

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif Was to Leave Here for Istanbul Later Yesterday for a Series of Talks On Bilateral Relations and Regional Developments With Turkish Officials

IRAN NEWS

Energy Ministry's Spokesman For the Electricity Industry Says Daily Electricity Consumption In Iran Reached 55,071 Megawatts On Saturday to Register a New Record High

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Tehran Refutes Claim About PKK Presence In Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force dismissed the groundless claim made by Turkish officials that the PKK terrorists are on Iranian soil near the common border.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a visit to military bases in northwestern Iran on Saturday, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour denied as “irresponsible and baseless” the allegations made by a Turkish official that the PKK elements are on Iranian soil.

A few days ago, Interior Minister of Turkey Suleyman Soyulu had claimed that there are around 100 “terrorists” in Iran’s Dambad, near Turkey, which “constitutes a real danger.”

In response, the IRGC general said, “There is very good and fruitful interaction between the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey along the common border. Thus, the officials of the friendly and neighbor state of Turkey are expected to make contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran through official channels after verifying the authenticity of an incident and before making any media comment about border incidents, and to pursue such issues according to the arranged mechanisms.”

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Iran-India Trade to Become Normal So Soon

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - There is no particular problem in trade with India now and bilateral relations will return to normal soon, Vice president of India-Iran Chamber of Commerce Parham Rezaei told ILNA.

The Iranian official refers to outbreak of coronavirus and added “following the coronavirus epidemic, we faced challenges with our trade relations with India and although the situation has not returned to normal but it is expected within the next week or two it is going to be over.”

Rezaei said that there is no problem with financial transfers with India and the deposited money can be used for basic goods.

Iran’s main non-oil exports to India include steel, ammonia, gas condensates, petrochemicals, and paraffin. India’s main exports to Iran include agricultural products such as rice, oilseeds, cotton, tea as well as textiles, thread, and industrial machinery.

Iran has been an important trade partner for India with bilateral trade in 2018-19 posting a 23.7 percent growth to \$17.03 billion. Of this, mineral oil and fuel imports were key, accounting for \$12.3 billion.

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Iran to Become Regional Hub For Renewable Energies



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Energy Minister on Renewable Energies Affairs says the U.S. sanctions have currently affected the economic, banking and forex sectors of the country as the country’s medicine is under sanctions and it means renewable energies are also under sanctions.

Speaking in a press conference yesterday, Mohammad Satkin said leading countries first focus on productivity then they turn to electricity production and the ministry in the first step has focused on productivity then on renewables, reiterating that the ministry will use all existing potentials in this regard especially in utilizing wind.

He added that the ministry is doing its best that the country would become the hub in the region for rush of investors and those who want take advantage of Iran’s experience in renewables.

Satkin added that in the eastern part, the country has the biggest windy fields with capacity over 40mw. So the ministry is doing its best with full support of the private sector in equipping and investing in this field to carry out new policies.

He noted that in the past 12 years, wind potentials of the country have been under study, noting that country has three special channels in the east as one of them is north of Zabol which is very valuable in terms of energy and it has capability for construction of 2 to 3mw power station.

Satkin further said Khaf channel is the other one which has one of the most unique winds in the world and it can be developed for over 1000mw station. The windy region of Doroud is the third channel where the 50mw project has been kicked off there and it has capability for construction of some thousand-megawatt wind power station.

He added that Iran has prepared one of the most precise maps and it has even identified the border regions like with Afghanistan and perhaps in the future, Iran and Afghanistan may launch a joint project as Iran has enough expertise to offer its neighboring countries.

On signing agreement with foreign companies, Satkin said the ministry pays the sum of all contracts with domestic companies is paid in national currency rial as it is unable to pay in dollar or other currencies but Iranian companies may enjoy having foreign backings and the ministry tries to attract foreign capital.

He also pointed to exports of renewables, adding that the government has authorized export of renewable energy but it needs proper planning to be assured of electricity production in order to export it to the neighboring states whenever they need.

Zarif Denies Saudi Oil Facilities Hit by Iranian-Made Missiles

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran’s foreign minister has dismissed as baseless the UN Secretariat’s claim that the missiles which hit the installations of the Saudi Aramco company were of Iranian origin.

“Unfortunately, the UN Secretariat showed that it is being influenced by US threats,” said Mohammad Javad Zarif in a live Instagram interview on Saturday.

“The region is in a critical situation. The logical move would be for regional countries to hold talks about the future rather than being a hostage to the past,” the top diplomat said.

“The first year when I became [foreign] minister, I asked late Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal whether he wanted us to exchange grievances about the past, or whether he wanted to air his grievances against us,” said Zarif.

“I told him ‘we have more grievances than you, but we can talk about the future. We a lot to say to each other about the future,’” said the Iranian foreign minister. Zarif said Yemen didn’t use to be gripped by war at that time, and that many more things could have been done. “I think if regional countries come to realize that the Americans will not stand by them and only want to milk them, then it would be possible to reach a solution and agreement in the region. This is our proposal to the regional countries, too,” he said.

He said the U.S., like Israel, seeks to create a security situation in Iran.

“The U.S. is not sympathetic toward Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and others, either,” he said.

Asked whether Donald Trump has any chances of winning a second term as U.S. president in the upcoming election, Zarif said, “The biggest mistake in humanities is to make predictions, especially with regards to political issues, especially under changing and dangerous circumstances.”

“But I want to predict that Trump’s chances of winning is more than 50%,” he said.

However, Zarif noted that Trump’s chances of emerging victorious in the forthcoming election have seriously decreased compared to four or five months ago. Zarif said Trump has 35-percent voting base in the U.S. society which has not changed yet, and as long as this base remains constant, there is still a chance of him being reelected.

“Of course, Trump has made many mistakes. In the foreign policy arena, he has not had a single case of success,” the top Iranian diplomat said.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Is the U.S. Condition Really Critical?

Almost one month has passed since a black man, George Floyd, was murdered by the police in Minneapolis and with the outbreak of protests in this city, the sleeping sorrows in American people have turned into cry and it is going to get out of control. The American society is not all black but in the current condition that the media in line with the West try to show the protests an anti-racism one, the number of the white who have joined the protests is on the rise and the protests are now limited to racism and discrimination.

In the U.S., racism has kicked off since the slavery era and today it has expanded to the gap between poverty and wealth. Even in this current protest and unrest condition that world people are anticipating any moment to hear fresh news like announcement of self-autonomy like what is happening in Seattle, the two almost ruling political parties in the U.S. went on conducting polls. In fact, holding such polls is just aimed at distracting the public minds from what they really are after. The U.S. research center Navigator has been able to rush to help the capitalists and industrialists in the U.S. in critical periods. The institute in two of its latest researches say, “88 percent of American people believe that their country is in critical condition and they blame Donald Trump and the White House’s inefficiency. At the same time, the Democrats with 96 percent and the black people with 90 percent believe that condition in the U.S. is critical and this crisis cannot be easily curbed.”

This research institute has published the result of another poll conducted in the worst political and social condition in which respondents had been asked with this question which political party you agree the Republican or the Democrat. Hence, by creating such a distraction, 55 percent of the respondents to the question said they preferred the arrival of a new management and supported the Democrat candidate while 39 percent voted for the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, and 8 percent said that they preferred not to answer at this stage. Likely, they are waiting to see what will happen and what will be the fate of the people’s uprising in the U.S.

This is while after the murder of Floyd, people’s reaction to his death in different cities in the U.S. has been on the rise and we witness tougher reactions from Trump regarding the protestors. In these years, that according to 90 percent of American people, the country has experienced different types of crises, several issues have worried them. The White House’s repeated lies have destroyed people’s trust.

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U.S.-Indicted Dealmaker for Venezuela’s Maduro Detained

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - A Colombian businessman indicted by U.S. authorities as the chief money launderer for Nicolas Maduro’s regime in Venezuela has been detained in the African island archipelago of Cape Verde.

Alex Saab was detained on June 12 as his San Marino-registered jet made a refueling stop in Cape Verde on its way from Caracas to Iran.

U.S. Justice Department spokeswoman Nicole Navas Oxman said on June 13 that Saab was arrested in Cape Verde on an Interpol red notice.

Maria Dominguez, Saab’s U.S.-based attorney, confirmed his arrest. The United States has no extradition treaty with Cape Verde and it was not immediately clear what would happen next.

The U.S. government accuses Saab of being the front man for a vast network of money laundering and corruption in Venezuela through shell companies in the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Hong Kong, Panama, Colombia, and Mexico. The U.S. Justice Department in July 2019 indicted Saab and another businessman for bribing Venezuelan officials and diverting some \$350 million to overseas accounts.

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Establishment of Public Libraries on Agenda

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has highlighted his administration's efforts to deal with the economic consequences of the coronavirus outbreak, pointing to schemes to protect the livelihood of people and prevent price hikes.

