

President Hassan Rouhani in a Message to the Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte Congratulated the National Day of The Philippines and Called for Enhancing Bilateral Ties

IRAN NEWS

In a Message to His Russian Counterpart, Iran's Foreign Minister Congratulated Him, the Russian Government and the People on the Occasion of the Country's National Day

VOL. XXVI, No. 6967 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY JUNE 13, 2020 - KHORDAD 24, 1399

2 DOMESTIC


Sanctions Failed To Weaken Iranian Nation's Will



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Refutes Reports About Suspension of Trade Ties With UAE



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Trump Authorizes Sanctions Over ICC War Crimes Probe



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Federer to Miss Rest of Season After Second Knee Operation



> SEE PAGE 8

Iran Slams U.S. for Trying To Obstruct IAEA Reports' Mechanisms, Procedures

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has criticized the United States and some other countries for seeking to undermine the mechanisms and procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency's reports on Tehran's nuclear activities.

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the international organizations in Vienna Kazem Gharibabadi, in an Instagram post on Friday, lambasted the constant obstruction of the U.S. and its allies against Iran in the quarterly meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors.

He wrote that the quarterly meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors will begin its work on June 15 via video-conference given coronavirus outbreak.

At the forthcoming meeting, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi will give a report on verification of the implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Gharibabadi noted.

The envoy said the U.S., along with some western countries, seeks to make the decision-making process possible through votes, if necessary, while some other countries like Russia opposing the issue.

"Although there is a short time left to hold this meeting, the modality of the meeting and the ruling ritual of its work has not been finalized yet," Gharibabadi said.

He added that the U.S. continues to undermine international mechanisms and the procedures ruling the international bodies. According to the Iranian envoy, the IAEA Director-General's reports on the verification of the implementation the JCPOA, as well as the safeguard agreement in Iran, will be discussed during the session.

Tehran Urges OIC To Push for Referendum In Palestine

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs has taken part in an extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Executive Committee on Israeli threats to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Following Israel's recent announcement of its plan to annex parts of the occupied territories, particularly the west bank of Jordan River, to the territories under occupation within the next month and the US government's support for the plan, the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held a virtual extraordinary meeting at the level of Member States' Foreign Ministers on Wednesday, June 10, to address the issue.

See Page 7

Iran Economic Growth Stood At Minus 7% Last Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran in its latest report announced the economic growth of the country in the last Iranian calendar year which ended on March 20.

According to the report, Iran's economic growth dropped to minus seven percent last year. The growth has been calculated with oil revenues. The Statistical Center added that last year's economic growth without oil revenues stood at minus 0.06 percent.

The report shows growth in the agro sector was 3 percent while the figure for the mines and industries sector was minus 14.7 percent and in the services sector it was minus 0.3 percent.

Meanwhile reacting to the report, deputy head of Iran's chamber of Commerce Mr. Hossein Salahvarzi said that the global economic growth has been affected by the outbreak of the Coronavirus and Iran's economy is not an exception.

He said the form of Iran's economy in the future depends on how the country acts against the Coronavirus and currently the country is moving slowly.

He admitted that some believe that if Iran's economy continues before the outbreak of the virus, they will definitely witness the expansion of poverty and inequality.

Salahvarzi reiterated that the government should adopt several scenarios for the post-Coronavirus era and it should prioritize its plans based on the public and country's needs.

He reiterated that if the Coronavirus continues to affect the economies, the scenarios will totally differ.

He expressed hope the world would overcome the pandemic and the economies would back to their normal lives.

The World Bank expects Iran's economy to bounce back to growth in 2021 with 2.1% in GDP expansion after having experienced an estimated 5.3% contraction this year.

In its June edition of Global Economic Prospects report, World Bank has revised down its forecast for Iran's growth in 2020. The previous such report had estimated 0% growth in 2020.

However, the forecast for next year has been revised up, as the previous report had forecast 1% growth in 2021.

Turkey to Build Gas Pipeline to Supply Nakhchivan

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's state gas grid operator Botaş has opened a tender for a gas pipeline to supply Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan. The new supply route would sideline Iranian gas sales to Azerbaijan and comes as Ankara is trying to repair its relationship with the United States.

Sandwiched between Iran and Armenia and sharing a tiny border with Turkey, Nakhchivan has long relied on Iran for natural gas for both domestic heating and power generation.

The move follows an announcement in February by the presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan that they planned to fast track the construction of the pipeline, which has been on hold since 2010, when an agreement was first signed to build it.

Botaş's tender calls for the design of a pipeline running around 80 kilometers from the eastern Turkish city of Iğdır to the border with Nakhchivan, capable of carrying up to around 2 billion cubic meters of gas, which is more than four times the enclave's consumption.

Design work is to be completed by early 2021, meaning that line could be constructed and operational as early as 2022.

Nakhchivan has been importing Iranian gas under a swap agreement between Baku and Tehran inked in 2004, under which Azerbaijan supplies gas to Iran's isolated northwestern border city of Astara, which has no gas supply from inside Iran. In return, Iran supplies 85 percent of that volume to Nakhchivan, with the 15 percent differential acting as a transit fee - terms which Baku has for some years been seeking to renegotiate.

The prospect of a rival gas supply line from Turkey to Nakhchivan could persuade Tehran to be more amenable, but the planned line promises to have a substantially wider impact.

Turkey also imports Iranian gas, but that flow has been halted since March 31 when a sabotage attack, which the Turkish authorities blamed on the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), forced the closure of the pipeline. Ankara has been in no hurry to repair the line, claiming that the attack is a "force majeure," meaning it isn't liable to compensate Tehran for any losses.

The March attack was certainly fortuitous for Turkey.

The month before, Turkey's deputy energy minister Alpaslan Bayraktar told a conference in Istanbul that Ankara planned to use the availability of cheap liquid natural gas (LNG) delivered by ship to force its pipeline gas suppliers to cut their prices.

See Page 7

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Ivanka Trump: All of Us Were Scared

When Iran's gasoline was being shipped to Venezuela, the U.S. had been gripped with an unimaginable anxiety. In another words, President Donald Trump was facing with a dilemma of either having a peaceful or hostile approach to it. He could hit the first vessel but he did not do it. That why he did not hit the vessel was unclear in the first days but gradually its reason was revealed.

The Financial Times daily in an article quoted U.S. President's daughter Ivanka Trump, on what went on between Iran and the U.S. in the past month, as saying, "When Iran's statement on its shipment of fuel to Venezuela was revealed by our friends inside Iran, immediately the Democrats, the Republicans, CIA officers and military generals held a secret meeting, and during the meeting Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explicitly expressed his concern. But my father, Donald Trump, announced coolly that it is stupid and Iran will not commit such a move. They cannot mess with our big army, and with just few drones and warships the case will be closed. General Michael Terry one of the high-ranking military officials in the meeting said that if Iran's vessels move towards Venezuela, they will face with our warships and they will be surrounded from air and sea and fuels of the vessels will be confiscated and taken to the UK via the Caribbean Sea and the crew and captains of the vessels would be taken to the U.S. My father Donald Trump expressed his satisfaction and began applauding and praising and had a thumbs-up for it. Ms. Jonson, deputy director of CIA on research and planning, with a humiliating rhetoric said it is very naïve to think Iran will retreat completely. Iranians have changed their strategy of defense into an attacking tactic and they have prepared a squadron of angry rangers and ready to set traps, and this move may be their plot to destroy all of the U.S. bases and troops in the Middle East. Ladies and Gentlemen, Iran is equipped with a very sophisticated and precision weapon that with the smallest uncalculated mistake, they would destroy us. I recommend no fire, no obstacle and no warning because Iran has prepped several reactions for any action and they have responses to any plan of ours. They have practiced for years for having their responses to us. When we were busy with our void political games and regime change with our allies, Iran was busy with producing weapons, missiles, drones and submarines. So the U.S. position has weakened in recent six months.

See Page 7

U.S. Vows to Reduce Iraq Troop Presence

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The United States said Thursday it would reduce troops in Iraq in the coming months as friction between the two countries eased under a new US-friendly premier in Baghdad.

The United States also promised support to prop up the struggling Iraqi economy as the two nations held their first strategic dialogue in more than a decade.

Tensions skyrocketed following a U.S. strike on Baghdad in January that martyred Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, with lawmakers in Baghdad demanding the expulsion of the roughly 5,200 US troops in the country.

President Donald Trump responded by threatening crippling sanctions and, according to U.S. military sources, Washington began planning a vast bombing spree against groups blamed for the rockets. In a joint statement, the United States said that the reason for its military's return to Iraq in 2014 -- defeating extremists from the Islamic State group -- had made major headway.

See Page 7

Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39
www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com
@irannewsdaily

U.S. Has No Right to Abuse UN, IAEA to Vilify Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a message referred to U.S.' attempts to escalate tensions with Iran, saying it has no right to abuse UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to vilify Iran.

"U.S. has tried to heighten tension w/ Iran & bully others to follow," Zarif wrote on his Twitter account on Thursday.

"But having admitted to: -Terror assassination in Iraq -Complicity in war crimes in Yemen & Palestine -Piracy -Breaching JCPOA, UNSCR 2231, & IAEA decisions It retains NO right to abuse UN & IAEA to vilify Iran," he added.

