

Iran's Deputy Energy Minister Says Over 10m People in the Country's Rural Areas Will Be Supplied With Drinkable Water Through Pipelines By the Iranian Calendar Year of 1400 (Starts in March 2021)

IRAN NEWS

Director of Avicenna Center for Infertility and Recurrent Abortion Said That the Cost of Infertility Treatment in Iran Is One-Tenth to One-Fiftieth That of Other Countries in the Region

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2

DOMESTIC

Pakistan's Senate Chairman Congratulates Qalibaf



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

Iran in Talks With Oman for Exporting Gas



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

Trump Cuts Ties With WHO

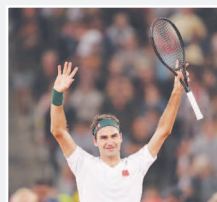


> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

Federer Tops List of World's Highest-Paid Athletes



> SEE PAGE 8

Gov't Reopens Mosques, Calls for Observing Protocols

TEHRAN (MNA) – Emphasizing that instilling fear, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future of life is not helpful, the Iranian president called on the people to continue to work closely with the country's medical staff in the fight against coronavirus in full compliance with health protocols.

Speaking on Saturday at the meeting of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, Hassan Rouhani said, "It is necessary that our decision is based on the fact that we must live with a virus for months, with full caution and observance of all health protocols."

The president also said that according to the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, mosques across the country will be open for daily prayers with full implementation of health protocols, and shopping malls will reopen for limited working hours."

At the meeting in which governors-general from all over the country attended via video conference, Rouhani said that coronavirus is still an important issue in the country and has caused many changes in political, social, health, and even cultural issues. **See Page 7**

GC Disapproves Bill on Cutting Zeros From National Currency



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Guardian Council Spokesman Abbas-Ali Kadhodaie yesterday said the council has not approved the bill on slashing four zeros from the national currency and has returned the bill to Majlis to be amended.

Speaking in a press conference yesterday, Kadhodaie said that the bill approved by Majlis has problems and ambiguities because it has not noticed Iran's undertakings towards the International Monetary as one of the yardsticks for calculating and determining the par of exchange. He added that the bill would be returned to Majlis for revision and amendment.

He also voiced the council's readiness to provide its research capacity to the 11th parliament to improve the quality of the legislative process.

Answering the question about the approach and interaction of the Guardian Council towards the 11th parliament and its expectations from it, the GC Spokesman Kadhodaie said, "We hope that the 11th parliament would use the experiences of the past parliaments to seize this 4-year opportunity to realize the rights of the people and solve their living problems."

He went on to say that the Guardian Council is fully prepared to provide its research capacity to the parliament to improve the quality of the legislative process.

"Just like the previous parliament, which the Guardian Council had a good expert interaction with it, this relationship will be maintained with the 11th parliament," he stressed.

Speaking in a press conference and when asked the reasons for the Guardian Council's opposition to the resolution of the last days of the tenth parliament regarding the amendment of the election law, Kadhodaie noted, "The Expediency Council has passed resolutions in accordance with this resolution, and for this reason, the EC comment on the amendment of the election law."

He elsewhere announced that the double-urgency bill to counter the Zionist regime's hostile actions against peace and security was not considered contrary to Islamic law and the Constitution.

In addition, the draft agreement on bilateral air services between the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the government of Kuwait was not considered contrary to Islamic law and the Constitution.

The Guardian Council also did not consider the bill on the accession of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agreement on International Transport of Perishable Food and Special Applied Equipment for such transfers to be contrary to Islamic law and the Constitution.

Iran's COVID-19 Death Toll Rises to 7,734

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health Ministry spokesman says 57 more patients have died of the novel coronavirus in the past 24 hours, increasing the overall fatalities to 7,734.

In his Saturday press briefing, Kianoush Jahanpour confirmed 2,282 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of cases to 148,950.

He said 116,827 patients have so far recovered from the disease, and been discharged from hospitals across the country.

2,533 patients are also in severe conditions of the disease, he added.

So far, Jahanpour noted, 915,998 COVID-19 tests have been taken in Iran.

He said the condition in Khuzestan province is still critical. He also warned that East and West Azarbaijan, Lorestan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Hormozgan, and Isfahan provinces are in alarming conditions.

E3 Regrets U.S. Decision To End Waivers

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a joint statement on Saturday, spokespersons of the High Representative of the European Union and the Foreign Ministries of France, Germany and the United Kingdom deeply regretted the US decision to end the three waivers covering key JCPOA nuclear projects in Iran, including the Arak Modernisation Project.

"These projects, endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2231, serve the non-proliferation interests of all and provide the international community with assurances of the exclusively peaceful and safe nature of Iranian nuclear activities," the statement said.

"We are consulting with our partners to assess the consequences of this decision by the United States," it added.

Terming the JCPOA as a key achievement of the global architecture, the statement said, "That is why we have worked continuously with the aim of ensuring the full and effective implementation of commitments under the JCPOA, in particular the return of Iran to full compliance with its nuclear commitments without delay." **See Page 7**

Turkey Replacing Gas Imports From Iran, Russia By LNG From U.S.

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Official Turkish data show a significant drop in natural gas imports from its eastern neighbor, Iran, in the first quarter of 2020.

Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Authority reported on Thursday, May 28, that the country received two billion cubic meters of natural gas from Iran in the first quarter of the year, down nearly fifteen percent from the same period last year.

But since the beginning of the second quarter, a blown-up natural gas pipeline has reduced imports even further and Ankara has so far refused to repair it.

A group linked with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claimed responsibility for the attack.

The pipeline used to carry around ten billion cubic meters of Iranian natural gas to Turkey annually and has frequently been attacked since it became operational in the early 2000s.

Iran's Oil Minister, Bijan Namdar Zanganeh last Monday blamed Turkey for not showing interest in repairing the gas pipeline. **See Page 7**

Iran in Bid To Set Up Nanoscience Hub in Nairobi

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Iran is bidding to set up a nanoscience and nanotechnology center in Kenya, setting up Nairobi at the center of global innovations.

The facility to be put up at the University of Nairobi is to concentrate on the research of all aspects of computational nanoscience, and to help promote the fields of nanoscience and nanotechnology across the country and beyond.

This has emerged following talks between the university and the Iran Embassy in Nairobi which will bring in Iranian universities to actualize the ambitions.

Western and Asian powers have historically dominated the field of nanotechnology, but this development arguably adds impetus to Kenya's bid to transform itself into an innovation and research hub in Africa.

Nanotechnology refers broadly to a field of applied science and technology whose unifying theme is the control of matter at the molecular level in scales smaller than 1 micrometer, normally 1 to 100 nanometers, and the fabrication of devices within that size range. The technology finds application in a variety of sectors including medicine, transport, agriculture, electronics and energy. **See Page 7**

Gov'ts, Firms Warned Against Aiding Iran Fuel Shipments to Venezuela

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Seeking to deter further shipments of Iranian fuel to Venezuela, the Trump administration has quietly warned foreign governments, seaports, shipping companies and insurers that they could face stiff U.S. sanctions if they aid the tanker flotilla, the U.S. envoy on Venezuela told Reuters on Friday.

Elliott Abrams, Washington's special representative on Venezuela, said the pressure campaign targeting heavily sanctioned U.S. foes Iran and Venezuela was being waged "to be sure everyone recognizes this would be a very dangerous transaction to assist."

The Venezuelan navy on Thursday escorted a fourth tanker bringing Iranian fuel through its waters to the gasoline-starved country, defying U.S. threats of "measures" in response to the shipments. At least one other tanker was en route in the Atlantic. It was a sign of deepening ties between Venezuela and Iran, both OPEC members with fraught relations with the United States.

The government of Venezuelan Socialist President Nicolas Maduro has flaunted the tankers' arrivals to show it remains unbowed by pressure. The United States, which seeks Maduro's ouster, has called it a "distraction."

"We've alerted the shipping community around the world, ship owners, ship captains, ship insurers, and we've alerted ports along the way between Iran and Venezuela," Abrams said in an interview.

He said diplomatic warnings, known as demarches, have been sent privately to governments "around the world."

A person familiar with the matter said among them was Gibraltar, situated on the tankers' route. A U.S. official said various countries had been asked to deny then port services.

It remained unclear what impact this effort might have.

Two other tankers, the Liberia-flag Bella and Bering, passed through the Suez Canal in early May, according to Refinitiv Eikon data. Sources familiar with the matter said United States was looking for ways to prevent them from reaching Venezuela.

Abrams declined comment but, citing the sanctions risk, said: "I do not think that you will find ship owners and insurers and captains and crews willing to engage in these transactions in the future."

He predicted the fuel would only last a few weeks and mostly be siphoned off by Maduro loyalists. Shortages have grown acute due to U.S. sanctions against Venezuela under Maduro, who has overseen an economic collapse. The United States this month issued a global maritime advisory, giving guidance to the shipping industry on how to avoid sanctions related to Iran, North Korea and Syria.



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Leader to Address 31st Demise Anniversary of Imam Khomeini

TEHRAN (MNA) – On the occasion of the 31st anniversary of the founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini (RA), Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei Khamenei will deliver a speech on Wednesday.

Every year, a commemoration ceremony was held in Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum, southern Tehran in presence of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei, senior state and military officials, as well as thousands of people from different walks of life.

This year, due to restrictions caused by the coronavirus, Ayatollah Khamenei is to deliver a televised speech on June 3 on the occasion of the 31st anniversary of Imam Khomeini's passing.

Pakistan's Senate Chairman Congratulates Qalibaf

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Chairman of Pakistani Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani terming Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf as close friend of Pakistan congratulated him on being elected as new Parliament Speaker of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to an official statement on Friday, Sanjrani hoped that the newly-elected Speaker will further promote Pakistan-Iran friendship.

