

Ministry of Health and Medical Education Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari on Wednesday Said “Unfortunately, in the Past 24 Hours, 120 More COVID-19 Patients Lost Their Lives”

IRAN NEWS

Iranian and Syrian Officials On Tuesday Stressed the Need To Strengthen and Develop Scientific Cooperation and other Fields Between the Two Countries

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Ministers Weigh Plans for Iran-Iraq Oil Cooperation

TEHRAN (IFP) – Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh and his Iraqi counterpart Ihsan Abdul Jabbar have discussed the ways to promote cooperation between the two neighbours in the oil industry.

In a telephone conversation, Zangeneh and Abdul Jabbar conducted a review of relations between Iran and Iraq and called for the expansion of oil cooperation between the two Muslim neighbours.

In the conversation, the Iranian minister congratulated Abdul Jabbar on taking office as the new oil minister of Iraq after formation of a new government under Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi's leadership.

For his part, Abdul Jabbar said Iraq's daily export of crude in June has reached 2.8 million barrels.

The Iraqi oil minister also emphasized that it would be in Iraq's interests to abide by a production cut agreement between the OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, saying the Iraqi Kurdistan Region has been directed to comply with the OPEC+ deal and cut its share of oil output. The OPEC members, Russia and other oil producing nations agreed in April to cut output by around 10% of global supply to support oil prices amid the coronavirus pandemic.

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Iran Will Never Allow U.S. To Exploit IAEA to Kill JCPOA



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Iran will never allow the United States to use the UN nuclear agency as an instrument to kill a landmark 2015 nuclear deal signed between Tehran and major world powers.

Addressing a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on Tuesday, Zarif said withdrawing from international treaties and organizations has become the new normal for the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

"We will not allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to become a tool in the hands of the Trump administration to destroy the JCPOA," said the top Iranian diplomat, using an acronym for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the nuclear deal is officially called.

As verified by the IAEA's reports, the Islamic Republic has always cooperated with the agency in a transparent way and lived up to all of its commitments, he added.

Zarif said "we will never allow Iran to become the topic of investigations, which are based on espionage claims." "It will be very deplorable if the United Nations secretariat and the agency's secretariat moves in the path of the JCPOA's destruction," he added.

Zarif further said "since quitting the JCPOA, the US has been using all pressure tools against Iran, and this is unacceptable." The Russian foreign minister, for his part, said his country would stand by its ally Iran and do its utmost to prevent the collapse of the hard-won nuclear deal.

"We will be doing everything so that no one can destroy these agreements," Lavrov told reporters after face-to-face talks with Zarif.

The top Russian diplomat slammed the United States for trying to "manipulate" the Security Council in order to put pressure on Iran and said "Washington has no right to punish Iran."

He said U.S. plans to extend an arms embargo on Iran "contravene international law," expressing Moscow's firm opposition to any attempts "to promote an anti-Iranian agenda."

Lavrov described his talks with his Iranian counterpart as "very timely" and thanked him for accepting the invitation to come to Moscow for a "very useful" conversation.

Prior to the presser, the two ministers sat down for talks on various issues of bilateral and global significance. At the end of the meeting, the Iranian and Russian foreign ministers signed a declaration in 13 paragraphs on promoting international law.

Iran and Russia expressed their determination to confront unlawful unilateral approaches to the settlement of international crises and to actively work instead to promote fair, multifaceted and collective approaches based on recognized principles and rules of international law in order to solve urgent regional and global issues.

The two sides emphasized the principle of requiring governments to refrain from threatening or resorting to force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of any other country in contradiction to the United Nations Charter. Accordingly, they condemn unilateral military intervention.

Iran and Russia voiced full support for the principle of non-interference in the internal or external affairs of countries. They also emphasized that the two countries are resolved to counter terrorism in all its forms as a threat to global peace and security.

Iran Plans Monthly Gasoline Shipments to Venezuela

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran plans to follow its trailblazing shipment of fuel to sanctions-hit Venezuela with regular gasoline sales despite U.S. threats to punish any facilitation of the cargoes, a report says.

Last month, Iran sternly warned the U.S. to stay clear of its oil tankers as they set off for the Caribbean to deliver about 1.5 million barrels of gasoline to Venezuela which is under a virtual American economic siege.

On Saturday, an Iranian news agency said Iran's naval forces had prepared to target U.S. commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf in case American forces interfered with Venezuela-bound Iranian oil tankers.

"According to reports received by Noor News, after increasing military threats against Iranian vessels headed for Venezuela, an order was issued to Iran's armed forces to identify and track several US merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman," the agency said on its website. "Options for reciprocal action were immediately identified and monitored for possible operations," Noor News added.

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Aerospace Force Space Division has said the homegrown Noor satellite that was launched into space last month was used to track the oil tankers. "In the Atlantic Ocean, where access to ships is normally more difficult, monitoring the position of the oil tankers and the situation in their surroundings was put on the agenda of the Noor satellite, and was accomplished," Brigadier General Ali Jafarabadi said.

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Iran Blasts E3 Draft Resolution at IAEA Meeting

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has condemned as "unconstructive" a resolution reportedly drafted by the three European signatories to a 2015 nuclear deal for a vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s governing board meeting, saying such a resolution makes a mockery of international rules.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations, urged France, Germany and the UK — also known as E3 — not to complicate the situation surrounding the Iran deal if they cannot fulfill their end of the bargain and help salvage the accord.

The comments came as IAEA Board of Governors started a four-day meeting on Monday, with Iran on the agenda.

According to a Bloomberg report, the resolution prepared by the European trio urges Tehran to "fully cooperate" with the IAEA investigation of its nuclear facilities. It came after the nuclear watchdog's inspectors claimed they had not been given access to two locations that may have hosted atomic activities two decades ago. The resolution will have to be presented at meeting and is expected to win Washington's backing.

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Iran Foreign Investment in 2019 The Lowest Level In 17 Years

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its latest report says foreign direct investment (FDI) in Iran has dropped by 36.5 percent in 2019 compared with the previous year.

Figures published by UNCTAD show foreign investment in Iran was \$ 1.5 billion over the past year, the lowest since 2002.

That figure was above \$ 5 billion in 2017 but dropped to \$ 2.3 billion the following year and fell further to a \$ 1.5 billion last year as U.S. sanctions took hold.

However, the Islamic Republic's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Farhad Dezhphasand, claimed last February that "in the first nine months of 2019, foreign investment in Iran showed a 32 percent increase compared with the same period last year."

Nonetheless, Mr. Dejpasand did not provide detailed figures or evidence to back-up his claim. The Islamic Republic's official statistics are often seriously questioned by experts and sometimes contradict data provided by international organizations.

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Pakistan Eases Mango Trade Via Iran Border

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) – Pakistan government decided to extend opening time of Pakistan-Iran border for export of mangoes to the neighboring nation and asked Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to discuss and resolve logistic issues with the traders.

The Special Committee of National Assembly on Agricultural Products decided to extend number of days per week and duration for each day for export of mangoes to Iran. Limit on number of trucks coming from Iran is also expanded.

Pakistan-Iran border remains open for three days with a limit on daily duration. The decision was taken in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak in March.

The NA body met under a chairmanship of Speaker Asad Qaiser.

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U.S. to Seek In-Person Meetings With Iran Over Prisoner Releases

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States would like a in-person meeting with Iran to discuss prisoner releases and it wants the UN Security Council to impose an indefinite arms embargo on the Islamic Republic, a senior U.S. diplomat said on Tuesday.

The two adversaries disagree on many issues, including U.S. President Donald Trump's decision two years ago to abandon the 2015 Iran nuclear deal under which Tehran limited its nuclear program in return for economic sanctions relief. Despite the tensions, the two sides struck a deal under which Iran on June 4 freed a U.S. Navy veteran it had imprisoned since 2018 and the US allowed an Iranian-American physician to visit Iran.

Speaking at a virtual event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations, U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook said he hoped for further prisoner exchanges and talks on a wide array of issues. Tehran has been reluctant to deal with officials in Washington since the Trump administration abandoned the nuclear agreement, demanding the US return to it.

"We'd love to have an in person meeting to have a consular dialogue so that we can move faster than we have," Hook said. "The door for diplomacy on our side is wide open, not just on these matters but on ... all the issues that have been bedeviling the U.S.-Iran bilateral relations for 41 years," he said, saying Trump "would like to get to the negotiating table".

He also said the administration believes a UN arms embargo on Iran expiring in October should be extended indefinitely.



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Iran to Retrieve Funds From S. Korea Via Legal, Int'l Channels

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Governor of Central Bank of Iran Abdolnasser Hemmati said that Iran will take back its dollars from South Korea in coordination with Foreign Ministry and with the use of legal and international methods.

Talking to reporters in the sidelines of a meeting of Resistance Economy Headquarters on Monday, he added that these financial resources held by the South Korean banks belong to the Iranian people and Central Bank of Iran.

Hemmati also hoped that the Korean government would abide by its commitments and not block access to these resources under the pretext of the U.S. sanctions.

Iran After Release of Currency Assets Abroad

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN –President Hassan Rouhani says diplomatic and economic officials have launched a push to free the country’s foreign currency assets in the other countries in order to reduce susceptibility to any currency market volatility.