Addressing a Sunday session of the Administration's Economic Headquarters, President Rouhani said the cabinet's top priority in addressing the economic repercussions of coronavirus is to protect the livelihood and economy of the families, particularly the vulnerable groups.

He also noted that the problems created by the novel coronavirus pandemic could be addressed with serious cooperation from the people, saying popular partnership is the most effective help in dealing with the economic challenges and shocks.

Denouncing the harsh and inhumane sanctions that have been imposed on Iran amid the COVID-19 outbreak, President Rouhani said, "Fortunately, the administration has carefully devised plans since the outbreak of the disease to tackle the coronavirus economic problems, and has tried to withstand such difficult situation vigorously by formulating special policies and with reliance on people."

Provincial Cooperation Can Boost Iran-Kazakhstan Trade Ties



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Head for International Affairs of Iran's Chamber of Commerce believes bolstering trade through strengthening logistic centers in ports, developing the extra-territorial cultivation, purchase and use of frigate-containers and ro-ro (roll-on/roll-off) ships by the private sectors can boost the trade between Iran and Kazakhstan.

During the videoconference meeting on facilitating trade between Iran and Kazakhstan which was held yesterday, participants reviewed the latest developments in the borders of Iran and Kazakhstan and existing problems, and they presented some solutions to remove transit problem and hurdles for imports and exports.

Mr. Karbasi pointed to the slogan of the year and emphasized that materialization of surge in production depends on exports. He expressed hope that with the existing potentials, the trade volume between Iran and Kazakhstan would touch one billion dollars.

He said due to the closure of land borders via Turkmenistan, most of Iran's exports faced problems and the only channel for exchange of goods was the Caspian Sea and northern ports of Iran and Kazakhstan's Aktau Port. He added that Aktau Port has its own problems regarding loading, berth and unloading and after reopening of the land border via Sarakhs border checkpoint, now trucks can take the exports to Kazakhstan but shortage of frigate-containers has created headache for land and marine transports.

He urged Iranian companies active in technical and engineering services to open offices or to get license for cooperation in Kazakhstan.

Karbasi then offered some suggestions for boosting trade relation between Iran and Kazakhstan, saying that provincial cooperation can help the bilateral ties to be strengthened. He also said strengthening the logistic centers for goods in ports of both states, developing extra-territorial cultivation, and use of frigate-containers and ro-ro ships by the private sector can bolster bilateral ties between Tehran and Astana.

Meanwhile Iran's envoy to Kazakhstan Majid Saber, for his part, said that Kazakhstan is the second biggest country among the former Soviet Union countries and it is the biggest land-locked country in the world.

He said after the Coronavirus pandemic, Kazakhstan was the only country which did not stop its trade with Iran because in the first days, Iran assured the Kazakhs of observing all health protocols in the marine transportation.

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the hearing session of the Parliament held on Sunday said that establishing the public libraries are among the most important agenda of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Seyed Abbas Salehi went on to say that some 365 libraries, including 5 central libraries have been made in recent years.

He also added that so far hundreds of conferences and book reading

competitions have been held in Iran.

Referring to approaches taken by the ministry under Hassan Rouhani's government, Salehi also elaborated that some 30,000 book reading clubs with some 300,000 members around the country are actively running all across Iran the fact which he referred to as one of the achievements of the ministry to development book reading culture as well as promoting the publication based economy.



The president said the main priority in the administration's economic plans is to control prices and supply the basic means of life.

"Strict monitoring and control as well as timely reaction to price hikes are among the major duties of all authorities, producers, guilds and salespeople, and shortcoming and failure in this regard is by no means acceptable," President Rouhani noted.

The president also unveiled grand plans to resolve the housing market problems, saying economic policies have been developed to regulate and control the flow of liquidity that may disrupt the housing market.

In April, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei gave permission for withdrawing €1 billion from the National Development Fund of Iran to battle against the novel coronavirus and handle the consequences of the disease.

Austria Eager to Boost Parliamentary Ties with Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The president of the National Council of Austria expressed the European country's willingness to broaden parliamentary relations with Iran.

Wolfgang Sobotka sent a message to Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf to congratulate him on his new post.

Parliaments are the beating hearts of democracy and have a key role in societies, the presiding officer of the lower house of the Austrian Parliament said in the message.

Highlighting the significant role that international interaction between the parliaments could play in building trust and de-escalating tensions, Sobotka expressed hope for the expansion of "friendly parliamentary relations" between Iran and Austria during Qalibaf's tenure.

In September 2015, former President of Austria Heinz Fischer came to Tehran for an official visit to become the first head of a Western state visiting Iran for many years.

Late last month, Iranian lawmakers elected Qalibaf, a former mayor of Tehran, as the new speaker of the Parliament.

Iran Unveils Capsule Hotel

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The pilot model of capsule hotels was unveiled in the presence of Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali Asghar Munesan.

This kind of hotel imported to Iran by Touring and Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran and is supposed to be used in different provinces.

Addressing the ceremony, Munesan said these hotels can be used as a new form of residential areas in the tourism field.

Elaborating on the advantages of these hotels, he said they can cause development in eco-camps and can be used at airports, terminals, and railway stations.

Meanwhile, the director of Touring and Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hadi Sajjadi-rad said these hotels will be used as a new form of residential areas for tourists.

In the first phase, 200 capsule hotels will be installed in Tehran, Mashad, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Tabriz.

A capsule hotel is also known in the Western world as a pod hotel is a type of hotel developed in Japan that features many small bed-sized rooms known as capsules.

Capsule hotels provide cheap, basic overnight accommodation for guests who do not require or who cannot afford larger, more expensive rooms offered by more conventional hotels.

Iran Suspends Import of Leather Goods From Turkey

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran fully suspended the import of leather goods from Turkey in May 2020, Turkey's Ministry of Trade told Trend.

The export of leather goods from Turkey to Iran went down by 84.93 percent from January through May 2020 compared to the same period of 2019, making up \$1.09 million.

Iran may increase the import of leather goods from Turkey in June 2020.

From January through May 2020, export of leather goods from Turkey to the world markets decreased by 28.7 percent compared to the same period of 2019 and amounted to \$530.3 million.

The export of leather goods from Turkey made up 0.9 percent of the country's total export volume over the reporting period.

Turkey exported the leather goods worth \$61.4 million to the world markets in May 2020, which is 62.2 percent less compared to the same month of 2019. Meanwhile, Turkey's leather export amounted to 0.6 percent of the country's total export volume in May 2020.

Turkey exported the leather goods worth \$1.4 billion from May 2019 through May 2020.

Suspects Nabbed in Iran for Arson

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's Police chief said a number of suspects have been arrested in connection with recent acts of arson. Asked by reporters about a recent wave of suspicious fires in various parts of Iran, Police Commander Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari said on Sunday that the law enforcement and other organizations in charge have taken action to handle the issue.

"Good measures have been taken in this regard," he said.

"Some of the fires have started unintentionally and a number of others deliberately, and a number of (suspected) individuals have been identified and arrested in connection with it," the general added.

A series of mysterious blazes and wildfires in the past couple of weeks across Iran have raised concerns among the authorities and citizens.

Tehran's Fire Department announced on June 13 that a big fire at a flower market in the capital's Khavaran Road has been contained. There were no casualties, but 32 flower stands were destroyed.

Veteran Iranian Actor Keshavarz Passes Away at 90

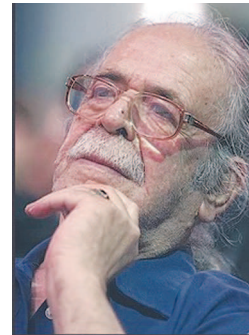
IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Veteran Iranian cinema and theater actor Mohammad Ali Keshavarz passed way yesterday at 92.

According to reports, Keshavarz died after months of challenge with his kidney problem which led to problem for his breathing.

Keshavarz was born on April 15, 1930. He graduated from Art School for Acting. He started stage acting in 1960 and began film acting with Night of Hunchback (1964, Farokh Ghaffari). He was one of the most experienced and prominent actors of Iranian cinema. He has also appeared in a few television series.

Mother, Kamalolmolk, Naseruddin Shah and the Condemned are some of his brilliant works. He was last seen in movie Ali Akbar Moalem Damghani in 2010.



Iran Records Highest COVID-19 Daily Death Toll in Two Months



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health Ministry spokeswoman says 107 people have died of the novel coronavirus in the past 24 hours, the highest number of daily fatalities in two months.

Sima-Sadat Lari said on Sunday the new deaths increase the overall fatalities to 8,837.

She also confirmed 2,472 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of cases to 187,427.

So far, she said, 148,674 patients have recovered from the disease and been discharged from hospitals across the country.

However, 2,781 are currently in severe conditions of the disease, the spokeswoman added.

She also noted that 1,244,074 COVID-19 tests have been taken so far in Iran.

