

**Iran Reiterated Its Support for the Complete Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and Expressed Worry About Violation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by The U.S. and France.**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday That 109 More Iranians Have Died of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing the Total Deaths to 10,239**

VOL. XXVI, No. 6978 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY JUNE 27, 2020 - TIR 7, 1399

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## U.S. Fails to Forge Consensus for Anti-Iran Resolution at UNSC

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations has implied that the United States failed to garner support for its anti-Iran resolution at the United Nations Security Council, which was meant to extend an existing arms embargo on the Islamic Republic.

Majid Takht Ravanchi made the remarks in a Thursday tweet just a day after the U.S. briefed the UN Security Council on a resolution, which called for a 2015 arms embargo against Iran to be extended.

The U.S. resolution, in which Iran has been blamed for a 2019 attack on Saudi oil facilities, claimed that lifting the arms embargo could have "major implications" for security and stability of the Middle East region, urging the UN body to "prohibit the supply, sale or transfer, direct or indirect ... of weapons and related materials" to Iran.

The United States has proposed a UN Security Council resolution which calls for an arms embargo against Iran to be extended.

"Yesterday, U.S. briefed #UNSC on the extension of arms embargo on Iran and called for Council's unity," the Iranian ambassador said in his tweet. **See Page 7**

## Iran Sold Gasoline to Venezuela at Market Price

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh says the Iranian gasoline delivered to fuel-starved Venezuela last month was sold to Caracas at market price.

Zangeneh made the comments on Friday in reaction to allegations that Iran has provided Venezuela with gasoline free of charge. "This is not true. Iran's gasoline was sold to Venezuela at market price," he said.

He said Tehran had received sufficient guarantees for the return of its revenues, and part of the money has already been received.

Regarding the continuation of energy trade with Venezuela, the petroleum minister said, "We should wait and see how negotiations between the two countries will proceed."

Last month, five Iranian oil tankers set off for the Caribbean and delivered about 1.5 million barrels of gasoline to Venezuela which is under U.S. sanctions and virtual economic siege.

In case of an agreement between Tehran and Caracas, Iran is to follow its trailblazing shipment of fuel to Venezuela with regular gasoline sales despite U.S. threats to punish any facilitation of the cargoes. **See Page 7**

## Iran to Build Major Pipeline as Safe Way for Oil Exports



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says the national pipeline project launched on Thursday to carry oil as an alternative route for the Strait of Hormuz serves as an important message to those that have imposed sanctions on the country.

President Rouhani said other countries in the region have also developed alternative methods of supplying oil should the Strait of Hormuz become unsafe one day for exporting crude.

"Many regional countries managed to find a second way to export oil in case it would be risky one day to export crude via the Strait of Hormuz. Alternative methods could be exporting oil through the Red Sea, the Sea of Oman or the Mediterranean," said the president at a ceremony where operational work got underway for three major projects of the Iranian Oil Ministry.

The projects included a major pipeline that connects Goreh in the west of Persian Gulf to Jask Port in its east, making the country independent of Strait of Hormuz for oil exports.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran was the only country whose oil exports would be completely halted if the Strait of Hormuz were closed one day for some reason," he said, indicating that the problem is solved now that a pipeline is being constructed in the south of the country as an alternative way for the Strait of Hormuz to export oil.

"This is the most important project, not only from an economic point of view, but also in terms of national security, economic security and energy security," he said.

"With the pipeline taking oil to [the port of] Jask going into service in March 2021, hopefully some one million barrels of crude will be exported from this port," he noted.

"Jask will turn into Iran's key hub of oil exports," said the president.

He said the inauguration of major national projects is a very strong message to the Americans as well as adversaries of Iran and those who have imposed sanctions on this country.

"The enemies should know that their attempts are futile and will get nowhere, and we will press ahead with our projects and important national objectives without even one minute of delay," he said.

Referring to Iran's southern neighbors, and their projects to skirt the Strait of Hormuz, Rouhani noted that the only country "left in the middle" was the Islamic Republic.