He said Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf is a close friend of Pakistan who gained much popularity as mayor of Tehran.

Chairman of Pakistan's Senate added that the parliaments of the two countries will play an effective role for cooperation, lasting peace and development in the region.

"We have to work together to overcome the problems of the present age," said Sadiq Sanjrani.

He added that "we will work together to promote parliamentary support and coordination".



Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani said the parliamentary leaders of the Asian region will have to come together for peace in the region.

He said regional and global cooperation has also been intensified in the fight against the Corona pandemic.

He called further strengthening of close cooperation between friendly countries of Iran and Pakistan.

The newly-elected Iranian MPs convened for a second time on Thursday and elected Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf as the Parliament speaker for the first year of the new Parliament.

Minister Urged to Remind Observing Health Protocols Continuously

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani called on the Ministry of Health and Medical Education to present necessary warnings on the dire consequences of lack of observing health protocols.

Speaking in a telephone conversation with Health Minister Saeed Namaki on Friday, Rouhani added, "Health and Social-Security Committees of the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters should adopt necessary decisions to control and contain the novel coronavirus."

He seized this opportunity to express his thanks to doctors and medical staff of the country who rendered high-quality medical services to patients since the outbreak of the virus in the country.

Namaki presented a comprehensive report on the trend of fighting against COVID-19 in the country and also measures taken at the ministry to contain the growth of corona patients in some provinces and cities and expressed his major concern on the growing trend of transmission of virus due to the intercity travels by people.

Once the unnecessary travels of people during holidays and weekends is continued and if health protocols are not observed strictly by people, the country will witness a growing trend of coronavirus, he emphasized.

Iran Deplores U.S. Crackdown on Protesters

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran has strongly denounced the United States' violent crackdown on the African-American protesters who poured into streets this week following the recent murder of a black man by a white police officer in Minneapolis.

"Iran regrets the tragic murder of black Americans, denounces deadly racial profiling in the United States & urges authorities to do justice for every case," Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a tweet on Friday, incorporating an intecut of videos showing the police violently confronting the protesters.

"The protesters' voice must be heard. In doing so, suppressing the suffering Americans & press freedom must URGENTLY be stopped," the ministry added.

The tweet came three days after disturbing footage surfaced online showing the police officer, Derek Chauvin, choking unarmed George Floyd to death after forcing him to the ground and pinning him down with his knee.

The officer refused to relieve the pressure, although Floyd was being heard repeatedly pleading for his life and saying, "I can't breathe."

Floyd's death has been followed by protests across the country.

Rallies have turned violent in Los Angeles and Minneapolis, where the police have fired tear gas and rubber bullets against the demonstrators.

Commander Orders Heavy Surveillance of Iran-Iraq Border

TEHRAN (IP) - Following border attack on Iranian Guards at Sardasht region, the Commander of the Iranian border guards, Brigadier General Qasem Rezaei said that heavy and precise surveillance of the area would be applied 100 percent

Rezaei told reporters on Saturday that heavy and precise surveillance of the area would be applied 100 percent, and all border guards are on duty to defend the country's territorial integrity.

Headed: "Iranian Border Guards are working to maintain territorial integrity and complete stability and security."

Three Iranian border guards were martyred by bandits on the Azerbaijani-Eastern border in the city of Sardasht. Martyr Sargant Taqi Bahrehvar, commander of the Maraqeh base and Alireza Eslam Doust, and Hadi Abdi soldiers of the Tabriz Border Regiment and Miandoab were martyred during a clash with armed bandits.

Border guards at the Sardasht Border Regiment clashed with armed bandits on Friday morning while controlling and monitoring the border strip in the Gorillake area, 20 km from the city, killing several bandits and three border guards were martyred.

The border town of Sardasht is located in southwestern Azerbaijan and shares a 100-kilometer border with Iraq.

Army Fighting Wildfire in Southwest Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian Army Ground Force has dispatched troops to the province of Khuzestan to help extinguish a wildfire that is burning woodlands in two southwestern provinces.

Deputy Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Forces Brigadier General Nozar Ne'mati said on Friday that disaster response battalions from the Armored Brigade 392 have been deployed to the woodlands near Khasraj county in Khuzestan to put out the wildfire.

He also noted that the military helicopters at the Army Ground Force Airborne Division's airbase in Masjed Soleyman have performed tens of sorties to assist in the operation to control the raging fire in the southwestern provinces of Khuzestan and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

In a telephone conversation with the governor of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad on Friday, Iranian First Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri was briefed on the latest efforts to control the wildfire.

The VP also asked the provincial governor to coordinate plans with Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami and with the chairman of Iran's Crisis Management Organization to handle the situation by employing firefighting helicopters.

Tehran, Moscow Discuss Trade, Investment Relation



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian discussed trade ties and investment cooperation with his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak in a phone conversation on Friday.

According to the ministry report, the two ministers who are the chairs of the two countries' joint economic committee, discussed cooperation in the energy, agricultural and transport sectors.

"In this conversation, agreements were also reached on the purchase of some basic goods by Iran from Russia," the Iranian Energy Ministry portal (Paven) said in a statement.

The ministry report gave no further details about the purchases. Meanwhile two ministers agreed on holding the 16th round of their joint economic cooperation commission.

The two sides reportedly agreed to holding the next round of Iran-Russia joint economic cooperation commission in the Caucasus.

They discussed various topics, including joint projects and holding the joint cooperation commission.

Ardakanian and Novak conferred on power plant projects, especially the Sirik project.

Implementing projects of building four thermal plants in Bandar Abbas named Sirik and electrifying Garmsar-Inche Boroun railway were among other topics reviewed by both sides.

Also in late December 2019, Moscow's commercial representative in Tehran, Rustam Zhiganshin had announced that more than 50 percent of Iran and Russia's total bilateral trade was being conducted through national currencies.

"If in 2018 payments in national currencies comprised 40 percent [of the two countries' trade], in 2019 this quota has already exceeded 50 percent," Zhiganshin told sputnik.

Russia's exports to Iran include machinery, steel, wagons, wood, vegetable oil, corn, barley, red meat, and other goods, while its imports from the Islamic Republic are mostly dairy products, vegetables, and fruits.

IRGC Ready to Help Iranian Carmakers

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force said his forces can offer advanced technologies to the Iranian automakers without any limitation.

In comments during a visit to a factory of Iranian carmaker Iran Khodro, Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh said the IRGC Aerospace Force has a "technological industry" and is prepared to share it with the local automotive industries without limitation.

The key to success in the automobile industry is reliance on the local capabilities and domestic knowledge-based companies, the commander noted.

He also hailed the Iranian carmakers for overcoming the foreign sanctions by employing the domestic capabilities and the local university elites.

"Strengthening the country's industry and economy could immunize against the sanctions, as it has happened in the country's defense industry," the general added.

Iran Protests U.S. Threat Against Sailors, Tankers

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Managing Director of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran in protest at the U.S. unusual and hostile stance on threatening the Iranian sailors and maritime fleet said on Saturday that security of sailors should not be endangered.

The U.S. measure is against international law, Mohammad Rastad said at an online video call with Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Kitack Lim.

Rastad called on IMO to remind the U.S. officials that their statements are total disregard of the International Law of the Sea.

Although all international communities stress the need to prepare the ground for facilitating global trade and providing fundamental needs in the current critical conditions [due to coronavirus pandemic], Iran is still under the maximum pressure from the United States, said Rastad expressing Iran's protest against such situation.

As he said, the U.S. measures have direct [negative] effect on maritime security worldwide.

Referring to the arrival of five Iranian oil tankers in the Venezuela port to help the friendly nation meet its fuel shortage after the US sanctions against the country, Rastad said Iran's activities have been completely legitimate and based on international regulations.

IMO secretary general, for his part, said he will review the case, although the organization has political limitations.

Lim, further, appreciated measures taken by Iran's PMO since the December 2019 outbreak of coronavirus.

He called on Iran for continuing its positive maritime measures in order to be turned into a model for other IMO member countries.

Formed in 1948, IMO with its 174 member countries is responsible for regulating affairs related to shipping.

Rouhani Congratulates Croatia on National Day

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has extended congratulation to his Croatian counterpart, Zoran Milanovic, on the occasion of the country's national day.

In a message on Saturday, Rouhani said, "On behalf of the Iranian government and nation, I would like to extend congratulations on the occasion of May 30, the national day of the Republic of Croatia, to your Excellency and the people your country."

Referring to the "the many commonalities in the field of culture and extensive capacities for cooperation in the political, economic, scientific and technological fields," he expressed hope that "the relations between the two countries would be further expanded in order to ensure the interests of the two friendly nations of Iran and Croatia."

"I ask God Almighty for your health and success, and for the progress and prosperity of the Croatian people," Rouhani concluded.

Croatia celebrates Statehood Day on 30 May to mark its decision in 1991 on starting the process of separation from other former Yugoslav republics.

FM Spokesman Slams U.S. for Not Extending Waivers to Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Saturday termed US refusal to extend waivers to the sanctions on Iran's nuclear ties with outside world as the violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 and the UN Charter.

In reaction to the recent measure taken by the United States not to extend waivers for Iran's nuclear cooperation with the outside world, the Foreign Ministry spokesman strongly condemned the move.

The action ignores the inherent rights of Iran and disrupting the international regulations, he further noted.

