

Iranian Foreign Ministry
Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi
Said that Britain, France, and
Germany Have Entered a Non-
Constructive and Dangerous Game

IRAN NEWS

According to UNHCR Report, Iran
Is Among the Top 10 Countries in
The World Hosting Immigrants as
The Country Ranks Seventh for
Hosting 979,400 Refugees and the
Displaced in 2019

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Gov't to Make Wearing Mask Obligatory

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran could make wearing face masks compulsory in areas with a high risk of coronavirus infection, President Hassan Rouhani says.

President Rouhani made the announcement while saying that inexpensive masks should be readily available to people in abundance.

He further said schools and universities will open on September 5, 2020, but all healthcare protocols must be fully observed as the new academic year begins.

The president said the government does not intend to shut down businesses due to the coronavirus outbreak, nor is it necessary to do so.

However, said Rouhani, overcrowding in public places should be prevented and nonessential travel should be avoided.

He urged people to keep observing social distancing protocols and avoid getting together in large numbers.

"We should prepare ourselves for a long-term fight against the coronavirus," he said.

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Duterte Invited To Visit Tehran

MANILA (Dispatches) - Iran's government has invited Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte to visit the Tehran, Malacañang said Friday.

The Palace said the invitation was relayed by Iran's new Ambassador to the Philippines Alireza Tootoonchian, who presented his credentials to Duterte during a video conference call. "Ambassador Tootoonchian... conveyed the best wishes of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his invitation for the President to visit Iran at the earliest opportunity," the Palace said through the Office of the Presidential Assistant on Foreign Affairs.

"He also stated that the Philippines enjoys a special standing in Iran because of the country's independent foreign policy, particularly under President Duterte, and its advocacy for peaceful co-existence among peoples of different faiths." Duterte, meanwhile, thanked Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for pardoning a Filipino who was detained in Iran.

The President expressed hope for "stronger bilateral ties, particularly in science and technology and people-to-people exchanges" in the years ahead.

Duterte also received the credentials of the new ambassadors of the State of Palestine, New Zealand, Canada and Vietnam.

Iran Criticizes IAEA for Relying on Baseless Claims



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official has expounded on the legal dimensions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s access to Iran's nuclear sites and activities.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, in an article, explained a range of issues and points with regards to the IAEA's request for "transparency."

"This report is being published on the threshold of a meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors and in the wake of the submission of a report by the IAEA's director general to the board which resulted in the adoption of an anti-Iran resolution," said Kamalvandi, the deputy head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and the organization's spokesman.

"The report was drawn up by the European Troika based on forged and unsubstantiated documents and was met with serious objection from China and Russia as well as abstentions from the seven Board members, and was finally approved by the board," he noted.

He said the IAEA director general's new seasonal report calls for access to, and transparency on two sites in Iran. "Accordingly, the agency, based on forged documents and intelligence gathered through spy operations by Israel, demanded access."

The Islamic Republic of Iran regards these accusations as an unwarranted and illegitimate precedents and seeks to prevent the establishment of such a trend," said the official.

Kamalvandi noted that the strongest verification system is being implemented for Iran's nuclear activities, adding almost 20 percent of the total inspections conducted by the IAEA around the world are being carried out in Iran since the JCPOA was signed. "Eighteen seasonal reports by the IAEA's director general over around four years all suggest the Islamic Republic of Iran's constructive and extensive cooperation with the agency," he noted.

He said Iran's giving access to the IAEA's inspectors is a symbol of Tehran's cooperation and full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA, the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol.

However, he added, the U.S. and Israel are putting the agency under pressure to once again put on the table issues pertaining to Iran's nuclear program that have already been dealt with and are over now.

"The agency should not be used as a tool to advance the wicked policies of some governments and regimes," he said.

Kamalvandi underlined that Iran, under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, is obliged to present to the IAEA auditing reports as well as special reports on its nuclear materials.

Meanwhile, he stressed, any demand by the IAEA for "complementary" access to Iran's sites and materials should be coupled with relevant reasons and in accordance with the agency's statute as well as the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol.

"Answering the agency's questions and giving any type of access shall be a function of legal considerations," he said.

He once again recalled a fatwa by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei under which the production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction are religiously forbidden.

Kamalvandi urged the agency not to give credit to information obtained through spying activities or invalid sources.

Iran to Offer Incentive Package to Foreign Airlines

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Tehran - The Director General of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company for Trade and Investment Affairs Nasser Aghaei said on Sat. that Iran will offer an incentive package for flights of foreign airlines passing from Iranian sky.

By providing incentive packages, Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company intends to boost the motivation of foreign airlines to use Iran's sky, he said, adding, "in this respect, priority will be given to those companies which are placed in Iran's first revenue portfolio of transit flights, so, these flights will benefit from incentive packages due to the outbreak of the coronavirus global pandemic." Competing with other regional countries and encouraging airlines to use the Iranian sky instead of the sky of rival countries is the major concern of the government, Aghaei added.

The critical condition brought about for international aviation industry during the outbreak of coronavirus, COVID-19, is the issue which is not covered to anyone, he said, adding, "We should bear in mind that coronavirus, COVID-19, has affected all aspects of this industry both in Iran and world considerably, one of these adverse effects is related to the significant reduction of passing flights across the world such as Iranian sky and this issue still remains in place." Given the expert studies made in this regard, a new regulation was submitted to the government by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, he emphasized.

"We are duty bound to increase the traffic of passing flights from country's sky especially at the current condition that all countries are grappling with COVID-19," Aghaei stressed.

Another Iranian Ship Approaching Venezuela

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Another Iranian ship has sailed into Venezuela's territorial waters and is expected to dock in the Latin American country's ports over the next couple of days, the American media say.

According to a report by the Associated Press on Saturday, the Iranian-flagged freighter Golsan left Shahid Rajaei Port in Iran's southern city of Bandar Abbas in mid-May and is heading in the direction of Venezuelan shores.

Russ Dallen, head of the Miami-based investment firm Caracas Capital Markets, said the cargo ship "is carrying parts to continue repairing Venezuela's collapsed refineries."

Dallen added that the Iranian vessel - sailing at a speed of about 13.1 knots - is expected to anchor in Venezuelan ports on Sunday or Monday. The ship approached Caribbean waters on Friday following a high-seas journey from Iran.

Earlier in the month, five Iranian oil tankers carrying millions of barrels of gasoline and components entered the ports of the fuel-starved South American country and are now on their way back to Iran.

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Zarif: E3 Are Powerless Against U.S. Coercion

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a message described EU as accessories to the US and Israel, saying they are in no position to counsel Iran.

"E3 must stop public face-saving & muster the courage to state publicly what they admit privately: their failure to fulfill even own JCPOA duties due to total impotence in resisting US bullying," Zarif wrote on his Twitter account on Friday.

"Behind facade, E3 are accessories to Trump & Netanyahu - & in no position to counsel Iran," he added.

Earlier, Zarif in a message urged IAEA Board of Governors not to let JCPOA enemies endanger Iran's interests, saying that E3 should not be their accessory.

Meanwhile, speaking at a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, Zarif said we will not let the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to become a tool for ending Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

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Iraqi PM to Visit Iran, U.S., S. Arabia

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi is reportedly planned to visit Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. in a bid to provide economic protection for his country.

As Alaraby reported, in his first round of trips to other countries as of getting appointed, Al-Kadhimi is set to visit the named countries to attract their political and economic support.

Some Iraqi officials say that in his trip to the US, the Iraqi PM will pursue Baghdad-Washington's strategic negotiations.

In his recent remarks, al-Al-Kadhimi said that Baghdad will stand by Tehran during the hard times as Tehran did the same.

Iraq will cooperate with Iran to solve the problems for payments of oil and natural gas, he has vowed, adding that he has given the necessary orders to the relevant officials.

Hoping that the oppressive sanctions against Iran will be removed soon, he said that Iraqi officials will use Iran's experience in the fight against challenges.

Trade is a goal of the Iraqi government although the coronavirus outbreak reduced trade, it will increase in the near future, said al-Kadhimi, stressing that all the debts should be paid in full.



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Afghan Acting FM to Visit Iran Today

TEHRAN (IRNA) -Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan Mohammad Hanif Atmar, heading a high-ranking delegation, is scheduled to visit Iran today (Sunday).

During his stay in Iran, Atmar is to hold talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and other officials, Mousavi said.

The high-profile Afghan delegation is to discuss various issues and in the framework of work groups of Iran-Afghanistan comprehensive cooperation documents and cooperation in economic, border, foreign nationals, media, security, health, water and energy fields.

115 More Iranians Die of Coronavirus

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari yesterday in her presser said, so far, 200,262 people in the country have definitely been infected with the coronavirus, and 161,384 of total infected people have recovered.