"If the Strait of Hormuz closed for any reason, Iran would be the only country in the region that its oil exports would be completely stopped," Rouhani said.

Rouhani went further by describing the project as unique, "This pipeline through which we will be transporting our oil to Jask and the Sea of Oman is a great, huge and unique work in the history of Iran."

The project's start was announced six years ago and less than half the pipeline network has been complete according to Rouhani. However, experts told Radio Farda that sending oil through the pipeline needs large investments for powerful pumping stations; a task Iran cannot easily complete facing severe technology and banking sanctions.

Despite repeatedly threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, Rouhani last year insisted that Tehran would guarantee to keep it open.

In the meantime, he dismissed calls for closing the waterway as a dangerous "slogan", asserting that blocking the Strait of Hormuz could backfire and create enormous problems for Iran.

The new terminal is close to the port of Chabahar on the Sea of Oman, which Iran is developing in cooperation with other countries, most notably India.

## U.S. Keeps Targeting Iran Metal Industry With More Sanctions

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States has, in its most recent move to target Iran's record-holding metal industry, issued sanctions against four steel, aluminum, and iron companies operating in the Islamic Republic, and also taken aim at the sales of Iran's largest steel manufacturer.

On Thursday, the U.S. Treasury Department said in a statement that it had imposed sanctions on Tara Steel Trading GmbH, an offshore subsidiary of Mobarakeh Steel Co., three overseas' sales agents serving the steel company, and Iran-based Metil Steel. The Treasury said the sales agents "generated tens of millions of dollars annually from the foreign sale of Mobarakeh Steel Company products, providing significant contributions to the billions of dollars generated overall by Iran's steel, aluminum, copper, and iron sectors."

Mobarakeh Steel Co is the largest flat steel producer in the Middle East and North Africa and contributes 1% to Iran's gross domestic product, the statement added. The United States returned its sanctions against Iran after illegally and unilaterally leaving a historic nuclear accord between the Islamic Republic and major world powers that has been endorsed by the United Nations Security Council as a resolution.

Thursday's action also blacklisted three large aluminum, steel, and iron producers in Iran, similarly claiming they contributed billions of dollars in sales and export of Iranian metals. **See Page 7**

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Premature Death of Annexation of the West Bank

I pray Almighty God that today Resistance Current in the region is moving towards the summit and this move has chilled the Zionist regime and its lords to the bones that even they confess no politician and military man should act imprudently.

Last Monday the Israeli newspapers published an interview with former inauspicious Israeli National Security Adviser Chuck Ferilich where he has said annexation of the West Bank to Israel can lead to a war with Israel in three fronts. It seems Ferilich is the one who has noticed sooner than anyone the dangerous and deteriorating condition for Israel and warns that war in three fronts with Hamas, Syria and Lebanon with the unsparing support of Iran will undoubtedly cause the premature death of this regime.

Ali-Fawaz in Al-Mayadeen wrote, "Amid the crisis and events since the beginning of 2020 that we witness, speech of Seyed Hassan Nasrallah is very important due to its message and time of the speech. To find out the dimensions of developments, it is enough to have a look at to Israeli newspapers."

He continues, "Since the beginning of the year, several successive events have happened. With assassination of martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the factor of time has totally come out of the control of the infidelity and atheism, and chaos in the power balance in regional and global level has appeared which indicates Resistance is moving in the right direction towards the summit.

After the Coronavirus pandemic and the U.S. running aground in stupid handling of the outbreak of the Coronavirus and above all racism issue, the American Empire is losing its superpower stand and rule in the world. The U.S. stumble has also led to the stumble of its Arab regime allies.

With Yemen Army's firing three missiles at some important and strategic targets in Saudi Arabia and hitting important bases, tourism minister of Sanaa government announced, "These missiles have hit strategic and military regions and it conveyed a message for Tel Aviv and Washington and not for Saudi Arabia." At the same time, the revolutionary speech of Seyed Hassan Nasrallah has climaxed. The secretary general of Hizbullah emphasized, "Anyone who puts us between arms and starvation, our arms are in our hands and we will kill him, kill him and kill him." Three times of emphasis means that there will be no option for us. Today all of the region enjoys the momentarily circulation of news and information in the world. **See Page 7**

## CBI Rejects IMF Forecast For Iran Economy

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Governor of Central Bank of Iran Abdolnasser Hemmati rejected Thursday the forecast of International Monetary Fund (IMF) about Iran's economy.