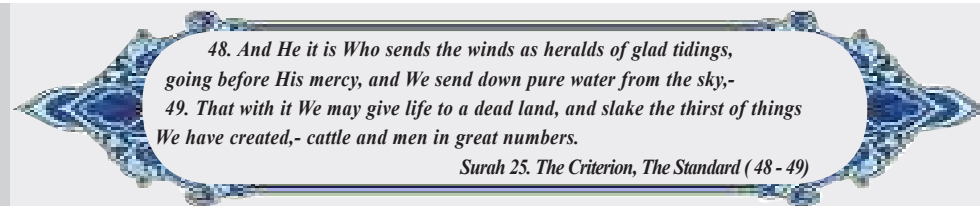
Pointing out that the Islamic Republic of Iran closely monitors the technical and political consequences of the measure; he said that the necessary legal steps will be taken if the action leads to negative effects on Iran's nuclear rights in accordance with international documents and the provisions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:02
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:35
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:49



Iran in Talks With Oman for Exporting Gas

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Managing Director of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) says Iran is in talks with Oman to export gas to this country while Iraqi Kurdistan is after buying gas from Iran.

Speaking to ILNA, Hassan Montazer Torbati said that the current condition of long-term gas contracts would totally change in the post-Coronavirus era, adding that Iraqi Kurdistan demands Iran's gas while talks with Oman for exporting gas to this Arab country are underway.

On the export of gas to Turkey and Turkey's delay in resumption of importing gas from Iran, he said that exports of gas to Turkey have halted since March 31 after the pipeline was exploded and Turkish company Botas has announced that repairing the pipeline would take longer because of the outbreak of Coronavirus. He reiterated that Iran has taken legal actions and has informed the Turkish company it would not accept longer period for repairing the pipeline and has warned.

He admitted that in the post-Coronavirus era, the long-term gas contracts will drastically change and the prices would be affected by the oil price. He said it is expected the next contracts to be based on new formula.

On renewing gas contract with Turkey after 2025, Montazer Torbati noted that talks will start with Turkey soon after the Coronavirus problem is resolved.

He admitted that gas market in Turkey will be decisive for future contract but Iran



due to its capability can be a safe gas provider for Turkey.

On Iran's gas to Iraq, he said Iran's gas exports to Iraq go on according to the schedule but recent reports show that the U.S. is increasing pressure on Iraq to find a replacement for its gas imports from Iran but gas contracts due to the primary investments cannot change easily and it will take time but Iran will do its best to protect its market in Iraq.

Reacting to probable exports of gas from Iraqi Kurdistan to Iraq and neighboring states, Montazer Torbati said that Iraqi Kurdistan has signed contracts for production of gas and constructing the gas pipeline for exports to Turkey but there have been no significant progress, so some projects have been stopped or have been slowed down. He noted that there is a doubt over Iraqi Kurdistan's capability for exports, adding that the region has asked for Iran's gas due shortages for domestic consumption.

On exports to Oman, he said the 42-inch pipeline between Minab-Sirik-Jask has been designed for exports of gas or domestic consumption, adding that tenders for providing necessary equipment are underway.

Montazer Torbati reiterated that talks with Oman are underway for exports of gas to this friendly country.

Reviewing Ways of Supporting ESCO



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN - Head of Social Security Organization Mr. Mostafa Salari and Governor General of Isfahan Mr. Abbas Rezaee in meeting with the board of directors of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) reviewed the current condition of the company and ways for boosting support from this giant industrial complex.

During the meeting, Mr. Salari called ESCO an important and influential industry whose issues can have national dimensions.

He added that Social Security Organization, as the major shareholder of the company, would do its necessary supports in the framework of its legal tasks.

Meanwhile addressing the meeting, Isfahan Governor General Mr. Rezaee said strengthening of ESCO and resolving its problems is very important for the province and the country, adding that the company observes all its social responsibilities, and all problems in way of provision of its raw material should be resolved.

Earlier in the beginning of the meeting, the CEO of Esfahan Steel Company Mr. Mansour Yazdizadeh read a report on the current condition of ESCO, adding that last year the company experienced new records for production with two blast furnaces and for exports of its goods but it is still facing with problems like shortage of the raw material.

He added that ESCO due to the method of its production is deprived of energy subsidy and comparing to other steel companies, the company needs more energy for providing its necessary coke for production which cost dear.

Yazdizadeh noted that the share of the company in the stock market is in good condition, adding while the company has accumulated loss, with the support of Social Security Organization and the government it can zero the losses and distribute the dividend.

Petchems Production Capacity to Reach 86m Tons By Yearend

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Oil Minister and CEO of National Petrochemical Company (NPC) says the production capacity of petrochemical sector will reach 86m tons by yearend and called for stopping launch of blind development in this sector.



Mr. Behzad Mohammad in an interview with ILNA highlighted the performance of petrochemical industry last year, saying that smartization of the petrochemical industry is the only way of remaining in the international market. He said since last year, no new petrochemical complex has joined the industry and the production was almost the same as its preceding year. He further said 23m tons of almost 31m tons of marginal product were exported and remaining 8m tons were offered in the domestic market. He further said that 6m tons of 8m tons of products in the domestic market were offered in the bourse.

Mohammadi noted that the price of petrochemical products last year declined by 30 percent on average, noting that the total revenues of the petrochemical industry stood at \$14.5b that \$9.5b have been earned through exports and the remaining was earned in the domestic market. He further said despite all woes and sanctions, the petrochemical industry earned 22 percent more forex than the ceiling which had been set by the NIMA and it means the industry injected \$8.2b into the NIMA system, almost \$600m more than its preceding year.

Mohammadi said that the outbreak of the virus has led to drastic slump in demand as well as decline in oil products consumption, adding that the fall in demand for crude oil led to 40 percent decrease in demand for petrochemical products.

He noted that 16 petrochemical projects are to come on stream by the yearend and by inauguration of those projects, the marginal product will soar from 31m to 37m tons, admitting that four projects out of 16 projects may be affected by the virus pandemic and they come on stream next year, reiterating that 12 projects will come on stream this year for sure. He said those projects worth over \$12b.

He also warned about uncalculated and blind development of petrochemical projects, adding that the projects should be based on the demands and markets.

Mohammadi added that currently, the refineries and petrochemical companies produce some 985,000 tons of propylene, 175,000 tons shy of the domestic demand, noting that the propylene production will hit 1950,000 tons by 2025 which will be 700,000 tons shy the domestic need.

He predicted that the production capacity in this sector to hit 86m tons by the yearend.

Iran to Spend 100,000b Tomans On New National Data Network

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Information and Communications Technology Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi said on Saturday that the Government will spend more than 100,000 billion tomans to develop and enhance the national data network and make G4 internet available.

Azari-Jahromi made clear that the private sector has spent 19,000 billion tomans on upgrading national data network, but, the Government will spend 100,000 billion tomans on setting up modern national data network and producing G4 internet.

He said that the budget has been allocated by the government for expanding the national data network.

He also said the goal of the country is to have five million internet TV subscribers. This field of economy is a huge opportunity.

Saying the infrastructure of the national network will be completed before summer, he added that the passive defense infrastructure is of great importance too. A huge center will be inaugurated in Tabriz. Also the mother data center will be launched in mid-summer in Tehran.

Tourists Can Visit World's Biggest Brick Dome as of May 30

ZANJAN (IRNA) - Visit to Iran's Soltaniyeh Dome, the world's biggest brick dome in northwest of Iranian capital- is available for tourists as of yesterday.

The tourists should follow health protocols and social distancing rules to take visits, head of the World Heritage of Soltaniyeh Mir-Mousa Aniran said. The official said that the 735-year-old historical building of Soltaniyeh has been sterilized and disinfected completely, then opened to public.

Based on a decision made by Iran's anti-coronavirus headquarters about three months ago, all museums and historical sites of the province had been shut down in line with preemptive measures taken to fight the coronavirus pandemic which have killed near 370,000 worldwide since its outbreak in Dec 2019, Aniran said.

Soltaniyeh Dome is one of the most magnificent examples of Persian and Islamic architecture, the official said. The octagonal building is unique in Islamic era due to its outstanding tile decoration, the official noted. Soltaniyeh Dome was inscribed on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage List in July, 2005.

Soltaniyeh has been the capital of Ilkhanid dynasty since 1306 for about three decades.

The historical dome is built by Mohammad Khodabandeh more than seven centuries ago and is currently the largest brick dome in the world.

Iran Calls for Lifting Tariffs on Exports to Georgia

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Iran's ambassador to Georgia met with the country's Regional Director-General of Foreign Ministry and called on him to address the limitations created for importing the Iranian goods to Georgia.

Meeting with Kakha Sikharolidze on Friday, Seyyed Javad Qavam Shahidi pointed to the limitations on the export of the Iranian goods to Georgia and the concern of the Iranian businessmen over the issue and called for addressing the issue.

He noted that Iran and Georgia must pursue long-run interests, Qavam Shahidi said the limitations could leave negative impacts on the economic cooperation of the

countries, thus lowering the volume of the trade exchanges.

Kakha Sikharolidze for his part stressed the expansion of ties between Iran and Georgia, noting that the import limitations on the Iranian goods merely are technical problems arising due to the coronavirus pandemic. Sikharolidze expressed hope that the problem is solved the economic agencies' efforts in developing new regulations.

The Iranian ambassador to Georgia recently announced Iran's readiness to implement health protocols at border crossings, calling for closer cooperation between the two countries' customs to find effective solutions to the obstacles created by the coronavirus outbreak.

Sixth S. Pars Refinery Feedstock to Increase by 42%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Sixth South Pars Gas Company Refinery Director said on Saturday that by growing operational output and accessibility of the refinery by 2021, its feedstock would augment by 42 percent.

Ahmad Valipour said that the Sixth Refinery pursues its strategic plans in two axes: supplying the feedstock through 16th phase marine pipelines which would materialize 42 percent increase in feedstock and output, and implementation of plans to lower gas flares that would be beneficial for both environment and refinery output.