According to Lari, West Azarbaijan, Hormozgan, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Bushehr provinces are considered as red zones.

Tehran May Cancel Int'l Quran Contest

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Mehdi Qarasheikhlu, head of the Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Organization's Quranic Affairs Center, noted that the competition had been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak.

It is possible that this year's competition will be cancelled altogether, he said, adding that a decision will be made on the issue next week.

The official added that discussing cancellation of the national Quran competition is also on the agenda.

The 37th International Quran Competition of the Islamic Republic of Iran had been scheduled to be held on April 10-14 but was delayed given the concerns about spread of COVID-19.

Iran's Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization annually organizes the international Quranic event with the participation of Quran activists from various countries.

Quran reciters and memorizers from over 80 countries took part in the 36th edition, held in Tehran in April 2019.

The coronavirus outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China, has infected over 7.8 million people around the world and killed more than 432,000.

Fakoor Engineering Company's solution for the development of the steel chain

Localization of Pelletizing Knowledge and Technology

Iran News - Perhaps no one would have thought that Iranian engineers, despite limitations due to Coronavirus and tough foreign sanctions, could take significant steps in the field of mining by localizing knowledge and technology in the field of pelletizing as one of the basic needs of the country; But the launch of the Sangam pelletizing plant showed that even in the face of severe sanctions, the country's specialists can be taken into account. At present, given that Iran has invested heavily in iron ore and steel, our country desperately needs pellets as the country's main steel needs, as well as the goal of producing 55 million tons of steel by 2025. Therefore, pellet production in the current situation is of great importance for the development of the country's steel chain and ultimately job creation and economic growth. But for this purpose, due to the escalation of international sanctions, obstacles have been created in the field of concentrate and pellet production, which will certainly make it difficult to achieve the development goals of the steel chain. Therefore, in such a situation, what can save the country from the pressure of sanctions and economic backwardness, goes back to the ability of Iranian engineers to localize knowledge and technology in areas such as pelletizing. In this regard, Fakoor Sanat Tehran Engineering Company, with its research in the most equipped stone and iron pellet research institutes in the Middle East, has been able to take fundamental steps in the field of localization of pelletizing knowledge and technology in the country with the opening of iron ore processing plants. Accordingly, we have recently witnessed the opening of industrial and mineral propulsion projects without the presence of foreign engineers in the country. Thus, Sangam Steel and Iron Ore Concentrate and Sanandad Development Pipeline Factories were inaugurated on Thursday in the presence of the head of the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade, Khodadad Gharibpour, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Imidro, and Alireza Razm Hosseini, Governor of Khorasan Razavi. Following that, at least 2.5 million tons of pelletizing of the country will be provided by Sanabad Inclusive Development Factory.

The path of development has not stopped

Accordingly, the head of the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade said that the opening of industrial and mineral propulsion projects in the toughest sanctions has a clear message for the enemies. The path of development has not stopped. Hossein Modarres Khiaabani stated: "The operation of these large industrial and mining projects, which have a progress of more than 80%, will be carried out in line with the implementation of the government's policies to speed up the implementation of semi-finished projects and projects until September 1400." The Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade, on behalf of the hard-working society of the production sector and the large family of the country's industry, has made a coherent plan to put the projects into operation on a weekly basis in the form of a "production, continuity of hope" scan. Accordingly, until September 1400 and the end of the twelfth government, significant economic, social and security dimensions of these plans will be given to the people. He added: "These 200 industrial projects have had an investment of 170,000 billion tomans, along with which the downstream and related industries will also prosper." The volume of pellet production is 54 million tons. According to Modares Khiaabani, the country's total steel production has doubled during the activities of the 11th and 12th governments; In the sense that at the beginning of the 11th government, the country's steel production was 14.5 million tons, and today, when 28 million tons of steel is planned for production in 2020, with other projects that will start again in 2020, the capacity Production will increase by another five million tons. Accordingly, Iran's steel production capacity will reach 55 million tons. The head of the Ministry of Industry, Mines

and Trade pointed out: Simultaneously with the production plan of Sangam concentrate implemented by Mobarakeh Steel, the production of 2.5 million tons of Sanabad pelletizing with the investment of Khuzestan Steel and the collection of banks' pension funds was inaugurated. Therefore, the volume of pellet production in the country will reach 54 million tons. He said: "These mining projects are located in the Sangam complex in the easternmost point of the country and will provide the country with an unparalleled capacity, especially since this complex is located in Khaf and in one of the border points." In addition to increasing the possibility of cross-border exchanges and foreign trade, these projects affect the dimensions of people's lives in terms of economic and social spheres, and in a way guarantee the security of the east of the country. According to Modares Khiaabani, the opening of the projects will take place at a time when we are under international restrictions and the most severe global sanctions. The completion of these projects and their hot and cold testing stages has been done only by capable Iranian experts, engineers and youth, without the presence of even a single foreign director and expert.

Sangan position in the steel industry chain

Also, Khodadad Gharibpour, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Imidro, said during the inauguration of the two factories: Sanandad's comprehensive development pelletization reached its nominal capacity within a month, while this is usually done within a year. He added: "Sangan attracts a total of \$ 1.9 billion by launching the rest of the iron ore processing plants." Gharibpour emphasized that the owners of Sanabad pelletizing technology were surprised by the launch of this factory with the limitations due to Coronavirus without the presence of foreign experts. He also announced that another plant for the production of iron ore concentrate will be commissioned in Sangam Complex by the end of the year. Regarding the Sangam position in the steel industry chain, the Deputy Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade said: "Creating 17.5 million tons of concentrate production capacity and 15 million tons of pellets in Sangam in the coming years will provide food production of 10 million tons of steel." Referring to the importance of exploration in mining development, he said: "With the implementation of new explorations in Sangam, the amount of iron ore reserves in this area will exceed one billion tons." The Deputy Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade emphasized: The commissioning of Sanabad pellet plant, like Aluminum-Jonoob, is a product of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Demonstrating the engineering power of executive companies

It can be said that the opening and commissioning of the 2.5 million ton unit of Sanabad comprehensive development pelletizing industry paved the way for the country's steel and iron ore production jump. However, in addition to playing a key role in the development of the steel industry, the project is a prime example of the potential of Iranian engineers as well as engineering companies. This is because the Shahid Qasem Soleimani pelletizing unit has been set up in general by local experts in the face of increasing sanctions in order to increase self-sufficiency in the steel industry. Although European and Chinese equipment has been used in these factories, what is worth considering is that the design of the factory as well as the installation and commissioning of all the equipment has been done by Iranian companies in the field of implementation. It also plays an important role in water extraction and environmental protection of mining companies. Meanwhile, the launch of the Sanabad Comprehensive Development Company's development plan is very effective in preventing the sale of mineral raw materials. It also creates direct employment in the city of Khaf.