Sanctions Failed To Weaken Iranian Nation's Will

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani says sanctions imposed on Iran by Western countries, especially the United States, have failed to weaken the Iranian nation's will and this has been proven through incessant inauguration of development projects under the toughest sanctions.

Rouhani made the remarks in Tehran on Thursday during a ceremony held via video-link that featured inauguration of industrial and mining projects in the northeastern Khorasan Razavi and central Esfahan provinces.

He cited the continued trend of the country's unveiling various developmental projects across its different areas as a testament to the Islamic Republic's steadfastness down its path of progress and the fact that "the sanctions cannot affect the Iranian nation's will."

Rouhani acknowledged that the bans had brought the country under pressure and complicated its operations.

However, the president said directors of countrywide production units were urging allocation of more foreign exchange to their projects so they can speed up the production process, saying this proved that "the enemy has not been able to stop us and force us to surrender."

The U.S. returned the sanctions against Tehran in 2018 after leaving a historic nuclear agreement between Iran and major world powers. Washington's departure and snapback of the bans came although the deal, officially known as



the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has been ratified by the United Nations Security Council as a resolution and notwithstanding the JCPOA's multilateral nature.

Not only has not Iran allowed the enemies to achieve their goals against the Iranian people, but it has also kept proceeding further, Rouhani noted.

Although the enemies' efforts might have slowed down the country's advance to some extent, Iran would "keep up adhering to the principle of moving forward," the president stated.

"Today, we are bearing witness to a very good onward movement in the country," he noted, reminding that the outbreak of the new coronavirus had not impeded the Islamic Republic's onward march either.

As cases in point concerning the virus failure to bring down the country's production levels, he cited instances of a monumental increase in the output of home appliances.

Last month, the output of washing machines and television sets respectively rose by 152 and 49 percent compared to the same period last year, when the virus was many months away from hitting the country, Rouhani announced.

Kazakh Speaker Calls for Boosting Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chairman of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nurlan Nigmatulin in a message underlined the role of parliaments in developing relations between Iran and Kazakhstan.

In his message, Nurlan Nigmatulin congratulated his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on his election.

He assured that the Iranian and Kazakh parliaments which always make efforts in favor of people will play a major role in this regard. Nigmatulin wished success for Qalibaf and progress for Iranians.

The newly-elected Iranian MPs elected Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf as the Parliament speaker for the first year of the new Parliament.

Qalibaf secured 230 votes out of a total of 264 votes cast to become Majlis speaker.

Afghanistan to Send Delegation To Iran to Prevent Illegal Traffic

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the dispatch of a delegation from Kabul to Tehran to investigate the recent incidents for Afghan citizens and prevention of illegal traffic.

According to a statement from the Afghan Foreign Ministry, the National Security Council of the country decided to send a high-level delegation from Kabul to Tehran to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry also added that it had submitted a report on the recent incidents to the National Security Council, which had decided to send a high-level delegation to Iran to prevent the recurrence of such unfortunate incidents.

According to the report, the purpose of the negotiating team is to prevent illegal traffic by focusing on ensuring better border security between the two countries.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry also announced that the delegation will discuss with Iranian officials the fight against human trafficking on both sides of the border, the beginning of the process of establishing the identity of Afghan citizens and the legalization of immigrant residency, as well as the implementation of the draft law on the employment of Afghan workers legally.

Following the car crash of Afghan nationals in Yazd Province, Afghan Ambassador to Tehran Abdolghafor Lival held a meeting with the officials of the province on Sunday and noted, "We believe that human traffickers and the driver are responsible for this incident."

According to Lival, the driver has been identified and the judicial authorities are striving to arrest him.

He further maintained that bilateral relations are significant for Afghanistan and appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting Afghan refugees.

Tehran, Baghdad Discuss Developing Bilateral Ties

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Irai Masjedi and Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein in a meeting on Thursday reviewed bilateral ties in various fields.

According to Iraqi Foreign Ministry, both sides emphasized reinforcing bilateral relations and the importance of developing cooperation in line with people's interests.

Since the formation of the new Iraqi government, Masjedi has held talks with Iraqi prime minister and most of the Iraqi cabinet ministers.

Earlier, Masjedi voiced Iran's readiness for promoting collaboration with the Iraq's new government in all fields.

He also congratulated the newly-elected Iraqi ministers by the parliament of Iraq.

He wished for developing Iran-Iraq ties in line with national and Islamic interests.

HR Advocates Do Not Let Opponents Breathe



FARS (IP) - The head of Iran's Judiciary said that human rights claimants do not allow their protesters and opponents to breathe.

In a Thursday meeting with a group of Fars Province local tribes, southwestern Iran, Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi said the European countries that advocate the dissemination of human rights, do not allow their protesters breathe.

He added that while development must be present in all social indicators, but technology alone is not a good indicator of development.

Noting that all development potentials are present in Iran, Raisi said with reliance upon the potentials, the country can reach the indicators of development.

He referred to the Leader of Islamic Revolution's remarks and added that as Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has said the future of Iran will be bright.

Iran, Canada Emphasize Finalization of Ukrainian Plane Case

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Mohsen Baharvand and his Canadian counterpart in a telephone talk late on Thursday stressed the need for accelerating research on the case of the crashed Ukrainian plane and its finalization in a fair and transparent manner.

Baharvand and Canada's deputy minister of foreign affairs, Marta Morgan also discussed bilateral issues during the phone call.

The two sides underlined the necessity to expedite settlement of issues related to the Ukrainian plane crash, as the international flights will resume operation in near future following a halt due to coronavirus outbreak.

Given the large number of Iranians residing in Canada and the problems the face in receiving consular services, as well as the need for communication with the families of those killed in the incident, Baharvand called on the Canadian government to remove obstacles in the way of Iranian and Canadian citizen to receive consular services, but the Canadian side postponed examining the issue to a later date.

A Ukrainian airliner bound for Kiev crashed near Tehran shortly after departure from Tehran's main international airport on January 8 and all 167 passengers and nine crew members on board were killed.

Iran Ready for More Prisoner Swaps With U.S.

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran has raised the possibility of exchanging more prisoners with Washington, reaffirming Iran's readiness for more diplomatic efforts to secure the release of its citizens held hostage in the U.S.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday that Iran has already announced that it stands ready to do all in its power to secure the release of Iranian hostages in US jails and bring them back home "within different frameworks."

The Islamic Republic, he added, showed "goodwill" and made a "humanitarian" gesture in response to the proposals by some countries and figures, including Switzerland and its ambassador to Tehran, for the freedom of US security prisoners, whose wrongdoings are confirmed.

"If we find the conditions ripe again for such swaps or if we can prove the innocence of the Iranian citizens, who are facing baseless and delusional charges of circumventing unilateral, illegal and groundless US sanctions, we will definitely use all our diplomatic means to free our dear ones and reunite them with their families," Mousavi said.

Last week, Iran freed U.S. navy veteran Michael White as part of a prisoner swap, in which the US released Majid Taheri, an Iranian scientist who had been imprisoned in the US on false charges, after spending over a year in jail.

Zarif Urges End of Apartheid Israel's Tyranny Over Western Halls of Power

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif referred to American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) green light to lawmakers to criticize Israeli annexation, saying it's time to end apartheid Israel's tyranny over Western halls of power.

"If there were ever any question of WHO dictates

US—and Western—policy in the Mid East, this headline screams it loud & clear," Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on his Twitter account on Thursday.

"#AIPAC has poisoned US politics for years, overtly giving instructions to Congress," he added.

"Time to end #APARTHEID Israel's tyranny over

Western halls of power," Iranian top diplomat reiterated.

The UK-based newspaper Jewish News on Wednesday reported: "The leading pro-Israel lobby in the United States is telling lawmakers that they are free to criticize Israel's looming annexation plans — just as long as the criticism stops there."

"So far, the group has remained publicly silent. But in private, AIPAC is telling lawmakers that as long as they don't push to limit the United States' aid to Israel, they can criticize the annexation plan without risking future support from the lobby group," it added.

In the name of God

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT



Brief Notice of International Tender No.9800377

Esfahan Steel Co. intends to purchase 27 Ton Refractory Blocks For Rolling Mill Furnace's Burner through international tender No.9800377.

Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.'s Website at www.esfahansteel.ir to get the tender documents no later than 17.June.2020. The place and deadlines for the submission of the offers are as follows:

In Isfahan: Confidential Secretariat of ESCO's Security Department, at the main entrance gate next to Melli Bank, Esfahan Steel Company, 45th km of Zobahan- Shahrekord highway, Esfahan, Iran, telephone No. 0098-31-5257-2197 max. Up to Wednesday dated 12.08.2020 at 1:00 (p.m.);

In Tehran: ESCO's office, near to Shaded Alley, Karim Khane zand Boulevard, Vali-e-Asr Ave. Tehran, Iran. Tel No. 0098-21-8891-5657 max. upto Tuesday dated 11.08.2020 at 1:00 (p.m.);

Email address: toa@esfahansteel.ir the same as item no.2. For further information, prospective bidders may contact us via the following phone No.: +98-31-52572017

Public Relation of Esfahan Steel Co.