Lari said about the latest data on the coronavirus in the country and the deaths caused by the virus, “According to the definitive laboratory findings and from yesterday to June 20 in the country, 2,322 new patients with COVID-19 were diagnosed in the country and the number of patients with this disease reached 202,584.”

595 of the new patients were hospitalized.

Fortunately, 161,384 patients have recovered and discharged so far, Lari added.

The Spokeswoman said, “Unfortunately, in the past 24 hours, 115 COVID-19 patients have lost their lives, and 9,507 people have lost their lives in the country to date.”

The official stated, “2,842 patients are in intensive care units.”

So far, around 1,395,675 COVID-19 diagnosis tests have been conducted in the country,” the Health Ministry spokeswoman said.

According to the spokeswoman, the provinces of Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Golestan,



Kermanshah, Khorasan Razavi, East Azerbaijan, and West Azerbaijan, are on alert.

2,842 patients are in critical condition.

Meanwhile Deputy Health Minister Mohsen Farhadi yesterday noted that many job activities were shut down despite economic losses they have undergone during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The official noted that movie theaters, hotels, and cultural places are going to be reopened from June 21st of course by implementing all required health protocols unless any ignorance will cause formidable problems.

“Handwashing, constant surface sanitation, 1-2-meter distancing, and wearing masks are necessary to contain the virus,” he noted.

Public cooperation and implementing all hygienic protocols are a must, otherwise, the disease would not be contained and controlled, Mohsen Farhadi highlighted.

Iran Demands to Deploy Police Team Over Death of Fugitive Judge



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) department of the Iranian Police has demanded to dispatch a delegation to Romania to investigate the suspicious death of wanted fugitive judge Gholam-Reza Mansouri in the European country, a commander said.

In remarks on Saturday, Commander of Iran’s Interpol Office General Hadi Shirzad said his department has requested Romania to allow the deployment of a delegation in order to investigate the death of Mansouri.

Iran’s Interpol department has sent a letter to the Interpol office in Romania, calling for the repatriation of body of the deceased and more information on the incident resulting in his death, the general added.

The Iranian Police has set up a delegation to ascertain the cause of the wanted judge’ death and investigate into the case, Shirzad noted, saying the team will be deployed to Romania as soon as the European country gives he green light.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday that Tehran is awaiting an official report on the cause of the incident, and requests Romanian officials to announce the exact cause of his death.

The Iranian judge charged with bribery and corruption was arrested by the Interpol in Romania earlier this month and was planned to be handed over to the Islamic Republic once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

The fugitive judge was accused of corruption and taking more than \$500,000 in bribes.

Tajik Speaker Says Willing to Boost Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chairman of the Majlisi Milli of Tajikistan Rustam Emomali said in a message on Saturday that Tajikistan is willing to boost parliamentary ties with Iran to share experience and ensure cooperation more than ever.

In his message, Emomali congratulated Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on his election as speaker of the Iranian parliament (Majlis).

He wished health and success for Qalibaf and development for people of Iran.

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

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

U.S. Leadership’s Mindset Void of Freedom of Other

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran has lambasted the United States for years of looting and coercion of others, all in favor of the benefits of the country’s leaders.

“Years of looting and coercion prove that ‘freedom of other’ lacked in the U.S. successive leadership’s mindsets,” Iranian Foreign Ministry tweeted on Saturday, with #JUNETEENTH2020, marking the abolition of slavery more than a century and a half ago.

“Under Trump, the horrible reactions to peaceful protests remind the world the very scandalous history. “#JUNETEENTH2020 is a high time to decry the US ‘humans new slavery’ at home and beyond,” the tweet adds.

Juneteenth, a portmanteau of June and 19th, commemorates the US abolition of slavery under President Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, belatedly announced by a Union army in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, after the Civil War ended.

Thousands marched through US cities on Friday in Juneteenth observances, an occasion freighted with special resonance this year amid America’s reckoning with its legacy of racism.

Capping nearly four weeks of protests and national soul-searching aroused by the death of a Black man, George Floyd, under the knee of a white police officer, demonstrators took to the streets from Atlanta to Oakland, California, blending the Juneteenth holiday with calls for racial justice.

Tehran Ready to Swap Prisoners With Other States

TEHRAN (IP) - Expressing concern over depriving minimum human rights for Iranian prisoners in some countries, an Iranian official announced Tehran’s readiness to swap prisoners with other countries, including neighboring countries.

Deputy Justice Minister for Human Rights and Civil Liberties Mahmoud Abbasi announced Iran is ready to swap prisoners with other countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Referring to the release of 3,000 Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government on Friday, the Deputy Justice Minister for Human Rights and Civil Liberties Mahmoud Abbasi, said that Iran is ready to transfer Pakistani prisoners to their country.

“We hope that they will hand over their prisoners as soon as possible,” Abbasi added.

Iran’s foreign ministry says less than 3,000 Iranians are imprisoned for various crimes in other countries.

Expressing concern over the situation of Iranian prisoners in the United Arab Emirates, the Iranian Deputy Justice Minister for Human Rights and Civil Liberties said, “Unfortunately, our prisoners in UAE prisons are deprived of minimum human rights, including consular services and fair trials, and the continuation of the current situation doubles the legal and international responsibility of UAE’s government.”

According to Iran’s foreign ministry, less than 3,000 Iranians are imprisoned for various crimes in other countries. 212/207

Enemy Too Afraid of Iran’s Missile Power

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami lauded the defense industry of the country for fulfilling armed forces’ needs based on domestic capabilities.

“Iran’s defense industry has reached a point of growth and self-sufficiency that it produces all the needed equipment for ground, aerial, naval, electronic, radar confrontations by relying on domestic technology; the enemy is too afraid of this defense power and Iran’s military authority, especially in the area of missile capability,” Hatami said on Saturday while speaking in a ceremony held on the occasion of 39th anniversary of the martyrdom of Mostafa Chamran, first defense minister after the Islamic Revolution.

Hatami went on to say that what Martyr Chamran founded in the defense industry of the country decades ago have now attained great achievements. Enemies also recognize these progresses and are seeking to limit the Iranian nation by imposing cruel and unfair sanctions, he said.

June 20 marks the 39th martyrdom anniversary of professor-commander Mostafa Chamran, the first Iranian defense minister after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Born in 1932, Chamran was a member of parliament, as well as the commander of paramilitary volunteers during the Iraq–Iran War (1980-1988). Chamran left his academic career as a scientist and professor at the University of California, Berkeley in order to help Islamic movements in Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt. He was also instrumental in the struggles leading to the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Chamran was martyred on June 20 1981 after being hit by shrapnel shells in Dehlavieh, a region in Iran’s southern Khuzestan Province during the 1980-1988 Iraqi imposed war on Iran.

Iran Files Complaint to IMO Over U.S. Illegal Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Managing Director Mohammad Rastad in a conversation with Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Kitack Lim criticized over US illegal sanctions and threats against Iran’s legitimate activities.

Rastad stressed that while Iranian sailors are doing their activities legally and in the framework of international maritime conventions and regulations, they are threatened.

Such abnormal behavior by the U.S. is considered a direct threat against maritime security, he said.

He urged IMO and other international inspectorate bodies to pursue this issue.

With regard to IMO chief’s belief in the non-political position of IMO, we could convince IMO to address illegal threats against Iran’s shipping activities, Rastad noted.

Referring to the U.S.’ new sanctions against the Iranian shipping industry, he said “we need more serious interactions between maritime organizations and it is necessary to take advantage of domestic power for improving activities in this field and to minimize the effects of sanctions”.

Earlier, Iran’s Ambassador to UK Hamid Baedinejad sent a letter to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) regarding the US threats against Iran’s oil tankers.

Tehran, Baku Review Trade, Border Trade Ties

BAKU (IRNA) - In a video call with Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Republic Javad Jahangirzadeh and Deputy for International Affairs of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Mohammad Reza Karbasi, the latest situation of trade and border trade with Azerbaijan during the pandemic time was reviewed.

According to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baku, in this video call, Jahangirzadeh said that trade increased five-fold in recent years, and they reviewed the latest situation of trade and border trade between the two countries.

The ambassador said that Iranian Embassy in Baku helped solve the problem of the traffic of Iranian trucks on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan requiring the Azeri parties to exercise effective cooperation with Iranian lorry drivers.

In this video call, some issues related to some problems facing Iranian trucks in the customs of the two countries were mentioned to follow up by our country’s embassy.

Explaining the latest situation regarding joint economic projects with the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran also noted the embassy’s ongoing plans to build a joint industrial township and the start of technical negotiations on a preferential tariffs agreement with the country in the near future to help boost trade between the two countries.

IRGC to Start Construction Of Long-Rage Air Defense

TEHRAN (MNA) –Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Air Defense Force Brigadier General Reza Shaban announced on Saturday that the body plans to commence the development of long-range air defense systems.

Brigadier General Shaban said IRGC has manufactured shot and long-range radars and defense systems and is to start its activities in manufacturing long-range defense systems as well.