FAM's 30% Share in The Development of Pelletizing in The Country



Mohammad Vahid Sheikhzadeh * - Although Iran's name has not yet been included in the list of developed countries and economic superpowers, it is known as the world's tenth largest steel producer due to its rich iron ore resources, good manpower and gas potential. In other words, although Iran has not been able to grow in proportion to its capacities, it has the potential to make significant economic growth for the country with the development of steel. Accordingly, three billion tons of extractable iron ore resources have been identified in the country so far as a raw material needed for the steel industry, which can meet the country's needs for the next 20 years. Also, achieving the production of 55 million tons of steel by 1400 is on the agenda as one of the most important development priorities of the country. For this purpose, basic measures should be taken in the field of pellet production and iron ore concentrate to meet the needs of steel units. In the current situation, although steel production has doubled compared to the previous government, it has reached 28 million tons, but with the aim of producing 55 million tons, steel is still a long way off. Therefore, the localization of knowledge and technology of pelletizing in the country has been considered by some engineering companies in the field of implementation, such as Fakoor Sanat Tehran. In this way, even in the face of severe sanctions, the necessary steps must be taken to design the plant, as well as to install and operate the equipment. As a result, in addition to meeting the country's pellet needs, steps can be taken to create jobs and help deprived areas of the country. Accordingly, Sangam region in Khorasan Razavi province and on the border of Afghanistan with 30% of the country's iron ore reserves has been considered by prominent engineering companies in the field of installation and commissioning in this field. With the participation of FAM Sangam, the company "Fakoor Sanat - Asphalt Tous - Special Machinery", 12.5 million tons of pellets will be delivered to the country's steel companies this year. Thus, we witnessed the opening of Sanabad Comprehensive Development Pelletizing Plant with a production capacity of 2.5 million tons of pellets. Meanwhile, by September of this year, Tous Asphalt Plant has opened a 5 million ton pelletizing plant in Goharzamin and also Fakoor Sanat has inaugurated a 5 million ton pelletizing plant in three wells near Bafgh, Yazd. They will provide a significant role in the field of job creation. For example, Sanabad pelletizing, with an investment of about 2,000 billion tomans, creates jobs for 2,000 people directly and indirectly in the Khaf region. It is noteworthy that the steel chain also plays a key role in meeting the needs. One of the main points of the 2.5 million ton Sangam pelletizing project is that LC, or its documentary credit, was opened in September 2015 and after four and a half years, it has reached a production capacity of 110%. The plant, funded by China's NFC, uses pelletizing rotary kiln, pelletizing, and its advantage is that its technology and technical knowledge are completely indigenous and implemented by Fakoor Sanat. NETC China has been a leader in pelletizing technology in parts of the plant's technology, but the design, engineering and technology of the plant has been done by Iranian engineers. In fact, the design of this factory is not only very special but also has good access. It is also one of the few projects that has exceeded its nominal capacity within a month. In other projects, however, it usually takes about six months to a year for production to reach the desired capacity. Another feature of the project is that much of the plant's equipment, including mixers and special refractories, was purchased from Germany during the sanctions. In other words, this factory is a combination of precision European equipment with a 20% share and European-Chinese equipment with a 30% share, as well as a 50% share in the construction of the factory in Iran. As mentioned, this factory has been put into operation by Iranian experts. It is noteworthy that with the participation of Fam, other development measures are being implemented, including the Persian Gulf water transfer project in different parts of the country. In fact, with the cooperation of these three contracting companies, namely Fakoor Sanat, Asphalt Tus and Special Machinery, which specialize in construction and construction, large projects will be carried out in the country, many of which are in the field of pellet production and iron ore concentrate. Thus, this year alone, the need for 12.5 million tons of pellets in the country will be met through these companies. This shows that these three companies, with a production of 12.5 million tons of pellets out of 54 million tons of pellets required by the country, play a 30% share in the production of pellets. What should not be forgotten is that with the participation of Fam, about 70 factories of the country's concentrate have been designed and launched so far and have played a serious role in the development of the steel industry chain. In the field of pelletizing, about 40% of the country's factories have been developed. Therefore, based on what has been said, it can be said that with the participation of specialized companies and knowledge-based companies in the field of engineering, very good measures have been taken in the field of localization of knowledge and technology of pelletizing technology. Certainly, Iran will be closer to producing 55 million tons of steel.

* CEO of Fakoor Sanat Tehran Engineering Company

China Sentences Australian To Death for Drug Trafficking

BEIJING (AFP) - An Australian national has been sentenced to death in China for drug trafficking, in a ruling that could further inflame tensions between Beijing and Canberra.

The man, named in Chinese pinyin as “Kamu Jielaisibi” and identified by Australian media as Cam Gillespie, was handed the death penalty by Guangzhou Intermediate People’s Court on Wednesday, according to a notice posted on the court website.

The notice revealed no details about the defendant besides his Australian nationality.



Protests After Black Man Killed by Police in Atlanta

ATLANTA (Dispatches) - Demonstrators have taken to the streets in Atlanta in protest against the fatal shooting by police of a Black man who had fallen asleep in his car while waiting in line at a fast food drive-thru south of downtown.

The Friday night incident comes at a time of heightened tension over police brutality and calls for reforms across the United States following the May 25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis after a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.



Lebanon Protesters Call On Gov’t to Resign



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Angry protesters in Lebanon took to the streets in the capital, Beirut, and other cities on Saturday calling for the government’s resignation as the country sinks deeper into economic distress.

The protests come after two days of rallies spurred by a dramatic collapse of the local currency against the dollar. Some of those rallies degenerated into violence, including attacks on private banks and shops.

The local currency, pegged to the dollar for nearly 30 years, has been on a downward trajectory for weeks, losing more than 60 percent of its value. But the dramatic collapse this week deepened public despair over the already troubled economy.

Lebanese media reported that the exchange rate had tumbled to 6,000 per dollar on the black market early on Friday, compared with the official peg of 1,507, in place since 1997.

Lebanon is heavily dependent on imports, and the dollar and local currency have been used interchangeably for years.

The unparalleled economic and financial crises are proving a major challenge to the government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab, who took office earlier this year after his predecessor resigned amid nationwide anti-government protests.

Soon after taking office, Diab was faced with handling the coronavirus pandemic, which put the country in lockdown for months, further compounding the crisis. Diab’s government is supported by the powerful armed group Hezbollah and its allies, but has already been weakened by the economic crisis.

In a speech on Saturday, Diab urged the public to be patient, saying there were many political hurdles, including from rivals he said sought to undermine his government. Diab offered no solutions to the crisis, nor did he name his opponents, but said his government is working to fight corruption and uphold the power of the state.

For the protesters on Saturday, many of them members of organized political parties, Diab’s government has failed to handle the crisis.

Neemat Badreddin, a political activist, described the government as captive to the interests of political groups and not the public. “This current government proved to be a failure,” said Badreddin, wearing a face mask featuring the Lebanese flag with its green cedar tree in the centre.

“We want a new government ... we want stability and we want to be able to live without begging or without people having to migrate.”

Protesters in Beirut carried a banner that read “There is an alternative”.

In the southern city of Sidon, some directed their wrath at the central bank governor. One protester raised a banner that called him the “protector of all thieves in Lebanon”.

In the northern city of Tripoli, army troops forcefully dispersed dozens of protesters who had blocked the road preventing trucks from moving forward, according to videos posted online.

The protesters allege the trucks were smuggling goods to Syria - a common complaint in Lebanon as the neighboring country grapples with its own economic hardships. Later, Lebanon’s customs authorities said in a statement that the trucks were transporting UN aid destined to war-torn Syria.

The Lebanese Red Cross said it treated nine people wounded in Tripoli.

After an emergency cabinet meeting on Friday to address the crisis, the government announced that the central bank would inject fresh dollars into the market to prop up the Lebanese pound - a measure that many say is likely to offer only temporary relief.

Paris Marchers Decry Racism; Far Right Rallies in London

PARIS (AP) - Paris riot police fired tear gas Saturday to disperse a largely peaceful but unauthorized protest against police brutality and entrenched racism, as France’s minorities increasingly push back against a national doctrine of colorblindness that has failed to eradicate discrimination.

In London, far-right activists and soccer rowdies scuffled with police while trying to “guard” historical monuments that have been targeted recently by anti-racism protesters for their links to slavery and British colonialism.

The events in the two European capitals reflected the global emotion unleashed by the death of George Floyd in the United States and the ensuing reckoning with racial injustice and historical wrongs. In both cities, protesters defied restrictions on public gatherings imposed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.



Anti-Racism Protesters Clash With Police in Paris

PARIS (Reuters) - Riot police fired tear gas and charged at pockets of violent protesters at an anti-racism rally in central Paris on Saturday, as a wave of anger continued to sweep the world following the death of African American George Floyd.

The protesters gathered in Place de la Republique, chanting “No justice, no peace” beneath the statue of Marianne, who personifies the French Republic. One banner held by the crowd read: “I hope I don’t get killed for being black today”.

Police refused organisers permission to march to the Opera House. The first clashes erupted after three hours of peaceful gathering. Some protesters hurled bottles, paving stones and bicycle wheels at police lines and one Orange outlet was vandalised. Organisers urged protesters with children to leave.

The outrage generated by Floyd’s death in Minneapolis last month has resonated in France, in particular in deprived city suburbs where rights groups say that accusations of brutal treatment by French police of residents of often immigrant background remain largely unaddressed.

Assa Traore, sister of 24-year-old Adama Traore, who died near Paris in 2016 after police detained him, addressed Saturday’s protest. “The death of George Floyd has a strong echo in the death in France of my little brother,” she said. “What’s happening in the United States is happening in France. Our brothers are dying.”

Traore’s family say he was asphyxiated when three officers held him down with the weight of their bodies. Authorities say the cause of his death is unclear.

Earlier this week, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner acknowledged there were “proven suspicions of racism” within French law enforcement agencies.

His remarks drew condemnation from police unions, which said officers were being scapegoated for deep-rooted social ills. Police have held their own protests in cities across France this week.

Ahead of the protest, in the ethnically diverse Paris suburb of Belleville, one man of Algerian descent said he had been the victim of police violence but he doubted institutional racism ran through the force.

France, Italy, Germany and Netherlands Sign Vaccine Deal

PARIS (Dispatches) - Pharma giant AstraZeneca struck a deal Saturday with Europe’s Inclusive Vaccines Alliance to supply up to 400 million doses of an experimental Covid-19 vaccine, as efforts to boost manufacturing capacity continue at pace.

The alliance, which was forged by Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands to speed up production of a vaccine, is set to take delivery of the vaccine being tested by the University of Oxford by the end of 2020. The agreement with AstraZeneca also aims to make the vaccine available to other European countries that wish to take part. The cost is expected to be offset by funding from the governments.

“This agreement will ensure that hundreds of millions of Europeans have access to Oxford University’s vaccine following approval,” AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot said. “With our European supply chain due to begin production soon, we hope to make the vaccine available widely and rapidly.”