Even CBI's most negative scenarios cannot confirm the forecast of minus six percent economic growth for Iran, Hemmati wrote.

In its very recent forecast on world economy, IMF has said that Iran's Gross Domestic Product, GDP, will decline by about six percent in 2020.

According to Hemmati, IMF has made a mistake as it did so last year.

Elaborating on existing of CBI assets in Iraq, the CBI governor said that the use of assets to buy fundamental needs is done under Iran's decision and within the framework of friendly relations between the two countries.

He made it clear that the CBI has national duty to plan for providing enough fundamental needs for the people.

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# Iranians Victims of U.S.-Backed Terrorists

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in response to the U.S. annual report on terrorism that Iranians are victims of terrorism and at the same time heroes of fight against terrorists created and supported by the Americans.

“Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns the U.S. annual report on terrorism due to its obvious blame game, sheer dishonesty, and double standards in the fight against terrorism,” Mousavi said.

He further noted that the U.S. as the biggest sponsor of state terrorism and the main supporter of the Zionist aggressive and occupying regime is not in a position to claim that it is fighting terrorism.

## President Calls for Prompt Implementation of Agreements With Pakistan

*IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK*

**TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has called for rapid implementation of the deals with its eastern neighbor Pakistan to enhance economic and trade relations between Tehran and Islamabad.**

President Rouhani said a few months after the outbreak of the coronavirus and with the reopening of part of the borders in accordance with health protocols, it is hoped that the borders will return to the pre-corona situation and with the expansion of border market activities, trade between citizens of the two countries will be further boosted.

He also stressed the importance of developing and deepening bilateral relations in all fields, saying, “I hope the cooperation between the two countries in ensuring the security of the joint borders will continue and expand.”

He made the comments in a meeting with the new Pakistani envoy to Tehran, Rahim Hayat Qureshi, who presented his credentials.

The President also called the ties between Iran and Pakistan sincere and



fraternal, saying the two countries have always supported each other in difficult and historical moments.

For his part, the new Pakistani ambassador described Iran as a very important and influential country in the region, saying relations with Iran are of great importance to Pakistan and all officials emphasise the development of these relations.

Rahim Hayat Qureshi added Pakistan will continue to support Iran in international forums and considers Iran’s security as its own security.

He further mentioned the development of trade and economic relations with Iran as one of his priorities, adding that the situation of trade borders between the two countries will soon return to pre-corona time.

## Tehran, Pyongyang Must Stand Against U.S. Bullying



*IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK*

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says the United States is the enemy of the Islamic Republic and North Korea, and both nations must stand against the U.S. bullying.

President Rouhani on Wednesday stressed that the American officials have always been oppressive against governments and nations such as Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“We must stand firm against Washington’s bullying,” added Rouhani in a meeting with the new Korean envoy to Tehran who presented his credentials.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani underlined that the development of sincere ties between Tehran and Pyongyang will benefit both nations and the region.

He also touched upon the friendly ties between the two countries since the Islamic Revolution, expressing hope that the mutual relations would further strengthen by the efforts of the two countries’ officials.

For his part, the new Ambassador of North Korea to Tehran talked about the need to work for the development of bilateral relations, underscoring that combating the US hegemony is a goal shared by the two sides.

## Iran Defence Power at Maximum Level

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iranian Defence Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami says the country has been able to outstandingly advance its defence capabilities under the toughest sanctions and political and military pressures.

General Hatami said on Thursday the Islamic Republic has been able to reach the highest level of deterrence in terms of military power.

The top military commander added that sanctions have become an opportunity for the security forces of the Islamic Republic to develop endogenously and productively in several areas, especially the defence industry.

Hatami made the statements in a ceremony to deliver three domestically-manufactured fighter jets called Kowsar to the Army Air Force.