He made the remarks on the occasion of the first anniversary of the downing of a US Navy MQ-4C Triton drone in June 2019 by Iran’s military. The IRGC commander added that Iran is capable of manufacturing modern defense systems with the lowest prices.

Referring to the IRGC Aerospace Force release of a new video on Friday that shows the development of the indigenous Khordad-3 air defense system, that downed an intruding US spy drone in 2019, he explained that IRGC has successfully tested the system on the sea.

The released video shows the mobile air defense system launching the missile after being stationed on an Iranian carrier.

The missile successfully hit its target inside the Iranian airspace over the coastal province of Hormuzgan on June 19, 2019. At the time the IRGC declared that the drone was from the RQ-4 Global Hawk variety. Triton is a slightly modified version of the Global Hawk and is made mostly from its components.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:49

77. Say (to the Rejecters): "My Lord is not uneasy because of you if ye call not on Him: But ye have indeed rejected (Him), and soon will come the inevitable (punishment)!"
Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (77)

Iran Should Not Lose Turkey's Gas Market

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Former Secretary General of Gas Exporting Countries Forum Mr. Mohammad Hossein Adeli says Iran should do it best in order to save Turkey's gas market.

Speaking to ILNA, Mr. Adeli said that it is not the right time for criticism and all should help the oil ministry to manage its policies in order to earn more money for the country.

He added that all should avoid politicizing the issues in order that the related bodies can continue their performance and policies because this attitude is very crucial for any ruling government in the country.

He also urged the foreign ministry to rush for helping the oil ministry for saving its international markets.

He added that it is not a good approach that some try to hinder export of gas and call for export of petrochemical exports and it should be changed. He admitted that this approach has put political pressure on decision-makers and has obstructed the country from its presence in the gas exports markets.

On Turkey's gas policies both in importing sector or in developing pipelines for exports, Adeli said that he believes Turkey is a good market for Iran's gas exports.

He further said that Iran should do its best to save Turkey's export market because Turkey once thought about the transit of Iran's gas to Europe and its earnings but now due to the drastic developments in the gas market geopolitically, Turkey considers itself a key player and it wants to take advantage of it.

Adeli noted that the competition between Russia and the U.S. for ruling Europe's gas market has provided this opportunity for Ankara to carry out TurkStream pipeline with Moscow in order that Russia can sell its gas to Eastern Europe via Turkey.

He admitted that the intense rivalry between Turkey and Azerbaijan which is



widened with the U.S. support gives Turkey this opportunity to choose other options for its gas and it has now ties with Qatar for gas and LNG. He emphasized that even the U.S. is purchaser of Qatar's LNG. So Turkey is now totally different from what it was 10 to 15 years ago and Iran should realize these differences and developments and adopt its policies based on these developments, he added.

Adeli reiterated that so Iran should set its policies based on international competition rather than internal political competitions and criticisms.

He stated Turkey sets its policies based on its national interests and it diversifies its resources for gas purchase and it takes advantage of its transit position to become a gas hub and to play its regional and international role.

On exports of gas to India, Adeli said the issue of gas exports to India and Pakistan has been talk of the country for decades, adding that talks with those countries have always come to a halt under the U.S. threats or incentives and today the U.S. itself is ready to provide those countries with LNG and its ally Qatar has also done so.

Adeli reiterated that Iran should not forget the significance of India and Pakistan gas markets and it should take back those markets from the U.S.'s control because Iran with its huge gas reserves and proximity to those countries deserves to have better share of those markets especially India because Iran and India have had good historical and amicable ties and Indians can count on Iran's exports.

IME Posts Weekly Trade of 572k Tons of Commodities



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Over 572,236 MT of commodities worth over \$738m were traded last week on the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

According to the report from IME International Affairs and PR, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 192,271 MT of various products worth close to \$370m were traded last week.

On this trading floor, 212,616 MT of steel, 3,880 MT of copper, 7,240 MT of aluminum, 150 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 18 MT of precious metal concentrates as well as 20 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 322,871 MT of different commodities with the total value of \$379m were traded.

On this trading floor, 64,025 MT of bitumen, 113,000 MT of VB feed stock, 69,714 MT of polymer products, 7,000 MT of lube cut oil, 30,318 MT of chemical products, 2,204 MT of base oil, 400 MT of slaps waxes, 650 MT of insulation as well as 46,560 MT of sulfur were traded.

Furthermore, 1,093 MT of metal scrape were traded on the IME's side market.

It is worth noting that a ton and 20 kg of saffron were traded on the agricultural trading floor.

Iran's Auto-Making Industry Back To Its Heyday



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Acting Industry, Mine and Trade Minister Hossein Modares Khiabani says when South Korean and French auto-making giants left Iran two years ago, nobody thought that Iran's auto-making industry could have produced this amount of vehicles and to stand on its feet but it happened and the production trend of two Iranian auto-making giants have come back to their heyday.

Mr. Modarres Khabani said that it is natural that after focusing on the quantity and circulation, the auto-makers should be focused on improving the quality for international competition and regional market and all should move towards improving quality and customer's satisfaction.

He further said that auto-makers should also work on the after sale services simultaneously with working on the look and technical aspect of their productions.

Modarres Khiabani added that currently the country is active in exporting auto parts, expressing hope that it can provide its need domestically and produce vehicle with competitive quality.

He noted that the production of vehicles in the country has grown by 18 percent in the first two months of the current year comparing to the same period last year.

He added that in this period, delivery of products of two giant auto-makers Iran Khodro and SAIPA have increased by 55 percent and 50 percent, respectively. He added that the ministry is currently focused on providing the raw material to increase the auto production.

Modarres Khaibani stated that despite restrictions, five million people registered for buying cars through lottery, adding that this amount of demand equals to production of cars in 2 to 3 countries. He said even in countries like South Korea, the number of produced cars stands at 3.6m annually while in Iran, five million people have applied for it.

Iraq Is After Reducing Dependence on Iran Electricity

TEHRAN – Vice-Chairman of Iran Electrical Industry Syndicate

says although Iran's recent two-year contract with Iraq for electricity export was successful, Iraq is currently in talks with other countries to boost the capacity of its power network and imports of electricity imports from those states.

Speaking to Mehr new agency, Payam Bagheri said that Iran have electrical links with its neighboring states by land, adding that Iran's electricity export is more to Iraq and it is because of huge demand of this country and its lack of proper network. He said during hot seasons Iraq faces shortage of electricity and it compensates the shortage through imports of electricity and gas from Iran.

Bagheri noted that during the peak time, Iran exports more than 1000 megawatts of electricity to Iraq and sometimes the figure reaches 1200 megawatts. He admitted that sometimes both countries face problem in their trade especially since the U.S. sanctions became more serious.

He went on to say that almost half of Iraq's one billion dollars debt to Iran has been paid. He admitted return of money resulted from exports to Iraq is one of the challenges for Iran, adding that during recent visit of



Iranian Energy Minister to Iraq, Iran retrieved half of its money from Iraq.

Bagheri termed the minister's visit to Iraq as useful, adding that signing the two-year contract for electricity export to Iraq was successful. But he admitted that Iraq is working to cut its dependence on Iran's energy by beginning talks with other countries for exports of electricity and expanding its power network.

He said Iraq usually signs one-year contract for imports of electricity and signing a two-year contract is an achievement for Iran because Iraq is currently under the U.S. pressure and it gets sanctions waiver from the U.S. for its energy imports.

He also urged the officials to work harder to make Iran the electricity hub in the region because it is a must for the country which has been stipulated in the Sixth Development Plan.

Bagheri warned the officials that other countries are working to eliminate Iran from electricity market, adding countries like Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Persian Gulf states and Oman are working to boost their electricity capacity to cut their dependence on imports.

He noted that to become a regional hub in electricity, the country needs a strategic plan.

Armenia Lifts Restrictions on Border With Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Armenia's State Revenue Committee (SRC) has announced that restrictions at the country's main border crossing with Iran has been lifted nearly four months after they were introduced to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

The SRC said in a statement on Wednesday that all operations at Meghri border crossing, located on the southern border with Iran and known on the other side as Norduz, had returned to the normal mode.

It said requirements introduced in late February following the spread of the pandemic had been lifted for good.

Police had been escorting Iranian vehicles inside Armenia while cargoes were checked and reloaded at the border to prevent any spread of the virus.

The SRC said all types of cargo from Iran, including those destined for other countries, would be processed in Meghri.

Armenia still maintains a state of emergency over the spread of the virus although it has eased some of its restrictions to allow economic activity to resume.

The country is the second top destination for Iranian exports in Eurasia. It imported around \$430 million worth of Iranian cargoes in the year ending March 19, according to Iranian government figures.

Iran plans to further increase the value and volume of its exports to Armenia and through the country to other members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) more than seven months after Tehran reached an agreement with the bloc to lower trade tariffs between the two sides.