The agreement is the latest in a series to make the vaccine — even though it is not certain it will work. But so desperate is the need that scaling up of manufacturing continues despite the risk.

The Anglo-Swedish company recently completed similar agreements with Britain, the United States the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance for 700 million doses. A license also has been agreed with the Serum Institute of India for another 1 billion doses.

The vaccine was developed by Oxford University’s Jenner Institute, working with the Oxford Vaccine Group.

Testing of the experimental Covid-19 vaccine began in healthy volunteers in Britain in April with over 1,000 people aged 18 to 55. Another round with 10,000 volunteers began last month.

Other companies, including Moderna and Sanofi, are racing to develop and produce a vaccine against the new coronavirus, a step experts say will be crucial to allowing countries to ease their lockdowns and restrictions on public life.



Nepal Parliament Approves New Map as Land Row With India Escalates

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - The lower house of Nepal’s parliament on Saturday approved a new map of the country, including areas disputed with India, the speaker of the national legislature said.

The move signals a hardening of Nepal’s position over a decades-long border row that has strained ties between the South Asian neighbors.

India’s foreign ministry rejected Nepal’s new map, arguing that the addition of Indian territory is not based on historical fact or evidence.

“It is also violative of our current understanding to hold talks on outstanding boundary issues,” foreign ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava said in a statement.

Nepal published its revised map in May after India inaugurated a 80 km (50 miles) road connecting its northern Uttarakhand state with Lipulekh on the border with Tibet that passes through the land Nepal says belongs to it.

The map shows a sliver of land on the northwest tip of Nepal as the Nepali territory.

Agni Prasad Sapkota, Speaker of Nepal’s House of Representatives, said the new map was approved by 258 out of 275 members of parliament, exceeding the required two thirds majority. There were no votes against.

The map must also be passed by the National Assembly, the parliament’s upper chamber, and approved by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari before it becomes a part of the constitution.

In the capital city Kathmandu, dozens of people painted the new map on a street and lit candles on it in celebration of Saturday’s decision.

Standing outside parliament after the vote, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli held out the prospect of talks with India to resolve the dispute.

“It is a good thing that there is unity,” Oli told reporters. “Now there will be talks (with India).”



Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

Mahmoodieh (\$4000)
400sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
fireplace
pkg, & F.F

Kamranieh Villa (\$8000)
2000sq.m
6bdrs, S/p
Sauna, J
green yard
Terrace, S/q
elegantly Furn

Darrous Apts
140sq.m, 2bdrs (\$1600)
200sq.m, 3bdrs (\$2200)
300sq.m, 4bdrs (\$3200)
All with S/p, S, J, & F.F

Farmanieh (\$2000)
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
L.balcony
pkg, F.F

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

Sa'adat abad (\$1400)
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OPEC+ Panel to Discuss Compliance With Oil Production Cuts

LONDON (Dispatches) - An OPEC+ monitoring panel will meet next week to discuss the ongoing record production cuts to see how laggards in compliance are doing with making up for flouting quotas, but will not be making any decisions regarding the collective cut that was just extended through the end of July, five OPEC+ sources told Reuters on Friday. The Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), which includes members of OPEC and of the non-OPEC group of nations part of the

deal, is meeting on Thursday, June 18, as part of a schedule of monthly meetings until the end of the year to discuss the situation on the oil market and the compliance with the cuts. OPEC+ agreed on Saturday to extend the record production cuts of 9.7 million bpd by one month through the end of July, contingent on all countries in the pact complying 100 percent with their quotas and compensating for lack of compliance by overachieving in the cuts in July, August, and September.



Conte Calls for Courage to Save Italy at Talks With EU, IMF

ROME (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte called Saturday for a “courageous plan” when he launched virtual talks with EU and IMF leaders to rescue Italy’s economy and society from the “unprecedented shock” triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Conte said the plan was needed to surmount the nation’s crisis as Italian opposition figures shunned the hastily organized and roundly criticized emergency talks. European Union leaders “must show that they have understood that it is about defending mutual interests,” Conte said in an opening speech transmitted to leading executives in Brussels.

“We are in the process of living an unprecedented shock with very high human, social and economic costs,” Conte said.

The EU’s third largest economy is expected to contract by at least 8.3 percent in 2020, under the most optimistic estimate from Italy’s national statistics agency. To stimulate activity in EU countries most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the European Commission has proposed a 750-billion-euro (\$847-billion) recovery plan -- 500 billion euros in grants and 250 billion euros in loans.

Italy is expected to receive around 172 billion euros of this sum. “We must also take advantage of (the moment) to transform the crisis into an opportunity to eliminate all the obstacles that slowed (the country) down for the last 20 years,” Conte said. He said he shared European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s view that “we cannot allow ourselves to return to the pre-crisis status quo”.

The talks venue is a 17th century palace, the Casino del Bel Respiro, which Conte called a rare choice “to pay tribute to Italian beauty.

“At a time when we conceive the revival, we must make sure the whole world focuses on our country’s beauty.”

Participating remotely were Von der Leyen, the EU’s economic affairs commissioner Paolo Gentiloni, European Council President Charles Michel, a former Belgian premier as well as International Monetary Fund director Kristalina Georgieva, a Bulgarian who previously served on the European Commission, the EU executive. “This is the moment for you to develop and implement an effective recovery plan,” Von der Leyen said, adding the Commission will support Italy until recovery.

“Europe needs a strong Italy at its core,” the former German minister said. Michel, the council president whose duty is to organise EU summits, said: “By reinforcing Italy, we are also reinforcing Europe.” Despite the A-list from Europe, Italians such as far-right leader Matteo Salvini decided to sit out Conte’s conference, casting it as a media stunt designed to boost the premier’s profile.

Although his approval ratings rose during the coronavirus emergency, Conte faces questions from prosecutors over his handling of the pandemic and now confronts political challenges over the threat of deep recession.

Conte has suggested a task force headed by former Vodafone chief executive Vittorio Colao to come up with recommendations on how to get Italy’s economy back on track.

Conte said last week he wanted to unite “the country’s strongest forces” and compile the “most effective ideas” for an economic rebound following two months of lockdown. He hoped to enroll ruling majority, members of the opposition, trade unions and economic experts to draft guidelines for a recovery plan.

Proposals include digitising Italy’s onerous public administration, modernising infrastructure and restructuring the national university system, among others. But the opposition spurned Conte’s invitation and even government officials including Economy Minister Roberto Gualtieri criticised hasty plans and lack of cabinet input. Salvini seized on initial confusion, writing on Facebook on Monday that “the only certainty” was that there was a rift in the government.

“Meanwhile, thousands of Italian families have still not received a euro, the invasion of illegal immigrants has resumed unabated, appeals by the head of state to speak with the opposition are ignored,” wrote Salvini, a former deputy prime minister.

EU to Tackle Unfairly Aided Foreign Firms on EU Buying Spree

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The EU wants to crack down on foreign companies using “unfair” state subsidies to acquire EU firms, according to a European Commission proposal seen by Reuters, as part of a strategy to protect its key industries and the single market.

European Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, who will present the proposal, outlined her plan in an interview with Reuters on Tuesday, saying foreign subsidies risk fragmenting the single market and tilting the level playing field.

“There is an increasing number of incidences in which foreign subsidies appear to have facilitated the acquisition of EU undertakings, influenced other investment decisions or have distorted the market behaviour of their beneficiaries,” the EU draft said.

It cited the aluminium, steel, semiconductor, shipbuilding and automotive industries as prone to foreign subsidies such as zero-interest loans, unlimited state guarantees, zero-tax agreements or dedicated state funding.

Foreign companies seeking to buy a stake of more than 35% in EU firms which have a turnover of more than 100 million

euros would have to inform the Commission if they have received more than 10 million euros in state aid in the past three years.

Failure to do so could lead to fines or a veto of the deal, and the buyers may have to sell assets to counter any unfair advantage.

The EU proposal also targets companies operating in the bloc and benefiting from foreign subsidies to grow market share or underbid European rivals to gain footholds in strategically important markets or access to critical infrastructure.

Such companies may also have to sell assets, reduce market share or capacity, or make payments to the bloc to rebalance any distortions.

The EU draft recommends a three-year ban on foreign aided companies taking part in public procurement tenders if they receive unfair foreign subsidies.



India’s Forex Reserves Cross \$500b Mark

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India’s foreign exchange reserves rose by over \$8.223 billion during the week ended June 5 to cross the \$500 billion mark.

According to the RBI’s weekly statistical supplement, the overall forex reserves increased to \$501.703 billion from \$493.480 billion reported for the week ended May 29.

While the country’s forex reserves jumped by \$8.2 billion in the week ended June 5, 2020, since the announcement of lockdown in March, it has surged by \$31.8 billion. Hitting an all-time high of \$501.7 billion as on June 5, 2020, India has come a long way since its forex reserves of \$5.8 billion as of March 1991.