Addressing a meeting of the Administration’s Economic Headquarters on Tuesday, President Rouhani stressed the need to prevent the pressure of sanctions on the supply of foreign currency from leading to a hike in the price of basic commodities.

The president said one of the main economic priorities the administration has set for the current Iranian year is managing the capital market and supplying the foreign currency to meet the country’s demands.

“The foreign policy and the Central Bank officials are trying to free Iran’s currency assets in the other countries through multilateral consultations, so that the country’s currency market would be immune to possible volatility,” President Rouhani noted.

He also highlighted the efforts to handle the situation in two fronts at the same time, saying the administration is actively dealing with the “cruel and inhumane sanctions” imposed by the enemies and fighting against the coronavirus epidemic and mitigating its economic repercussions simultaneously.



“One of the country’s glories in simultaneous handling of the sanctions and the coronavirus has been fulfillment of the necessary needs of people in the market, in such a way that we prevented the inhumane dream of those imposing sanctions from coming true, which was causing problems and distress in the daily economic lives of people and the supply of the items they need for livelihood,” the president stated.

President Rouhani also praised the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Central Bank of Iran for providing the necessary medicine in the current tough conditions, saying good planning has enabled people to obtain medication in spite of the sanctions and the outbreak of coronavirus.

In comments on Sunday, President Rouhani had highlighted his administration’s efforts to deal with the economic consequences of the coronavirus outbreak, saying the main priority in the administration’s economic plans is to control prices and supply the basic means of life.

Tehran Censures UN for Taking Saudi-Led Coalition Off Child Rights Blacklist

TEHRAN (IFP) - Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has slammed the United Nations for its double standards on human rights after the UN chief’s decision to remove the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen from a list of violators of children’s rights.

In a statement on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi deplored the UN secretary-general’s decision to remove the Saudi-led coalition from a blacklist of those violating children’s rights.

“The UN secretary-general has omitted the name of Saudi-led coalition from the list of child-murderers while, as acknowledged by the international organizations, a large number of Yemeni children and teenagers have died in catastrophes such as bomb attacks on buses carrying students and aerial bombing of residential houses, schools and hospitals, as the tragic news and images of them are undeniable,” he noted.

The spokesperson said such measures by the UN are not unprecedented, as in 2015, the then secretary-general of the United Nations had removed Saudi Arabia from the same blacklist of children’s rights violators arguing that Saudi Arabia had threatened to cut off funding to the UN.

“Unfortunately, some in the United Nations are seeking to sanctify that country’s (Saudi Arabia’s) crimes against Yemeni children and women with Saudi dollars, while the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has announced that a Yemeni child dies every 10 minutes of the consequences of the war and blockade imposed on Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition,” Mousavi added.

The Iranian spokesman further denounced the “shocking and disgusting” logic behind the decision to remove Saudi Arabia from the blacklist of violators of children’s rights in armed conflict because the Saudi-led coalition was responsible for the death or injury of “only 222 children” in 2019.

“The result obtained logically is that the death and injury of this number of children is either an unimportant fact for the secretariat of that organization (the UN) or the casualties at the hands of a country like Saudi Arabia is deemed to be a praiseworthy progress compared to the past record, which is another evidence for the claims that there are selective approaches and double standards on human rights,” the Iranian spokesperson stated.

Iran at Forefront of Fight Against Drugs

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN A representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Tehran said that UN-affiliated international organizations acknowledge Iran’s leadership in the fight against drugs.

Colonel ‘Majid Karimi’, the head of Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police on Tuesday met ‘Alexander Fedulov’, the representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) in Tehran.

Two officials in the meeting discussed issues on the fight against drug smuggling and increased cooperation under the Partnership Program (CPP) of UNODC in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the meeting, Alexander Fedulov appreciated Iran’s readiness to strengthen the professional skills and operational capacity of the Anti-Narcotics Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran in accordance with international norms and standards, as well as the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fight against narcotics in regional and international positions.

He also said that the United Nations-affiliated international organizations acknowledge that Iran is a vanguard in the fight against drugs.



In this meeting, the head of the Anti-Narcotics Police of Iran, referring to the negligence and inertness of Western countries in performing international duties in the effective fight against drug trafficking, added: “Despite the cooperation and tireless and extensive efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, European countries do not act in accordance with the level of threat and the responsibility for this struggle has been imposed on Iran.

Colonel Majid Karimi added, “Iran’s anti-narcotics police is an important and effective partner for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to improve drug control programs in the region and the world, as well as its active partner in activities in regional and international level.”

Iran’s Armed Forces Capable to Face Any Threat



TEHRAN (IP) - In a closed session in Iran’s Majlis, Chief of the general staff of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated on the country’s full readiness of armed forces to face any threat.

: In a session to discuss the regional issues with the Majlis representatives on Tuesday, Chief of the general staff of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Major General Mohammad Baqeri called for a budget increase to boost the countries defense capabilities.

In the session which the rest of it was a closed meeting, the Iranian General delivered a report on the latest developments and the performance of the Islamic Republic’s Armed Forces.

On the sidelines of the session, a Majlis MPs quoted Major General Baqeri as calling for a budget increase for the military sector in a bid to boost the country’s defense capabilities against different threats.

In these discussions, Baqeri also pointed to some problems and limits of Iranian Armed forces in defense and stressed on the military and defense capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as our country’s full readiness to face any threat.

Another MP quoted Major General Baqeri as saying that in the Atlantic Ocean, a number of U.S. warships were threatening Iranian tankers to escalate tensions, however, they were unable to achieve their goal.

“On their rout to Venezuelan ports, the Americans had many entrapments, including bribing and threatening to divert the Iranian tankers and take control of them, which in no way resulted in anything,” the chief of staff said at a closed-door session of parliament.

Afghanistan Urged to Be Aware of Iranophobia

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Chief of Presidential Staff, Mahmud Vaezi in his latest tweet released on Tuesday, called the vigilance toward enemies’ scenario of Iranophobia as well as avoiding the rupture of fraternal relations with the Iranian nation along with the national interest of Afghanistan.

Reacting toward some of the moves and measure to rupture brotherly ties between Iran and Afghanistan, Vaezi tweeted that the vigilance of the Afghan government in

avoiding igniting scenario of Iranophobia designed by the enemies to strain the brotherly ties between the two nations as well as not forgetting the generous hospitality of Iranian government and nation during the last decades toward some 3000,000 Afghan nationals is in line with Afghanistan national interest.

Following the incidents of Afghan nationals in recent weeks, foreign Persian-language channels and some media outlets in Afghanistan have used these events as a pretext to destroy relations between Iran and Afghanistan.

Tehran-Rome Friendship Rooted In Traditional Parliamentary Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies Roberto Fico congratulated his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf’s election, saying friendship between Iran and Italy is rooted in traditional parliamentary relations.

Both countries are fighting against the consequences of coronavirus pandemic, Roberto Fico said, adding that Qalibaf’s election indicates Iran’s determination for passing crisis and returning to normal conditions.

He hoped for developing parliamentary cooperation by taking advantage of valuable situations, and by holding negotiations.

Legal Prosecution Awaits Health Protocols Violators

TEHRAN (IP) - Director- General of Inspection Department of the Ministry of Health said on Tuesday that anyone who ignores and violates health rules will face legal prosecution.

Speaking at the news conference via video conferencing on Tuesday at the health ministry, Mohammad Hossein Heydari said that some of the Iranian cities are in Red Zones with the highest infections.

He added: “turning Red and Yellow Zones to White requires public cooperation to implement all health rules and regulations, the simplest one is hand-washing rule.”

Heydari went on to say that as long as some cities are on the threshold to reach Coronavirus peak, all hygienic protocols implementation are a must, and the offenders will be dealt with legally.

Saying the fact that people must get used to run their normal life along with the Coronavirus, however, he expressed hope that everyone to play the role to eradicate the disease.

“By reducing the trips, cutting down public gatherings, and not leaving home excepts for urgent and necessary demands ‘Defeating COVID-19’ motto, would be realized,” Heydari concluded.

Search for Missing Crew of Vessel Capsized Off Iraq Ends

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian maritime authorities say a search operation to find missing crews of a vessel that capsized earlier this month in Iraqi waters has been suspended for good.

Nader Pasandeh, head of safety at Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), said on Tuesday that the search for two missing sailors was no longer tenable due to “technical reasons”.

“Despite all efforts (including) local and maritime search and sending signals to neighboring countries and ships sailing through the region, there has been no sign of the two missing crew members,” Pasandeh was quoted as saying PMO’s website.

The missing crew, one Iranian and one Indian, were on board Behbahan, a cargo ship that sank on June 2 as it was heading from the southwestern Iranian port of Khorramshahr towards the port of Umm Qasr near Iraq’s Basra.

The Iranian Behbahan cargo ship sinks off the Iraqi coast after setting sail from the southwestern port city of Khorramshahr two days earlier.

Reports earlier this month suggested that Behbahan capsized after bad weather and heavy swells pushed it 850-ton cargo of tiles and ceramic to one side.

Four crew members survived the incident and were returned to Iran while the body of an Iranian sailor who had been killed was retrieved from the Iraqi waters.

Authorities in Iran and Iraq have indicated that is no chance for those who fell into the water to survive after two weeks. However, Pasandeh said the search operation would resume once there is an indication or a sign in the regional waters of the sailors or their bodies.

He said monitoring regional waters would go on as the PMO continues corresponding on the issue with maritime authorities of the region.