He said that the refinery made strategic plans last year to maximize, stabilize and improve the production from the joint reserve in South Pars field.



EORC Donates 3b Rials for Release of Unintentional Crimes Prisoners

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN – Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) allocated some 3b rials for the release of some unintentional and financial crimes prisoners and their return to their families during the holy month of Ramadhan.

According to the public relations of the company, it donated 3b rials for the release of some unintentional crimes prisoners in presence of the spokesman of the company Mr. Mohammad Sadeq Hajian in order that they could return to their families.

During the gathering and ceremony, Mr. Hajian highlighted major activities of the company in line with its social responsibilities, adding that concurrent with performing its operational tasks and production of 23 percent of the oil products needed by the country and providing feed for some petrochemical companies in Isfahan, Arak, Sepahan, Naft-e Jay and L.A.B., the company has also done its social obligation amid the outbreak of Coronavirus in the province and the country, and it allocated some 9b tomans for fight with the virus.

He added that beside its daily activities and production, the company produced and distributed over 200,000 liters of disinfectants for Isfahan's organizations and offices per day, and the demand for disinfectant still is high and the company will produce disinfectants till the time it is demanded.

Hajian also pointed to some other health packages which were distributed by the company among its staff and hospitals.



North Korea Supports China's Measures on Hong Kong

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea on Saturday expressed its support for China's decision to impose new national security laws in Hong Kong, calling it a "legitimate step" to safeguard the state security.

"Since Hong Kong issue is an issue pertaining thoroughly to the internal affairs of China, any country or force has no rights to say this or that about the issue," North Korea's KCNA state news agency cited a representative of North Korea's foreign ministry as saying.

"We categorically oppose and reject the outside interference detrimental to the security and the social and economic development of Hong Kong."



Russia Slams U.S. Decision To Withdraw From WHO

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - A Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Friday that Washington damages international law on cooperation in health after the U.S. terminated its relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Maria Zakharova told the TASS news agency the world needs to consolidate its efforts to fight the COVID-19 outbreak. "What can the U.S. offer to the world instead of this?" she asked rhetorically.

The sad picture that emerged in the US health system during the pandemic leaves Washington without an avenue to talk about leadership in the health field, she said.



Trump Cuts Ties With WHO



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump said he is severing ties with the World Health Organization over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, as the death toll from the disease spiked again in the United States and Brazil.

Trump's move signals an end to hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to the United Nations agency just when it needs it most, with outbreaks in many parts of the world yet to reach their peak.

Countries in Latin America are bracing for difficult weeks ahead, especially Brazil, where the death toll shot up by 1,124 on Friday and there were a record number of new infections.

Trump initially suspended funding to the WHO last month, accusing it of not doing enough to curb the early spread of the virus and being too lenient with China, where the virus emerged late last year.

On Friday he made that decision permanent in a major blow for the UN agency's finances, as the United States is by far its biggest contributor, pumping in \$400 million last year. "Because they have failed to make the requested and greatly needed reforms, we will be today terminating our relationship with the World Health Organization," Trump told reporters.

The Republican leader said the U.S. would be redirecting WHO funds "to other worldwide and deserving urgent global public health needs."

"The world needs answers from China on the virus. We must have transparency," Trump said.

Beijing has furiously denied US allegations that it played down or even covered up the threat from the virus after it was detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December, insisting it has been forthcoming.

The pandemic has since claimed almost 364,000 lives globally and the number of cases is nearing six million.

Populations are now learning to adjust to life with the long-term threat of infection as the virus continues its march around the globe and a vaccine remains elusive.

As the disease spreads across South America, the poor have been hit hard in countries like Brazil, which now has the second highest number of cases in the world after the United States.

Lockdowns have interrupted the meager services many depend on, such as school lunches for hungry children and water deliveries.

"In 26 years, I've never seen so many people living in fear, so many people going hungry," said Alcione Albanesi, founder of charity Amigos do Bem, which distributes supplies to communities in the hot, dry and impoverished Sertao region of Brazil's northeast.

"Everything has ground to a stop. But hunger doesn't stop."

Officer Charged With Murder of Black American

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Minneapolis police officer accused of killing a handcuffed African-American man was charged with murder Friday, but the move failed to quell surging anger as tense protests erupted in cities across the nation.

Demonstrations raged from New York to Los Angeles, and from Atlanta where police cruisers were set ablaze, to Washington where protesters faced off with Secret Service agents outside the White House.

In Minneapolis, Derek Chauvin, the white officer filmed kneeling on the neck of a handcuffed and unarmed George Floyd for nearly nine minutes, was charged with one count of third-degree murder -- unintentionally causing a death -- and one count of negligent manslaughter.

"This case is now ready, and we have charged it," said county prosecutor Mike Freeman amid outrage over the latest death of an African American in police custody. But the charges failed to calm a shaken nation whose deep wounds over racial inequality have been torn open anew.



Authorities imposed a curfew Friday in Minneapolis after three nights of violent protests left parts of the city in flames.

But protesters defiantly remained on the streets, sometimes dodging tear gas canisters fired into crowds by police.

Protester Naeema Jakes said she needed to be on the streets so she could verbally confront officers.

"I need you to look in my eyes and feel me," Jakes said. "This is pain, this is hurt."

The 46-year-old Floyd's relatives -- who spoke Friday with President Donald Trump -- welcomed news of the arrest as a "step on the road to justice," but said they hoped for tougher charges and action against the other officers involved in Floyd's detention and death.

Freeman said the three other officers were also under investigation, and that he anticipated charges.

All four were fired from the police department Tuesday after video surfaced of Monday's arrest.

Merkel a "No" for Trump's In-Person G7 Summit

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel will not attend an in-person summit of G7 leaders that U.S. President Donald Trump has suggested he will host despite concerns over the coronavirus pandemic, the Politico website quoted her spokesman as saying Friday.

Leaders from the Group of Seven, which the United States heads this year, had been scheduled to meet by videoconference in late June after COVID-19 scuttled plans to gather in-person at Camp David, the U.S. presidential retreat in the state of Maryland.

Trump last week, however, indicated that he could hold the huge gathering after all, "primarily at the White House" but also potentially parts of it at Camp David.

Merkel, a scientist by training, has declined. "As of today, considering the overall pandemic situation, she cannot agree to her personal participation, to a journey to Washington," German government spokesman Steffen Seibert told Politico.

"The federal chancellor thanks President Trump for his invitation to the G7 summit," he said. The 65-year-old chancellor is the oldest G7 leader after Trump, who is 73. Japan's Shinzo Abe, also 65, is several months younger than Merkel.

Their age puts them at higher risk of contracting the coronavirus. The White House has said it is putting the huge diplomatic gathering back on the agenda as a "show of strength" when world economies are gradually reemerging from shutdowns.

Merkel is the first to give a firm no, while other world leaders have expressed vaguely positive responses.

Earlier Friday, the White House said Trump and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had spoken and "agreed on the importance of convening the G7 in person in the near future." Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who hosted the 2018 summit, has said any in-person gathering would have to prioritize safety, while a French presidential official said that Emmanuel Macron was "willing to go to Camp David if the health conditions allow."

Hong Kong Leaders Say Trump Completely Wrong for Curbing Ties

HONG KONG (Reuters) - Senior Hong Kong government officials lashed out on Saturday at moves by U.S. President Donald Trump to strip the city of its special status in a bid to punish China for imposing national security laws on the global financial hub.

Speaking hours after Trump said the city no longer warranted economic privileges and some officials could face sanctions, security minister John Lee told reporters that Hong Kong's government could not be threatened and would push ahead with the new laws.

"I don't think they will succeed in using any means to threaten the (Hong Kong) government, because we believe what we are doing is right," Lee said.

Justice minister Teresa Cheng said the basis for Trump's actions was "completely false and wrong", saying the need for national security laws were legal and necessary.

In some of his toughest rhetoric yet, Trump said Beijing had broken its word over Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy from Beijing, by proposing the national security legislation and that the territory no longer warranted U.S. economic privileges.

"We will take action to revoke Hong Kong's preferential treatment as a separate customs and travel territory from the rest of China," Trump said, adding that Washington would also impose sanctions on individuals seen as responsible for "smothering - absolutely smothering - Hong Kong's freedom."

Trump told reporters at the White House that China's move on Hong Kong was a tragedy for the world, but he gave no timetable for the moves, leaving Hong Kong residents, businesses and officials to ponder just how far his administration will go.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong said Saturday marked "a sad day" for China's freest city.

"This is an emotional moment for Americans in Hong Kong and it will take companies and families a while to digest the ramifications," AmCham President Tara Joseph said in a statement.

"Many of us ... have deep ties to this city and with Hong Kong people. We love Hong Kong and it's a sad day," she said, adding the chamber would continue to work with its members to maintain Hong Kong's status as a vital business centre.

China's parliament this week approved a decision to create laws for Hong Kong to curb secession, terrorism and foreign interference. Mainland security and intelligence agents may be stationed in the city for the first time - moves critics say put the city's extensive freedoms at risk.

Authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong insist the legislation will target only a small number of "troublemakers" who threaten China's national security. They say such action is urgently needed after months of sometimes violent anti-government protests rocked the city last year.

Saudi Arabia Confirms Yemen Donors' Conference With UN

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia has confirmed it will host a virtual donors' conference next week for Yemen together with the United Nations, which has said the conflict-riven nation risks being overwhelmed by the coronavirus.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency on Friday cited a directive from King Salman confirming Tuesday's donor conference with which the UN aims to raise \$2.4bn in one of the biggest aid operations so far.

"If we don't get the funding we need and if more isn't done to suppress the virus, COVID-19 could engulf Yemen," Lise Grande, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, said in a statement.