India’s forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, special drawing rights (SDRs) and India’s reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). On a weekly basis, FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged higher by \$8.422 billion to \$463.630 billion.

However, the value of the country’s gold reserves decreased by \$329 million to \$32.352 billion.

Besides, the SDR value rose by \$10 million to \$1.442 billion. The country’s reserve position with the IMF increased by \$120 million to \$4.278 billion.

The major reason for the rise in forex reserves is the rise in investment in foreign portfolio investors in Indian stocks and foreign direct investments (FDIs). Foreign investors had acquired stakes in several Indian companies in the last two months. According to the data released by RBI, while the FDI inflow stood at \$4 billion in March, it amounted to \$2.1 billion in April.

Austria Plans Coronavirus Help for Jobless, Families

ZURICH (Reuters) - The Austrian government intends to make one-off payments to jobless people and boost spending on families with children as part of measures this year to cushion the blow from the coronavirus pandemic, its coalition leaders said.

Measures to be approved at a cabinet meeting next week include payments of 450 euros (\$506) to the unemployed and 360 euros per child under 18, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and Greens party leader Werner Kogler told broadcaster ORF in interviews aired on Saturday.

In addition, the government plans to cut the lowest income tax bracket to 20% from 25% and make the change retroactive to the start of this year.

Kurz said the coalition government of conservatives and Greens would have more to say about the costs of the measures when the meeting wraps up on Tuesday.

In May the government announced an aid package of up to 38 billion euros to keep companies and the economy afloat. On Friday it almost doubled the amount of debt it plans to issue this year to a record level.

Austria plans to cut value-added tax (VAT) for restaurants and the culture sector to 5% until the end of the year to help them cope with the fallout, the government said on Friday.

Austria has had nearly 17,000 confirmed cases of infection with the virus that causes respiratory disease COVID-19 and 677 reported deaths.

Austrian economic output will shrink by 7.2% this year if there is no second coronavirus wave in the autumn, but even a resurgence milder than the first outbreak would deepen that to 9.2%, the country’s central bank said this month.

French Economy to Take Two Years to Recover From Slump

PARIS (Dispatches) - France’s economy will take two years to recover from its worst post-war recession, triggered this year by the coronavirus outbreak, the central bank (CB) said.

The eurozone’s second-biggest economy is on course to contract 10.3% this year, before it bounces back with growth of 6.9% in 2021 and 3.9% in 2022, the Bank of France forecast.

Nearly one million jobs are likely to be shed this year and unemployment could climb to a new record of 11.8% in the first half of 2021.

The central bank said the outlook could be brighter if the virus is quickly brought under control, while a second wave of infections could plunge the economy into a 16% downturn this year followed by growth of only 6% in 2021 and 4% in 2022.

The forecasts did not take into account the potential impact of a recovery plan that the government aims to announce in the coming months.

President Emmanuel Macron put France under one of the most stringent lockdowns in Europe in mid-March, effectively shutting down large swathes of the economy until restrictions began to be lifted on May 11. As of the end of May, economic activity was still running 17% below normal levels, though up from the 32% reduction seen during the first two weeks of lockdown in March, the central bank estimated. Business surveys suggested activity could get back to less than 12% of normal levels this month, it added.

Nonetheless, the time spent under lockdown meant that the economy probably contracted 15% in the second quarter from the previous three months, when it had already slumped 5.3%, the Bank of France estimated. France will spend an extra billion euros on a programme to boost apprenticeships in French companies as part of new measures to soften the impact of the coronavirus crisis on employment.

The extra state support for the apprentice scheme - one of the government’s unsung successes before the crisis hit - was announced after President Emmanuel Macron met with trade unions and employers at the Elysee palace. “We had historic growth in apprenticeships. We can’t sacrifice the young generation,” Labour Minister Muriel Penicaud said after the talks.

State support for hiring apprentices under 18 years of age will be raised to 5,000 euros from 4,125 euros and for apprentices 18 years or over to 8,000 euros from 5,125 euros.

France is keen to avoid a wave of layoffs and is also betting on a German-inspired scheme to financially encourage firms to keep workers on their books, reducing their hours instead of cutting jobs.

“What’s at stake is to save jobs and skills,” Penicaud said, adding that the terms of the new scheme will be unveiled within two weeks.

Keeping workers in their jobs, even with reduced hours, would help preserve skills and allow for a quicker rebound once demand for French products picks up again, presidential advisers say. Macron moved quickly to transform the job market in the first years of his presidency, making it easier to hire and fire workers in a bid to cut an unemployment rate that had historically remained high even in good times.

Lawmakers Label British Airways National Disgrace Over Jobs



LONDON (Reuters) - British Airways was labelled a “national disgrace” by lawmakers for its treatment of employees on Saturday, adding to pressure on the airline as it juggles job cuts and new quarantine rules.

Britain’s Transport Select Committee said that BA and its parent company IAG (ICAGL) were trying to take advantage of the coronavirus crisis to cut 12,000 jobs and downgrade the terms and conditions of other employees.

“It is unacceptable that a company would seek to drive this level of change under the cover of a pandemic,” Conservative lawmaker Huw Merriman, who chairs the committee, said in a report published on Saturday.

In response, a spokeswoman for the airline said: “We will do everything in our power to ensure that British Airways can survive and sustain the maximum number of jobs consistent with the new reality of a changed airline industry in a severely weakened global economy.”

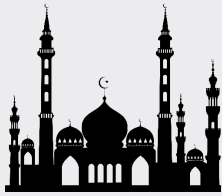
BA is engaged in a battle with unions and in legal action against the government over its quarantine policy, which requires all international arrivals to self-isolate for 14 days.

The lawmakers said in the report that quarantine would damage the economy and called for the government to replace it with more targeted measures, such as travel corridors between low-risk countries.

“It is imperative that the UK Government finds a way to get aviation back on its feet,” Merriman said.

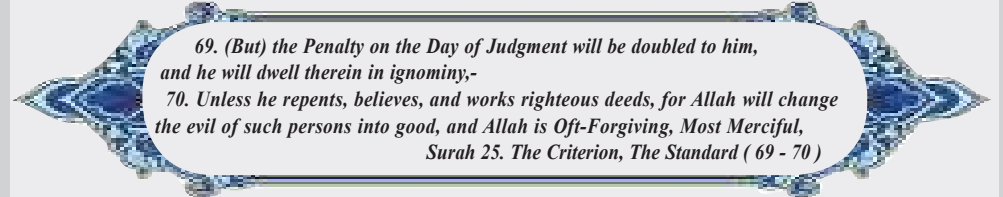
BA, along with competitor airlines easyJet and Ryanair, launched legal action on Friday to try to overturn the quarantine policy. All three have announced job cuts, but so far only BA has been singled out for its tactics.

BA, which is burning through 20 million pounds (\$25.2 million) a day and has no revenues, is preparing for what most airlines and travel experts expect to be a smaller travel market after in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:43
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:01
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48



Pakistan Unveils \$44b 2020-21 National Budget

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The Pakistan government unveiled its budget for the fiscal 2020-21 amid an economic slowdown and challenges triggered by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday, Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Hammad Azhar, presented the budget of 7,294.9 billion PKR (\$44 billion) for the upcoming fiscal year starting from July 2020 to June 2021 at the lower house of Parliament after approval by the cabinet, reports Xinhua news agency.

In his speech in Parliament, the Minister said that COVID-19 has seriously affected the developing economies like Pakistan, and the pandemic has affected not only health sector but also has social and economic implications.

Economic activity in the country slowed down due to lockdown imposed by the government to stop the spread of the virus, and the whole activity also had a negative impact on the GDP rate and investment, he said.

No new income tax has been imposed in the budget as the government wants to enhance the tax net to make more people pay taxes rather than levying more taxes on the taxpayers.

The new budget also focused on fiscal management, revenue mobilization, measures for economic stabilization and growth, reduction in non-development expenditures, boosting exports, job creation and people friendly policies for the socioeconomic prosperity of the country.

A total of 1.3 trillion PKR have been allocated for defence expenditures for the forthcoming financial year, Azhar said.

To contain COVID-19, the government allocated 70 billion PKR.

While for Special Economic Zones to be built under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the government has allocated 70 billion PKR whereas 26 billion more will be spent on other CPEC projects including a major railway project, Azhar said.

For science and technology, 20 billion PKR have been allocated whereas 5 billion more will go to educational reform.

The government also set inflation target for the forthcoming fiscal year at 6.5 per cent.



Furthermore, the government has decided to postpone repayment of any foreign debt till FY2022 to divert critical resources to crisis management.

After the presentation of the budget, debate on the proposed budget will be followed in the succeeding sessions of the house, after which it is likely to be approved from the lower house formally by the end of this month.

After approval from the lower house, the budget will be presented in the upper house.

Is the U.S. Condition...