Iran, Tunisia Stress Enhancement of Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation

TUNISIA (IP) - Iranian ambassador to Tunisia and the Tunisian Parliament Speaker stressed the increase of cooperation between the two countries’ parliament.

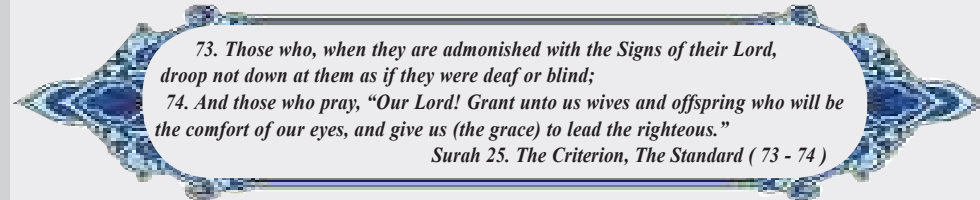
The Iranian envoy to Tunisia, Mohammad Reza Raouf Sheibani conveyed the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and stressed the expansion of parliamentary relations between the two countries and the need to develop and consolidate bilateral ties in all fields, especially in the economic, cultural and political fields.

Raouf Sheibani expressed the Iranian government and nation’s congratulation on the Tunisian revolution and its path to democracy, announcing his country’s readiness to support Tunisia. The Tunisian Parliament Speaker Rasid al-Ghanoushi for his part stressed the enhancement of the parliamentary relations of Iran and Tunisia as well as the activation of the friendship committee between the two countries.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:01
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48



73. Those who, when they are admonished with the Signs of their Lord, droop not down at them as if they were deaf or blind;
74. And those who pray, "Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous."
Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (73 - 74)

Iran, Kazakhstan Call for Resumption of Direct Flights

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami in a telephone talk with Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development of Kazakhstan Mr. Beibut Atamkulov reviewed ways for boosting cooperation on transportation and transit in rail, road, air and marine fields.

In during their phone talks, both sides emphasized developing strategic cooperation between both states and both sides called for resumption of direct flights by certain airliners.

Both ministers pointed to the resumption of cooperation in the air field after both countries resolved problems in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, adding that both sides underscored the resumption of direct flights.

Iranian Minister Eslami announced Tehran's readiness for three-way meeting with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and also announced readiness for four-way talks on the road and rail transit with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the deputy ministers level for resolving the existing problems.

Meanwhile Atamkulov, for his part, announced his country's readiness for dispatch



of more wagons to Iran and called for more cooperation between both countries for efficient utilization of Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan rail route.

He also called for strengthening the combined transit route of north-south Caspian and using port capacities of both states in the Caspian Sea.

Both sides also discussed other issues like cooperating in the management of Kuryk Port of Kazakhstan by Iranian side, holding joint marine and port meeting for resolving problems.

The Kazakh minister also called for cooperation with Iran in technical and engineering fields especially in the southern port and construction of warehouse.

Resolving banking problem and creating a new banking channel for transactions were of the other topics which were discussed during this telephone talk between the both ministers.

Electricity Import From Turkmenistan Resumes

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Electricity imports from Turkmenistan started as Tuesday, the chairman of Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid Mohammadnejad told ILNA.

The Iranian official said that imports of 250 MW of electricity from this country began on Tuesday, and imports will likely be in the form of goods.

The grounds for energy exchange with Turkmenistan were laid in 1999, but practical steps were taken in 2002. The Iranian power grid is currently connected to and exchanges energy with electricity networks of Armenia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Nakhichevan enclave.

Referring to the latest state of trade between Iran

and Turkmenistan, Mohammadnejad said "Due to the outbreak of coronavirus, the Iran joint border with Turkmenistan namely Sarakhs, Lotfabad and Incheboron have been closed for the past four months and Iran connected to Eurasia and Central Asia from this route.

Asked about Turkmenistan's breaking its promise to reopen border with Iran on June 10, he said that Iran's Foreign Ministry officials are following up the case.

"Iran's volume of trade exchange with Turkmenistan has reached 5% in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year

Iran and Turkmenistan share a common border of more than 1000 km. The two countries have good relations since Turkmenistan's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Iran GDP Without Oil Grew 1.1% in Year Ending March

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has issued an initial estimate about economic growth in the country over the last calendar year, saying the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country was up 1.1 percent year on year in March 2020 without considering the share of oil revenues in the economy.

"The growth of the country's oil-free economy in the year 1398 reached 1.1 percent," said the CBI in a statement published on Monday while reiterating that the figures had been based on fixed prices recorded in fiscal year spanning 2011-2012.

The statement said Iran's overall GDP, including the share of oil revenues, reached a total of 6,137.3 trillion rials (over \$34 billion) over the last year, adding that the entire economy shrank 6.5 percent year on year in March.

It said the calculations, provided by the Economic Accounts Department of the CBI, were raw and could be revised.

The official IRNA news agency cited other reports by the CBI as saying that the total liquidity in Iran reported at the end of the past calendar year on March 19 was just more than 24,720 trillion rials (over \$137 billion).

Facing a raft of American sanctions targeting its sale of oil, Iran has managed to stir growth in its non-oil economic sector.

The government says it is currently sustaining on a budget that has been emancipated from crude revenues to a great extent.

Sectors like manufacturing and agriculture have grown steadily for the past two years, enabling the government to find access to new sources of hard currency mainly through exports of various products to neighboring countries.

Oil revenues accounted for tens of billions of dollars in hard currency revenues for Iran before the United States imposed its unilateral sanctions on the country in November 2018.

Iran to Increase Overflight Fee Discounts to 50%

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Based on the new proposal, Iran Airports Company would be allowed to increase the already 30% discount on its overflight fees to 50% to attract foreign airlines to the country's skies.

Reportedly, the average earnings per flight from the Iranian airspace is not less than \$800, and about 950-1,000 flights pass through the Iranian airspace on a daily basis.

Managing Director of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company Siavash Amir Makri was quoted by ILNA earlier that overflight fees in Iraq and Afghanistan are fixed, \$375 and \$400 respectively, but overflight fees in Iran are about \$100 so using the Iranian airspace is cheaper for other countries. According to him, Iran's revenue from overflight fees was about \$300-350 billion a year.

However, Iran Airports Company registered a total of 23,223 takeoffs and landings during the first two months of the current Iranian year (March 20-May 20), which indicates a 62% decline compared with the similar period of last year.

More than 2.02 million passengers were transported during the two months under review, indicating a 73% year-on-year decline. Over 19,509 tons of cargos were handled during the same period, which shows a 75% fall compared with the corresponding period of last year, IAC's latest report published on its website shows.

Iran Airports Company is an arm of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, which manages 54 airports across the country.

Non-Oil Exports Decline by 47.7%



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Mr. Masoud Khansari says the non-oil exports have plummeted by 47.7 percent in the first two months of the current year and warned the officials to amend their policies.

During the meeting of TCCIMA representatives with Finance Minister, Mr Khansari said the outbreak of the Coronavirus has affected Iran's non-oil exports, adding that none-oil exports are Iran's main source of incomes but unfortunately it has been affected with the pandemic condition and the country's non-oil exports declined by 47/7 percent in the first two months. He added that although the pandemic was the main reason behind this plummet, wrong policies deteriorated it.

He added that consultation with exporters can be a solution but it is paid less heed and many of exporters are thrown out of the export and new faces step into the business and this is the reason for concern.

Khansari noted that whatever the chamber or experts recommend comes under fire and it becomes a personalized matter and it is not a good act.

He added that in the first quarter of the year some 1.4m people have entered the stock market and the figure does not include justice share-holders and it can be a good opportunity.

But he warned the officials to avoid repetition of a mistake which caused the financial institutes' disgrace as they became bankrupt and the government was forced to compensate. He also criticized current condition in arbitration which has caused discomfort and concern for the private sector.

He expressed hope that by taking proper measures and policy, the country would come over pandemic effect and materialize the slogan of surge in production.

Lead, Zinc Ingot Production Exceeds 121,000 Tons in Two Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Statistics showed that 121,323 tons of lead ingot was produced in two Lead Production Plants in Zanjan and Isfahan provinces in the first two months of the current year [from March 21 to May 20], showing a six percent decline as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Previous statistics indicate that more than 80 units in the country are active in the extraction of zinc in the country. It was estimated that 450,000 to 475,000 tons of zinc were extracted by the aforementioned 80 units in the country last year [ended March 20, 2020], the volume of which stood at over 220,000 tons a year earlier.

According to the global statistics, the Islamic Republic of Iran stood at 15th rank in terms of exporting zinc ingot. Iran exported zinc ingot, valued at \$227 million, in 2016, accounting for 1.6 percent export share in the world. South Korea, the Netherlands, and Canada are the biggest exporters of zinc ingot in the world respectively.

Isfahan, St. Petersburg to Share Anti-COVID-19 Experiences

TEHRAN (IP) - Representatives of the twin towns of Isfahan (central Iran) and St. Petersburg, Russia, shared their experiences in preventing, managing, and controlling the pandemic of the Coronavirus.

The Director of Public and the International Relations of Isfahan Municipality, Iman Hojjati said in a video conference with the officials of St. Petersburg, Russia they the exchanges of medical experience between Isfahan and St. Petersburg officials is very effective in combating COVID-19 disease.