FM Pursuing U.S. Crime of Assassinating Martyr Soleimani

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand said on Thursday that Foreign Ministry is pursuing the US crime in assassination of Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani.

Diplomatic actions have been implemented through letters sent to the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, said Baharvand on Thursday.

Judicial investigations must be accurate and without any time limitation, he noted.

Baharvand said that investigations are underway on the case, noting that he may visit Iraq and Syria as part of the investigation. Trial for any crime is first held domestically and then internationally, he said, adding that different organs in the country such as IRGC, Judiciary, and Intelligence Ministry are cooperating on the case.

Baharvand said that once the investigations are completed, the process of pursuing the case in international courts will begin. Martyr Qasem Soleimani was assassinated in a targeted US drone strike on 3 January 2020 in Baghdad, which was approved by U.S. President Donald Trump. The strike was strongly condemned by many, including the Iranian government, and a multi-city funeral was held in Iraq and Iran for the general and his companions.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:04
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:42
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:01
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48

65. Those who say, "Our Lord! avert from us the Wrath of Hell, for its Wrath is indeed an affliction grievous,-
66. "Evil indeed is it as an abode, and as a place to rest in";
Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (65 - 66)

Iran Refutes Reports About Suspension of Trade Ties With UAE

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says media reports about a suspension in trade ties with the UAE are not true.

An Iranian businessman with a key role in trade between the country and the United Arab Emirates has dismissed reports about a suspension of commercial ties with Abu Dhabi, saying Iranian merchants can take delivery of goods stored in UAE ports provided they submit health certificate documents to authorities in the Arab country.

Farshid Farzanegan, who leads Iran-UAE Joint Chamber of Commerce, said on Thursday that providing documents that prove consignments are free from the new coronavirus infection have become mandatory for all ships docking at UAE ports, including the Iranian vessels.

"This preventive measure has been intensified to control the spread of the coronavirus and a move to cut or terminate trade between Iran and the UAE, as reported in some news agencies, is void of any journalistic truth," said Farzanegan in a post on his Twitter page.

The comments came a day after mass-circulation Persian daily Jame Jam said in a report that the UAE had suspended its trade with Iran despite the fact that it had



resumed imports and exports with other countries after a period of closure of the harbors and airports in the Arab country over the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report said Iranian merchants have been waiting for weeks to be able to take delivery of massive cargoes that are in Dubai and other UAE ports.

"A shortage of goods in the (Iranian) market shows that (any) maritime transport with Dubai is yet to take place," said the newspaper report.

However, Farzanegan told the official IRNA news agency that the UAE, Iran's second trade partner after China, would continue to process a huge part of Tehran's imports and exports.

He said the UAE is one of the few countries in the world that has managed to preserve its trade ties with other countries even at the height of the pandemic in April and May.

Exports Through Astara Railway Terminal Ups 178%

RASHT (IRNA) - During the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), some 41,535 tons goods were exported to Azerbaijan through Astara Railway terminal, the Iranian official said adding that the figure experienced 178% growth compared with the same period last year.

Managing director of north railway Gholam Hossein Valadi said 81,967 tons products have been transferred through terminal which had 38% increase compared with last year which was 59,638 tons.

He noted that cement, clinker, chemicals, tiles, steel, and home appliances were among goods exported to Azerbaijan.

Astara railway started work with the attendance of Iranian and Azeri presidents three years ago.

Iranian and Azeri cargo trains unload their shipments in Astara every day.

Iran, Iraq Reach Initial Deal On Building 354km Highway

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Iraq have finalized initial plans to build a 354-kilometer highway connecting the two neighbors.

Iran's minister of transportation says an initial deal has been reached with the neighboring Iraq to build a long highway that would ease traffic across the border and would help boost trade between the two neighboring countries.

Mohammad Eslami said that the 354-kilometer highway would connect the city of Mehran on the western Iranian border to the holy city of Najaf in central Iraq.

"The Mehran-Najaf Highway could be a high-potential road for transit and trade exchanges between the two countries in addition to the function it would have for transporting the pilgrims," said Eslami.

The minister added that Iranian and Iraqi officials had concluded "initial talks" for building the key road.

Border crossings to Iraq's Kurdistan region handle over 40% of Iran's exports to the Arab country.

A study by the Iranian parliament shows that nearly two million Iraqis visit Iran each year for pilgrimage purposes. The number of Iranians visiting Iraq for a similar reason is around 700,000 although over two million Iranians arrive in Iraq during the Arba'een period, a special religious occasion which takes place in the second month of the Islamic calendar.

Iran and Iraq have massively expanded their trade relations over the past years mainly as a result of deepening political ties between the two neighbors.

Iraq is only second to China in Iran's list of top export destinations with more than \$12 billion worth of goods and services purchased from Iran each year.

Iran has embarked on a series of major transportation projects to facilitate trade with Iraq, including a railway that would connect cities on the southwestern border to the Iraqi port city of Basra.

President Inaugurates Several Industrial, Mineral Projects

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani has inaugurated several major industrial and mineral projects with an overall price tag of Rls. 48 trillion.

The projects, which were inaugurated in a ceremony held on Thursday via videoconference, simultaneously came on stream in the central province of Isfahan and the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi.

Among the projects inaugurated was an iron ore concentrate production unite with an annual output capacity of 5 million tons as well as an iron pellet production unit with a production capacity of 2.5 million tons a year.

On the sidelines of the industrial projects, other projects also went on line, including several projects to produce

fridges, polymer products and houseware appliances.

Addressing the opening ceremony, President Rouhani said the nation's ranking in terms of steel production has improved from the 10th spot to the 8th as the country's steel output capacity stands at 55 million tons.

He said Iran is producing a whole range of steel products, including iron ore concentrate, pellets, sponge iron and iron ingots.

"Our steel production chain (range of products) is a regular and complete one," he said.

His comments come as the World Steel Association's latest report shows Iran's global standing in steel production has declined from the previous eighth to

become the world's ninth biggest crude steel producer.

Iranian steel mills sold over 254.35 trillion rials (\$1.6 billion) worth of steel products during the last fiscal year.

According to Reza Shahrestani, a member of the Board of Directors of Iran Steel Producers Association, sales volume shows a 93% rise compared to the year before.

Aras Free Zone Is Iran's Exports Gateway to Eurasia

TABRIZ (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Gholamreza Ansari said Aras Free Zone, especially Nordooz is regarded as Iran's only gateway to Eurasia.

Speaking on the sidelines of his visit to Aras, Ansari referred to Aras strategic position for the Eurasian market, saying and Nordooz bridge is regarded as Iran's export gateway to Eurasia. "Aras Free Zone plays a major role and has a good geographical situation for establishing trade with Eurasia," Ansari said.

He underscored that Nordooz border is the only gateway for exports to Eurasia.

He described Armenia as a suitable opportunity for Iran and expressed hope that the government will take advantage of this chance for increasing employment, trade and forex.

Ansari went on to say that Free Zones can play an important part in exports and bringing forex revenues to the country.

Fortunately, signing a free trade agreement with Eurasia has created a golden opportunity for Aras, he noted.

Ansari earlier said by providing better health conditions at borders, the borders will resume normal activities like those in the pre-coronavirus era.

He hoped that by signing health agreements with various countries, health conditions will improve at borders.

Local Tourism Industry Booming After Restrictions Ease

TEHRAN (IFP) - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts says tourism industry is thriving again in the country now that the coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

Ali Asghar Mounesan said Iran has recorded over two million overnight stays since the beginning of June.

He said the number has been more than expected, but people need to observe health protocols and social distancing to enjoy their trips. The minister further added that hopefully as of next month, Iran will be able to re-launch foreign tourism as in many other countries.

In response to a question about the impact of the coronavirus on the handicrafts and tourism industry, Mounesan said the government supported this industry amid the corona outbreak, and a package of nearly 2 billion dollars was considered for ten sectors, three of which were related to tourism and handicrafts.

"COVID-19 has devastated the tourism industry, and it was estimated that by the end of the year, the industry would be in a state of complete stagnation, but I don't think that would be the case," he added. "Some countries are once again focusing on tourism. Italy is one of the countries that has opened doors to tourists," he added.

Iran Leads World in Handicrafts

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy Tourism Minister Pouya Mahmoudian said Iran ranks first globally in handicrafts due to its significant capacities in handicrafts production.

Speaking at Artists and Craftsmen of global handicraft cities' honoring ceremony on the occasion of World Handicrafts Day, June 10th, 2020 held at Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Ministry, Pouya Mahmoudian stated the aim behind the ceremony was to get back where Iran's handicrafts were stood once.

She also added that many artists are under tough economical conditions amid coronavirus outbreak, but as the Islamic Republic of Iran successfully dealt with the eight-year imposed war by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, it would pass this condition as well.

Deputy tourism minister stressed that the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Ministry does its best to get back to its golden days by the cooperation of relevant organizations.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's handicrafts are hidden treasures which rank first across the world," she continued.

Highlighting Iran's glorious situation in the world's markets, the official said Iran will compete in the international trading sector.

Deputy Tourism Minister referred to the registration of Iranian cities and villages in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites, saying: "We intend to attract global attention to Iran as a tourism resort for the tourists."

"11 cities and 3 villages have been registered by UNSECO which puts Iran first in the world producing handicrafts," she announced.