FROM PAGE 1

The gap between the poor and the rich has widened unacceptably and the Coronavirus pandemic has turned into a total hell by itself and the U.S. political system has shown strange failure regarding this crisis.

The number of COVID-19 infected patients in the U.S.

is higher than any country while almost all of the people in the world did not expect the U.S. to show such a feeble picture in tackling the virus. A recent video clip on poverty, hunger and people's anger in the streets has gone viral, indicating one reality and it is the painting picture of the media from the Great Satan.

Even we believe that the U.S. is 90 percent in critical condition, it will mean that even if the White House officials change their approach and align with social gatherings, these crises will not be controllable at east in less than 6 months. Perhaps, the range of these crises would go beyond the U.S. and grip all the West and even Europe. In such a condition, won't it be difficult to seat and analyze the November presidential and Congress elections? With such ways and methods which do not give a damn to the people, which wise man will be ready to go to the poll stations? It has set a tough prediction ahead and we see the false walls of propaganda collapsing.



Tehran Refutes Claim...

FROM PAGE 1

The commander also said that the IRGC Ground Force is in charge of security in Iran's northwestern areas, is vigorously present along the border with full preparedness, and is closely and constantly monitoring the situation across the border regions.

The presence of terrorist elements is among the red lines of Iran, Pakpour stressed, adding, "However, we understand that the recent operations by small (terrorists) groups on the Turkish soil have mounted pressure on the Turkish officials and have forced them to raise such a claim."

Iran-India...

FROM PAGE 1

While imports from Iran declined by 90.3 percent in the April-November 2019-20 period to \$1.29 billion because of the reduction of petroleum imports to zero, the fall in exports was lower at 36 percent to \$2.23 billion.

Iran and India had held a new round of negotiations on signing a preferential trade agreement (PTA) between the two sides in mid-February.

Initiated in 2016, the negotiation on this agreement is said to be in the final stages, and the two sides hope that the list of the commodity items entitled to preferential tariffs will be finalized in the next round of the talks.

During the previous (fourth) round of the negotiations, which was also held in Tehran, the two countries discussed the draft text of the agreement which is to reduce tariff rates by 25%-45%.

U.S.-Indicted...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S. Treasury Department has also put sanctions on Saab for running a vast corruption network for a food-aid program that lined the pockets of the Maduro regime, which has overseen the economic collapse of the oil-rich country.

U.S. officials say the food scheme also includes Maduro's stepchildren as well as 13 companies in various countries.

More recently, Saab is suspected of getting involved in the oil business by helping Maduro buy fuel oil and supplies from Iran in exchange for gold in order to get around U.S. sanctions on both countries.

U.S.-Indicted...

FROM PAGE 1

"As for domestic policy, one should look at his handling of the coronavirus crisis, new unrest, and migrants as well as minorities. All of these are serious points of weakness in Trump," Zarif added.

"However, if you, as a realistic person, look at the circumstances and predict Trump's situation this autumn, you'll see his situation has not yet changed that much," he said.

Support of Occupation, Production Units to Continue

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Tourism Financial Group says protecting jobs, emphasize on not lay-off of the workforce and also developing the existing units are of the major programs of the group in this year which is Year of the Surge in Production.



On the sidelines of his visit of Bonab Steel Industry Complex and in the joint meeting of managers of the group with officials of the complex, Mr. Mehdi Jahangiri said boost in production, maximum and efficient utilization of skillful workforce, launching developmental projects based on the targets set at Mahan Holding are on the agenda.

He pointed to the important position of the complex, adding that strong point of the complex is its young, educated and skillful workforce, stipulating that with the existing potential in the complex either in its steel-making or rolling unit, it is one of the production unit and influential in the economy and employment of the region or the country.

Jahangiri noted that in the sanctions era and during inappropriate condition looming over the production and industry in the country, Tourism Financial Group did not let this steel-making complex close down, and in fact it took a major step for protecting occupation and dynamic economy unit the region and the country.

He also announced readiness for entry of Bonab Steel Industry Complex into Farabourse.

Meanwhile the CEO of the complex Mr. Babak Alizad Shahir, for his part, pointed to the capabilities of Mahan Holding and the existing steel chain, adding that with the measures taken by the complex and its educated and committed workforce as well as full support of head of Tourism Financial Group, the complex is expected to materialize its set targets in direction of pick-up and surge in production.

Meanwhile head of board of directors of the complex Mr. Seyed Bahaoddin Hashemi pointed to the existing capacity of the complex, adding it can have a bright future in the country because of its workforce and support of Tourism Financial Group.

Global Economic Conditions Will Be Worse in June Than in April

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has presented a very serious picture of the Global Economy. IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath says the decline in the global economy due to the Coronavirus epidemic is frightening. She says the recovery outlook remains uncertain. The IMF had forecast a 3 percent decline in the global economy in April, but Gopinath has said that the new estimate on June 24 could be much worse.

Speaking at the seventh virtual meeting of the Asian Monetary Policy Forum, Geeta Gopinath said that there is intense uncertainty about recovery. She said sectors like transportation have suffered extensive losses due to Coronavirus. At the same time, it has increased the risk of Bankruptcy and Job loss. Apart from this, there has also been a change in consumer behavior. He said that today everyone is concerned about recovery.

If the Corona Stays for a Long Time Then There



Will Be Worse Conditions.

The IMF released the World Economic Outlook in April. It said that if the corona epidemic continues for a long time, the economic situation may become worse. Last week, the World Bank forecast a 5.2 percent decline in the Global Economy. The World Bank had said that on the economic front it is the worst situation in 150 years.

The Rate of Decline in Global GDP Is Estimated to Be 2.3% in May.

Governments around the world have taken several steps to compensate for the damage done to the economy due to Coronavirus. Its results are also coming to the fore. The global GDP fell by 4.8 percent in April due to the lockdown, but it is expected to improve in May. The GDP growth rate is expected to decline by 2.3 percent in May. That is, the rate of decline in world GDP will be half.

Tourism Revival Key in Spurring Economic Growth in ASEAN

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - With economies reeling due to COVID19, the Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations' (FATA) stressed the revival of tourism is key to spur economic recovery in the region.

FATA President Datuk Tan Kok Liang expressed confidence the tourism industry will be one of the first to recover adding that once tourism recovers, it will quickly become the catalyst for the revival of other affected sectors linked to the industry.

"Ensuring that the travel and tourism industry is the first to recover would mean instant activation of a wide range of related micro-economies. The impact from the tremendous growth of tourism in ASEAN will be an eye opener; creating curiosity and branding opportunities in international markets," Liang said in a statement.

For his part, FATA secretary general and current Philippine Travel Agencies Association president Ritchie Tũaño said the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) for 2016 to 2025 remains their guidepost during the pandemic and beyond.

"We need to continue to position and brand ASEAN as a single market destination. Then, within each member state, sub-regional destinations and circuits must be promoted. FATA members will work with governments in the region to ensure that tourism survives during the pandemic while ensuring stakeholders readiness post COVID19," Tũaño said.

FATA likened ASEAN, with its 622 million population as having the potential of the domestic tourism within Europe, China, and the United States.

Last year, tourist arrivals to the ASEAN region reached 133 million, 10 million ahead of the ATSP projection. This has translated to tourism playing a crucial role in economies within the region, contributing at least two percent to 14.50 percent to each members gross domestic product.

Liang said they are also banking on the ASEAN member state's declaration of closer cooperation in the sharing of information and exchange of best practices, describing it as a boost to stakeholders and traveler's confidence.

"It will further build resilience and prepare the region to effectively implement and manage sustainable tourism in the aftermath of a crisis," he said.

On June 19, FATA is organizing an online forum dubbed "Way Forward for Tourism in ASEAN" which will have tourism government officials and national tourism organization heads from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and the Philippines as resource speakers.

Deputy Minister Hails BMI's E-Banking System

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Banking, Insurance and State Enterprises of Ministry of Economic Affairs Abbas Memarnejad assessed as positive the performance of e-banking systems of Bank Melli Iran.

According to reports, Memarnejad hailed services of BMI in the e-banking sector, saying that BMI is one of the two banks in the country which has prepared its

future banking roadmaps and digitalization and have sent to the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

He noted this point that BMI in the field of planning and operationalizing e-banking has had active participation, adding that BMI's systems and portals are in a condition that they can offer good services to the clients.

Memarnejad said that almost half of ETF's recent transactions have been carried out by BMI and all have



Man City Eyeing Villarreal Defender Pau Torres

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City are eyeing Villarreal defender Pau Torres.

ESPN says Torres is an option for bolstering City at the heart of the defence. Pep Guardiola will prioritise signing a new central defender ahead of landing the left-back.

Benjamin Mendy and Oleksandr Zinchenko have both had fitness issues this campaign while Angelino did not make an impact after signing last summer and was loaned to RB Leipzig in January.