"Russia has set up a special center to prevent the outbreak of the Coronavirus," said Artem Gorkin, a spokesman for Russia's Ministry of Health.

St. Petersburg Foreign Relations Committee representative Golga Korolova also noted that Russian doctors were trying to treat people with Corona, saying that the media also helped manage the virus by informing them about ways to prevent the Coronavirus.

The Coronavirus, which was identified late last year (2019) in Wuhan, China, has now become a pandemic.

The number of people infected with the coronavirus in the world has reached more than 8 million, of which nearly 435,000 have died.

Pakistan Parliament Moves to Promote Border Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly taking notice of problems being faced by traders in doing business with Iran including mango exports directed the Ministry of Interior to take appropriate and urgent trade-facilitative measures during COVID-19 for opening and operation of Taftan border.

According to a statement, Speaker Asad Qaiser made the direction while chairing the Special Committee of National Assembly on Agricultural Products also attended by Minister for Planning Asad Umer, Minister for National Food Security and Research Fakhar Imam, Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar, Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

The Committee was informed that Pakistan exports more than 14,000 tons of mango worth Rs.400 million to Iran each year. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent restriction of cross-border movement, the Government of Pakistan and Government of Iran mutually agreed to open the border for three days per week from 08:00 am to 02:00 pm for vehicles carrying traded goods.

The Iranian vehicles are allowed to enter Pakistan and on their way back, carry Pakistani goods to Iran.

Owing to the perishable nature of the product and inordinate delay in permission for trucks to enter Iran through Taftan border results in significant losses to mango exporters as well as loss of foreign exchange to the country.

The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Interior should take appropriate and urgent trade-facilitative measures during COVID-19 for opening and operation of Taftan border, five days a week, during the mango season with extended timings to facilitate mango exports to Iran.

Additionally, the Committee recommended that the Pakistani vehicles carrying mango shipments should be allowed to transport mango at Iranian ports or arrangements for a minimum of 100 containers should be made which can transport mangoes to Iran excluding containers/vehicles carrying LPG.

The Committee also deliberated on the upward revision of freight charges by Pakistan International Airlines on mango exports. The Committee urged the CEO PIA to review the freight charges for mango export and report to the Committee.

Iran Shifts National Economy From Dependence on Oil

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran has shifted national economy from dependence on oil over the past two years due to the conditions created in the country, an official with Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says.

Gholamreza Panahi, CBI Vice Governor for Foreign Exchange Affairs, made the remarks at a specialized economic meeting in Tehran on Monday evening.

To provide forex, the country was affected by the coronavirus pandemic from three months ago, Panahi said at the meeting held at the Economy of Resistance headquarters.

However, the production units and industrial sectors enjoy support from the Government, he added.

The deadly coronavirus radiating from Wuhan, China, in December 2019 has affected near 8,108,000 people across the world and killed over 438,000 people; while in Iran the number of the dead is more than 8,900.

CBI endeavors to provide forex from non-oil exports, the official concluded.

Trump Gov't Sues to Block Bolton's Book

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The Trump administration filed a lawsuit Tuesday seeking to prevent publication of former national security advisor John Bolton's book, which is expected to provide a damning insider portrait of the White House.

The Department of Justice alleged in its suit, filed in federal court in Washington, that publication of the book risks "compromising national security" through revelation of classified information that Bolton had access to during his turbulent 17-month stint in the White House. The suit says Bolton failed to have the text vetted, meaning his book would be in "clear breach of agreements he signed as a condition of his employment and as a condition of gaining access to highly classified information."



Beijing Cancels Flights, Closes Schools Again

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Beijing shut all its schools again and cancelled at least 1,225 flights on Wednesday, according to state-run media, as the city reported 31 new coronavirus cases.

City officials have urged residents not to leave the city, and several provinces have quarantined travellers from Beijing after more than 130 new cases were confirmed in the capital in recent days.

The new cases have raised fears of a second wave of infections as China had largely brought its domestic outbreak under control.



Hezbollah Leader Accuses U.S. of Trying to Starve Syria, Lebanon



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - New U.S. sanctions against the Syrian government aim to "starve" the country and its neighbor Lebanon, the head of the Lebanese movement Hezbollah said Tuesday.

"The Caesar Act aims to starve Lebanon just as it aims to starve Syria," Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech.

"Syria has won the war... militarily, in security terms and politically," he added, describing the law which came into force Wednesday as Washington's "last weapon" against Damascus.

The U.S. law targets companies that deal with President Bashar al-Assad's regime, which Hezbollah, Tehran and Moscow support in Syria's conflict.

It imposes financial restrictions on the Damascus government to compel it to halt "attacks on the Syrian people", and it is expected for the first time to target Russian and Iranian entities active in Syria.

The Syrian government and loyalist businessmen are already targeted by U.S. and European economic sanctions.

After nine years of war which have cost more than 380,000 lives, Syria is mired in an economic crisis compounded by a coronavirus lockdown and a dollar liquidity crisis in Lebanon, a major conduit for regime-held regions.

A large chunk of Syria's population is living in poverty, prices have soared and the value of the Syrian pound has hit record lows against the dollar on the black market.

Nasrallah also accused the United States of engineering the collapse of the Syrian currency, but vowed that Assad's allies would stand by the regime.

"The allies of Syria, which stood by its side during the war... will not abandon Syria in the face of economic warfare and will not allow its fall, even if they are themselves going through difficult circumstances," he said.

Lebanon too is experiencing the worst financial meltdown since the end of its own 1975-1990 civil war, as well as being rocked by months of anti-government protests.

"The Americans are pressuring the Bank of Lebanon to prevent it from putting enough dollars into the market," he said, charging that Washington was just using claims that Hezbollah was sending dollars into Syria as a pretext.

He also accused the U.S. government of trying to get Lebanon to push Hezbollah into giving up its weapons but it would never do so.

Nasrallah called on the Lebanese government "not to submit" to the Caesar Act.

The United States on Tuesday warned Assad that he would never secure a full victory and must reach a political compromise.

Kelly Craft, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, urged him to accept a Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire, elections and political transition along with UN-led talks.

"The Assad regime has a clear choice to make: pursue the political path established in Resolution 2254, or leave the United States with no other choice but to continue withholding reconstruction funding and impose sanctions against the regime and its financial backers," Craft said.

India Says 20 Troops Killed In Fight With China

NEW DELHI (AFP) - Twenty Indian soldiers were killed during "hand-to-hand" fighting with Chinese troops in a disputed Himalayan region, India's military said, the first deadly clash between the nuclear powers in decades.

Both sides blamed the other for Monday's violence, which followed weeks of rising tensions over their competing territorial claims, with thousands of extra troops deployed. The clashes reportedly involved intense fighting and no gunfire, in line with longstanding tactics to avoid a full military battle over the disputed 3,500-kilometre (2,200-mile) border.

An Indian army source told AFP there was no shooting but there were "violent hand-to-hand scuffles".

The fighting occurred in the precipitous, rocky terrain of the strategically important Galwan Valley, which lies between China's Tibet and India's Ladakh.

The soldiers threw punches and stones at each other, with Chinese troops allegedly attacking their Indian counterparts with rods and nail-studded clubs during the more than six-hour fight, the Hindustan Times reported.



N. Korea Threatens to Beef Up Military Presence Around DMZ

SEOUL (AFP) - North Korea threatened Wednesday to bolster its military presence in and near the Demilitarized Zone, a day after blowing up its liaison office with the South, prompting sharp criticism from Seoul.

In a series of denunciations of South Korea, the nuclear-armed North rejected an offer from President Moon Jae-in to send envoys for talks.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's powerful sister Kim Yo Jong called it a "tactless and sinister proposal", the official KCNA news agency reported.

Seoul retorted with an unusually stern condemnation, calling her remarks "senseless" and "very rude".

"We warn we will no longer tolerate the North's unreasonable acts and words," said Blue House spokesman Yoon Do-han, calling Pyongyang's disclosure of Moon's offer of envoys "unprecedentedly senseless".

And its defence ministry said the North's threats would violate several inter-Korean agreements. "The North will surely pay the price if such actions are taken," it said in a statement.

The demolition of the liaison office in the Kaesong Industrial Zone, just across the border in Northern territory, came after Pyongyang vehemently condemned Seoul over anti-Pyongyang leaflets sent by defectors into the North.

Activities at the office had already been suspended for months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

And relations between the neighbours have been at a standstill since the collapse of a summit last year between the nuclear-armed North and the US in Hanoi over sanctions relief and what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in return.

Analysts say the North may now be seeking to manufacture a crisis to increase pressure on the South to extract concessions.

In a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency, a spokesman for the North's military said it would deploy regiment-level units to the Mount Kumgang tourist area and the Kaesong complex.

Police Fire Tear Gas as Thousands Join French Healthcare Protest

PARIS (Dispatches) - French police fired tear gas after being pelted with objects during a Paris demonstration on Tuesday led by thousands of healthcare workers demanding more investment in the health system.

Doctors, nurses and administrative staff marched without incident in the capital and other French cities to demand the government keep its promise to overhaul France's hospital system in response to the coronavirus crisis.

But when demonstrators arrived in front of the Les Invalides complex in central Paris, protesters clad in black set fire to a vehicle and pelted the police with projectiles, chanting "everybody hates the police."

They also overturned several vehicles.