Yemen has reported nearly 300 infections and 55 deaths so far, amounting to a fatality rate of 20 percent, compared with a global average estimated by the UN at seven percent.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), last week said aid workers in Yemen were forced to turn people away because of a lack of medical oxygen or sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Mahathir Vows to Challenge Expulsion From His Own Party

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and four other former members have promised to challenge their removal from the Bersatu party.

Mahathir, 94, along with his son and three other senior members, were expelled from the Bersatu party on Thursday in the latest twist in a power struggle with his successor.

"The unilateral action by Bersatu's president to sack us without valid reason is due to his own fears in facing party elections as well as his unsafe position as the most unstable prime minister in the history of the country's administration," a joint statement by Mahathir and the four others said.

The party has been split into two camps since intense political wrangling led Mahathir to resign as prime minister in February and the king to appoint fellow party member Muhyiddin Yassin as his replacement despite Mahathir's objections.

Mahathir's son, Mukhriz Mahathir, has since challenged Muhyiddin as party president in a vote that has been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Mahathir co-founded Bersatu with Muhyiddin in 2016, and the party joined an alliance that claimed a stunning victory in the 2018 polls, leading to the first change of government since independence.

The ruling alliance collapsed after Muhyiddin pulled Bersatu out to work with the former government, which has been accused of massive corruption. Mahathir, a two-time prime minister, resigned in protest.

Mahathir said he still has the majority support of legislators and has called for a no-confidence vote against Muhyiddin.

In their statement, Mahathir and the other expelled members said they may take legal action to challenge their termination and ensure Bersatu is not used as a vehicle for those crazy for power.

Party letters sent to the five said their membership had ceased as they sat with the opposition bloc during a half-day parliament sitting on May 18. But the letter was signed by a lower official who Mahathir's group and others said had no power to remove them.

Muhyiddin had earlier unsuccessfully tried to reconcile with Mahathir.





Zaferanieh (\$2500)
250sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Jordan Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
parquet floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Fereshteh
180sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J
balcony, F.F
(\$1800)

Niavaran (\$2000)
220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/pool
S, J, pkg, & F.F

Velenjak Bldg
5storey, 20bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkgs
Brand new, F.F
(\$10000)

Shahrak-e-gharb (\$2000)
220sq.m, 2bdrs, balcony
pkg, & Fully Furn

Cell: +989121907875
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Turkey's Economic Confidence Jumps in May

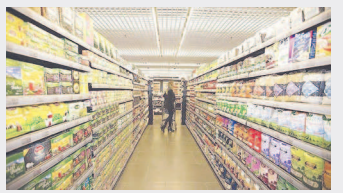
ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economic confidence index improved sharply to 61.7 in May, the country's statistical authority said.

The May figure jumped 20.4% from 51.3 last month, amid Turkey's normalization from the waning coronavirus pandemic, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data showed.

The month-on-month rise was driven by improvements in the consumer, real sector, services, retail trade, and construction confidence indices.

The construction confidence index surged the most from last month, at 31.1%.

The service and consumer confidence indexes followed with 10.8% and 8.5% rises, respectively.



OPEC Delivers Three Quarters Of Record Oil Cut in May

LONDON (Reuters) - OPEC oil output hit the lowest in two decades in May as Saudi Arabia and other members started to deliver a record supply cut, a Reuters survey found, although Nigeria and Iraq are laggards in making their share of the reduction.

On average, the 13-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries pumped 24.77 million barrels per day (bpd) this month, the survey found, down 5.91 million bpd from April's revised figure. OPEC and its allies last month agreed to an output cut to offset a slump in demand and prices caused by the coronavirus crisis. An easing of government lockdowns and lower supply have helped oil prices LCOc1 more than double compared with a 21-year low below \$16 a barrel in April.

"OPEC has made a strong start in May with its latest production cut, lowering supply by 5 million bpd versus April," Daniel Gerber, chief executive of Petro-Logistics, which assesses OPEC supply by tracking tanker shipments, told Reuters.

"However, compliance is far from perfect. With less than four weeks between the adoption and the start of the agreement, many countries had already committed volumes to buyers and have not managed to reduce supply to the agreed levels."

OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, agreed to cut supply by a record 9.7 million bpd from May 1. OPEC's share, to be made by 10 members from their October 2018 output in most cases, is 6.084 million bpd. So far in May, they delivered 4.48 million bpd of the pledged reduction, equal to 74% compliance, the survey found.

May's output would be the lowest by OPEC since 2002, excluding membership changes since then, Reuters survey records show.

The biggest drop in supply came from Saudi Arabia, which pumped a record 11.7 million bpd in April. Saudi supply is expected to drop even further in June. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait also cut back sharply, sources in the survey said. Both had also pumped at record rates in April.

Iraq, a laggard in making cuts in 2019, curbed output according to the survey following reduced exports from the south of the country, although at 38% its compliance was much lower than that of the Persian Gulf OPEC members.

Another laggard, Nigeria, made only 19% of its promised reduction, the survey found. Venezuela and Iran reduced output in May, while Libyan supply was steady. All three were exempt from voluntary cuts because of U.S. sanctions or internal issues limiting production.

Iran is seeing a drop in fuel use because of the coronavirus outbreak, compounding the impact of sanctions on supply. Venezuela, contending with both U.S. sanctions and a long-term decline in output, posted another drop in exports.

Oil output in Libya has plunged since Jan. 18 due to a blockade of ports and fields by groups loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar. Production averaged 100,000 bpd in May, the survey found.

The Reuters survey aims to track supply to the market and is based on shipping data provided by external sources, Refinitiv Eikon flows data, information from tanker-trackers such as Petro-Logistics and Kpler, and information provided by sources at oil companies, OPEC and consultants.

Thirty Countries Launch Alliance to Share COVID-19 Tools

ZURICH (Reuters) - Thirty countries led by Costa Rica and the World Health Organization launched an initiative on Friday aimed at sharing vaccines, medicines and diagnostic tools to tackle the global coronavirus pandemic.

While the developing nations' push, called the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool, was welcomed by groups including Doctors Without Borders, a drug industry alliance questioned if it would really boost collaboration or broaden access to COVID-19 medicines.

The WHO effort comes amid concerns rich countries pumping resources into finding vaccines - more than 100 are in development - will muscle their way to the front of the queue, once a candidate succeeds.

Switzerland, home of big drugmakers Roche and Novartis, has also raised fears of "vaccine nationalism", saying it wants to ensure fair access.

"Vaccines, tests, diagnostics, treatments and other key tools in the coronavirus response must be made universally available as global public goods," Costa Rica President Carlos Alvarado said, of the voluntary initiative.

The effort, originally proposed in March, aims to provide a one-stop shop for scientific knowledge, data and intellectual property amid a pandemic that has infected more than 5.8 million people and killed some 360,000.

The WHO issued a "Solidarity Call to Action", asking other stakeholders to join the push. However, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations raised concerns about undermining intellectual property protections, which the industry group said enable collaboration and will be needed after the pandemic is over, to prepare health systems for new challenges.

Ukraine Expects \$5b IMF Loan Approval and Initial Payout

KIEV (Reuters) - Ukraine is expecting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to approve a \$5 billion loan package on June 5 and to disburse the first tranche of \$1.9 billion the next day, Prime Minister Denys Shmygal told Reuters on Friday.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said Ukraine risked defaulting without the money, which Shmygal said he expected to be approved at an IMF board meeting. Kiev struggled for months to pass the reforms

the fund was asking for amid concerns over corruption and influence-peddling.

The country's precarious financial position and horse-trading over reform comes at a time when Zelenskiy is trying to negotiate with Russia, which annexed Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014 and backed a pro-Russian uprising in eastern Ukraine.

The IMF declined to comment on Shmygal's statement. His remarks offered the most precise timing the government has yet given for when it expects the disbursement of the IMF loan tranches, money the government sorely needs to weather an economic shock caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Today, together with the president, we will have a phone call with Mrs Kristalina [Georgieva], the head of the IMF. The board meeting will be held on June 5, and probably on June 6 Ukrainian time we expect to receive the tranche," he said.

The second tranche, worth \$1.6 billion, is expected from September onwards and the third tranche, of \$1.5 billion, would come next year, Shmygal said. Ukraine additionally expects to receive 600 million euros from the European Union shortly after the first IMF tranche.

Shmygal also disclosed a preliminary estimate for economic growth in the second quarter of this year, saying gross domestic product could fall by 12%.

The government has previously said the economy would shrink by nearly 5% for the full year.

The government expects the second quarter to be the worst affected, and Shmygal said Ukraine could bounce back to growth of 3.6-4% next year.

Ukraine moved quickly to impose lockdown measures in March to contain the coronavirus pandemic. It has recorded fewer cases than much of western Europe, but many businesses were either closed or restricted.

The prime minister also said that the government would not restrict wheat exports for the next two months, even though the quota the government previously agreed with traders has been exhausted.

U.S. Consumption Dives 13.6% in April

NEW YORK (AFP) - U.S. personal consumption plunged a record 13.6 percent in April, the first full month where businesses closed their doors and shoppers stayed home to stop the coronavirus, the Commerce Department said Friday.

Prices also dropped by 0.5 percent, the biggest drop in more than five years, according to the monthly personal income and outlays report, as slowing consumption was worsened by mass layoffs that have now put around 40 million Americans out of work, at least temporarily.

A separate survey showed consumers are becoming more pessimistic about the prospects for the post-pandemic recovery, and together show the latest signs of the damage inflicted on the world's largest economy, where key sectors have seen their operations snarled by measures aimed at stopping the pandemic that has killed more than 100,000 people.