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Bayern Munich

Determined to Sign Sane

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich are determined to sign Manchester City attacker Leroy Sane.

The Daily Mail says Bayern have been linked with Sane for over 12 months, who is still yet to sign a new contract with Pep Guardiola's side.

The 24-year-old has one more year left on his deal, but City have been trying to get him to sign an extension for several months. It appears Sane has been stalling contract talks in order to force a move in the next transfer window.

Messi Caps Barcelona Win Over Mallorca

MADRID (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi returned without a beard and with a goal and two assists as Barcelona resumed their La Liga title challenge on Saturday with a thumping 4-0 victory over Real Mallorca.

After three months away because of the coronavirus pandemic, Barca exploded into the lead with just 64 seconds played when Arturo Vidal headed in and Martin Braithwaite struck a second from a Messi headed assist.

Jordi Alba latched onto a Messi pass to add a third but not before play was briefly stopped by a pitch invader, who was able to run on, despite the match being closed to fans. Messi then scored a fourth in injury time for his 25th goal of the season.

La Liga's first match back came on Thursday between Sevilla and Real Betis, with teams scheduled to each play their remaining 11 matches of the season in less than six weeks.

Messi will be crucial to Barcelona's hopes of holding off Madrid but their captain, who turns 33 this month, may have to pace himself, especially after an injury-interrupted season.

Clean shaven, and without any sign of the thigh problem that prevented him from training earlier this month, Messi played 90 minutes and looked like he had never been away.

His goal was set up by Luis Suarez and the sight of the Uruguayan coming off the bench would have been welcome for coach Setien too.

Suarez has not played since undergoing knee surgery in January and was able to recover during the suspension. He could play an important part in the run-in.

Asked what pleased him most, Setien said: "The satisfaction of seeing Luis again on the field. You have to admire the performance he gave in those 35 minutes that he played. Starting like this is very important for him and for the team as well."

Mallorca, who sit 18th in La Liga, were never going to offer the sternest of tests but this was a useful outing for both Barcelona's fitness and morale.

Before matches were suspended in Spain because of coronavirus on March 12, Barca had regained top spot but only after being convincingly beaten by Madrid the week before.

This performance suggests time away might have done them good and it remains to be seen now how Madrid respond. Madrid's next four matches all come after their title rivals have played first.

Barcelona were in front after just over a minute as Frenkie de Jong did well to



recover the ball from a loose touch before Alba sent a deep cross to the arriving Vidal, who headed in.

Mallorca were under relentless pressure as Braithwaite and Messi both went close to adding a second. Mallorca's Takefusa Kubo, on loan from Real Madrid, forced a good save out of Marc-Andre ter Stegen on the break.

But Barca scored a second before half-time as an Alba cross span up and both De Jong and then Messi feathered headers across for Braithwaite to bang in on the half-volley, his first goal for the club.

Both teams eased off in the second period and there were smiles on the Barcelona players' faces when a pitch invader ran on in the 52nd minute wearing an Argentina shirt. He posed for a picture with Alba before being escorted away.

Alba added a third after finishing off Messi's clipped ball over the top and then Messi grabbed a goal himself. Suarez fooled his marker by letting the ball run across his body and Messi weaved inside where he could unleash with his right foot.

McIlroy Makes Some Noise at Colonial

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Rory McIlroy's seven-under-par 63 in the second round at Colonial on Friday suggests he has adjusted to golf without the galleries, though the world No. 1 says the silence that meets his birdie putts took some getting used to.

The PGA Tour returned to action for the first time in three months amid the COVID-19 pandemic at the spectator-free Charles Schwab Challenge on Thursday.

McIlroy, 31, was tied for 39th after the opening day at Colonial Country Club but picked up the pace in the second round, flirting with the course record before taking a bogey at his last hole — the ninth.

He sits on nine-under 131, two strokes behind leader Harold Varner III.

"I think even yesterday, once we sort of got into the flow of the round, things started to become more normal," McIlroy said.

"When that first birdie putt went in and I didn't get a clap ... like my hand was trying to go up to wave to someone in the gallery, but there's obviously no one there. But once you get into it, it's the same.

"I'd love there to be fans here this week. I think this tournament deserves to have fans but hopefully we can get back to playing in front of some big crowds soon."

Pakistan Ex-Cricket Captain Shahid Afridi Contracts Virus

KARACHI (AFP) - Pakistan's well-loved former cricket captain Shahid Afridi on Saturday said he had tested positive for coronavirus, as the pandemic accelerates across Pakistan.

The 40-year-old all-rounder, known for towering sixes and distinctive celebrations after taking a wicket as a bowler, revealed his illness on Twitter.

"I've been feeling unwell since Thursday; my body had been aching badly. I've been tested and unfortunately I'm covid positive," Afridi said.

"Need prayers for a speedy recovery, Inshallah (God willing)," he added.

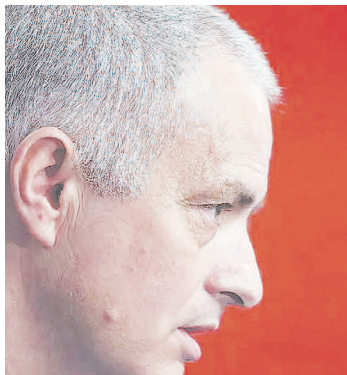
His career, spanning 1996 to 2018, took off when he smashed a 37-ball hundred in only his second one-day international, against Sri Lanka in Nairobi in 1996.

Mourinho Tells Spurs to Get Ready for Empty Feeling

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jose Mourinho believes his Tottenham Hotspur side must adapt quickly to the "new reality" of playing matches without any fans when they resume their Premier League campaign against Manchester United on June 19.

Spurs faced Norwich City in a friendly with no spectators at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Friday of this week, with all remaining Premier League matches set to be played behind closed doors as a health measure in response to the coronavirus pandemic that led the English top flight to shut down for several months.

"It was a good training session," Mourinho told the club's website following a match divided into four periods of 30 minutes to give more players the chance of meaningful game time.



"We needed minutes, we needed to know the feeling of playing here without our supporters and to have this training session with another Premier League team is the best thing," the Portuguese boss explained.

"We have to adapt to this new reality, which is what we tried to do, to have a feeling of playing with an empty stadium.

"The points are there to fight for, and with or without fans, the points are there on the pitch and ourselves and United will have to fight for them."

Record-Breaking Mertens Sends Napoli To Italian Cup Final

ROME (Dispatches) - Dries Mertens fired Napoli to the Italian Cup final on Saturday after netting the goal which gave his side a 2-1 aggregate semi-final win over Inter Milan and made him the club's all-time top scorer.

Napoli will face Juventus in Wednesday's final in Rome thanks to Belgium forward Mertens, who slotted home his 122nd goal for Napoli four minutes before half-time to make the score 1-1 on the night and give them overall victory after a 1-0 first-leg win at the San Siro in February.

Christian Eriksen had levelled the tie for Inter straight from a corner in the second minute and the away side continued to dominate the first half, but Mertens ended a lightning counter-attack to put the hosts through at the Stadio San Paolo.

"We wanted the final at all costs and we achieved that. Now we need to recuperate and be ready for the final in a few days," said Lorenzo Insigne, who set up Merten's winner.

Mertens, 33, overtakes Marek Hamsik and moves seven clear of Diego Maradona, who scored 115 goals in all competitions and won two Serie A titles and the UEFA Cup over his seven tumultuous years in southern Italy. Although there were no fans in the stands at the San Paolo, public broadcaster RAI reported that a small number of Napoli supporters that had gathered outside the San Paolo set off fireworks throughout half-time in celebration of Merten's goal and after the match.



Bayern Within One Victory of Bundesliga Title

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich moved to within just one win of an eighth straight Bundesliga title as a late Leon Goretzka goal sealed a 2-1 victory over Borussia Moenchengladbach at the Allianz Arena on Saturday.

Teenage striker Joshua Zirkzee put Bayern ahead before Benjamin Pavard's own goal levelled for Gladbach, but Goretzka netted his third goal in five league games with four minutes remaining.

Even without the suspended Robert Lewandowski and Thomas Mueller, Bayern earned their 13th straight win in all competitions to re-establish their seven-point lead over Borussia Dortmund at the top of the table with three matches left.

Victory at relegation-threatened Werder Bremen on Tuesday will confirm Bayern as German champions for the 30th time in Hansi Flick's first season in charge. "I'm happy that the team got the job done with some hard work -- those were three important, 'big' points," said Flick.

Second-placed Dortmund had earlier trimmed Bayern's lead to four points when Erling Braut Haaland's last-gasp header grabbed a dramatic 1-0 win at Fortuna Dueseldorf.

Bayern had to dig deep again, having also laboured to victory by the same margin in Wednesday's German Cup semi-final win over Eintracht Frankfurt. Gladbach made a fast start but were denied an early lead as Jonas Hofmann's strike was ruled out for offside.