He went on to say that Iran does not need the permission of the arrogant powers for developing its defence sector.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Brigadier General Hatami praised the efforts made by the country’s military experts to build the jets amid the coronavirus outbreak.

He also pointed out that knowledge-based companies and universities are collaborating with the military experts and the Islamic Republic would soon produce more developed aircraft.

## “Infamous” U.S. Regime in No Position to Judge Other Countries

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry spokesperson has roundly rejected the U.S. State Department’s annual report on terrorism, saying the world’s most infamous terrorist and criminal regime is in no position to judge the other countries.

In a statement on Thursday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi dismissed the annual Country Reports on Terrorism released by the U.S. regime, saying, “The Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejects and condemns the U.S.’ annual Country Reports on Terrorism because that regime is blatantly shifting the blame onto others, is utterly insincere, and has double standards in the fight against terrorism.”

“The United States of America’s regime, known as the biggest state sponsor of terrorism and the main sponsor of the aggressive and occupying Zionist regime, is in no position to claim to be fighting against terrorism and make judgments about this issue,” the Iranian spokesperson added.

History of the past couple of decades clearly shows that the United States of America, as acknowledged even by a

number of American officials, has had a role in the creation of some terrorist groups or has supported those groups and their terrorist activities, Mousavi noted.

“Trump has also admitted openly in his election campaign that the previous US administrations have created ISIS and other terrorist groups,” he noted.

The spokesman further slammed the US regime’s cowardly and terrorist move to assassinate Lt. General Qassem Soleimani –known as the hero of the war on terrorism- as a brazen example of the US regime’s terrorist crimes, saying, “The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the biggest victim of terrorist actions, which have been taken mainly with the US government’s direct and indirect supports, and with more than 17,000 people martyred in this path, is always at the forefront of the fight against terrorism at the global and regional levels.”

Mousavi finally denounced the U.S. regime’s unilateral sanctions, economic terrorism, and medical terrorism against people of Iran as the latest example of the US regime’s terrorist measures against independent nations in the world.

## Iran, China Reiterate Support for JCPOA

BEIJING (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in a video conference late on Wednesday stressed the need for maintaining credibility of JCPOA, Security Council Resolution 2231, and opposing destruction of the international deal.

Yi described Iran and China as the two all-out strategic partners, as they understand each other in major issues relating to pivotal interests and support each other, saying that they also protect international justice jointly.

Beijing is ready for promoting relations, he said, noting that China, wants to explore ways to revive travels between the two countries and work together while observing health protocols.

Zarif, for his part, said that Iran and China have stood alongside each other in the fight against coronavirus and Iran welcomes China’s proposal for a “Healthy Silk Road” and is willing to participate in the relevant cooperation.

Iran strongly opposes politicization of the epidemic as well as US interference in China’s internal affairs. The business personnel of both parties should promote the cooperation of the parties in different areas.

## Tehran Willing to Maintain Economic Ties With Sofia

TEHRAN (IFP) - President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani has urged that Iran and Bulgaria should maintain and boost economic relations, the coronavirus-related difficulties notwithstanding.

In a meeting with Bulgaria’s new ambassador to Iran on Wednesday, President Rouhani stressed the need to enhance economic relations between Tehran and Sofia and enhance mutual cooperation, particularly by promoting transportation and freight services.

“Iran and Bulgaria should pursue and keep up the bilateral economic relations in full compliance with the health regulations in the current conditions that the coronavirus outbreak has created difficulties and restrictions,” the president stressed.

Highlighting the good relations between Iran and Bulgaria and the positive meetings and consultations between their officials in various arenas, President Rouhani said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran is resolved to broaden relations and cooperation with Bulgaria in all fields.”

The president then hailed the newly appointed Bulgarian ambassador’s fluency in the Persian language, expressing confidence that Nikolina Kuneva’s interest in the Persian culture and literature would contribute to a positive development in Tehran-Sofia ties.

For her part, the incoming ambassador submitted her letter of credence to President Rouhani, and emphasized the necessity of expanding her country’s relations and cooperation with Iran in different fields, as in the cultural, economic and tourism sectors.