Iranian government figures shows that trade with EAEU, which comprises of Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, had exceeded \$2.1 billion before the pandemic caused a significant decline in exchanges across the borders.

Overhaul in Gasoline-Manufacturing Unit of Persian Gulf Star Refinery



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Persian Gulf Star Company says the hydrogen gas rotary compressor convertor of the gasoline-manufacturing unit of its refinery has been replaced without any halt in production, adding that the company will use all capacities for providing the country with fuel.

Mr. Mohammad Ali Dadvar highlighted the six-day operation for replacing the condenser of the hydrogen gas rotary compressor of the gasoline-manufacturing unit of Persian Gulf Star Refinery, saying that green management means saving in all grounds and avoiding wasting the capital. He noted the company decided to conduct an overhaul in this unit with reliance on the knowledge, efforts and jihadi actions of his colleagues without and halt in the gasoline production trend which is a unique act in the national oil industry.

On the impacts of this action on improving the performance of the refinery, Dadvar said replacement of this convertor saves waste of 25,000 liters of water per day and it has major effect on the rise of octane and quality of the final product.

He also added that the coronavirus pandemic and social distancing had the least effect on the production in the refinery, adding that engineers and workers of the refinery by observing all health protocols did their responsibilities for providing almost half of fuel which is needed in the country and they will continue their endeavors to produce more fuel in the year of surge in production despite the heat in Hormuzgan Province.

Brazil Passes 1 Million Coronavirus Cases

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Brazil passed 1 million coronavirus cases on Friday and approached 50,000 deaths, a new nadir for the world's second worst-hit country as it struggles with a tense political climate and worsening economic outlook.

Second only to the United States in both cases and deaths, Brazil confirmed its first case of the novel coronavirus on Feb. 26. The virus has spread relentlessly across the continent-sized country, eroding support for right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro and raising fears of economic collapse after years of anemic growth.

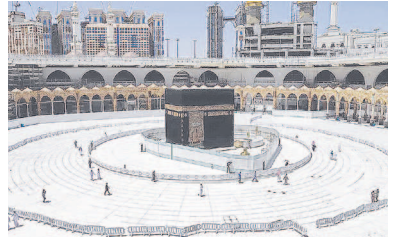


Saudi Arabia to Reopen Mecca Mosques Sunday

RIYADH (AFP) - Saudi Arabia plans to reopen from Sunday mosques in Mecca, the holiest city in Islam, after they were closed for three months due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, state television reported.

The kingdom has taken restrictive measures against the virus, particularly in Mecca, but the number of new coronavirus cases has notably increased in recent days.

"The mosques in the holy city will begin to reopen their doors to the faithful on Sunday after three months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic," the state-run Al-Ekhbariya channel reported, citing a decision by the Islamic affairs ministry.



Modi Refutes Border Intrusion In Deadly Clash With China



NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi appeared to downplay a clash with Chinese troops in a disputed Himalayan region that left 20 Indian soldiers dead and more than 70 injured, saying on Friday there had been no intrusion across his country's borders.

"Nobody has intruded into our border, neither is anybody there now, nor have our posts been captured," Modi said, referring to Ladakh's Galwan valley, where hand-to-hand fighting between soldiers from the nuclear-armed neighbours took place earlier this week.

India and China are attempting to cool tensions after the deadliest clash in at least five decades, with military-level talks taking place in an attempt to deescalate the confrontation.

But Modi's comments, made in a televised statement at the end of an all-party meeting to discuss the incident, contrasted with his government's earlier stance.

On Wednesday, Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar had told a senior Chinese diplomat that the dispute was triggered after "the Chinese side sought to erect a structure in Galwan valley on our side of the LAC," according to a ministry statement.

The LAC refers to the Line of Actual Control, the de facto border that has been a constant source of friction in the region where India and China fought a brief war in 1962.

With his nation in shock over the loss its soldiers lives, Modi faces one of the most difficult foreign policy challenges since he came to power in 2014.

On Friday evening, some opposition parties questioned why the government was not better prepared.

"Does the government not receive, on a regular basis, satellite pictures of the borders of our country? Did our external intelligence agencies not report any unusual activity along the LAC?" said Sonia Gandhi, president of the opposition Congress party.

Earlier on Friday, an Indian government source said that China had returned 10 Indian soldiers captured during the battle.

In a briefing in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian denied any Indian troops had been in its custody.

"As far as I know China hasn't seized any Indian personnel," Zhao said.

The Indian army did not comment on the release, which according to the source took place on Thursday evening, instead referring to a government statement that said all of its soldiers were accounted for.

India has said the Chinese side also suffered casualties in the clash, but China has not disclosed any.

Turkey to Work With Italy for Libya Peace

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey and Italy will continue to work for a lasting peace and political solution in Libya, Turkey's foreign minister said Friday, while slamming the European Union's naval operation in the Mediterranean that tries to enforce a U.N. arms embargo on the conflict-torn country.

Mevlut Cavusoglu made the comments during a joint news conference with his Italian counterpart Luigi Di Maio. Italy and Turkey support the U.N.-backed government that is based in Tripoli against the rival forces under the command of Khalifa Hifter, who is supported by France, Russia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and other key Arab countries.

Turkey says the EU's naval operation — dubbed Irini — is focusing its efforts on the Tripoli-based administration and not enough on Hifter's forces who launched an offensive in April 2019 to capture the capital.

"We will continue to work with Italy for a last peace and a solution-oriented political process," Cavusoglu told reporters, praising Italy for what he described as its "balanced stance" on Libya.



Police Break Up New Protests in Belarus

MINSK (Reuters) - Police in Belarus arrested demonstrators and journalists on Friday evening to break up new protests against President Alexander Lukashenko, hours after he blamed foreign plotters for fomenting unrest.

For the second evening in a row, protesters had formed a long line through the centre of the capital Minsk in solidarity after the jailing of Viktor Babariko, Lukashenko's main rival in August's presidential election.

Protests also broke out in several other towns across the eastern European country. Lukashenko has ruled with an iron fist for 26 years, but faces his biggest challenge in years as frustration over his handling of the coronavirus pandemic has combined with grievances over the economy and human rights.

Relations with traditional ally Russia have been strained in recent months as Moscow reduced subsidies that have propped up Lukashenko. But his crackdown on opponents will likely hobble his efforts to mend fences with the West.

The European Union called for the release of Babariko, widely seen as the most potent challenger to Lukashenko.

As criticism of Babariko's arrest grew, Lukashenko said his government had foiled a plot to foment a revolution akin to the street protests in Ukraine in 2014.

He said political forces from "both from the West and from the East" had concentrated their interests in Belarus, and that "certain forces" had intensified their efforts. He did not give details or say which foreign country was involved.

"That was the goal. The masks were torn not only from certain puppets we had here, but also from puppeteers who sit outside Belarus," he said.

Babariko was head Belgazprombank, of the local unit of Russia's Gazprombank, before running for president. A top security official said Babariko was controlled by Russian "puppeteers" and Lukashenko said the bank's money was being used to finance Babariko's campaign. Babariko's campaign team called the allegations against him "an absurdity".

"Operation Irini is not balanced. It has never met any of the (Tripoli-based) Government of National Accord's requests and concerns," Cavusoglu said. He maintained that the operation ignores alleged "constant arms transfers to Hifter by France."

Cavusoglu's comments come amid growing tensions between Turkey and France over Libya. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Thursday that the military alliance would investigate an incident between Turkish warships and a French naval vessel in the Mediterranean, as France accused Turkey of repeated violations of the U.N. arms embargo on Libya and branded Ankara an obstacle to securing a cease-fire there.

Di Maio said neither side in the Libyan conflict should have access to arms, adding that Rome welcomed indications that the sides were willing to negotiate. He also defended the EU naval operation, describing it as "balanced."

"The aim is to control the arrival of all armaments," Di Maio said. "It is not a remedy for all ills, but at least it ensures that the embargo is observed."

Pompeo Hits China Hard Despite Talks

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday warned Europeans they would abandon their values by embracing China, in a scathing denunciation of Beijing just two days after talks on trans-Pacific tensions.

In his first remarks since his closed-door talks with a senior Chinese official in Hawaii, Pompeo indicated that his views have not softened as he denounced Beijing as a "rogue actor" bent on global domination.

There is "no way to straddle these alternatives without abandoning who we are. Democracies dependent on authoritarians are not worthy of the name," Pompeo told a forum in Denmark by videoconference.

He said he similarly had a "very frank" message over his six hours of talks Wednesday with senior Chinese official Yang Jiechi.

Pompeo said he told Yang the United States was closely watching China's actions -- including its recent deadly border clash with U.S. friend India.

"America is engaging in a response to Chinese Communist Party aggression in a way that America has not done for the past 20 years," Pompeo told the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, referring to President Donald Trump's administration.