Police then fired tear gas and charged, in tense and chaotic scenes.

The police put the crowd at Les Invalides at 18,000. A police source said radical anti-government protesters had merged into the crowd and estimated their number at between 250 and 300.

"Violent groups are trying to escalate tensions at the peaceful demonstration held by healthcare workers," police headquarters in Paris tweeted.

Thirty-two people had been arrested, according to police.

"They have hijacked this protest by force," Patrick

Pelloux, the head of the Association of Emergency Doctors in France (AMUF) told BFM television, adding that he was "disgusted."

A nurse was in tears. "You have ruined our protest," she said, addressing the violent protesters.

Healthcare workers have long complained about low salaries and insufficient staff at French hospitals, leading to a series of strikes over the past year to demand funding increases. There were clashes between the police and demonstrators in the northern city of Lille, in Nantes and Toulouse in southern France.

The French healthcare system has been under severe pressure due to the coronavirus epidemic, although officials insist it has largely withstood the challenge.

But many healthcare workers have insisted that the nightly rounds of applause for caregivers treating COVID-19 patients would ring hollow if the government did not back up the public recognition of their work with additional resources.

"We were portrayed as superheroes because we worked overtime and protected our patients without enough equipment. We were promised hirings and funding but we haven't seen any of it," said a nurse, Latifa, who works at a hospital in southern city Grenoble.



Saudi Broke Global Rules in Qatar Broadcast Dispute



GENEVA (Reuters) - A World Trade Organization (WTO) panel told Saudi Arabia on Tuesday it had breached global rules on intellectual property rights by failing to prosecute a pirate broadcaster of sports and movies in a dispute with Persian Gulf neighbor Qatar.

Doha filed its complaint in 2018, saying Saudi Arabia was blocking Qatari-owned broadcaster beIN from broadcasting in the kingdom and refusing to take effective action against alleged piracy of beIN's content by beoutQ, a commercial-scale pirating operation.

The three-person WTO panel ruled that Saudi Arabia's failure to act against beoutQ was a breach of WTO rules and recommended that Riyadh bring its measures into conformity with its obligations under the TRIPS Agreement on intellectual property.

Under the agreement, countries need to allow for criminal procedures and penalties to be applied in cases of commercial-scale copyright piracy.

The panel did support Saudi Arabia's view that it could block Qatar's broadcaster from obtaining legal counsel in Saudi Arabia on grounds of national security. Riyadh welcomed that finding.

However, the panel also said national security could not excuse Saudi Arabia from its failure to prosecute beoutQ.

David Sugden, senior legal counsel and director of corporate affairs at beIN Media Group, accused Saudi Arabia of continuing "to promote the theft of sports rights" and said the only way Saudi fans could watch such sport was "via illegal means."

In a statement, Qatar's commerce ministry described the ruling as a "resounding victory" and said that Saudi Arabia needed to respect the rights of high profile sports and entertainment.

Saudi Arabia rejected that assertion.

"Saudi Arabia has a strong record of protecting intellectual property and is committed to applying its national law and procedures in full conformity with WTO rules," Saudi Arabia's mission to the WTO said in a statement.

Qatari company beIN holds regional broadcasting rights for much of the world's most expensive and high profile sporting events as well as entertainment.



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J, balcony
marble fl
fireplace
Brand new
pkg, & F.F

Shanon (adviser)

Jordan Villa (\$5000)
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6bdrs, S/p
Sauna, J
balcony, pkg
green yard
Nicely Furn

Niavaran (\$2300)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Velenjak bldg (\$8000)
5storey, 20bdrs, & pkgs

Farmanieh (\$2800) 300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F
Zaferanieh (\$3000) 320sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F

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Lufthansa Seeking Cuts Equivalent to 22,000 Positions

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Lufthansa said it was seeking to strike agreements with worker representatives by June 22 on how to make cuts equivalent to 22,000 full-time positions.

The airline's flight operations will be affected with a calculated 5,000 jobs, 600 of which will be pilots, 2,600 flight attendants and 1,500 ground staff, Lufthansa said in a statement.

A further 1,400 jobs at headquarters and in administration at other Group companies will also be affected. Lufthansa Technik has a worldwide surplus of about 4,500 jobs, 2,500 of them in Germany and in the LSG Group's catering business 8,300 jobs are affected worldwide.

"We want to keep as many colleagues on board as possible throughout the crisis and avoid layoffs," Lufthansa said.



BOJ Holds Fire, Pledges \$1 Trillion to Struggling Firms

TOKYO (Reuters) - The Bank of Japan kept monetary settings steady on Tuesday and stuck to its view that the economy will gradually recover from the coronavirus pandemic, signalling that it has taken enough steps to support growth for now.

However, it increased the nominal size of its lending packages for cash-strapped firms to \$1 trillion from about \$700 billion announced last month.

While the BOJ remains focused on steps to ease corporate funding strains, Governor Haruhiko Kuroda may offer hints on how it will deal with longer-term issues such as how to fire up growth and inflation when the pandemic begins to subside. "Given markets have calmed down and the economy appears to be bottoming out, there's no reason for the BOJ to take action anytime soon," said Hiroshi Shiraishi, senior economist at BNP Paribas Securities.

"Fiscal policy will play a main role in responding to the virus fallout, so the central bank will continue to indirectly help the government by keeping borrowing costs low," he said. In a widely expected move, the BOJ maintained its yield curve control targets at -0.1% for short-term interest rates and 0% for long-term rates. The central bank also made no major changes to its programs to ease corporate funding strains, including a lending facility aimed at channeling funds to firms.

Due to the way it is designed, the amount of money to be pumped out via the programs will reach 110 trillion yen (£809 billion) if more loans are taken out via government schemes, the central bank said.

That was larger than an estimate of 75 trillion yen made in May, as the government expanded the range of eligible loans under a second stimulus package.

The BOJ is among a host of major central banks that have pumped trillions of dollars into financial systems to support businesses hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Finance Minister Taro Aso praised the BOJ's money printing, telling reporters on Tuesday the central bank's lending facilities "undoubtedly led to an increase in money supply."

Markets have widely expected the BOJ to stand pat after it expanded stimulus in March and April, mainly by boosting asset purchases and creating lending facilities to channel money to companies hit by slumping sales from the pandemic. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared a state of emergency in April, requesting businesses to close and citizens to stay home, a move that dealt a severe blow to consumption. The emergency was lifted in late May, but analysts expect the economy to have contracted more than an annualized 20% in the current quarter, after having slipped into recession.

The BOJ maintained its guarded optimism on the outlook and stressed its readiness to ease policy again if needed.

"Although economic activity will gradually resume, Japan's economy will remain in a severe state for the time being," the central bank said in a statement. "Once the impact of the pandemic subsides, the economy is likely to improve" due to an expected rebound in consumption and output, as well as the boost from government stimulus, it said.

UN Chief: Support Migrants



TEHRAN (UNIC) — United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day of Family Remittances, 16 June 2020, appealed to people everywhere to support migrants, who are among the engines of the global economy and make crucial contributions to well-being across the world.

The full text of his message reads:

On the International Day of Family Remittances, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize the determination of 200 million migrants who regularly send money home, and the 800 million family members living in communities throughout the developing world who depend on those resources.

Last year, remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached a record \$554 billion — more than three times the amount of official development assistance and surpassing the level of foreign direct investment.

Yet this year, the World Bank projects that remittances will fall by about 20 per cent, or \$110 billion, causing hunger, lost schooling and deteriorating health for tens of millions of families, with an especially heavy impact on women and girls. Several nations and organizations have issued a call to action to "keep remittances flowing", urging policymakers to declare remittance services as essential and facilitate the scaling up of digital remittance channels. At this time of global crisis, I appeal to people everywhere to support migrants, who are among the engines of the global economy and make crucial contributions to well-being across the world.

I call on all stakeholders to take steps to reduce remittance transfer costs, provide financial services for migrants and their families — particularly in rural areas — and promote financial inclusion for a more secure and stable future. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration offers one key platform for action. I am encouraged by wide-ranging support for the global campaign -- #FamilyRemittances2030: Building resilience in times of crisis. Let us do our utmost to support millions of families to reach their own goals. In doing so, we will come closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, one family at a time.

Aviation Crisis Means Oil Demand to Stay Below Pre-Virus Levels Before 2022

LONDON (Reuters) - Oil demand is recovering from the greatest fall in its history in 2020, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday, but less flying due to coronavirus fears means the world will not return to pre-pandemic demand levels before 2022.

"Our first forecast for 2021 as a whole shows demand growing by 5.7 million barrels per day (bpd), which, at 97.4 million bpd, will be 2.4 million bpd below the 2019 level," the IEA said in its monthly report. "Reduced jet and kerosene deliveries will impact total oil demand until at least 2022 ... the aviation industry is facing an existential crisis", the Paris-based IEA said.

The IEA raised its forecast for 2020 oil demand by nearly 500,000 bpd due to stronger than expected imports in Asia.

"China's strong exit from lockdown measures has seen demand in April almost back to year-ago levels. We have also seen a strong rebound in India in May, although demand is still well below year-ago levels."

Citing a plunge in global oil supply by 11.8 million bpd in May, the IEA said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies including Russia - a grouping known as OPEC+ - had reduced their output by 9.4 million bpd.