Pouya Mahmoudian concluded her remarks by saying, "Despite the coronavirus outbreak and its negative consequences, Iran won't stop to get back to its best place."

PERMIT NO : 55/99/6232

DATE : 13/6/2020

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER



AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below 7 items of pesticides technical and raw materials, through one step international tender.

ITEM	Name	PACKING	Quantity KG
1	Cartaphydrochloride tech Min 95%	25 kg bag	27000
2	Fipronil (premix) Tech 18.8-21.2%	200 kg drum	8000
3	Deltamethrin tech Min. 98.5%	200 kg drum	3000
4	Permethrin tech Min.95%	200 kg drum	5500
5	Stabilizer PAP	200 kg drum	8400
6	Adjuvant NP85 or P-Z	215 kg drum	12000
7	Phosphoric acid 85%	50 kg gallon	4200

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Saturday dated 13/06/2020 until Monday dated 22/06/2020 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 358039782263500650000000000006.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Monday dated 27/07/2020 (during official working hours) to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on Tuesday Dated 28/07/2020 at 02:00 PM with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee hall (9th floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

We would like to emphasize that the bid bond amount should be in cash or bank guarantee as follows:

- 1- € 24405 for Cartaphydrochloride Tech Min 95 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 4062291000.
- 2- € 31805 for Fipronil (premix) Tech (18.8-21.2) pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 5294200000.
- 3- € 7946 for Deltamethrin Tech Min 98.5 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 1323000000.
- 4- € 3039 for Permethrin Tech 95 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 505815750.
- 5- € 1136 for Stabilizer PAP equivalent to Iranian Rials 189000000.
- 6- € 1911 for Adjuvant NP85 or P-Z equivalent to Iranian Rials 318000000.
- 7- € 310 for Phosphoric acid 85 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 51450000.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iits.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & Intl Affairs Dept of Agricultural Support Services Company(ASSC)

Germany Submits Long-Awaited Climate Plan to the EU

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany submitted its ten-year energy and climate plan to the European Union on Thursday, six months after the deadline to do so, lending long-awaited support to the European Commission's plan to design a tougher 2030 emissions goal for the bloc.

The EU's executive Commission plans to propose a more ambitious 2030 climate target in September, to put the bloc on track to slash its net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050.

The Commission is assessing two possible 2030 targets - either a 50% or a 55% emissions cut against 1990 levels - and uses climate plans submitted by each member state to decide what would be realistic.



1 Dead in Knife Attack At Slovak School

BRATISLAVA (AP) — A man with a knife attacked a school in Slovakia on Thursday, killing one person and wounding at least five before he was killed by police, authorities said.

The attack took place at the United School in the town of Vrutky in northwestern Slovakia on Thursday morning. The establishment operates for children from elementary age up to high school. The dead victim was the deputy director of the high school, authorities said. The attacker was identified as a 22-year-old man from the nearby town of Martin, a former student at the school, police said.

The Slovak rescue service said three adults and two students were treated in a hospital in Martin but didn't immediately reveal more details.



Trump Authorizes Sanctions Over ICC War Crimes Probe



WASHINGTON (AFP) - President Donald Trump on Thursday ordered sanctions against any official at the International Criminal Court who investigates US troops, ramping up pressure to stop its case into alleged war crimes in Afghanistan.

In an executive order, Trump said the United States would block all US property and assets of anyone in the Hague-based tribunal involved in probing or prosecuting US troops.

"We cannot -- we will not -- stand by as our people are threatened by a kangaroo court," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement to reporters.

"I have a message to many close allies around the world -- your people could be next, especially those from NATO countries who fought terrorism in Afghanistan right alongside of us."

Attorney General Bill Barr alleged without giving detail that Russia and other adversaries of the United States have been "manipulating" the court to serve their own agenda.

Using the language of Trump's "America First" principle, Barr said that the administration was trying to bring accountability to an international institution.

"This institution has become, in practice, little more than a political tool employed by unaccountable international elites," he said.

Human Rights Watch said that Trump's order "demonstrates contempt for the global rule of law."

"This assault on the ICC is an effort to block victims of serious crimes whether in Afghanistan, Israel or Palestine from seeing justice," said the group's Washington director, Andrea Prasow.

"Countries that support international justice should publicly oppose this blatant attempt at obstruction," she said.

Trump has been tearing down global institutions he sees as hindering his administration's interests, recently ordering a pullout from the World Health Organization over its coronavirus response.

In The Hague, a spokesperson said the court was "aware" of the announcement from Washington and would react after examining it.

The Trump administration has been livid over the International Criminal Court's investigation into atrocities in Afghanistan, the longest-running war of the United States.

The administration has also voiced anger over the ICC's moves to probe alleged war crimes in the Palestinian territories by close U.S. ally Israel.

"The ICC is a failed institution. The court is ineffective, non-accountable and is a politically motivated bureaucracy," said Robert O'Brien, Trump's national security advisor.

The administration last year revoked the US visa of the court's chief prosecutor, Gambian-born Fatou Bensouda, to demand that she end the Afghanistan probe.

But judges in March said the investigation could go ahead, overturning an initial rejection of Bensouda's request.

Under Trump's order on Thursday, visa restrictions will be expanded to any court official involved in investigations into U.S. forces.

The United States argues that it has its own procedures in place to investigate accusations against troops.

"We are committed to uncovering, and if possible holding people accountable, for their wrongdoing -- any wrongdoing," Barr said. Trump, however, used his executive powers last year to clear three military members over war crimes, including in Afghanistan.

EU Urges States to Reopen Domestic Borders From Monday

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union on Thursday urged all its member countries to start lifting travel restrictions on their common borders from next week, saying that the closures they introduced to tackle the coronavirus do little to limit its spread.

The EU's executive arm, the European Commission, wants Europe's ID check-free travel area to be up and running again by the end of June. Once that has happened, a ban on nonessential travel to the continent can also gradually be eased. Unveiling the executive arm's recommendations for helping to breathe new life into Europe's virus-ravaged tourism sector, EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson told member countries that they "should open up as soon as possible, and the commission recommends to do it already on Monday."

Johansson said that the virus situation "is really improving in all member states, the situation is converging," and she said that Europe's Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has reported "that having internal border restrictions is not an effective measure."

In a report dated May 26, the ECDC said that "the relative significance of transmission through tourism and long-distance travel will probably be small compared to ongoing transmission occurring in the local setting and as a result of local transportation."

Panicked by Italy's coronavirus outbreak in February, countries in the 26-nation Schengen travel zone — where people and goods move freely without border checks — imposed border restrictions without consulting their neighbors to try to keep the disease out, causing massive traffic jams and blocking medical equipment.

Free movement is a jewel in Europe's crown that helps its businesses flourish and many European officials worry that the future of the Schengen area is under threat from coronavirus travel restrictions. These added to border pressures already caused by the arrival in Europe of well over 1 million migrants in 2015.

Many EU countries have announced that they are indeed easing internal border restrictions from June 15, but some remain reluctant to do so, fearful that the disease might not be entirely under control in certain of their neighbors.

Prices of some basic goods are set to increase further after U.S. legislation known as the Caesar Act comes into effect later this month, targeting companies dealing with Damascus.



Syria's Assad Sacks PM Khamis

DAMASCUS (AFP) - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Thursday sacked his prime minister for four years, as the country grapples with a stinging economic crisis and renewed protests.

"President Assad issues decree number 143 for year 2020 which relieves the prime minister Imad Muhammad Dib Khamis of his position," the presidency said in a statement.

Khamis, 58, had been Syria's prime minister since 2016. He is replaced by Water Resources Minister Hussein Arnous for an interim period leading to legislative polls set for next month.

"Assad assigns... Hussein Arnous the duties of prime minister as well as his (other) duties," the presidency said.

"The government is continuing with its work until a new parliament is elected." Parliamentary polls had been due in Syria earlier this year but were postponed twice due to the coronavirus pandemic. The new date set last month is July 19.

Khamis' sacking follows sharp criticism of his government over its handling of the economic crisis.

Syria's economy has been battered by nine years of war compounded by a financial crisis in neighboring Lebanon, which had served as a conduit to bring dollars into government-held areas despite international sanctions.

In recent days the value of the Syrian pound on the black market has tumbled from one record low to the next.

At one point this week it peaked at 3,000 to the dollar, more than four times the official rate of around 700, and 60 times its pre-war rate from 2011.

The government has blamed the unofficial devaluation on U.S. sanctions and exchange rate "manipulation". But the rapid deterioration has sparked rare criticism in government-held areas, including in the southern city of Sweida.

Russia Welcomes Prospect of U.S. Troop Pullback From Germany

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's Foreign Ministry on Thursday welcomed President Donald Trump's reported plan to withdraw more than a quarter of U.S. troops from Germany, saying it would help bolster security in Europe.

Trump has reportedly signed off on a plan to cut the number of troops stationed in Germany from 34,500 to no more than 25,000.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that "we would welcome any steps by Washington to scale down its military presence in Europe."

"Such steps would undoubtedly help reduce confrontational potential and ease military and political tensions in the Euro-Atlantic region," Zakharova said at a briefing, adding that the large U.S. military presence in Germany is a "vestige of the Cold War."