"Household spending will likely continue to be impacted going forward by a more cautious attitude by consumers as job losses continue to mount," Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said. "However, we think April likely marked the bottom and activity could be less weak in May and June." Fueling the \$1.89 trillion drop in consumption were decreases in spending on food and accommodation as people stopped traveling and going out.

And that drop sent the personal savings rate soaring by 33 percent with shoppers holding on to \$6.15 trillion -- money that could be unleashed to aid the economy's recovery or reserved for hard times ahead. Income took an incongruent turn, shooting up by 10.5 percent in April, but that spike was caused by the government's massive \$2.2 trillion CARES Act which boosted unemployment benefits and included direct payments to all Americans.

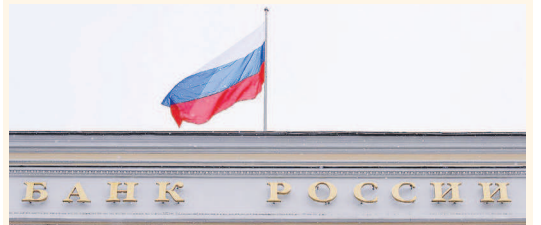
When those payments are excluded along with other government social benefits, income actually fell 6.3 percent, which Harvard University economist Jason Furman said would be the largest decline ever. And he warned on Twitter that if Congress fails to extend the expanded unemployment payments beyond their expiration in the coming weeks, "these numbers will turn ugly in August."

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index was practically flat in May, according to the survey released Friday, ticking up only half a point as consumers held back their buying. But the index measuring future conditions plunged six points to 65.9, according to the report. The CARES Act has "helped to stem economic hardship, but those programs have not acted to stimulate discretionary spending due to uncertainty about the future course of the pandemic," the survey's chief economist Richard Curtin said.

Consumers expecting the economy to improve in the coming months but be generally bad in the year-ahead period, Curtin said.



Russia to Continue Cutting Rates



MOSCOW (Reuters) - The Russian central bank will continue cutting interest rates in 2020, as it faces a worsening economic contraction and lower inflationary risks, a Reuters poll showed on Friday.

Economic activity in Russia has been pummeled since late March by lockdowns across the country designed to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The consensus forecasts of 21 analysts and economists suggested gross domestic product will contract 3.8% in 2020 before growing 3% in 2021.

A month ago, when official data was yet to reflect the impact of the lockdowns, a similar poll showed the economy would shrink by 3.4% this year.

The biggest contraction, 9.1%, is expected in the second quarter, followed by a 4.9% drop in the third, 3.6% in the fourth and 2.1% in the first quarter of 2021.

"The peak of the pandemic in Russia has passed, but the post-pandemic future holds many challenges. The government's ability to shield the economy and population remains the key swing factor in shoring up the future," BCS Brokerage said.

In April, the first full month of the lockdown, the economy shrank by 12% on-year, cementing expectations that the central bank will cut rates next month.

The central bank is expected to lower its key rate to 5% in June, delivering a 50-basis-point cut that is smaller than a 100-basis-point step the central bank pledged to consider, the poll showed.

"The CBR will resist the temptation to cut the policy rate prior to the scheduled meeting on 19 June and pay more attention to transmission of the recent steps into market rates and utilization of the subsidized lending," said Artem Zaigrin, chief economist at Sova Capital brokerage.

In the third quarter, the central bank is seen slashing the key rate to 4.5%, where it will hold it into the middle of 2021. Forecasts for the end-2020 reading varied between 3.5% and 5%.

The previous monthly poll foresaw the rate at 4.75% in the third quarter and 4.5% by year-end. Inflation, which the central bank targets at 4%, is now seen finishing this year at 4.2%, down from 4.5% in the late-April poll.

Renault to Cut 15,000 Jobs in Vital Cost-Cutting Plan

PARIS (Dispatches) - Renault said Friday it will cut nearly 15,000 jobs, including 4,600 at its core French operations, as it tries to regain its footing in the wake of plummeting car sales and the shift to electric vehicles.

"In a context of uncertainty and complexity, this project is vital to guarantee a solid and sustainable performance," interim CEO Clotilde Delbos said in a statement.

The cost-cutting plan, which was unveiled to labour representatives Thursday, aims to reduce overheads by two billion euros (\$2.2 billion) over the next three years.

Four production sites in France could be closed or restructured, the automaker said, and its hulking factory at Flins northwest of Paris will stop making the Zoe electric hatchback from 2024.

An additional 10,000 jobs will be cut outside France, with expansion plans now halted in Morocco and Romania, and under review in Russia.

Overall, Renault's production capacity will shrink to 3.3 million vehicles over the next four years, from four million currently.

"We want to generate economies of scale to restore our overall profitability and ensure our development in France and internationally," Delbos said.

Renault has been rocked by turbulence since the shock arrest of ex-chief Carlos Ghosn in 2018, which exposed deep rifts in its alliance with Japanese partners Nissan and Mitsubishi.



After Ghosn's ouster, his successor Thierry Bollere was forced out in turn a few months later, as former Michelin chief Jean-Dominique Senard was brought in to chart a new course for the carmaker and repair the fractured alliance.

"The planned changes are fundamental to ensure the sustainability of the company," Senard said in a statement Friday.

The company has hired former Volkswagen executive Luca de Meo to take over as CEO, but he cannot begin working until July because of a non-compete clause.

Last year, Renault recorded its first annual loss in a decade, at 141 million euros. It is now negotiating the terms of a five-billion-euro rescue loan from the French state, which owns a 15 percent stake in the automaker.

Cartoonists From 88 States Participate In Iran Coronavirus Festival

SHIRAZ (IRNA) - Vice-Chancellor of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences for Cultural Affairs said on Saturday that artists from 88 countries around the world have taken part in the International Cartoon Contest with 4,200 works. Kourosh Azizi said on Saturday that the International Cartoon Contest entitled “We Defeat Coronavirus” began on the World Quds day, the last Friday of Ramadan month. He also said that the university didn’t have the opportunity to exhibit cartoon works received, but it would hold a closing ceremony in Tehran and publish the works in a book.



China May Buy Less American Farm Products

BEIJING (Reuters) - China may reduce its imports of agricultural products from the United States if Washington issues a severe response to Beijing’s push to impose national security laws on Hong Kong, three sources said.

China has pressed ahead with national security legislation for Hong Kong, raising fears over the future of the financial hub.

U.S. President Donald Trump has vowed a tough response, and will hold a news conference on China later on Friday.

Sources said that if Trump announces tough sanctions on Beijing, that could derail the trade deal the two countries have worked on for almost two years, as any worsening in relations could deter importers from buying U.S. farm goods.

If the U.S. countermeasures are really severe, China probably will reduce its buying of U.S. products, said one source familiar with the government plan.

If the measures are mild, trade may not be affected, the source added.

Under their initial Phase One trade deal reached in January, China committed to buying a further \$32 billion (£26.02 billion) worth of U.S. agriculture products over two years, above a baseline based on 2017 figures.

Soybeans were the top U.S. farm product shipped to China in 2017, with cargoes worth \$12 billion, and traders have said they expected China to step up purchases of U.S. cargoes of the oilseed.

“Commercial buyers are still inquiring about U.S. new (soybean) crop, making preparations to import American beans,” said a source with a major trading house.

“But this could change because of any political hiccups... Commercial buyers are very nervous at the moment,” the source said.

China has already bought some U.S. soybeans and corn in several rounds of purchases this year, but the typical peak period for Chinese purchases of U.S. crops comes after harvest in the fall. Those purchases may now be in doubt.

“The tensions between the U.S. and China mean private companies are less inclined to buy American products,” said Darin Friedrichs, Senior Asia Commodity



Analyst at broker INTL FCStone.

“U.S. soybeans don’t just have to be price competitive, they have to be price competitive accounting for the big U.S.-China political risk,” Friedrichs said.

Crush margins for American shipments after September are increasingly economical for crushers compared with rival supplier Brazil as the U.S. harvest approaches, traders said.

Whether China will continue to buy U.S. beans probably “depends on U.S. reaction to HK,” said a trader with a state owned firm.

Investors, Scientists Urge IEA Head to Take Bolder Climate Stance



LONDON (Reuters) - Fatih Birol, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA), faced renewed calls to take a bolder stance on climate change on Friday from investors concerned the organisation’s reports enable damaging levels of investment in fossil fuels.

In an open letter here investor groups said an IEA report here on options for green economic recoveries from the coronavirus pandemic, due out in June, should be aligned with the 2015 Paris accord goal of capping the rise in global temperatures at 1.5C.

The more than 60 signatories included the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, whose members have 30 trillion euros of assets under management, scientists and advocacy group Oil Change International.

“Bold, not incremental, action is required,” the letter said.

The Paris-based IEA said it appreciated feedback and would bear the letter’s suggestions in mind. It also said it had been recognised for leading calls on governments to put clean energy at the heart of their economic stimulus packages. “We have backed up that call with a wide range of analysis, policy recommendations and high-level events with government ministers, CEOs, leading investors and thought leaders,” the IEA said.

Birol has faced mounting pressure in the last year from critics who say oil, gas and coal companies use the IEA’s flagship World Energy Outlook (WEO) annual report to justify further investment - undermining the Paris goals. Birol has dismissed the criticism, saying the WEO helps governments understand the potential climate implications of their energy policies, and downplaying its influence on investment decisions.

But campaigners want Birol to overhaul the WEO to chart a more reliable 1.5C path. The world is on track for more than double that amount of heating, which would render the planet increasingly uninhabitable, scientists say.

The joint letter followed similar demands last year, and was published by Mission 2020, an initiative backed by former U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres.

Pandemic May Skew Economic Data, Cause Them to Be Less Accurate

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Key economic indicators may be skewed, and perhaps less accurate, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the International Monetary Fund.