Pompeo renewed calls on Europeans to shun Chinese telecom giant Huawei, which he called the arm of the communist "surveillance state," and said Beijing was "flagrantly attacking sovereignty" through its port investments in Greece and Spain.

"We must take off the golden blinders of economic ties and see that the China challenge isn't just at the gates -- it's in every capital," he said.

"Every investment from a Chinese state-owned enterprise should be viewed with suspicion."

Pompeo has been especially harsh about China's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

In the Copenhagen speech, he charged that Beijing "lied about the coronavirus and let it spread to the rest of the world."

China -- as well as Trump's domestic critics -- say that the US administration has been looking for scapegoats to deflect from its own handling of COVID-19, which has killed far more people in the United States than in any other country.

Pompeo also renewed his stiff criticism of China both over a draft security law in Hong Kong and its mass incarceration of some one million Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims.

EU Parliament Declares "Black Lives Matter"

BRUSSELS (AFP) - The European Parliament voted Friday to declare that "Black Lives Matter" and to denounce racism and white supremacy in all its forms.

The resolution has no legal consequences but sends a signal of support to anti-racism protesters, and it follows a UN call for a probe into police brutality and "systemic racism."

And, one day before President Donald Trump is to hold a rally in Tulsa, a city that saw one of the worst racist massacres in U.S. history, the lawmakers condemned American police brutality.

Point number one of the text of the resolution takes up the slogan U.S. campaigners painted on the street leading to the White House, when it "Affirms that Black Lives Matter." The resolution, passed by 493 votes to 104, "strongly condemns the appalling death of George Floyd", an unarmed suspect killed by U.S. police in May.

It rebukes Trump for his "inflammatory rhetoric" and for threatening to deploy the army against protesters. And EU member states themselves, many of which have seen protests in recent days about modern racism and previous colonial crimes, are not spared in the motion.

Trump Signals New Effort to End Dreamers Immigration Program

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Donald Trump on Friday signaled he could try again to end the program that has protected so-called Dreamer immigrants who are in the United States illegally but entered as children, following a loss in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump wrote on Twitter, referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy that "The Supreme Court asked us to resubmit on DACA, nothing was lost or won. They 'punted', much like in a football game (where hopefully they would stand for our great American Flag). We will be submitting enhanced papers shortly in order to properly fulfil[] the Supreme Court's ruling & request of yesterday."

When asked for clarification on his comments, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said: "we're looking at documents currently" and added the administration would move forward in a "responsible" and "compassionate" way.

The 5-4 court ruling found that the administration had erred in the way that it decided to end the program in 2017. DACA was put in place by the previous administration of President Barack Obama and currently some 649,000 immigrants are enrolled.

The majority opinion from the court, where Chief Justice John Roberts sided with the four more liberal justices, left the door open for Republican Trump to attempt again to rescind the program, ruling only that the administration had not met procedural requirements and its actions were "arbitrary and capricious" under a federal law called the Administrative Procedure Act.

Ken Cuccinelli, the Department of Homeland Security acting deputy secretary, on Friday told Fox News the department would "move as quickly as possible" to present Trump with various executive options he could take.

In another Tweet, Trump said that he wanted to "take care of DACA recipients," and blamed Democrats for not negotiating a permanent solution to the young immigrants' temporary status.

Talks over immigration, including a potential path to citizenship for the "Dreamers," fell apart in 2018 after Trump provoked outrage with his reported use of vulgar language to describe African countries in a meeting with lawmakers.





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J, balcony
yard, pkg
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Pasdaran Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2400) 300sq.m, 4bdrs, balcony, & F.F
Zaferanieh (\$2200) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, balcony, & F.F
Gheitarieh (\$1800) 160sq.m, 2bdrs, balcony, & F.F

Elahieh Apt (\$2000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F

Sa'adat abad (\$1400)
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BMW to Lay Off 10,000 Contract Workers

MUNICH (Reuters) - BMW will not extend the contracts of 10,000 contract workers, a company source told Reuters on Friday, as the German luxury carmaker seeks to reduce its capacity due to the coronavirus crisis.

The Munich-based company said earlier on Friday it had reached an agreement with the works council a package of "personnel measures for a sustainable future".



Deeper-Than-Expected Contraction In U.S. Economy Likely in Q2

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A defacto lockdown in the United States has lasted longer than expected despite a rollback in some restrictions on mobility, pointing to a deeper-than-expected contraction in gross domestic product in the second quarter, the IMF said on Thursday.

Details will be available when the International Monetary Fund releases its updated World Economic Outlook on June 24, spokesman Gerry Rice told a regular briefing held online.

Given the continuing lockdowns, the pace of recovery in the world's largest economy could be slower, he said, without giving an exact forecast.

Rice said the Chinese economy was gaining momentum, with high frequency data showing a stronger-than-expected recovery in investment and services through May. Overall, the balance of risks remained on the downside, he said.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and other top IMF officials have said the Fund is likely to revise downward its already pessimistic forecast for a 3% contraction in global gross domestic output in 2020.

The best-case scenario released by the Fund in April had called for the U.S. economy to contract 5.9% in 2020, with a rebound to 4.7% growth in 2021.

At the time, it forecast China would maintain positive growth of 1.2% in 2020, with growth expanding to 9.2% in 2021.

Rice said the IMF was continuing to provide financing to members through its emergency financing and other facilities. A total of \$250 billion of the Fund's \$1 trillion in lending capacity had been disbursed so far, he said.

As of Friday, 70 countries will have received some \$25 billion in rapid emergency funding that comes largely without the usual IMF conditions, Rice said.

Of that total, about \$10 billion went to 28 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, he said, noting that marked a huge increase from the Fund's average annual lending of \$1 billion in the region.

Japan's Economy Almost Stopped Deteriorating

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Japan's economy nearly ceased worsening as it began to reopen following the complete lifting of a nationwide state of emergency over the coronavirus pandemic, the government said in its monthly economic report for June released Friday.

The government, which said the economy was "worsening rapidly" in its May report, revised its monthly assessment upward for the first time since January 2018.

"The Japanese economy is still in an extremely severe situation due to the novel coronavirus, but it almost stopped deteriorating," the Cabinet Office said, citing improving private consumption in line with the restart of economic activity across the country.

The upward revision in the assessment of consumer spending was also the first since January 2018.

In May, the government said private consumption was "decreasing rapidly," with many Japanese people refraining from going out for nonessential reasons under the government's stay-at-home request.

The government had described the country's economy as recovering moderately since January 2018 but downgraded its view in March as the pandemic began taking its toll.

Out of 11 main components of the assessment, the government revised upward its view of private consumption and corporate judgments of business conditions.

"After a long period of restraints, various economic and social activities are picking up," Yasutoshi Nishimura, minister in charge of economic and fiscal policy, told a press conference after the Cabinet approved the report, adding that domestic demand is "improving after bottoming out in April and May."

But he also said foreign demand remains sluggish as some other countries are still seeing growing numbers of new infections. "We need to remain vigilant over whether (Japan's) entire economy has put the worst behind it."

Japan fully lifted on May 25 the nationwide state of emergency first declared in several densely populated prefectures in early April, calling for voluntary restrictions on social and economic activities.

Effective Friday, restrictions on travel between prefectures were also called off.



ADB Extrapolates Pakistan Economy To Expand at 2% In FY2020-21

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The Asian Development Bank has projected Pakistan's economy, which is expected to contract by 0.4 per cent in FY2020 (ending June 30 2020) as the COVID-19 outbreak further restricted economic activity, would regain some pace and grow at 2 per cent in the upcoming fiscal year 2020-21.

"Pakistan's economy was on the path to recovery before COVID-19, and once the COVID-19 impact subsides, Pakistan will resume its efforts to address macroeconomic imbalances and initiate structural reform, likely holding economic growth to a projected 2.0 per cent in FY2021," the ADB said in a regular supplement to its annual flagship economic publication, the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 released in April.

The supplement added that India's economy is forecast to contract by 4.0 per cent in fiscal year (FY) 2020, ending on March 31 2021, before growing 5.0 per cent in FY2021.

With respect to inflation rate, the ADB supplement suggested that inflation rate in Pakistan would remain at 11 per cent as against the earlier projection of 11.5 per cent in current fiscal year ending on June 30. Similarly in next fiscal year, the inflation rate would remain 8 per cent against the earlier projection of 8.3 per cent.

It said overall the developing Asia would barely grow in 2020 as containment measures to address COVID-19 pandemic hamper economic activity and weaken external demand, according to a new set of forecasts from the ADB.

ADB forecasts growth of 0.1 per cent for the region in 2020 which is down from the 2.2 per cent forecast in April and would be the slowest growth for the region since 1961.

Growth in 2021 is expected to rise to 6.2 per cent, as forecast in April. Excluding the newly industrialised economies of Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Taipei, China, developing Asia is forecast to grow 0.4 per cent this year and 6.6 per cent in 2021.