Zakharova challenged the U.S. to also take its tactical nuclear weapons home from Germany.



German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer told reporters earlier this week that Berlin hadn't yet been informed of any U.S. troops pullout. She warned that if the U.S. goes ahead the move would do more harm to NATO as a whole than to Germany's own defense.

Relations between Russia and the West are at post-Cold War lows following the 2014 Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, Moscow's alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and other issues.

Moscow has described the deployment of NATO forces near Russian borders as a top security threat.

Zakharova strongly warned Washington against redeploying some of the troops from Germany to Poland, saying it would further exacerbate tensions and undermine prospects of dialogue between Russia and NATO.

Top U.S. General Says Joining Trump Church Walk Was "Mistake"

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The top U.S. military officer on Thursday said he should not have joined President Donald Trump as he walked from the White House to a nearby church for a photo opportunity after authorities cleared the way of protesters using tear gas and rubber bullets.

"I should not have been there," Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Mark Milley said of his appearance at the politically charged event on June 1.

"My presence in that moment and in that environment created a perception of the military involved in domestic politics," he said in a prerecorded video commencement address to the National Defense University.

Milley's remarks followed a rare outpouring of condemnation from retired U.S. generals and even former defense secretary Jim Mattis for taking part in the event, given that the U.S. military is meant to be apolitical and is sworn to defend the U.S. constitution, which protects the right to peaceful protest. Milley and Defense Secretary Mark Esper had joined Trump to pay a surprise visit to the historic Saint John's Church, during which the president held up a Bible for photographers.

Minutes before the visit, law enforcement used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse mostly peaceful protesters occupying the square between the White House and the church in a demonstration against the police killing of George Floyd, drawing condemnation from Democrats and some Republicans.

Macron Denies Reports He Might Trigger Snap Election



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron does not plan to step down to prompt a fresh election, a move he reportedly told top party donors he was considering, his office said Thursday.

The Figaro newspaper said Macron had made the shock announcement while speaking via videoconference to a handful of the largest donors to his centrist party who were gathered in London about two weeks ago, according to one of the people present. The goal would be to reinforce his legitimacy as France emerges from its coronavirus lockdown, and to destabilize his opponents -- "I'm sure to win because there's no competition," Macron reportedly said.

Macron's Republic on the Move party lost its absolute majority in parliament last month after several MPs defected to form independent groups, a public approach that was all the more jarring amid the government's calls for "unity" during the COVID-19 crisis. But Macron's office said: "We deny this report. The president never suggested his resignation."

"He never took part in a videoconference with donors." The Figaro report also cited an unnamed Elysee Palace official, who said: "We're entering a phase of reflection and consultations, where everything is being considered."

The official added that Macron's decision could come "in the coming weeks or months".

Macron's party is bracing for a humiliating setback in a second round of municipal elections set for June 28, with opinion polls showing its candidates are unlikely to capture any major city, including Paris. Even Prime Minister Edouard Philippe is facing a tough battle to recover his seat as mayor of the northern port city of Le Havre. Speculation has mounted that a cabinet shuffle is in the works as Macron seeks fresh momentum for the final two years of his term.

The coronavirus outbreak has effectively stalled his ambitious policy reforms, including the controversial pensions overhaul that sparked a huge strike last winter.

The president plans a televised national address on Sunday night, his fourth since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

Shanon
(adviser)

Elahieh Apt (\$2400)
260sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

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

Parsian

Apt (\$2300)
Kamranieh
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S, J, gym, pkg, & F.F

Sa`adat abad Apt (\$1800)
160sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

bldg (\$10000)
Farmanieh
5storey, 20bdrs
yard, enough pkg lots

Vanak Apts
(\$1200) 2bdrs, & F.F
(\$1800) 3bdrs, & F.F

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

Commercial offices
Vali-e-Asr (\$30 per sq.m)
300, 400, 500sq.m, pkgs



Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

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

IRAN

NEWS

PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS

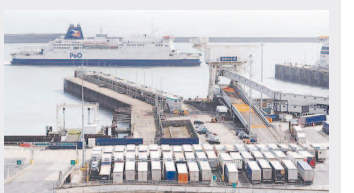
ADVERTISING

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

Int'l Trade Set to Shrink 27% in Q2

GENEVA (Dispatches) - International trade is set to plunge by 27% in the second quarter and by 20% for the year, as major sectors including the automotive and energy industries collapse from the effects the pandemic, a United Nations agency said on Thursday.

"Assuming persisting uncertainty, UNCTAD forecast indicates a decline of around 20% for the year 2020," the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in a report. "Trade in the automotive and energy sector collapsed while trade in agri-food products has been stable."



UNCTAD, IMO Urge to Keep Ships Moving, Ports Open and Cross-Border Trade Flowing

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations maritime and trade entities have said that it is more important than ever to keep ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which tracks world trade, has reiterated calls these calls.

The two organizations want governments to promote crew well-being by allowing crew changes and ensuring seafarers and travel options so that they can return home safely.

It has been estimated that, starting in mid-June 2020, as many as 300,000 seafarers a month will require international flights to enable ships' crew changeover. About half will travel home by aircraft for repatriation while the other half will join ships - 70,000 cruise ship staff are waiting for their repatriation.

However, due to travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this process has been hampered.

Yet, to comply with international safety and employment regulations, these crew changes cannot be postponed indefinitely. Access to medical care and sick or injured crew and to medical prescriptions must also be provided.

IMO and UNCTAD have also reaffirmed the urgent need for 'key worker' designation for seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel, offshore energy sector personnel and service personnel at ports. The two groups noted that government and relevant national and local authorities must recognize that these workers provide essential services and thus should be exempt from travel restrictions.

The joint statement said: "Such designation will ensure that the trade in essential goods, including medical supplies and food, is not hampered by the pandemic and the associated containment measures. "International collaboration, coordination and solidarity among all is going to be key to overcoming the unprecedented global challenge posed by the pandemic and its longer-term repercussions."

IMO and UNCTAD have also urged governments to pursue collaborative efforts to identify and remove any unnecessary regulatory obstacles to post-pandemic recovery and to facilitate maritime transport and trade in these difficult times.

Pragmatic approaches, such as granting exemptions and waivers where necessary and appropriate, have also been urged.

Additionally, efforts should be made to facilitate means for ship-shore, administrative and commercial interactions. There should be effective sharing of pre-arrival information and other COVID-related reporting requirements for ships and provision of adequate equipment and resources to customs and border control stations in ports.

The joint statement also pointed out that, in the longer term, some of the measures to confront the COVID-19 crisis may offer other important benefits such as encouraging further investment in digitalisation and advancing efforts to improve ships' energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping.

Lufthansa to Cut 22,000 Jobs Amid Covid-19 Downturn

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German airline Lufthansa said Thursday that it would have to slash 22,000 full-time jobs as it predicts a muted recovery in demand for travel following the coronavirus pandemic.

"The recovery in demand in the air transport sector will be slow in the foreseeable future," the airline said.

The group will operate about 100 less aircraft after the crisis, leading to "a total of 22,000 fewer full-time positions in the Lufthansa Group, half of them in Germany".

The posts make up 16 percent of the Lufthansa Group's total workforce of 135,000.

The airline said however that it would look at how it could use schemes for shorter work hours and other crisis arrangements to avoid outright redundancies.

Lufthansa, like its peers, has been brought to its knees by restrictions introduced to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Around 700 of the group's 763 aircraft were grounded at the peak of the lockdowns and it was forced to place 87,000 workers on government-backed shorter hours schemes.

Lufthansa's supervisory board last week approved a nine-billion-euro bailout deal from the German government after the company posted a first-quarter net loss of 2.1 billion euros (\$2.3 billion).



U.S. Weekly Jobless Claims Seen Declining Further

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Layoffs in the United States are abating, but millions who lost their jobs because of COVID-19 continue to draw unemployment benefits, suggesting the labor market could take years to heal from the pandemic even as businesses resume hiring workers.

The weekly jobless claims report from the Labor Department on Thursday, the most timely data on the economy's health, will follow news last Friday of a surprise 2.5 million increase in nonfarm payrolls in May. It could reinforce views that the labor market has weathered the worst of the turbulence.

The Federal Reserve signaled on Wednesday it would provide years of extraordinary support for the economy, with policymakers projecting a 9.3% unemployment rate at year end. The unemployment rate has jumped from 3.5% in February and was at 13.3% in May.

"The steady retreat in claims is a positive development, but the labor market has suffered a traumatic blow and a full recovery will be measured in years, not weeks or months," said

Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics in New York. "The figures don't capture the full extent of the blow dealt to workers during this unique crisis."

New applications for state unemployment benefits likely totaled a seasonally adjusted 1.55 million for the week ended June 6, down from 1.877 million the prior week, according to a Reuters survey of economists. That would pull initial claims further away from a record 6.867 million in late March.

But claims for jobless benefits would still be more than double their peak during the 2007-09 Great Recession. Many businesses have reopened after being shuttered in mid-March to slow the spread of COVID-19.

However, claims remain elevated amid jobs cuts outside the consumer sector, among industries that were not initially hit by the shutdown. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell told reporters on Wednesday there would be an "extended period" during which it would be "difficult for many people to find work."