“Accurate and timely economic data are crucial for informing policy decisions, especially during a crisis. But the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the production of many key statistics,” the fund said in a blog post this week.

The coronavirus disease, formally known as Covid-19, first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan last December. It has since infected around 5.8 million people and killed more than 360,000 globally, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

“Without reliable data, policymakers cannot assess how badly the pandemic is hurting people and the economy, nor can they properly monitor the recovery,” read the post written by three members of the IMF’s statistics department.

The blog post comes at a time when many countries are releasing data on gross domestic product for the first three months of the year — when the coronavirus started to spread globally. GDP is a broad measure of the size of an economy and is widely watched indicator by governments, central banks and investors.

In the U.S. — the world’s largest economy — the White House and Congress use GDP data to plan spending and tax policies. The Federal Reserve also considers GDP numbers when setting monetary policy, according to the country’s Bureau of Economic Analysis.

“Business people use these stats when making decisions about jobs, expansion, investments, and more,” the BEA said on its website. This week, several countries are scheduled to release their GDP data, including India, France, Italy, Canada and Brazil.

One crucial hurdle in producing reliable and timely economic statistics during the pandemic is the lockdown measures that have kept the staff of national statistical offices at home, said the IMF.

Iran in Bid...

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking during a virtual courtesy call to the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Kiama last week, the Iran Ambassador Jafar Barmaki noted that the institutions of higher learning from the two countries could collaborate on nanotechnology and oil exploration.

“This is a big opportunity. Iran has over 40 years’ experience in the two sectors and is willing to share with Kenya. We could work on staff and student exchange programmes,” said Barmaki.

Nanotechnology has been billed as the science of the future, with micro-particles already powering innovations across industries. Experts reckon that nanotechnology has the potential to increase the efficiency of energy consumption, foster food security, solve major health problems and increase manufacturing production at reduced costs.

“We are keen on tapping such new innovations to drive the country’s economic agenda,” said Kiama.

Last year, Iran announced that it would partner with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology to formulate postgraduate programs in nanotechnology, equip nanotechnology laboratories and bring in professors in the field of nanotechnology in a bid to build capacity in the field and raise awareness about nanoscience.

According to the Web of Science, Iran ranks fourth in nanotechnology in the world after China, the United

States of America and India.

Kenya has been pushing universities to morph into research and innovation centers, providing a platform for top-notch researchers to use their skills to develop solutions to African challenges.

The country hopes to use science, technology and research to address some of the problems threatening economic growth such as food insecurity, poaching, congestion in major towns and energy shortages.

A study of Kenya’s situation however reveals minimal understanding of what nanoscience and nanotechnology are, and what their potential benefits are.

“Given the current and anticipated impacts of nanotechnology in work efficiency, ways of life and the environment, Kenya’s efforts should be focused on how nanotechnology can improve efficiency. This requires synergistic relationships amongst all the stakeholders right from the beginning of the research and development processes,” said Professor Bernard Aduda in a recent research paper titled “Status of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology in Kenya”.

“The teaching of and research in these areas and the accompanying infrastructure are weak and disjointed. Moreover, there are almost non-existent or weak specific regulatory tools and policies governing this important but emerging technology and discipline.

“Gaps presently exist in our scientific knowledge, and coupled with inadvertent outcomes witnessed in other technological advances there are reasons enough for nanotechnology industries and relevant government agencies to invest in understanding the possible risks and neutralizing them prior to putting the products into the market,” the University of Nairobi academic argued.

Once set up, the center would become a hub of nanotechnology for masters students from not only the University of Nairobi but from other universities in Africa. Lecturers and technocrats will be sought from Iranian universities and from Iranian nanoscience research centers.

Barmaki said every year Iran gives 50 fellowships to African students to study masters and doctoral programs in Iran.

Gov’t Reopens...

FROM PAGE 1

“Fortunately, great things have been taken place during the time of coronavirus outbreak, and today we are facing new conditions. Although our lives are more limited and partly through cyberspace, people need to believe that we will not be able to return to the normal conditions as before coronavirus soon,” said Rouhani.

“We may have to change our lifestyles for a long time and accept the restrictions and bring some of our lives into the cyberspace,” the president said.

Referring to the report and concern of the Minister of Health and Medical Education on not heeding health protocols by the people in some areas, Rouhani said, “Not observing health protocols is a mistake that can endanger the future of our country.”

Emphasizing the need for communities to keep their distance and keep the infected people away from other members of the society, the President said, “Today, the heroes of our society are the medical staff who are taking steps in this direction with their devotion and self-sacrifice.”

Rouhani emphasized, “We have to plan as if we are living with this virus for years and months because there is still no definitive cure for this disease and this virus is spreading in different regions.”

The President said that organizing the economy and people’s lives is one of the most important issues in this situation and said, “We must live with coronavirus, as in the past, with full caution and observance of care and instructions.”

Rouhani added, “We are not only making decisions on a weekly basis, but we are also monitoring and assessing the conditions and decisions on a daily basis, and we are making decisions based on the situation in each region.”

Referring to the report presented at the meeting on the number of coronavirus patients in the country, the President said, “This number should not be a cause for concern for the people because this figure is based on tests and is in favor of the future because it separates the infected or the carrier from other people.”

Referring to the criteria for measuring the spread of coronavirus in the country, including the situation of hospital beds and the severity of the outbreak of the disease, Rouhani said, “Fortunately, despite the length of the disease in the country, the medical staff was tired, but today, the vitality of the medical staff is very promising, and they are doing their work with strength, spirit, self-sacrifice, and dedication.”

The President continued, “Fortunately, we do not have any problems in hospitals in terms of equipment and devices for equipping hospitals and medical staff, and we only ask people to help the country’s medical staff with more support and full implementation of health protocols.”

Explaining the approvals and decisions of today’s meeting of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, Rouhani said, “In this meeting, decisions were made in the direction of new reopening, which does not mean that the risks are reduced, but we must continue to live with caution and follow the protocols.”

The President added, “In today’s meeting, according to the request of the religious people of the country to reopen mosques for holding daily prayers, it was decided that congregational prayers be held throughout the country by observing health protocols and keeping distance.”

Rouhani added, “It was also decided in this meeting that the working hours of the shopping malls will be limited and these places will be able to continue their activities in compliance with health protocols.”

E3...

FROM PAGE 1

U.S. Secretary of State in a message earlier said, “I am ending the sanctions waiver for JCPOA-related projects in Iran, effective in 60 days. Iran’s continued nuclear escalation makes clear this cooperation must end.”

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Friday that China firmly opposes US recent decision to end sanctions waiver against Iran, adding that it demonstrates its consistent pattern of unilateral and hegemonic practice.

“The U.S. has chosen to stick to its maximum pressure campaign on Iran,” Lijian said in his regular press conference, adding, “The U.S. has not only unilaterally withdrawn from the JCPOA in violation of the UNSCR but also ratcheted up efforts to thwart other parties’ implementation of the deal.”

He noted, “The U.S.’ latest decision to end sanctions waiver on relevant nuclear projects hampers the international non-proliferation progress and shared efforts to preserve the JCPOA.”

“China firmly opposes U.S. recent decision to end sanctions waiver against Iran, he said, adding, “It demonstrates its consistent pattern of unilateral and hegemonic practice.”

Turkey Replacing Gas...

FROM PAGE 1

Natural gas imports from Iran in March show a decrease of more than thirty percent, and Turkey will probably receive no more Iranian natural gas in the second quarter of this year.

Meanwhile, it has also sharply reduced natural gas imports from Russia. In March, Russia, Ankara’s largest natural gas supplier for years, exported only 390 million cubic meters of the product to Turkey, down 72 percent from March last year. The reason for the decrease in the purchase of natural gas from Iran and Russia is the significant drop in the price of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in the global market.

As a result, Turkey has more than doubled its imports of LNG in March compared with March 2019, and for the first time, Turkey’s liquefied natural gas imports have outpaced the purchase of natural gas through pipelines. In March, Turkey tripled its purchases of liquefied natural gas from the United States. Turkey’s customs statistics show that it imported only \$ 33 million worth of goods and gas from Iran in March 2020, down nineteen times from March last year because it has also stopped buying crude oil from Iran since the second half of last year.

LPGA Stars Set to Compete At Texas Women's Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Two-time major winner Stacy Lewis and former U.S. Women's Open winner Brittany Lang will tee it up at the Texas Women's Open next week in Dallas. American's Lewis and Lang will be joined by several other US LPGA players, including Cheyenne Knight, France's Celine Boutier, Maria Fassi, of Mexico, and Gerina Pillier for the June 2-4 event. The Texas Women's Open used to be an LPGA Tour event in the 1950s, but is now sanctioned by the North Dallas chapter of the PGA of America.