"Economies in Asia and the Pacific will continue to feel the blow of the COVID-19 pandemic this year even as lockdowns are slowly eased and select economic activities restart in a 'new normal' scenario," said ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada in a statement issued here. "While we see a higher growth outlook for the region in 2021, this is mainly due to weak numbers this year, and this will not be a V-shaped recovery. Governments should undertake policy measures to reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 and ensure that no further waves of outbreaks occur."

Turkey's GDP Per Capita Index Down in 2019



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita index based on purchasing power parity (PPP) was 61 while the average for the EU countries was 100 last year, Turkey's statistical authority announced on June 18.

The index decreased 4 points from 65 a year earlier.

Turkey's GDP per capita index was 39% below the EU average, according to the preliminary results of the European Comparison Program for 2019, TÜİK said.

Among 37 countries involved in the comparison, Luxembourg was the country with the highest index of GDP per capita with 261, the TÜİK data showed.

"The country with the lowest index of GDP per capita was Albania with 31," it said.

The PPP is an index that allows a comparison for both economic activities and living standards among different countries.

The official report includes data from the 27 member states of the EU, as well as three European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries (Switzerland, Iceland and Norway), five candidate countries (Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania), one potential candidate country (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the U.K.

Meanwhile, the actual individual consumption (AIC) per capita in Turkey was 68 in 2019, whereas the average of EU countries was 100, 32% below the EU-average.

The AIC consists of goods and services actually paid or purchased by consumers as well as provided freely by governments, or by non-profit organizations (education, health care etc.).

While GDP per capita is mainly an indicator of the level of economic activity, actual individual consumption per capita is an alternative indicator better adapted to describe the material welfare situation of households.

UK Debt Is Bigger Than Economy for First Time Since 1963

LONDON (Guardian) - Britain's public debt is larger than the size of the country's economy for the first time since 1963, after the government borrowed a record £55bn in May.

The total level of debt has risen by £173bn over the last year to reach £1.95tn, or 100.9% of GDP, as ministers introduced unprecedented support for businesses and households during the coronavirus crisis.

The UK joined Italy, the US and Japan in the club of nations with levels of borrowing higher than their national income as the latest Office for National Statistics figures showed the UK government borrowed £55.2bn in May, roughly nine times more than the same month last year and the highest monthly borrowing since comparable records began in 1993.

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, said: "Today's figures confirm that coronavirus is having a severe impact on our public finances. The best way to restore our public finances to a more sustainable footing is to safely reopen our economy so people can return to work."

"We've set out our plan to do this in a gradual and safe fashion, including reopening high streets across the country this week, as we kickstart our economic recovery."

Separate data from the ONS showed UK retail sales increased by 12% in May as consumers began to buy homewares for the first time since the lockdown began in March.

The ONS said non-food stores provided the largest positive contribution to the monthly increase, aided by the opening of DIY shops, which had a 42% rise in sales.

However, the tentative signs of life on the high street still left overall sales down 13% on their level in February.

Retail sales recorded their largest fall on record in April, tumbling 18.1%, the ONS said.

In a clear message that shoppers have also changed their habits during the lockdown, the biggest gains went to online shops, which accounted for 33.4% of all spending, which compares with the 30.8% reported in April and an average of 18% seen last year.

Neil Birrell, the chief investment officer at the asset manager Premier Miton, said the sales figures showed the UK following the rest of Europe out of the lockdown period.

"Retail sales for May surprised on the upside, showing a much bigger recovery than expected, month on month."

Russia Cuts Interest Rates to a Post-Soviet Union Low

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Central Bank of Russia on Friday cut interest rates by 100 basis points to 4.5%, their lowest level since the fall of the Soviet Union, as it looks to shore up an economy reeling from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The CBR had already cut rates by 50 basis points in April, and suggested that it could

further reduce lending costs as inflation risks remain low and the economy continues to contract. Russian GDP (gross domestic product) plunged 28% in April.

In a statement, the CBR said that disinflationary factors have been "more profound than expected due to a longer duration of restrictive measures in Russia and across the world."

The bank said the effect of short-term pro-inflationary factors has been "largely exhausted," while financial stability risks arising from volatility in global financial markets have also declined.

"Household and business inflation expectations have abated. In these circumstances, there is a risk that in 2021 inflation might significantly deviate downwards from the 4% target," the CBR said. The headline rate of inflation stood at 3% year-on-year in May.

"If the situation develops in line with the baseline forecast, the Bank of Russia will consider the necessity of further key rate reduction at its upcoming meetings."

Russia is currently the third worst-affected country in the world by the coronavirus pandemic, with more than 568,000 confirmed cases. The bank mentioned that lockdown measures had weighed on economic activity for longer than expected, with GDP likely to contract by more than previously thought in the second quarter.

The CBR has acted more slowly than many other emerging market central banks since the pandemic began to spread in March, but conditions for further monetary policy easing are now firmly in place, according to Liam Peach, emerging Europe economist at Capital Economics.

"Crucially, the statement provided a strong signal that the easing cycle has further to run, with the CBR stating that it will consider the possibility of further interest rate cuts at upcoming meetings," Peach said in a note Friday, projecting that the policy rate will be lowered from 4.5% to below 4% by the end of 2020.

Over 200 kg of Illicit Drug Seized

TEHRAN (MNA) –The police chief of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province said that a car carrying 236 kg of opium was discovered in Shiraz-Yasuj highway.

After being learned about an automobile containing illicit drug departing for one of the central provinces, the issue went specifically on the agenda of the province’s anti-narcotics police officers, said Second Brigadier General Mahdi Ansari, police chief of the province. He went on to say that in an inspection station on the Shiraz-Yasuj highway, the officers suspected a Peugeot 405 car and order it to stop but the driver refused to obey.



India Set to Erect a Great Wall Against Chinese Companies

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India is considering multiple, comprehensive measures to curtail the country’s economic reliance on China, targeting trade, investment and project services in the wake of border hostilities. These are likely to include restrictions on participation by Chinese companies in government contracts and infrastructure projects, higher tariffs on imported Chinese finished goods as also a closer review of free trade agreements that are being used by the country to export goods indirectly into India.

A high-level meeting, likely to be attended by key stakeholder ministers and top officials from the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), is expected soon to discuss the details and the extent of measures, government officials told ET.

“Measures are being examined... All pros and cons of how and when as also their repercussions on Indian businesses will be looked into,” said a government official.

On the trade side, there could be tariff as well as non-tariff measures to discourage imports from China that added up to \$70 billion in FY19, more than from any other country. India had a \$53 billion trade deficit with China in FY19 and attempts to address it have not made much progress. Chinese companies have a big share of India’s mobile phone and electronics markets.

The government will consider measures to curb Chinese imports while simultaneously providing an environment for the domestic production of such goods.

India will also review its free trade agreements with other countries to see if they are being used by China to access the local market. India has already walked out of the negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes China among others, reasoning that there is no safeguard against a further rise in exports from that country to India. Stringent quality standards and checks could also be introduced to contain the inflow of goods from the country.

One set of likely measures is aimed at preventing Chinese companies from participating in contracts for infrastructure projects, government officials said. This includes the introduction of a clause based on the principle of reciprocity that would seek to restrict participation of companies from countries where Indian companies face curbs in applying for contracts.

Various options are being examined by the law ministry on the exact contours of the clause to ensure it cannot be challenged and meets international norms. The omnibus clause could cover all countries, the official said, though it is primarily aimed at Chinese companies.

One of the first sectors to introduce the clause could be roads and highways before it is expanded to others and eventually includes public sector units, said the officials. The ministries of road transport and highways and law are already in discussions to finalise the wording of the new clause, one official said.

The government has moved to scrap and rework contracts floated by state-owned telecom companies BSNL and MTNL to keep out Chinese equipment suppliers over security concerns. Additional criteria could be introduced to ensure that contracts awarded by the government as also public sector entities are secured by Indian suppliers of goods and services.



The law ministry is examining the feasibility of introducing such a clause in contracts in line with restrictions or stringent conditions imposed by some other countries on Indian companies from participating in contracts. “These stiff criteria essentially are barriers to ensure that only local companies can participate,” the official said, adding that such restrictions imposed by other countries are also being examined in detail.

The exercise had already been underway as part of the government’s Atmanirbhar, or self-reliance, mission and has gained in importance in the wake of changed circumstances at the border, he said.

The cabinet secretary, who also chairs a committee on boosting local manufacturing, has held discussions with various ministries that deal with infrastructure projects on how to increase local sourcing of both goods and services.

The lowest bidder is generally accorded prior security clearance but there’s a growing view that a more stringent framework is needed, said the official cited above.

Some bids in which Chinese companies were roped in as partners by an Indian company in the roads sector have been cancelled recently, including one in Nagpur.

The government has already reserved supply contracts of up to ₹200 crore for local producers.

The government is likely to revisit these criteria to ensure wider participation by domestic companies, another official said.