Initial claims are recorded when a person submits a first application for unemployment benefits. Once approved they become continuing claims and are reported with a one-week lag.

The report on Thursday is expected to show continuing claims slipped to 20 million in the week ending May 30 from 21.487 million in the prior week. Continuing claims have eased from a record high of 24.912 million in early May. That decline has been attributed to the government's Paycheck Protection Program, part of a historic fiscal package worth nearly \$3 trillion, that offers businesses loans that can be partially forgiven if used for employee salaries.

German Gov't's Stimulus Could Boost Economy by 1.3% Points This Year

BERLIN (Reuters) - The German government's planned 130 billion euro (116.4 billion pounds) stimulus program could boost economic output in Europe's largest economy by 1.3 percentage points both this year and next, the DIW institute said on Thursday.

DIW forecast the economy would contract by 9.4% this year as the coronavirus pandemic takes its toll before expanding by 3% next year - all under the assumption that the pandemic is sustainably contained.

But it said the government's latest economic stimulus package was noticeably supporting the economy and added that if the program were implemented as announced, economic output would fall less sharply - by 8.1% this year - and rise by 4.3% next year.

On Monday German a government spokesman said Chancellor Angela Merkel's ruling coalition hopes to pass large parts of the package at a special cabinet meeting on Friday.

Sources in the coalition and federal states have told Reuters that the German upper and lower houses of parliament are aiming to hold special sessions on June 29 to pass the package.

The program includes lower value-added tax (VAT) to boost consumption, a one-off 300-euro stipend per child to help families as well as a doubling of incentives to promote the sale of electric cars. It follows a 750 billion euro rescue package agreed in March.

DIW said gross domestic product would fall much further in the second quarter than during the first, when it dropped by 2.2% - the steepest rate since 2009.

But the institute said the economy would pick up again, albeit very slowly, from the third quarter as restrictions to contain the spread of the coronavirus are eased.

Australia Not to Be Intimidated By China Economic Threats

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia warned Thursday it would not be intimidated by attempts at economic "coercion" after China threatened to undermine the multi-billion dollar flow of Chinese tourists and students to the country.

Beijing has issued warnings in recent days that Chinese should avoid Australia due to concerns about racist incidents targeting ethnic Asians during the coronavirus pandemic.

The comments were the latest salvo in a long-brewing diplomatic dispute between Australia and its largest trading partner.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison dismissed on Thursday allegations of racist treatment of Chinese as "rubbish".

"It's a ridiculous assertion and it's rejected," he said during a radio interview.

"We have an important trading relationship with China and I'd like to see that continue," Morrison said.

But he warned his government would "never be intimidated by threats" or "trade our values in response to coercion from wherever it comes".

During the pandemic racism toward Asians has reportedly increased, according to the New South Wales anti-discrimination commission. Beijing defended its travel advice at a briefing on Thursday, saying it was "based on a large volume of facts".

"I don't know where the Australian leader's so-called 'coercion' comes from," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters.

"We advise Australia to face up to the problem, reflect on itself, and take concrete measures to protect the safety and rights of Chinese nationals in Australia," she said.

Tensions have grown steadily in recent years between the two governments as Australia has moved to counter Chinese moves to build its influence both domestically and across the Pacific region.

More recently Canberra angered Beijing by leading calls for an international probe into the origin and handling of the coronavirus pandemic in central China.

China has since taken several steps targeting trade with Australia, including the attempts to discourage Chinese travellers, who represent the biggest groups of foreign tourists, and overseas students.

The effect of Beijing's travel advice will only be known once Australia's borders -- closed to all non-essential inbound and outbound travellers due to the pandemic -- reopen.

Education is Australia's fourth-largest export with more than 500,000 international students enrolled last year, bringing about Aus\$37 billion into the economy.

Japan MPs Pass Record Coronavirus Budget



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's powerful lower house of parliament approved an emergency budget worth nearly \$300 billion Wednesday, doubling the scale of measures to pep up the world's third-biggest economy after the coronavirus tipped it into recession.

Consumer spending has slowed to a crawl despite Japan's relatively low infection numbers and death toll from the pandemic, prompting the first economic downturn since 2015. In response, lawmakers approved a second exceptional budget of 31.91 trillion yen (\$297 billion), including subsidies for smaller businesses and cash handouts for medical workers.

The budget bill will be sent to the upper house and is widely expected to be enacted as early as Friday.

The cash -- to be raised by issuing bonds -- will also be used to help finance rescue programmes and loans for struggling businesses.

The government said the size of the package, including loans and investments in addition to actual fiscal spending, is worth about 117 trillion yen, nearly the same size as the first extra budget enacted on April 30.

Combined with that initial stimulus package, Japan's total measures amount to 230 trillion yen when loan schemes are taken into account.

That is a whopping 40 percent of GDP -- trumpeted by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as the world's biggest virus programme -- and pushes Japan's debt-to-GDP ratio up to 257 percent, noted Naoya Oshikubo, senior economist at SuMi TRUST.

"It will be worth it to drive the recovery," said Oshikubo.

"The two supplementary budgets alone should push up real 2020 GDP by three points. In addition, the state of emergency has now ended across Japan and the economy is set to improve," added the economist. Rescue measures include subsidies to help small companies pay rent, subsidies for companies paying leave allowances to their employees, grants to medical workers and grants to help drug and vaccine development.

Tehran Urges OIC to Push For Referendum in Palestine

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs has taken part in an extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Executive Committee on Israeli threats to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Following Israel's recent announcement of its plan to annex parts

of the occupied territories, particularly the west bank of Jordan River, to the territories under occupation within the next month and the US government's support for the plan, the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held a virtual extraordinary meeting at the level of Member States' Foreign Ministers on Wednesday, June 10, to address the issue.



Latin America Logs 70,000 Coronavirus Deaths

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - More than 70,000 people have died from coronavirus in Latin America as the pandemic sweeps through the region, putting growing pressure on an already stretched healthcare system.

As the number of cases in the United States soared past two million, Central and South America has emerged as the new hotspot for a disease that has infected 7.4 million people around the globe. More than 415,000 of them have died.

In Brazil, which accounts for well over half of the deaths in the region, hospitals were struggling to cope with the influx of sick and dying.

"Nursing was always an overworked profession, and this pandemic has just made things worse," nurse Hans Bossan told AFP

"Nurses deal directly with patients, with the virus, we're on the front lines of the war," said Bossan, who is working 72 hours a week in three different jobs.

Nurses have been hit particularly hard as Brazil has rocketed up the global charts to claim an unwanted third spot in the number of deaths, behind the United States and Britain.

Around 18,000 nurses there have been infected with COVID-19, and at least 181 have died -- among the highest numbers in the world, according to the International Council of Nurses.

Critics of Brazil's populist President Jair Bolsonaro say the epidemic has been worsened by a haphazard response that has seen the president repeatedly downplay the severity of the disease.

He has agitated against the lockdowns that scientists say are necessary to tamp down the infection, insisting the economic cost is too high.

On Wednesday, and with infection rates still soaring, the economic capital Sao Paulo began reopening shops.

Malls were set to reopen in a slew of other cities on Thursday, the day before Brazilians celebrate Valentine's Day.

Reopening also gathered pace in the United States on Wednesday, with tourism-dependent Miami allowing people onto its beaches for the first time in three months.

"I almost started crying as soon as I came out onto the beach," said travel agent Julie Isaacson.

The moves come despite the US infection tally tipping past the two million mark. Almost 113,000 Americans have died. Although they are now easing, shutdowns across the country have taken their toll on the economy.

Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell said despite a rebound expected next year, the longer-term outlook remains highly uncertain.

The economic pain of the pandemic is being felt around the world.



The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) warned the global economy is on course to contract by at least six percent this year.

By the end of next year, the loss of income should surpass that of "any previous recession over the last 100 years outside wartime," the forecast warned.

The European Union ramped up efforts to dig itself out of the economic hole in which it is languishing, announcing it hoped to open its borders to foreigners in July.

Greece, whose economy depends heavily on tourism, has already announced it will reopen its skies from June 15 to a list of countries including non-EU states such as Australia, China and South Korea.

Austria and Germany said they were easing travel restrictions, though Germany extended a warning against travel outside the EU until August 31.

In Spain, where more than 27,000 people have died from COVID-19, La Liga soccer championships are set to resume on Thursday for the first time in three months.

In Britain, which has Europe's highest death toll, a former top government adviser said half of those deaths could have been avoided if lockdown had been imposed just a week earlier.

Fitch Forecasts 9.5% Growth for Indian Economy in Next Fiscal

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - In a good news for India, Fitch Ratings said on Wednesday (June 10) that Indian economy would register a sharp growth rate of 9.5 per cent next year if it manages to avoid further deterioration in its financial sector.

Fitch Ratings forecast a 5 per cent contraction in the GDP in the ongoing fiscal. "The pandemic has drastically weakened India's growth outlook and laid bare the challenges caused by a high public-debt burden," Fitch Ratings said in its APAC Sovereign Credit Overview released on Wednesday.

"After the global crisis, India's GDP growth is likely to return to higher levels than 'BBB' category peers, provided it avoids further deterioration in financial sector health as a result of the pandemic," it said forecasting a 9.5 per cent real GDP growth next year.