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Costa Given Court Date To Face Tax Fraud Charge

MADRID (Reuters) - Atletico Madrid forward Diego Costa is to face trial on June 4 for tax fraud in 2014, a court filing showed on Friday, with prosecutors asking the Spain international to be handed a six-month jail sentence and a fine of 507,208 euros (\$564,877). According to the filing, Costa defrauded the Spanish state of 1,014,416 euros by not declaring payments of 5,150,622 euros from his 2014 transfer from Atletico to Chelsea in his tax return, as well as more than one million euros in image rights.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY MAY 31, 2020

Federer Tops List of World's Highest-Paid Athletes

NEW YORK (AFP) - Roger Federer topped the 2020 Forbes magazine list of highest-paid global athletes announced Friday, leading the lineup for the first time with pre-tax earnings of \$106.3 million (95.5 million euros). The Swiss tennis legend, a men's record 20-time Grand Slam singles champion, becomes the first player from his sport atop the annual list since its 1990 debut, rising from fifth in 2019. Federer's haul over the past 12 months included \$100 million from appearances fees and endorsement deals plus \$6.3 million in prize money. His previous best showing was second in 2013. "His brand is pristine, which is why those that can afford to align with him clamor to do so," University of Southern California sports business professor David Carter told the magazine. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic that shut down sports worldwide caused the first decline since 2016 in the total income of the world's 100 top-paid athletes, a 9% dip from last year to \$3.6 billion. Another plunge is expected next year from the shutdown. Portuguese football star Cristiano Ronaldo was second on the list at \$105 million, \$60 million in salary and \$45 million from endorsements, with Argentine football hero Lionel Messi third on \$104 million, \$32 million of that from sponsorship deals. Messi and Ronaldo, who have traded the top spot three of the past four years, saw their combined incomes dip \$28 million from last year due to salary cuts when European clubs halted play in March.



league, aided by finishing the season before the deadly virus outbreak. Major League Baseball, whose start to the 2020 campaign was postponed by the virus outbreak, put only one player on the list after 15 in 2019. The lone MLB player was Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw, who was 57th at \$27.3 million with only \$750,000 from endorsements. Spanish footballer Carlos Ramos, the Real Madrid captain, was last among the 100 on \$21.8 million, including \$3 million in endorsements. Two women, tennis stars Naomi Osaka of Japan and Serena Williams of the United States, made the list, the most females on it since 2016. Osaka ranked 29th overall on \$37.4 million (\$34 million in endorsements), four spots ahead of Williams with \$36 million (\$32 million in endorsements). Federer, 38, boasts the biggest sponsorship lineup among active athletes with Moët & Chandon and Barilla among those paying from \$3 to \$30 million to link him with their brands. Federer, who spent a record 310 weeks as world number one, reached 18 of 19 Grand Slam finals from 2005-2010. Only Woods has joined Federer in making \$100 million in sponsor deals in a single year. Federer's newest deal is with Swiss running shoe On, where he is an investor, but several sponsors have been with him for more than a decade, including Rolex, Credit Suisse, Mercedes-Benz and Wilson. A split with Nike in 2018 opened Federer to Japanese apparel brand Uniqlo's 10-year deal worth \$300 million.

Murray to Return to Action in June

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray will return from his latest injury problem on June 23 in a tournament organized by his brother Jamie to raise money for a UK National Health Service charity. Jamie Murray has helped create the behind-closed-doors tournament called 'Schroders Battle of the Brits'. The event, which runs from June 23-28, will see the Murray brothers and fellow British players Kyle Edmund and Dan Evans go head to head at the Lawn Tennis Association's Roehampton base in London. It will be screened live on Amazon Prime and aims to raise at least £100,000 (\$122,000) for the state-run NHS. With the ATP and WTA seasons postponed due to the coronavirus, Murray's first appearance since November's Davis Cup Finals will be a welcome tonic for tennis fans. "The last few months have been incredibly challenging times for everyone and we see this event as our way of giving back," Jamie Murray said. "A lot of work has gone in to make sure this could happen and we are very excited to be able to bring an action-packed week of tennis, while raising valuable funds for NHS heroes to say thank you for the amazing work they have done." Prior to the lockdown, former world number one Andy Murray had been returning to the court after another injury-enforced absence. The 33-year-old was unable to hit for three months because of what was initially diagnosed as a mild bone bruise.

Spanish La Liga Confirm Season Will Resume on June 11

MADRID (AFP) - The Spanish league season will resume after a three-month coronavirus lockdown on June 11 with the Seville derby, and the 2020-2021 season will start on September 12, the Spanish Sports Council confirmed on Friday. The council released a statement saying that the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) and La Liga had agreed the format for the 11 remaining rounds in the top two Spanish divisions. It said the season should be completed by July 19, "depending on the evolution of the pandemic." Competition will kick off on Thursday, June 11 when Betis play Sevilla. The rest of the league return to action on the weekend of June 13 and 14. Earlier on Friday, Javier Tebas, the league president told Marca: "The important thing will be to know the end date of the 2019-20 season. The next one will start on September 12."

The Spanish government last week gave La Liga the green light to resume from the week beginning June 8. "More than 130 people are currently working so that everything can be done in a new format: the travel, the organisation, everything," said Tebas. The German Bundesliga has already played three rounds following its restart earlier this month, while the English Premier League and Italy's Serie A are also set to return in mid-June. But the top-flight seasons in France, Belgium and the Netherlands have all been ended. Barcelona led Real Madrid by two points at the top of the table when La Liga was halted in March. Tebas also said that television viewers would be able to choose whether to watch matches, which will all be played behind closed doors, with virtual sound effects added, an option that has caused debate among fans since the Bundesliga resumed. He said that he was taking part in a demonstration of the technology on Friday evening and that Javier Guillen, the director of the Tour of Spain, and Carmelo Ezpeleta, the boss of Dorna Sports, promoter of the MotoGP championship had also been invited.

Brazilian footballer Neymar was fourth overall on \$95.5 million, \$25 million from endorsements, while NBA star LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers was fifth on \$88.2 million, \$60 million of that from endorsements. NBA star Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors was sixth on \$74.4 million with former teammate Kevin Durant next on \$63.9 million. Tiger Woods, the reigning Masters champion and a 15-time major winner, was eighth on the list and tops among golfers at \$62.3 million, all but \$2.3 million from sponsor deals. Woods topped the Forbes list a record 12 times before an infidelity scandal helped end his run. Two NFL quarterbacks rounded out the top 10 with Kirk Cousins ninth at \$60.5 million and Carson Wentz 10th on \$59.1 million. The top 100 featured athletes from 21 nations and 10 sports. More NBA players made the list than those from any other sport at 35, but 31 NFL players made the cut, up from 19 from last year, and they pulled down the most money of any



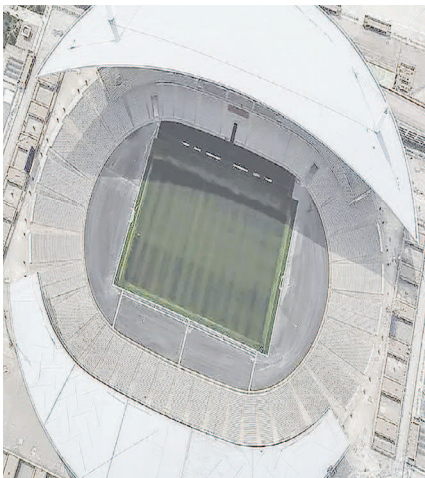
On Thursday, Belgium's most successful club responded to recent financial difficulties as Wouter Vandenhaute took over from Marc Coucke as president. Anderlecht finished only eighth in the Belgian league season, which was curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic, their worst post-war position. City boss Guardiola has been looking for a new assistant since Mikel Arteta left Manchester to become Arsenal manager last December. Kompany, 34, won four Premier League titles, two FA Cups and four League Cups with City and is widely regarded as one of the club's greatest ever players.

Kompany Turns Down Offer To Be Guardiola's Assistant

LONDON (Dispatches) - Vincent Kompany has turned down an offer from Manchester City to become Pep Guardiola's assistant coach, according to various Belgian media reports on Friday. The former City captain is under contract as player-manager of Anderlecht until 2022, having left the Etihad Stadium last year following a trophy-laden 11-year spell in England. Kompany, who has never concealed his desire to one day be City manager, said he wanted to stay at Anderlecht. Anderlecht finished only eighth in the Belgian league season, which was curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic, their worst post-war position. City boss Guardiola has been looking for a new assistant since Mikel Arteta left Manchester to become Arsenal manager last December. Kompany, 34, won four Premier League titles, two FA Cups and four League Cups with City and is widely regarded as one of the club's greatest ever players.

Istanbul Hopes to Host Historic Champions League Final

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Fifteen years after the "Miracle of Istanbul" that cemented Steven Gerrard's status as a Liverpool legend, the Turkish metropolis was supposed to host its second Champions League final on Saturday. But that was before the coronavirus pandemic wreaked worldwide havoc. UEFA suspended Champions League matches until further notice in March as Europe's football competitions were hit hard by the virus. The date and the venue of the final are now a source of uncertainty and alternative cities to Istanbul are being mentioned in media reports. However, the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) and local fans still hope the final will be played in Istanbul in August as planned. "It would of course be a source of pride to host a new final in Istanbul," said Atakan Bodan, a member of the ultrAslan, Istanbul giants Galatasaray's main fan group. "(Istanbul) is a city of football, we are passionate," said the football fan, who feels the suspension of the top football leagues has "robbed him of joy in his life". All football fans remember the 2005 Champions League final in Istanbul and Liverpool's stunning comeback and penalty shoot-out victory over AC Milan after trailing 3-0 by half-time.



Kvitova Wins All-Czech Crown On Return to Action

PRAGUE (Reuters) - World number 12 Petra Kvitova returned to court dressed for the French Open but was happy to triumph in the women's draw at an all-Czech tournament on Thursday as the sports world starts to slowly return from the novel coronavirus shutdown. The Prague tournament - played among the top Czech men's and women's players but without fans and with ball boys and girls wearing gloves and face masks - was one of the first after professional tennis was suspended in early March as the world went into lockdown to contain the spread of the virus. More tournaments are planned elsewhere, while some exhibition events without fans have already been played in countries such as Germany and the United States. With the French Open originally set to take place this week, Kvitova wore the clothing collection she had ready for the season's second Grand Slam. "If there will be the French Open, then Nike has something else for me," Kvitova, twice Wimbledon champion, said. "I played better every day, so that is very positive," she added on her return to action. The Prague event was missing world number three Karolina Pliskova and last year's French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova.