“There is a growing concern in the government about overdependence on external supply chains concentrated in a single country especially in crucial segments such as pharmaceuticals or supply of large equipment and machinery in many crucial sectors, which needs to be cut down,” the official said.

Virus Already in Italy By December, Waste Water Study Finds



ROME (AFP) - The coronavirus was already present in two large cities in northern Italy in December, over two months before the first case was detected, a national health institute study of waste water has found.

Researchers discovered genetic traces of Sars-CoV-2 -- as the virus is officially known -- in samples of waste water collected in Milan and Turin at the end of last year, and Bologna in January, the ISS institute said in a statement seen by AFP on Friday.

Italy’s first known native case was discovered mid-February. The results “help to understand the start of the circulation of the virus in Italy,” the ISS said.

They also “confirm the by-now consolidated international evidence” as to the strategic function of sewer samples as an early detection tool, it added.

Italy was the first European country to be hit by the virus and the first in the world to impose a nationwide lockdown. The first known case, other than a couple of visiting Chinese tourists, was a patient in the town of Codogno in the Lombardy region.

On February 21 the government designated Codogno a so-called red zone and ordered it shuttered, followed by nine other towns across Lombardy and Veneto. By early March it had extended the shutdown across the country.

ISS water quality expert Giuseppina La Rosa and her team examined 40 waste water samples from October 2019 to February 2020.

The results, confirmed in two different laboratories by two different methods, showed the presence of SARS-CoV-2 in samples taken in Milan and Turin on December 18, 2019 and in Bologna on January 29, 2020.

Samples from October and November 2019 were negative, showing the virus had yet to arrive, La Rosa said.

The data was in line with results obtained from retrospective analysis of samples of patients hospitalised in France, which found cases positive for SARS-CoV-2 dating back to the end of December, the institute said.

Spain Announces €4.25b Plan to Aid Tourism Industry

MADRID (Dispatches) - The Spanish government announced on Thursday a €4.25 billion plan to help the tourism industry recover from the fallout of the coronavirus crisis. The package comes at a crucial time for a sector that accounts for 12% of Spain’s gross domestic product (GDP). For the past three months, the sector has been

paralyzed by the confinement measures and restrictions on travel, which were implemented in a bid to curb the spread of the virus.

Spokespeople from the industry are now preparing for a record-low summer season, especially in terms of foreign tourist arrivals. To address this concern, the initiative, dubbed the Tourism Sector Promotion Plan, will provide airlines with incentives to travel to Spain in an effort to attract the greatest number of international visitors.

But the spokesperson of the UGT labor union, Miguel Ángel Cilleros, warned that the plan falls short of the industry’s expectations. “For many the program is not as ambitious as was expected, but what’s important is to start advancing. There will be time to assess it,” he said at the government press conference.

The sector had been expecting a larger aid package for two main reasons. Firstly, for the size of its contribution to the Spanish economy and the severity of its losses, which tourism lobby Exceltur put at more than €80 billion for the year. And secondly, because the European Union is currently negotiating a €750-billion coronavirus recovery fund, of which Spain is expected to receive €140 billion. What’s more, Spain’s €4.25 billion plan pales in comparison to initiatives from other countries such as France, which will inject €18 billion into the tourism industry – four times as much as Spain.

“This is an imperative aid plan for tourism,” said Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, as he began a press conference on Thursday. The Socialist Party (PSOE) leader explained that the plan will be focused on five areas: consolidating Spain as a safe destination; supporting companies in the sector; improving the competitiveness of the tourism industry; using marketing tools to promote international and domestic tourism; and building tourism intelligence with the creation of a new observatory.



The bulk of the aid package is comprised of €2.5 billion in loans through the state-owned bank Instituto de Crédito Español (ICO) for tourism businesses. In other words, 60% is aimed at facilitating funding, and will not take the shape of direct grants. Direct investment represents around €300 million, or 7% of the plan. Another €850 million is

earmarked for sustainability and digitization projects.

At the press conference, Sánchez said that the tourism industry is vital to Spain, and not just for economic reasons. “It is of great importance to the image and reputation of our country,” he argued.

As part of the recovery strategy, the prime minister said that Spain’s airport operator Aena had agreed to reduce the tariffs airlines must pay when they land in a Spanish airport. “We hope this is going to help bring about the fastest possible recovery of air traffic to our country,” said Sánchez. Spain’s tourism industry is heavily reliant on air arrivals, with more than 80% of travelers to the country arriving by plane. This part of the program represents €25 million, an amount considered very low by the industry.

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“A plan to aid tourism is a plan to aid Spain,” said Marta Blanco, the spokesperson of the CCOO labor union, adding that the ERTE furloughing scheme must be extended for tourism businesses as part of the recovery effort.

The government plan also includes a campaign to promote national tourism, but does not contain specific aid to incentivize local consumption, unlike Italy where lower-income families can receive €500 to go on a holiday in the country.

Nearly 11,000 visitors from Germany on Monday began to fly to Spain’s Balearic Islands as part of a tourism pilot scheme. The Spanish government announced on Thursday that another 10 flights will be allowed to fly to the archipelago as part of the scheme.

Tourists from the European Union and the Schengen free-travel area – including the United Kingdom – will officially be allowed to visit Spain from June 21, with the exception of Portugal. And on July 1, other international travelers will be allowed to enter Spain as part of the EU’s coordinated move to lift travel restrictions. But this will be contingent on a reciprocal agreement and taking into account the epidemiological situation in the countries of origin, among other factors.

Gov’t to Make...

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“As President, I kindly ask people to remain patient for the sake of Iran and in order to preserve the achievements [that we have secured while fighting the coronavirus epidemic],” he added.

“We have been successful, so far, in the fight against the coronavirus,” he said.

“In order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and cut its chain [of infection], a heavy responsibility lies on everyone’s shoulders, and the experience we have gained over the past

Elsewhere in his remarks, President Rouhani touched upon the condition of Iranian prisons amid the coronavirus outbreak.

“The health ministry has drawn up and communicated directives on running prisons [amid the COVID-19 pandemic],” he noted.

He said good measures have been adopted, so far, to stem the spread of the virus in prisons, including sending inmates home on leave.

Rouhani said it is possible to grant further leaves or extend the current furloughs in order to contain the virus in prisons.

Another Iranian Ship...

FROM PAGE 1

The Reuters news agency reported that Iran may continue to ship fuel to sanctions-hit Venezuela at a rate of about two to three cargoes per month.

“Tehran plans to keep up the shipments, according to five trading and industry sources close to the Oil Ministry,” the news agency said.

Iran plans to follow its trailblazing shipment of fuel to sanctions-hit Venezuela with regular gasoline sales, a new report says.

Venezuela is grappling with shortages of gasoline due to sanctions unilaterally imposed by the United States not only on Caracas but also on Iran.

Mexico has also expressed willingness to sell gasoline to Venezuela on “humanitarian” grounds if asked, defying United States sanctions against the South American country.

Zarif...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran has always behaved with full transparency with the IAEA, he said, arguing that 15 reports of the IAEA have indicated that Iran has always been committed.

“We will not let Iran be subject to investigation the documents of which are based on spying claims,” he noted.

Iran will give a suitable response if the IAEA wants to take advantage of illogical ways, Zarif reiterated.

European Investors Threaten Brazil Divestment Over Deforestation

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Seven major European investment firms told Reuters they will divest from beef producers, grains traders and even government bonds in Brazil if they do not see progress in resolving the surging destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

The rising threats from investors with more than \$2 trillion (1.6 trillion pounds) in assets under management, including Finland-based Nordea and the UK’s Legal & General Investment Management (LGIM), show how the private sector is taking global action to protect the world’s largest rainforest.

Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro has shrugged off diplomatic pressure on the matter.

Deforestation of Brazil’s Amazon surged to an 11-year high in 2019, Bolsonaro’s first year in office, and has risen a further 34% in the first five months of 2020, according to preliminary data from government space research agency INPE. The right-wing populist has weakened environmental protections and called for more mining and farming in the Amazon region.

“The trends we’ve seen in Brazil are very concerning,” said Daniela da Costa-Bulthuis, Brazil portfolio manager for Netherlands-based asset manager Robeco. “You have a dismantling of the regulatory mechanisms of environmental control since last year.”

Bolsonaro’s press office declined to comment on the investors’ concerns. He defended Brazil’s environmental record against criticism from world leaders last year as destructive fires in the Amazon drew global outcry. So far, corporate pressure has proven more effective in turning Brasilia’s attention to the environment.

A bill originally proposed by Bolsonaro to grant property deeds for irregularly settled public land, a measure seen encouraging deforestation, failed to reach a vote in May and is now delayed indefinitely after more than 40 mostly European companies threatened to boycott Brazilian exports.