"If recent trends in production are maintained and demand does recover, the market will be on a more stable footing by the end of the second half, the IEA said.

"However we should not underestimate the enormous uncertainties."

Economic Recovery Accelerates in May

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economic recovery continued to gather speed in May despite shocks from the COVID-19 epidemic with most of the key indicators showing improvement as a result of continued policy support, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Monday.

But officials and economists warned about possible economic headwinds ahead as the threat of the novel coronavirus still remains after Beijing, the capital city, reported a new cluster of local COVID-19 infections. The country's industrial output expanded by 4.4 percent year-on-year in May, 0.5 percentage point faster than that of the previous month, according to the NBS.

Retail sales, a gauge of consumption, dropped by 2.8 percent year-on-year but the contraction narrowed by 4.7 percentage points from April's decline. Fixed-asset investment in the first five months contracted by 6.3 percent on a yearly basis, recovering from a 10.3-percent decline in the first four months.

Meanwhile, the country's service production index resumed positive in May for the first time since the epidemic started and grew by 1 percent on a yearly basis. This compared with a 4.5-percent decline in April, showing that the service sector is on path to recovery, driven by robust growth of the information technology, financial and the property sectors, according to the NBS.

Fu Linghui, an NBS spokesman, said that the economic data in May were largely in line with expectations as business resumption continued, production and demand improved and employment and prices remained stable.

The economy continued to gather momentum and growth has been supported by the rapid development of the digital economy, online retail sales and high-technology manufacturing, he said. While major economic indicators continued to improve in May, they were still lower than those of the same period of last year, meaning that business activities have not yet returned to the normal level, Fu said.

"The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy continues to evolve and there has been a substantial increase in external uncertainties. China's economic recovery is still under pressure and it requires more efforts to bring the economy back to the path of normal growth," he said. Economists with Beijing Gao Hua Securities Co Ltd said that the economic recovery was largely helped by continued policy support reflected by the strong sequential growth of total social financing over the past three months and loosening of virus control restrictions and residents' greater willingness to go out because of the perception the spread of the virus was under control.

Swiss Economy Expected to Shrink by Worst Rate in Decades

ZURICH (Reuters) - Switzerland's economy will suffer its worst downturn in decades during 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic damages output and jobs, the government said on Wednesday, but the downturn will be less severe than initially feared.

Swiss gross domestic product will fall 6.2% this year, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) said, the worst downturn since 1975, when the country was hit by the aftermath of the oil price shocks.

Unemployment is forecast to rise to 3.8% this year, as foreign trade suffers, consumer spending shrinks and companies emerge slowly from shutdowns imposed to halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Still, the forecast was a slight improvement from the 6.7% downturn in GDP foreseen by the Swiss government's economists in their April statement, and compares favorably with other European countries.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and (OECD) says Britain could suffer an 11.5% slump this year. Downturns of 11.4% are expected in France and 11.3% in Italy.

The Swiss government expects a gradual recovery during the second half of 2020, provided a massive second wave of the disease along with severe restrictions does not occur.

In 2021, SECO forecasts underlying economic growth of 4.9%, although unemployment will remain high by Swiss standards at 4.1%.

"Switzerland's economy has been fairly resilient in an international comparison," said Gero Jung, chief economist at Mirabaud bank.

"Switzerland has been very quick to respond to the crisis, with the government's stimulus package being massive, totaling more than 60 billion francs (\$63.22 billion) or close to 10% of domestic GDP," he said. More than 15 billion Swiss francs in emergency loans have also been handed out to nearly 130,000 business. Some 1.9 million people - or 37% of the workforce - have applied for short-time working compensation.

More Than 600,000 Lose Work in UK

LONDON (Reuters) - The number of people on British company payrolls fell by more than 600,000 in April and May as the coronavirus lockdown hit the labour market, and vacancies plunged by the most on record, official data showed on Tuesday.

The jobless rate unexpectedly held at 3.9% over the three months to April - despite a record slump in overall economic output during that period - as firms turned to the government's job retention scheme to keep employees on their books.

Economists polled by Reuters had mostly expected a rise in the unemployment rate to 4.7%.

"The furlough scheme continues to hold off the bulk of job losses, but unemployment is likely to surge in the months ahead," Tej Parikh, chief economist at the Institute of Directors, said.

The furlough scheme is due to run until the end of October although employers have to make contributions to the cost of paying their temporarily laid-off workers from August.

Many companies have already announced permanent layoffs of workers. On Monday, building materials firm Travis Perkins said it would cut about 9% of its workforce, or 2,500 jobs. Airlines have shed more than 15,000 jobs in Britain.

Britain's job market was strong before the coronavirus hit, and the ONS said many of those who lost their jobs in April were not actively looking for work and so counted as 'inactive' rather than unemployed.

In a more up-to-date sign of how the coronavirus lockdown is affecting the labour market, experimental figures, based on tax data, showed the number of people on company payrolls fell by 612,000 in April and May. In May alone, it was 163,000 lower than in April when the biggest job losses occurred.



That left the number of paid employees 2.1% lower than in March, the ONS said.

There was also a big drop in job vacancies which showed their largest quarterly fall since the ONS began measuring them in 2001, with a slide of 342,000 to 476,000.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, under pressure to ease the slump in the economy, has ordered a review of Britain's two-metre social distancing rule which many employers say is stopping them from getting back up to speed.

Johnson and finance minister Rishi Sunak are also reportedly considering increasing a tax incentive for small firms to hire workers, and suspending social security payments by employers.

Tehran, Baku Hold Talk on Development of Economic Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a telephone conversation, Iran’s minister of finance Farhad Dejjpasand and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev conferred on expansion of mutual economic ties under the outbreak of coronavirus.

Expressing gratitude for Mustafayev’s efforts for deepening ties with Iran, Dejjpasand invited the Azerbaijani official to pay a visit to Iran.

The Iranian minister also hoped that through preserving anti-coronavirus health protocols the two sides can hold the 14th Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission in the near future.

Dejjpasand also called on Azerbaijan to facilitate commutes of Iranian trucks at the joint border. Mustafayev, for his turn, vowed that Azerbaijan will do its best to improve mutual economic ties with Iran in various aspects.



FAO Celebrates World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2020

TEHRAN (FAO) - The Representation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the Islamic Republic of Iran commemorates World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2020, highlighting the importance of promoting sustainable production and consumption.

During an event hosted on Tuesday by the Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organization, Mr Ali Shahnian, FAO-Iran Project Operation Officer delivered a statement on behalf of Mr Gerold Bödeker, FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In his statement, Mr Bödeker, emphasised that preventing land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas is an achievable target that can be realised through collective problem-solving, strong community involvement and cooperation at all levels.

He underscored that changing consumer and corporate behaviour, and adopting more efficient land use planning and more sustainable land management practices, will provide us with enough land to meet the demand for essentials and for a wider array of goods and services.

“We have no choice but to manage and utilise our resources much better. We need to enhance productivity and efficiency along the entire value chain,” highlighted Mr Bödeker.

“FAO is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in order to increase resilience to climate change and drought through the promotion of sustainable land management practices as a means to improve people’s livelihoods,” noted FAO Representative in his concluding remarks.

The full text of the statement of Mr Gerold Bödeker, the FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2020 reads:

Your Excellency, the Minister of Agriculture Jihad, Mr Khavazi,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every year, on 17 June, the global community celebrates the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought to promote public awareness on international efforts dedicated to this cause.

This day is a unique moment to remind everyone that preventing land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas – which is a well-recognised definition of desertification – is an achievable target that can be realised through collective problem-solving, strong community involvement and cooperation at all levels.

Desertification should be viewed as a breakdown of the fragile balance that allowed plant, human and animal life to develop harmoniously on the lands. This breakdown of the equilibrium represents the beginning of a self-destruction process for all elements of the life system on the planet.

Soil vulnerability to wind and water erosion, the lowering of the water table, the impairment of the natural regeneration of vegetation, and the chemical degeneration of soils are among the most immediate results of desertification.

Evidence also shows that desertification has a serious effect on the vulnerable populations in developing countries. By limiting the potential of natural resources, desertification reduces agricultural production and makes it increasingly precarious.

Overexploitation of the most readily available natural resources, selling off the agricultural production equipment and increasing rural migration to urban areas in search of better living conditions are among the most common strategies taken by affected populations for survival in the face of desertification.

Besides, as the number of human population growths across the globe, more people settle in urban areas and the average amount of human consumption escalates, the demand for arable lands to provide human food, animal feed and clothing fibre increases, while at the same time the health and productivity of existing lands not only declines due



to the immediate human-induced practices but also deteriorates by the long-term effects of climate change.

UN predicts that by 2050, the world will have over 9.8 billion inhabitants which implies significantly more food, water and other resources will be required to supply the world population with enough food, feed and fibre.

All these predictions mean that in just 30 years, we will need an extra 593 million hectares of agricultural land to produce an additional 74,000 trillion calories required to supply the world population’s energy intake, an increase equivalent to a 56% rise in crop calories.

Considering these projected demands, we should also pay attention to an unfortunate fact that currently, around one-third of all food produced each year across the world is lost or wasted. This is equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes of food with a footprint of 1.4 billion hectares, close to 30% of the world’s agricultural land areas.

The land surfaces presently used for grazing and grain production to feed animals accounts for 80% of agricultural land globally [7]. Moreover, recent estimations also reveal that by 2030, the fashion industry will use 35% more land – meaning over 115 million hectares.