On March 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed the world's largest lockdown in India to curb the spread of coronavirus COVID-19, bringing all economic activities to a grinding halt. The lockdown has been repeatedly extended but some restrictions have been eased from May 4 to restart the economy. "However, new cases have continued to rise," it said.

The coronavirus pandemic also forced the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to ease monetary policy by cutting policy rates and providing liquidity through long-term repo operations to boost the economy.

"The government has announced stimulus measures amounting to 10 per cent of GDP, of which the fiscal component of about 1 per cent of GDP is significantly less than many of India's peers," the rating agency said.

Notably, the General government debt was 70 per cent of GDP in 2019-20, well above the 'BBB' rating median of 42 per cent. India's ratio of public debt/GDP is expected to rise to 84 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 - up from a forecast of 71 per cent when Fitch Ratings affirmed the 'BBB-' rating in December 2019.

"This is based on our expectation of slower economic growth in FY21 and wider fiscal deficits, assuming that the government's fiscal response remains restrained," it said. "The credit profile is strengthened by relative external resilience stemming from solid foreign-reserve buffers, but weakened by some lagging structural factors, including governance indicators and GDP per capita."

Meanwhile, global rating agency Standard & Poor's (S&P) on Wednesday (June 10) affirmed its rating on India's long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit at the lowest investment grade with a stable outlook, saying the country's economy remains "a long-term outperformer versus peers at a similar level of income".

The S&P released its rating days after Moody's Investors Service downgraded India's rating by a notch.

Wild Guesses as UK Economists Grapple With Looming GDP Plunge

LONDON (Reuters) - For once, economists are united on one thing: official data on Friday will show that Britain's economy suffered a record collapse during April's coronavirus lockdown.

The question is, how big was the hit? There was an unprecedented range of views in the latest Reuters poll of more than two dozen economists, with the median forecast for an 18.4% month-on-month plunge in gross domestic product in April.

That was when much of the economy was subject to tight restrictions and it is expected to be the low point

of the slump as the lockdown is gradually lifted.

The least pessimistic saw an 8.5% drop, which would still be worse than anything during the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

The gloomiest forecaster in the poll - Investec chief economist Philip Shaw - predicted a 31.5% plunge.

"I do feel a bit like Doctor Doom," he said.

As a starting point he used scenarios published by the Bank of England and the government's fiscal watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility.

U.S. Vows to...

FROM PAGE 1

"The two countries recognized that in light of significant progress towards eliminating the ISIS threat, over the coming months the U.S. would continue reducing forces from Iraq," a joint statement said.

"The United States reiterated that it does not seek nor request permanent bases or a permanent military presence in Iraq."

The coalition has already consolidated to just three bases in recent months, down from a dozen.

The joint statement, hashed out ahead of time, did not give figures and Thursday's dialogue was brief, with David Schenker, the top U.S. diplomat for the Middle East, telling reporters the delegations did not discuss a timeline for reducing troops. Due to coronavirus travel restrictions, top-level talks expected to take place in Baghdad were demoted to a brief online kick-off session. Tensions have calmed substantially since Mustafa Kadhem -- an ex-spy chief with close ties to the US and its allies in the region -- took the reins as Iraq's premier in May. Two Iraqi officials said Kadhem has been invited to the White House this year, a diplomatic olive branch his predecessor Adel Abdel Mahdi had never received.

"There was a lack of confidence in the relationship with the previous government," one of the officials said.

Iraq in the joint statement promised to protect US bases that have seen a barrage of rocket fire blamed on paramilitary groups tied to Iran, a top adversary for the Trump administration. The United States said it would look to encourage investment and promote economic reform in Iraq, which was rocked last year by major protests against unemployment and corruption.

"We will support the new government through the international financial institutions to help it meet the challenge of COVID-19 and declining oil revenues," Schenker said. Iraq's economy relies almost exclusively on oil exports, with faltering prices and low demand drastically shrinking the government's ability to pay wages, pensions and welfare to eight million Iraqis. After Kadhem took charge, the United States extended a waiver from American sanctions to let Iraq keep importing needed gas from Iran, although the exemption runs out in September.

"The entire U.S.-Iraq bilateral relationship will not be fixed in a single day," said Robert Ford, an analyst at the Middle East Institute and a U.S. diplomat in Baghdad during the last round of strategic talks in 2008, which ironed out the U.S. drawdown from the occupation that began after the 2003 invasion to topple Saddam Hussein.

"But for once, we seem to have the right people in the right place at the right time," he said.

A dramatic or sudden drop could hamper the coalition's efforts to back an Iraqi fightback against IS sleeper cells, which have escalated attacks in recent weeks. "Whatever comes out of the dialogue is going to set the future of our strategic relationship," a top American official from the coalition told AFP.

Turkey to Build Gas...

FROM PAGE 1

"This is a signal to our existing pipeline suppliers that they need to be flexible," he said.

Global LNG prices were already at historic lows before the COVID-19 pandemic forced them lower still, meaning Turkey has been able to replace Iranian gas with LNG at a fraction of the cost charged by Tehran.

And while the threat of undercutting Iran's exports to Nakhchivan can only improve Ankara's hand in contract talks with Tehran, the potential for leverage doesn't end there.

Turkey has for the past few months been attempting to improve its fractious relations with Washington, which has in turn long been pressing both Turkey and Azerbaijan to limit their economic ties with Iran.

The prospect of Turkey and Azerbaijan ending or limiting their gas imports from Iran will certainly appeal to the Iran hawks in the Trump administration, all the more so given that the past year has seen the U.S. become one of Turkey's main gas suppliers. As of February, the U.S. was accounting for 18 percent of Turkish gas imports, compared to only 15 percent from Iran.

Ivanka Trump...

FROM PAGE 1

When the Congress leaders of Democrats and Republicans were at war with Bin Salman and Arab kings' petro-dollars, unity in Iran was strengthened by the launch of a satellite. Clerics have been impressed by the armed forces in a way that the issue of cultural or anti-cultural attacks by the Israeli and Saudi Arabian satellite TVs has lost their color. If we hit their gasoline reservoirs, we will be targeted by their missiles from long distances which have been under their scrutiny for long time. Targeting some reservoirs will equal to the loss of hundreds of refineries and bases. So it is better to find a better solution than military threat for confronting Iran. At the end of the three-hour long meeting and speeches of nine high-ranking participants, they reached this conclusion that compromise is the best option on the table."



That Donald Trump's daughter in the mass media reveals strategic secrets of the White House is either out of naiveté or she deeply opposes the U.S. hostile policies and she has chosen to reveal the information to the world for justifying the cowardly behavior of the White House. And the world uses all of these information and facts as their yardstick for drawing this conclusion that they are better to divert their direction from the U.S. path in dealing with Iran and they will choose it.

The soft and hard processes of the Islamic Revolution's policies in facing with sanctions have been, since the first days, to find the factors behind sanctions and to nullify them. Hence, military power of Iran and its intelligence dominance will lead to the White House's daily retreats.

Tehran Urges OIC...

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting, held at the request of the Palestinian National Authority and at the invitation of OIC Secretary General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen, was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other political officials from the OIC Member States. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand was representing the Islamic Republic of Iran in the meeting.

In his address to the virtual meeting, Baharvand reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's "unwavering stance on defending the cause of Palestine", and expounded on Iran's views on Israel's current threats, its main sponsor, namely the U.S., and on the effective solution to such persistent crisis in the Islamic world.

The Iranian diplomat strongly condemned Tel Aviv's measure to declare Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital, its announcement of plans to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, and the U.S.' support for those measures. He also highlighted the "definite ineffectiveness of the policy of negotiations with and appeasement towards Israelis", saying it is absolutely necessary for Muslims to think seriously about devising new approaches to Palestine in order to guarantee the inalienable rights of Palestinians to restore their legitimate rights.

"Now that it has been definitely proven that the US government has no goodwill and the Zionist regime is viciously and hypocritically playing with Palestine and with the principle of formation of the Palestinian government, the Islamic world is currently in dire need of ratification and implementation of a true pragmatic policy far beyond the current futile policy."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister underscored the international recognition of the right to self-determination, denounced the fierce obstructionism and opposition from the US and its cohorts to the issue of restoration of such inalienable right of Palestinians, and said that is why the people of Palestine have now no option but to resort to resistance in order to fulfill the undeniable right to self-determination.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and its Leader have repeatedly proposed the idea of approving a plan to hold a countrywide referendum with the participation of all Palestinians inside and outside Palestine with every religious and political background, he added.

"Now it's time for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States to pass a resolution to call on the United Nations -- as the chief international organization responsible for protecting world peace and security -- to resolve the most long-running predicament in the contemporary world by holding a referendum in Palestine." Apart from a number of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other political officials from the OIC Member States, OIC Secretary General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen was also taking part in the virtual extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a draft resolution was approved with 15 executive articles revolving around the categorical condemnation of Israel for its "malignant scheme" to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian territories.

The resolution has also condemned Israel for restricting and obstructing the Palestinian people's access to the necessary facilities and equipment for treatment of and protection against the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
ISSN 1024-6053
P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Printed by:Honar Sarzmin Sabz
Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and
Artistic Institute
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

India Postpone Sri Lanka Tour Over COVID-19 Fears

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India have postponed their limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka scheduled later this month over COVID-19 fears, cricket boards of both the countries said on Thursday.

