came back perfectly."

Even when football does return in England, matches are set to be behind closed doors for the foreseeable future.

Fears have been raised over the possibility that fans could congregate around stadiums, but there has been little evidence of such problems in Germany since the return of the Bundesliga.

And Guardiola encouraged fans to continue adhering to the health and safety guidelines. "We want to come back but now the priority is other things. It's still stay safe, be careful and when everything is possible we will come back," he said.

"The most important thing is to follow the instructions. If they say use a mask, stay at home, social distance, we have to do it. Because there are many, many people in the NHS (National Health Service) around the world who put their own lives at risk to save ours."

Jerome Boateng and David Alaba gave him no room, while Kimmich and Leon Goretzka in midfield made sure passes intended for him rarely met their mark. The Norway forward limped off with 20 minutes left after a heavy tackle from Boateng.

Things might have been different, with Haaland coming close inside the first minute with an attempt that went through the legs of Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer but was kicked off the line by Boateng.

At the other end, Lukasz Piszczek cleared a Serge Gnabry shot inches from the line, while moments later Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Buerki denied Kingsley Coman.

Bayern were in control, and Kimmich grabbed what proved to be the winner two minutes before half-time when he chipped Buerki from 20 yards.

It was the Germany international's third league goal from outside the box this season.

In an attempt to turn the game around, Dortmund coach Lucien Favre brought on



Marseille Confirm Villas-Boas to Stay on

PARIS (AFP) - Andre Villas-Boas will coach Marseille in the Champions League next season, the French club has rushed to announce amid mounting disquiet among fans alarmed by reports the Portuguese was set to leave after just one year in charge.

"After several discussions in recent days with Frank McCourt and Jacques-Henri Eyraud, Andre Villas-Boas has confirmed that he wants to continue working with OM next season," the club, formally known as Olympique de Marseille (OM), told AFP on Monday. L'Equipe, France's main sport daily, also wrote that Villas-Boas had chosen to stay on, citing the "unanimous" support of his players and management pledges to invest in the squad as key factors in his decision.

Last week, Marseille offered Villas-Boas — whose existing deal runs until the end of next season — a two-year contract extension as doubts persisted over his future at the club following the departure of right-hand man and sporting director Andoni Zubizarreta.

Villas-Boas, 42, led the former European champions to second place behind Paris Saint-Germain in the most recent 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, Europe's top-tier club competition, for the first time since 2013/14.

However, the former Porto, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur coach has expressed concern about the club's ability to invest in new signings this summer, with experts noting that the current squad is ill-equipped for the challenges of Champions League football.

Cilic and Coric to Join Djokovic's Balkan Tour



BELGRADE (Reuters) - Croatians Marin Cilic and Borna Coric will join world number one Novak Djokovic's tennis tournament to be played across the Balkans June 13-July 5, the Serb said on Tuesday.

The series will then move to Croatia's coastal resort Zadar, where 2014 U.S. Open winner Cilic and 23-year old Coric will take centre stage in front of their home fans.

"I thank Marin and Borna for joining the tour without asking for any financial compensation," said Djokovic, the winner of 17 Grand Slam titles who went on an 18-0 run at the start of the season before the stoppage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I have known both of them for a long time, they are great guys and we are good friends, so I am really looking forward to meeting up with them in Zadar. "Marin is one of the best players ever from this part of the world while Borna has the potential to break into the top five on the men's ATP Tour."

The final two legs of the tour are provisionally to be held in Montenegro and Bosnia, but Djokovic revealed at Monday's news conference in Serbia's capital they might have to be moved if the infrastructure is not completed in time. Djokovic returned to his hometown Belgrade on Sunday after being stranded in the Spanish resort of Marbella for two months, where he was visiting his younger brother Marko when the pandemic broke out.

WADA to Ramp Up Testing to Fill Anti-Doping Gaps



MELBOURNE (Reuters) - The World Anti-Doping Agency says the COVID-19 pandemic may have harmed the fight for clean sport and that "additional targeted testing" was being planned to eliminate gaps as competition resumes.

Athletes have expressed concern about reductions in testing for banned substances and urged clarity from authorities about the validity of test results during the global sports shutdown.

WADA, in a Q+A (here) document for athletes posted on its website late on Monday, said it was monitoring closely where levels of testing had been reduced altogether.

It also said it was in close contact with anti-doping organisations to find the best ways of being effective during this period.

"When the sporting landscape returns to a certain normality, these 'gaps' in testing will be addressed cooperatively through additional targeted testing especially given that intelligence-gathering and investigations continue," WADA said.

"Placing public health above the needs of the anti-doping system means that there may be impacts on the fight against doping in sport."

"However, there is significantly less training being carried out and significantly fewer competitions taking place."