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India's Pace Attack The Best in History

NEW DELHI (AFP) - India fast bowler Mohammed Shami has claimed they may have the best pace attack in Test history, brushing aside the feared West Indies quicks of the 1970s and 1980s. Shami, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav and Bhuvneshwar Kumar have over become leaders of the Indian attack, which has traditionally relied on spinners.

"You and everyone else in the world will agree to this -- that no team has ever had five fast bowlers together as a package," Shami said in an online chat for ESPNcricinfo.

Djokovic Puts Positive Spin on U.S. Open Plan

PARIS (AFP) - World number one Novak Djokovic appeared to row back on scepticism over plans to stage the US Open, saying on Thursday he was "extremely happy" the Grand Slam had escaped the coronavirus cull which claimed Wimbledon and much of the season.

Djokovic had initially voiced unease over the United States Tennis Association's intention to keep the event starting on August 31 at Flushing Meadows despite New York being the hardest-hit city by the US coronavirus crisis.

He described health protocols as "extreme" and "impossible".

However, organisers will have been encouraged by the positive noises coming from the three-time US Open champion on Thursday.

"I'm extremely happy and excited to see that all the tournaments, especially Grand Slams, are organising their events," the Serb said in reference also to the French Open, rescheduled now to start in late September.

"I think that a lot of people were sceptical, especially for the US events considering what the US went through as a country during this pandemic," the 17-time Grand Slam winner told Eurosport's Tennis Legends podcast.

"So a lot of people, including myself, were quite sceptical on whether it would happen or not.

"We are very glad that it is happening, of course, and it is very important that we provide opportunities, we provide jobs, we provide opportunities for players to compete.

"Because at the end of the day, this is what we do! As tennis professionals we love the sport; we are passionate about it. We miss competing and travelling and, at the end of the day, we miss being on tour. So I think this is very positive news."

The 33-year-old said he hoped the stringent restrictions including the existing ban on South American players travelling to compete would be eased before the Grand Slam gets underway.

"Let's hope that in the next two months some of those restrictions will loosen up a bit and that we will have a great, great tournament."

This month Djokovic had said that most players he had spoken to had "a rather negative view" about playing in New York, and predicted some would instead switch to the delayed clay court season.

A number of other players have also expressed doubts over the US Open including defending champion Rafael Nadal who said that he would not take part if the event was taking place now.

Women's world number one Ashleigh Barty as well as Wimbledon champion



Simona Halep have also expressed reservations.

The U.S. Open will be played without fans in attendance while strict health protocols will be in place.

However, there has been anger at the decision to drop qualifying from the tournament.

"Cheers to ATP and U.S. Open for further perpetuating my unemployment," tweeted world number 195 Mitchell Krueger of the United States.

Sachia Vickery, the women's world number 158, tweeted: "What a slap in the face to all the players in qualifying that won't even have a chance to compete and who literally depend on the money from grand slams to survive."

Wary of the fall-out, the USTA said \$6.6 million will be put aside as compensation for those affected by missing out on the 128-player main draw.

There was also anger too at the decision not to stage a wheelchair tournament at the U.S. Open this year.

"Massively disappointed to find out on Twitter this morning that the @usopen plan on cutting wheelchair tennis from this years tournament," tweeted Paralympic champion Gordon Reid, who is also a four-time doubles winner in New York.

"The wheelchair players have had ZERO communication or consultation from either the ITF or the Grand Slam around this decision."

International Paralympic Committee president Andrew Parsons added:

"The decision has left a lot of the athlete community rightly upset and angered".

Neymar Loses Lawsuit With Barcelona Over Bonus



BARCELONA (Reuters) - Paris St Germain and Brazil forward Neymar has been ordered to pay his former club Barcelona 6.7 million euros (\$7.51 million) after losing a lawsuit over an unpaid bonus, the Spanish champions said in a statement on Friday.

Neymar moved from Barca to PSG for a world record fee of 222 million euros in 2017 but took the La Liga side to court over the terms of the last contract he signed with them a year earlier, claiming he was entitled to 43.6 million euros.

"Barcelona expresses its satisfaction with the verdict announced today in relation to the lawsuit involving FC Barcelona and the player Neymar Jr regarding the amount of the signing bonus in the final renewal of the player's contract," said the club's statement.

"The ruling has fully dismissed the player's claim for payment of 43.6 million euros, and has accepted a large part of the defence presented by FC Barcelona, as a result of which the player must return 6.7 million euros to the club.

"Since the player's representative is entitled to appeal this decision, the club shall continue to fervently defend its legitimate interests."

Players Union Concerned About Too Many Games As Soccer Restarts

BERN (Reuters) - The global players union FIFPRO is concerned that footballers are being asked to play too many matches in a short space of time as the sport restarts following the coronavirus stoppage and says there has already been an increase in injuries.

FIFPRO said in a statement on Friday that competition organisers "have so far failed to introduce safeguards to protect player health during what will be a highly-congested schedule."

"Now, since the restart we are seeing a first spike in injuries because of insufficient preparation time and congested match schedules," it said.

The current season was stopped for around three months in most European countries due to COVID-19 and domestic leagues are now rushing to finish by the end of July.

The Champions League and Europa League will conclude in August while the 2020/21 season will then get under way around mid-September, with national team matches squeezed in between.

Next season's Champions League group stage will be played in three months instead of four while a total of six rounds of international matches will be played in Europe in October and November, instead of the usual four.

FIFPRO said the response to the more intense fixture list should be "better and innovative safeguards" for player health rather than an erosion of existing rights.

"It is vital that stakeholders protect players and allow them to perform at their best," it said, adding that the issue could not wait until 2024 when a new international calendar is due to be introduced.

FIFPRO said that there should be a five to six week break between seasons, including around three week's holiday for the players. "It is not acceptable that altering competition calendars leads to pressure to breach these rights," it said.

It also warned against applying pressure or imposing disciplinary measures on players who put the health of themselves and families ahead of playing obligations.

Hamilton Can Expect a Quicker car in Austria



LONDON (Reuters) - Six times world champion Lewis Hamilton can expect a quicker car when the Formula One season finally starts in Austria next month, with Mercedes promising plenty of updates.

The W11 car unveiled in February has yet to race, with the season delayed since March by the COVID-19 pandemic, and team technical director James Allison said months' worth of improvements were in the pipeline.

"There was the whole of January, the whole of February, March, all making the car quicker in the wind tunnel and also in the design departments," he said in a video on the Mercedes YouTube channel on Friday.

"So we've got quite a lot of ideas about how to make it quicker... our challenge now is to make sure that that quarter of a year of development can get off the drawing boards and onto the car as swiftly as possible.

"We hope to have a chunk of that for the first race in Austria, and the season that follows will of course take as much of the development as fast as we can get it onto the car in turn."

Mercedes have won the last six drivers' and constructors' championships and were fastest in pre-season testing in Spain in February. A seventh title for Hamilton would equal Michael Schumacher's all-time record.

Barca Held to a Goalless Draw At Sevilla



MADRID (AFP) - Barcelona made the first slip in the title race since La Liga's return by drawing 0-0 against Sevilla on Friday and handing Real Madrid the chance to regain top spot this weekend.

After their emphatic 3-0 win over Valencia on Thursday, Madrid will move level on points with Barca if they beat Real Sociedad on Sunday and go above the Catalans due to their superior record head-to-head.

Sevilla, in third, and Valencia, in eighth, always looked capable of shifting the dynamic at the top of the table, with Madrid capitalising to climb back to the summit for the first time since they beat Barcelona on March 1.

A valuable point for Sevilla gives them a five-point cushion over Getafe in fifth, albeit having played a game more.

Barca could have few complaints at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

They never really troubled Sevilla for any prolonged period and the closest Lionel Messi came to scoring the 700th goal of his career were a pair of free-kicks tipped over.

The sight of goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen jogging up for a late corner demonstrated how big a blow they considered dropping points to be.

"Seeing what we've done in the last two rounds, it's going to be very difficult to win this

Penalty Drama Denies Man Utd in Draw at Tottenham



LONDON (Dispatches) - Bruno Fernandes's penalty salvaged a 1-1 draw for Manchester United at Tottenham as the Red Devils had another late spot-kick overturned by a VAR review on Friday.

Jose Mourinho was on course to get the better of his former club when Steven Bergwijn's strike gave Spurs a half-time lead.

However, United's second half pressure finally told nine minutes from time when Fernandes converted from the spot after Paul Pogba had been brought down in the box.

Fernandes then thought he had won a second penalty, but a VAR review decided there was little contact as he went down under a challenge from Eric Dier.

A point does little for either side's chances of breaking into the top four.

United remain in fifth, two points behind Chelsea, while Spurs are four points further back in eighth.

In keeping with all matches since the Premier League's return earlier this week, all players and officials took a knee before kick in protest against racial injustice.

Once the action did get underway, United settled quickest to the eerie surroundings of a 62,000 seater stadium draped in banners with the only fans appearing on giant video screens behind each goal.