Virat Kohli and his men were scheduled to play three one-day matches and an equal number of Twenty20 internationals but the Indian board (BCCI) has informed Sri Lanka Cricket that the tour "will not be feasible".

Rose Grabs Lead in PGA Virus Return

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's Justin Rose fired a seven-under par 63 Thursday to seize the early lead as the U.S. PGA Tour ended a 91-day coronavirus shutdown and paid tribute to George Floyd.

Rose, the 2013 U.S. Open champion, birdied seven of his first 12 holes then closed with six pars to grab a one-stroke clubhouse lead over Venezuela's Jhonattan Vegas and Mexico's Abraham Ancer at the Charles Schwab Challenge.

Federer to Miss Rest of Season After Second Knee Operation

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Roger Federer will miss the rest of the 2020 season after undergoing a second procedure on his right knee, the 20-times Grand Slam singles champion said.

Federer struggled with injury at this year's Australian Open in Melbourne, where he lost in the semi-finals to eventual champion Novak Djokovic, and subsequently underwent surgery on the knee in February.

"A few weeks ago, having experienced a setback during my initial rehabilitation, I had to have an additional quick arthroscopic procedure on my right knee," the 38-year-old said in a Twitter post.

With professional tennis shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic it remains to be seen how many tournaments Federer will actually miss.

The Swiss also had knee surgery to repair a torn meniscus in 2016 and missed the second half of that season.

When he returned to the tour for the 2017 season it looked like he had never been away, winning the Australian Open to end a near five-year Grand Slam title drought and adding the Wimbledon title later that year.

The last of Federer's record 20 Grand Slam singles titles came at the 2018 Australian Open. The closest he has come since was at Wimbledon last year when he lost in the final.

"Now, much like I did leading up to the 2017 season, I plan to take the necessary time to be 100% ready to play at my highest level," he said.

"I will be missing my fans and the tour dearly but, I will look forward to see everyone back on tour at the start of the 2021 season."

Meanwhile Nick Kyrgios slammed the ATP as "selfish" Thursday for pressing ahead with plans for the US Open despite the country dealing with a coronavirus pandemic and widespread anti-racism protests.

The temperamental Australian suggested it was too early for the Flushing Meadow Grand Slam, joining other players in expressing reservations, including world number one Novak Djokovic.

"The ATP is trying to make the U.S. Open go ahead. Selfish with everything going on at the moment," Kyrgios, ranked just 40 but a showman who is popular with fans, said on Twitter.

"Obviously Covid, but also with the riots. Together we need to overcome these challenges before tennis returns in my opinion."

The tennis season has been on hold



since mid-March because of the pandemic, with the French Open postponed and Wimbledon cancelled.

The U.S. Open is still scheduled to go ahead, with the main draw starting on August 31 despite New York being the epicentre of the outbreak in the US.

Authorities and organizers have drawn up a list of hygiene rules, including a 14-day quarantine period for players arriving in the United States while restricting their entourage to one person.

Djokovic suggested on Wednesday that he may skip the North America swing and restart his season on clay in Europe in early September, complaining about the "very severe" measures being put in place at the US Open.

"Most of the players I've talked to so far have a rather negative view of the possibility of going," said the Serb.

World number two and reigning U.S. Open champion Rafael Nadal has expressed similar reservations, while top-ranked woman Ashleigh Barty has also voiced caution about resuming tennis too soon.

Spurs Star Alli Given One-Game Ban Over Coronavirus Joke

LONDON (AFP) - Tottenham midfielder Dele Alli has been given a one-match ban by the Football Association after joking about the coronavirus in a social media video and will miss his side's first Premier League match after the restart.

In the weeks before the virus took hold across the world, Alli posted a Snapchat clip in which he made fun of an Asian man in an airport departure lounge in February.

The England international was shown wearing a face mask and the video had the title: "Corona whattt, please listen with volume".

The video cut to an unsuspecting man of Asian appearance before panning to a bottle of antiseptic hand wash, underneath which appeared the caption: "This virus gunna have to be quicker than that to catch me".

Alli later deleted the post and posted an apology to the Chinese social media network Weibo.

He was charged with misconduct by the FA on February 26 and his case has now been heard. The one-game suspension means Alli will miss Tottenham's game at home to Manchester United on June 19, their first of the resumed season.

Haris Withdraws From Pakistan's Tour of England

LONDON (Dispatches) - Middle-order batsman Haris Sohail on Thursday became the first player to withdraw from Pakistan's England tour over coronavirus fears, the Pakistan Cricket Board revealed.

Fast bowler Mohammad Amir will also not travel although his decision was based on personal reasons as his wife is due to give birth to their second child in August.

Pakistan will play three Tests and three Twenty20 internationals starting in August, with hosts England providing "bio-secure" arrangements in closed stadiums and hotels.

"Sohail's family was concerned about COVID-19, so he requested to withdraw from the tour while Amir has withdrawn so that he can be at the birth of his second child," a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) spokesman confirmed.

Pakistan media reported that Sohail does not like to travel without his family, but they will not be allowed on the tour.

Amir retired from Test cricket last year but was due to play in the Twenty20 games.

Sohail would have been almost certain to be named in the squad.

The England and Wales Cricket Board have provided special arrangements to reduce the risk of the coronavirus for their series in July against the West Indies which precedes Pakistan's visit.

Their matches will be played at Manchester and Southampton, both of which have hotels on site.

Pakistan will send 28 players and 14 support personnel on the tour.

Three West Indian players -- Darren Bravo, Shimron Hetmyer and Keemo Paul -- withdrew from the England tour over COVID-19 fears last week.

The West Indies team reached England on Tuesday and will play the first of three Tests in Southampton from July 8.



Thiem Signs Up for Ultimate Tennis Showdown

PARIS (AFP) - World number three Dominic Thiem will complete the field in the Ultimate Tennis Showdown (UTS), a 10-man league played over five weekends at an academy in Nice run by the coach of Serena Williams.

The competition drawn up by Patrick Mouratoglou begins this weekend but three-time Grand Slam finalist Thiem will miss the start, having already committed to a tournament hosted by Novak Djokovic in Belgrade.

Organizers said Thiem would play his first UTS match on June 20, with Frenchman Elliot Benchetrit, ranked 208th, stepping in for the Austrian for the first two rounds. Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime has been ruled out after injuring his right ankle Tuesday in training. He will be replaced by veteran Spaniard Feliciano Lopez.

U.S. Open semi-finalist Matteo Berrettini will take on David Goffin in Saturday's opening round of matches, with sixth-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas opposing Richard Gasquet. Australian youngster Alexei Popyrin, Benoit Paire, Dustin Brown and Lucas Pouille are also taking part.

The six best-placed players after a round-robin format will advance to a knockout, with the top two qualifying directly for the semi-finals.

All matches will be held behind closed doors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Mouratoglou is aiming to attract a younger audience with an innovative competition that will allow viewers to hear conversations between players and coaches while encouraging a more relaxed on-court atmosphere.

Sevilla Win Derby in La Liga Return

SEVILLE (Reuters) - La Liga returned after a three-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic as Sevilla beat city rivals Real Betis 2-0 on Thursday with the help of a controversial penalty and a touch of class from Argentine winger Lucas Ocampos.

Ocampos struck the post in the first half before giving Sevilla a deserved lead from the spot in the 56th minute after Betis' Marc Bartra was harshly judged to have fouled Luuk de Jong.

Ocampos produced an outrageous backheel assist for midfielder Fernando to head home six minutes later to seal a win which consolidated Sevilla's push for a Champions League place.

Julen Lopetegui's side are in third place in the standings with 50 points after 28 games while Betis were left in 12th on 33. Sevilla dominated the derby in an empty and eerily quiet Sanchez Pizjuan which would usually be teeming with colour and noise for the occasion, but the red seats were left bare as fans were barred from attending for safety reasons.

Television broadcasts sought to re-create the experience of a normal match with fans by using simulated crowd noise and images, while Ocampos still saluted the stand behind the goal after breaking the deadlock from the penalty spot. "I had never played a derby here before and even though the fans are not here I still wanted to honour them and make it feel like they were and show that we are working hard for them," the Argentine said.



Premier League Clubs Agree Matchday Protocols

LONDON (Reuters) - All 20 Premier League clubs have approved matchday protocols for next week's resumption of action after a three-month stoppage due to by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A shareholders meeting on Thursday discussed details of medical and operational measures, including how many backroom staff will be allowed to attend away games.

The Premier League's Project Restart kicks off next Wednesday with the first two of the 92 outstanding fixtures.

Manchester City will host Arsenal and Aston Villa welcome Sheffield United.

All the remaining games will be played without fans and a limit of 300 people — including broadcast staff, written media, commentators, doping officials and scouts — will be allowed in stadiums on matchdays.

Stadiums will be split into red, amber and green zones with the red zone to include 20 players, 12 coaching and medical staff and a further five "essential staff".

Other measures include deep cleaning of corner flags, goalposts, substitution boards and match balls while medical staff will wear protective equipment when treating players.

Players will be tested for coronavirus at their club's training ground ahead of the journeys to stadiums for matches.