“While the coronavirus outbreak has created difficult conditions in the world today, it is highly important to promote relations between the two countries,” she added.

In a message for his Bulgarian counterpart in March sent on the national day of the Balkan nation, President Rouhani had pointed to the age-old ties and common interests between the two countries, hoping that bilateral relations in the political, economic and cultural areas would expand in future.



## Tehran, Caracas Remain Steadfast Against U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi in a message referred to U.S. sanctions against Iranian captains, saying Iran and Venezuela remain steadfast in countering unlawful sanctions.

“U.S. desperate moves against Iranian individuals - like the one announced by @SecPompeo, aka the #SecretaryofHate – just signal the miserable failure of the so-called “max pressure” Mousavi wrote in his Twitter account on Thursday.

“Despite U.S. pressure, #Iran & #Venezuela remain steadfast in countering unlawful American sanctions,” he added.

Earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said: “The U.S. is sanctioning five Iranian captains who delivered gasoline and its components to Venezuela.”

Meanwhile, U.S. Department of the Treasury announced: “These captains, who led five Iranian flagged tankers — CLAVEL, PETUNIA, FORTUNE, FOREST and FAXON — delivered gasoline and gasoline components to Venezuela, and are now added to OFAC’s Specially Designated National and Blocked Persons List (SDN List).”

Recently, Iranian oil tankers docked at Venezuela’s port after passing the Caribbean Sea to help the friendly nation of Venezuela deal with shortage of fuel was caused after the U.S. sanctions against the country.

## Romania Sabotaging Judge Mansouri’s Case

TEHRAN (MNA) – Regarding its lack of cooperation with Iran, it is believed that the Romanian government and Police are sabotaging investigations on the death of ex-Iranian judge Gholamreza Mansouri in Romania who is accused of corruption in Iran.

Mansouri was arrested in Romania last week but was residing at the Duke Hotel in Bucharest, the capital, while the police monitored him.

According to preliminary reports, he apparently fell out of a window at a hotel in Bucharest.

His death occurred only 12 days after the first session of Former Judiciary Chief’s Top Aide Akbar Akbar court was held in Iran.

Regarding the announcement of the Iranian Police to the Interpol and Romani’s responsibility in surveilling Mansouri’s hotel, Romania is considered responsible for his death, in case of whether being murdered or committing suicide.

The Romanian government has been sabotaging the case since it has not well-protected an Iranian criminal who was expected to be delivered to the Islamic Republic, has not provided vivid information and results of the conducted investigations in that country about Mansouri’s death, has remained indifferent about baseless claims of the American media over the issue, and has not provided any clear photo of the Iranian judge’s corpse.

Iran has called for Romania to prepare a full report, a credible and obvious explanation of Masouri’s death.

## Iranian, Pakistani Diplomats Discuss Afghan Developments

TEHRAN (IFP) - Diplomats from Iran and Pakistan have talked about the latest developments in Afghanistan.

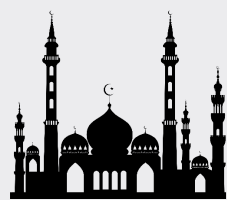
In a telephone conversation on Wednesday, the adviser to Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is also Iran’s special envoy for Afghanistan, and Pakistan’s Special Envoy for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq Khan discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan and the process of peace talks in that country.

Back in May, the special representatives of Iran and Pakistan for Afghanistan took part in a four-party video conference with their Russian and Chinese peers to talk about the process of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Iran has accelerated diplomatic efforts in recent weeks to help the warring sides in Afghanistan find a negotiated solution to the crisis.

A high-ranking Afghan delegation, led by the caretaker of Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan, paid a visit to Tehran this week for talks on a broad range of political and economic issues.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:04
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:51

9. In the end We fulfilled to them Our Promise, and We saved them and those whom We pleased, but We destroyed those who transgressed beyond bounds.  
10. We have revealed for you (O men!) a book in which is a Message for you: will ye not then understand?  
Surah 21. The Prophets ( 9 - 10 )

## Iran Petrochemical Income To Reach \$25b by Mid-2021

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Petrochemical income will reach \$25 billion by the end of term of the incumbent Government thanks to implementation of the second leap of oil and petrochemical projects, Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh announced on Thursday.**

Over the past two decades, national petrochemical income had been one billion dollar, Zangeneh said at a ceremony held via a video conference on opening of three important oil projects.