Food, feed and fibre must also compete with expanding cities and the fuel industry, which are also gobbling up land at rapid rates. The end result is that land is being converted and degraded at unsustainable rates.

All of these highlights that we have no choice but to manage and utilise our resources much better. We need to enhance productivity and efficiency along the entire value chain.

With changes in consumer and corporate behaviour, and the adoption of more efficient land use planning and more sustainable land management practices, we will have enough land to meet the demand for essentials and for a wider array of goods and services.

FAO, as the lead UN agency in promoting resilient agricultural development, concentrates on solutions that we can find in nature to tackle complex challenges and supply our needs in a sustainable way. This is especially important in a moment where the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic disruption threaten food security, nutrition, health and the livelihoods of millions of people, exposing the fragilities of our ecosystems and food systems.

FAO along with other UN entities engaged in advocating “United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)” are fully committed to supporting the implementation of the UNCCD in order to increase resilience to climate change and drought through the promotion of sustainable land management practices as a means to improve people’s livelihoods.

Thank you.

Turkish Lira Becomes Unofficial Currency in Syria



ANKARA (Dispatches) - In Turkish-controlled parts of northern Syria, people have started to use the Turkish lira, rather than the local Syrian currency as the economy and the value of the Syrian lira plummeted.

In recent weeks, Syria has faced a growing economic crisis where it has seen the value of the Syrian lira drastically drop and inflation soar. Currently, the lira is trading between 2,000-3,000 to \$1, where it is officially valued at 435 to \$1.

Turkey has begun delivering currency to Turkish-controlled areas in Syria, known as Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch areas, and opposition-controlled areas, including Idlib, as residents have started to rely on the stronger Turkish lira to survive.

“People in northern Syria are looking for a very stable currency because the Syrian lira is deteriorating quickly,” Abdulkafi al-Hamdo, a teacher in northern Syria, told Al Arabiya English. “They started using the Turkish lira because they have PTT,” he said. PTT is the Turkish postal service that is used to transfer money from Turkey to Syria. Syrian pound plummeted as U.S. sanctions loom and Rami Makhlouf saga alarms investors

Additionally, some organizations have started paying salaries in Turkish lira and money must be transferred in Turkish lira, al-Hamdo said. While the use of the Turkish lira predates the economic crisis in Syria, the need for it has increased rapidly as the Syrian lira devaluates. According to al-Hamdo, the use of Turkish currency has accelerated in the last week as workers’ salaries are no longer enough to sustain themselves or their families when they receive payment in Syrian lira.

Iran Plans Monthly...

FROM PAGE 1

On the diplomatic front, Iran complained to the United Nations and summoned the Swiss ambassador in Tehran, who represents U.S. interests in the Islamic Republic, over possible measures Washington could take against the Iranian tankers.

According to many observers, Iran’s determination forced a climbdown in threatened “measures” by the U.S. which had reportedly dispatched warships and a patrol aircraft to the Atlantic Ocean to possibly confront the Iranian vessels.

The U.S. warns foreign governments, shipping firms, seaports, and insurers that they could face stiff sanctions if they assist Iranian tankers with supplying fuel to Venezuela.

Bloomberg said this month the U.S. government has decided to avoid a military confrontation and instead prepared sanctions on as many as 50 oil and fuel tankers as part of an effort to cut off trade between Iran and Venezuela.

“The sanctions would be imposed through the Treasury Department and are intended to avoid a US military confrontation with the countries,” the leading financial news provider said, citing a person familiar with the matter.

However, both Venezuela and Iran are more than willing to cooperate in defiance of the U.S. threats. According to the Washington Post, Venezuela and Iran have “just proved” that the Trump administration’s sanctions are failing.

“By showing that they were able to trade to mutual benefit”, Iran and Venezuela “not only successfully circumvented U.S. sanctions; they also scored public relations points in the process,” the paper wrote last month.

Thanks to Iran’s bold move, the chink in the chain of the draconian sanctions is becoming visible.

On Monday, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said his country would sell gasoline to Venezuela if asked to do so. Lopez Obrador added he has not received such a request from the Venezuelan government.

Officials at Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro’s office have said Caracas plans to import more gasoline and additives from Iran.

Pakistan Eases...

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting was attended by Minister for Planning Asad Umer, Minister for National Food Security and Research Fakhar Imam, Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar, Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who is also chairman of Farmers’ Association of Pakistan, and PIA CEO Arshad Malik and others.

Food minister assured the traders no efforts would be spared to increase exports from agriculture sector through close coordination with the stakeholders. The meeting called for another meeting between mango exporters and PIA on Tuesday (today). The committee on interior affairs was directed to send its recommendations on issues related to export of mangoes to Iran. The committee would send its recommendations to the ministry of interior for further action. Mango exporters complained of higher freight charges by airlines that account for 90 percent of Pakistan’s mango exports. They previously estimated a 70 percent drop in mango exports from 130,000 tons last year, fetching \$90 million.

Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed said an increase in share of PIA in export volume of mangoes would save foreign exchange being paid to foreign carriers as freight charges for mango exports. PFVA, who participated through video link from Karachi, hoped that barriers to exports would be removed. He said the exporters would try to take mango export to 80,000 metric tons this year.

Mango export to Iran via land route is also badly suffering due to various serious issues, according to the PFVA. The PFVA said various sectors, including packaging and transportation, are directly related to the trade of fruits and vegetables. Many new investors and businessmen are attracted to the trade of fruits and vegetables after economic difficulties in other occupations due to lockdown. The new investment would create employment, it added.

Ministers Weigh...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) unveiled plans for using a joint mechanism with Iraq to purchase basic commodities and items excluded from the list of anti-Iranian sanctions.

Iran’s top banker Abdolnaser Hemmati, who is on a visit to Iraq with a ranking economic delegation, held a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart Ali Mohsen Ismail al-Alaq. In the gathering, held on Wednesday morning, the CBI chief stressed the need for the promotion of monetary and banking cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad and the employment of a joint mechanism to expedite the process of supplying Iran’s needs for basic commodities.

Hemmati also pointed to the previous agreements between the two neighbors, saying Iran will be using its resources in Iraq to buy non-sanctioned and basic commodities.

In the meeting, representatives of the central banks of Iran and Iraq were tasked with working out the joint mechanism in detail to put it into practice.

In February 2019, governors of the central banks of Iran and Iraq had signed an agreement to develop a payment mechanism aimed at facilitating banking ties between the two neighboring countries.

Iran Foreign...

FROM PAGE 1

UNCTAD’s statistics set Iran’s share of global FDI in over the past year as less than one-tenth of a percent (one-thousandth). Last year, the volume of FDI across the world reached \$ 1,540 billion, which indicates a three percent growth compared with 2018.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) attracted almost ten times, Turkey five times, Saudi Arabia three times, and Iraq and Oman twice as much foreign investment as Iran did. In the wake of the COVID pandemic, UNCTAD says the world is expected to experience a 40 percent drop in the volume of foreign investment in 2020 compared with 2019. This means FDI will fall below one trillion dollars for the first time since 2005.

Furthermore, UNCTAD says global FDI will also fall five to ten percent next year before recovering in 2022.

While the value of global FDI jumped to the record level of \$ 2 trillion in 2015, it has dropped every year since then, and finally recovered slightly last year.

The World Bank recently reported that the pandemic might cause the global economy to shrink and drop to a negative 5.3 percent growth this year.

Iran Blasts E3...

FROM PAGE 1

During the Monday session, the IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi claimed that for over four months, “Iran has denied us access to two locations and that, for almost a year, it has not engaged in substantive discussions to clarify our questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities.”

International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi says he expects very active discussions on issues related to Iran after opening a virtual meeting of the agency’s Board of Governors.

Gharibabadi dismissed the claims in the reported resolution and said, “While Iran is cooperating extensively and constructively with the agency, submitting a resolution with the purpose of asking Iran to cooperate and fulfill the two demands of the IAEA is regrettable and a totally unconstructive move.”

He criticized the European trio’s double standards on Tehran’s nuclear program and said such a resolution is being put forth by the countries that “either possess nuclear weapons or play host to such destructive and deadly weapons.” Such a move, Gharibabadi said is “a mockery of international norms and rules governing disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.”

Gharibabadi also called on all members of the IAEA Board of Governors to exercise vigilance and avoid taking any “political and hasty” measures in order for Iran to continue cooperation with the Vienna-based agency.

“Naturally if such a resolution, which clearly serves American goals, is approved, the Islamic Republic of Iran will have to take the necessary measures accordingly,” he noted. The Iranian envoy further stressed that the new IAEA request is founded on the claims raised by the Israeli regime, which is an enemy of Iran.

Iran warns IAEA board against falling under US, Israel pressure Iran warns the UN nuclear agency’s Board of Governors against taking an “unconstructive” decision targeting the Islamic Republic under the US and Israeli pressure. Tehran’s transparent cooperation with the agency “does not mean that we should agree to every request from the IAEA on the basis of delusional claims of our enemies,” he emphasized.

Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — in 2015.

However, Washington’s unilateral withdrawal in May 2018 and the subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the historic agreement in limbo.

China Offered Two F1 Races This Year

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China has been invited to host two Formula One races in Shanghai this season but no decision has been reached over whether to accept the offer, the head of the Shanghai Sports Bureau has told local media.

The Chinese Grand Prix was supposed to take place at the Shanghai International circuit on April 19 but was postponed until later in the year because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Formula One Management (FOM) still hope to run 15-18 races this year and have announced a revised and shortened provisional European schedule set to start in Austria without spectators on July 5.

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U.S. Open to Go Ahead Without Fans

NEW YORK (Reuters) - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday gave the green light for the U.S. Open to be held from Aug. 31-Sept. 13 without fans as part of the state's reopening from shutdowns related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Cuomo said on Twitter the United States Tennis Association (USTA) will take "extraordinary precautions" to protect players at its marquee event including robust testing, additional cleaning, extra locker room space and dedicated accommodation.

Bayern Clinch Eighth Straight Bundesliga Title

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski said Bayern Munich had proved they are the best club in Germany after securing their eighth straight Bundesliga title on Tuesday as the Poland striker's first-half volley saw them claim a 1-0 win at Werder Bremen.

Bayern were confirmed German champions for the 30th time in the club's proud history to maintain their iron-grip on the Bundesliga shield in recent years.

"We have showed that we are the best team in Germany," said Lewandowski.

Lewandowski struck two minutes before the break with a brilliant chest and low strike, but Bayern had to endure a nervy final 11 minutes after teenage left-back Alphonso Davies was sent off for a second yellow card.

At the end of a first 45 minutes dominated by Bremen's dogged defending and pouring rain, Bayern broke through when centre-back Jerome Boateng chipped over the top for Lewandowski to score.

It was the Poland striker's 31st league goal of the season, a career best, keeping him on course to be named the league's top scorer for the fifth time.

Head coach Hansi Flick landed the Bundesliga title in his first season in charge having stepped in when Niko Kovac was sacked last November.

Even the coronavirus lockdown could not stop Bayern's momentum, with the champions winning eight consecutive games in all competitions since the resumption of German football last month.

Flick, assistant coach when Germany won the 2014 World Cup, could land the treble as Bayern face Bayer Leverkusen in the German Cup final on July 4 and hold a 3-0 first-leg lead over Chelsea in the Champions League last 16.

"This is Bayern Munich, the goals are always high," said Flick after club president Hainer Herbert had said the treble is the goal this season.

"We have now reached our first big goal, the cup is now the next goal, then the Champions League, but you can't plan for that."

The home defeat means Bremen, who are three points from guaranteed safety with two games left, badly need a result at fellow strugglers Mainz this Saturday or against Cologne at home on the final day of the season.

This was Bayern's 13th straight win in Bremen, but Florian Kohfeldt's hosts worked tirelessly.

Having given Bayern the lead, Lewandowski went chasing a second and had the ball in the net in the 54th minute



but was flagged offside.

Canada left-back Davies showed a lightning pair of heels by clocking 36.51km/h, which will be a Bundesliga record if the speed is confirmed, before his late dismissal.

Having been shown a first-half yellow card for a foul on Leonardo Bittencourt, Davies was booked again for blocking the run of Milos Veljkovic.

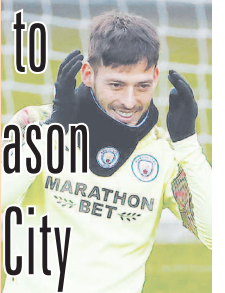
Bremen piled on the pressure in the final 10 minutes, with Boateng doing excellently to prevent a late cross from reaching Josh Sargent.

Kohfeldt threw on strikers Niclas Füllkrug and 41-year-old Claudio Pizarro, against his former club.

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer pulled off a stunning finger-tip save in the 90th minute to deny Japan forward Yuya Osako, with Pizarro sliding in searching for a tap-in, as Bayern held on.

The result means club stalwart Thomas Mueller now equals the league record of former Bayern great Franck Ribery with his ninth Bundesliga title.

David Silva to See Out Season With Man City



LONDON (Reuters) - David Silva will stay at Manchester City until the end of the Premier League season, manager Pep Guardiola announced on Tuesday.

The Spanish midfielder's contract was due to expire at the end of June, with the 34-year-old captain set to leave after 10 years with the club.

The Premier League is due to restart without spectators on Wednesday and aims to complete the season on July 26 after months of inactivity due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

"David will stay until the end of season," said Guardiola ahead of the home match against Arsenal.

"He will finish the last games without people. But hopefully he and the club can organise a proper farewell in front of people."

Silva, who joined City from Valencia in 2010, has won four Premier League titles, two FA Cups and the League Cup five times.

City's hopes of defending their Premier League title are gone, with Liverpool 25 points clear, but they remain in contention for the Champions League and FA Cup.

Pakistan's Hafeez to Delay Retirement If T20 World Cup Postponed

LAHORE (Reuters) - Pakistan all-rounder Mohammed Hafeez says he will delay his retirement if this year's Twenty20 World Cup is postponed because of the coronavirus crisis.

The 39-year-old former captain planned to end his 17-year international career after the World Cup in November but with hosts Australia labelling the tournament's schedule as "very high risk" Hafeez is now ready to play on.

"I gave retiring from T20 cricket after the World Cup a lot of thought," Hafeez said in a video conference. "I want to retire from T20 cricket after playing a big tournament in which I perform well, and hopefully go out on a winning note."

"This is my plan, and if the World T20 is postponed to November or some later time, that doesn't mean I won't play it."

Hafeez quit tests in late 2018 but remained active in limited-overs cricket and played the 50-overs World Cup in England last year. He was recalled to the Twenty20 squad for the home series against Bangladesh in January and has also been picked for Pakistan's tour of England in August-September.

While there have been growing calls for Hafeez to call time on his career, he said he was still good enough for international cricket. "I'm not going to quit cricket because someone asks me to, just like I never started playing at someone else's behest," he said.

Klopp Urges Liverpool Fans to Avoid Gathering at Stadium

LONDON (Reuters) - Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp has urged supporters to stay home and not gather at stadiums as the Premier League leaders prepare to resume their quest for a first English top flight title in 30 years.

The league was set to return later on Wednesday following a three-month break due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Liverpool need six points from their remaining nine games to win the title and could even secure it on Sunday if they beat local rivals Everton and second-placed Manchester City lose to Arsenal later on Wednesday.

Guardiola Backs Rashford, Sterling Against Stupid Critics



LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has condemned as 'stupid' those who say players like Marcus Rashford and Raheem Sterling should focus on football rather than speaking out on social issues.

Manchester United and England forward Rashford has campaigned successfully for school food vouchers to be provided over the summer holidays. City forward Sterling, also an established England international, has backed anti-racism protests after the death of unarmed black man George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis.

"Maybe stupid people don't believe that you are a human being," said Guardiola ahead of the Premier League restart against Arsenal on Wednesday.

"We can have an opinion the same like a doctor or even a politician. We are humans. Why should we not say our opinions to be a better society? What Raheem Sterling has done many times or players in our club, Michael Rashford or whoever."

"Of course they have to use their platform to make a better society," continued the Spaniard.

"They don't need to get more money. Fortunately for them they have enough so they do it to get a better place to live for the families, for our kids, for the next generation... I admire a lot these kind of gestures."



World 100m Champion Coleman Faces Suspension

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Reigning World 100m champion Christian Coleman is facing a two-year suspension after revealing on Tuesday he missed a drugs test last December.

The U.S. sprint star -- who only narrowly avoided being banned last year after three violations of anti-doping "whereabouts" rules across 2018 and 2019 -- revealed details of his latest missed test in a statement on Twitter.

Coleman said he had unsuccessfully challenged an Athletics Integrity Unit finding that he missed a test on December 9 2019.

"And now this might result in me being suspended from other filing failures that occurred well over a year ago at this point," Coleman said.

Coleman's impassioned statement on Twitter was accompanied by what appeared to be a copy of his formal notification from the AIU of a missed test.

If the missed case is confirmed, Coleman could face a suspension of up to two years, ruling him out of next year's Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Coleman, 24, escaped suspension on a technicality ahead of last September's World Championships in Doha after it emerged he had committed three whereabouts failures in a 12-month period.

Those offences were recorded on June 6, 2018, January 16, 2019 and April 26, 2019.

Barca Cruise Past Leganes



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi was rugby tackled and then scored a penalty as Barcelona put the pressure back on Real Madrid by easing to a 2-0 victory over Leganes at an empty Camp Nou on Tuesday.

Messi was hauled to the ground in the first half by a diving Unai Bustinza wrapping two arms around his waist and he was knocked over again in the second, this time earning a penalty, which he converted. After 33 appearances, Messi now has 26 goals this season. In his last eight games, he has seven goals and eight assists.

The 17-year-old Ansu Fati had earlier given Barcelona the lead, continuing his breakthrough season with a fifth goal in eight league starts. Leganes could have made the reigning champions feel uncomfortable if Miguel-Angel Guerrero had taken either of two golden early opportunities but the first was cleared off the line and the second denied by the post.

"We had a bit of luck at the beginning," admitted Barca coach Quique Setien.

But his team's reward for a rather underwhelming performance is a five-point advantage over Madrid, who can reduce that back to two by winning at home to Valencia on Thursday.

Valencia will be a more thorough examination of Madrid's sharpness after the three-month break and Barca can expect tougher tests to come than Leganes too, starting with a trip to third-placed Sevilla on Friday.