President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated three important oil and petrochemical projects this morning. About Miandoab petrochemical complex, the minister said the project will develop zones in west of the country. He further noted that 17 petrochemical projects are planned to be inaugurated up to the end of the Iranian year on March 20, 2021.

Noting that the value of Iran's petrochemical production would increase from \$12 billion in 2013 to more than double to \$25 billion by the end of next calendar year, he added: "As the Supreme Leader in a meeting with producers on May 6 stressed completion of the



projects and acceleration of the completion of the value chain, the value of these products will reach \$37 billion by the end of 1404 (March 2026)." Also about Goureh-Jask crude oil pipeline project in Makran, the minister said it is the most strategic plan followed by the government.

All equipment used for implementation of the project is indigenous, Zangeneh added.

Meanwhile Zangeneh told IRIB that Miandoab Petrochemical Plant is the first of the second leap projects in the petrochemical industry that was inaugurated.

He said 17 petrochemical projects were to be launched in the current calendar year which would add 25 million tons to the country's annual production capacity.

The Oil Minister stated that West Ethylene Pipeline was approved in 2002 to be laid from Assaluyeh, southern Iran, to Tabriz, northwestern Iran, as the longest ethylene line in the world with a length of 1,660 km.

## First Technical Meeting of Ramin Oil Field Developmental Project Held

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The first technical meeting for implementing Ramin Oil Field Developmental project in Khuzestan Province was held in presence of managers and officials of National



Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) and Persian Oil and Gas Industry Development Oil Company (POGIDC).

In the meeting which was held on Wednesday, the CEO of NIDC Eng. Seyed Abdollah Mousavi and CEO of POGIDC Dr. Jafar Hejazi and other senior managers of both companies exchanged views on the operational program, necessary human resources and other necessary issues regarding the project.

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Mousavi pointed to the interest of NIDC to expand bilateral relations, bilateral or multi-lateral co-operations with the private companies which are active in the oil industry, adding that cooperation with POGIDC is in line with the set goals of the oil industry in expanding cooperation with the domestic cooperation is very effective and constructive.

He added there is no field in the oil rich areas of the country that one cannot find any role of NIDC's skillful and experienced experts and the company has played key role in both onshore or offshore exploratory, descriptive, development and workover drilling of wells.

Mousavi added that the company beside its skillful experts, it has enough operational equipment and machine for drilling of oil and gas wells and offering integrated the technical and engineering services which are unique in the region.

He expressed satisfaction over cooperation with POGIDC, expressing hope that with good interaction between both companies, 28 Reservoir developmental project would advance.

The agreement between NIDC and POGIDC on developing Ramin Oil Field is in the framework of 28 Reservoir Development Project in the National Iranian South Oil Company which had been earlier signed by the officials of both states.

## Development, a Bridge to Materialize Surge in Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) in an online press conference said development is considered as a bridge for materializing the surge in production and the company is determined in development and boost of production.

In the online press conference held after the annual general assembly meeting of the company, Mr. Farzad Arzani underscored that the company has several projects for increasing the production to materialize the slogan of the year "Surge in Production" which has been chosen by the Supreme Leader.

Answering a question on providing products for the domestic market, Mr. Arzani said the priority of the company is the domestic market and it will meet the demands of the domestic market. He added that with interactions with some slab producers



and rolling plants, 900,000 tons of HOSCO's steel productions are to be presented in the domestic market and the remaining production of the company which is 620,000 tons are to be exported and sold in the international market.

Arzani added that HOSCO is doing to retain its current export markets

and is determined to step into new international market and it has been successful so far and currently some of the products of the company are exported to China which is the company's new export market.

He also said exports will help the companies to survive and for this reason the company is working on its exports, noting that the company has no problem in getting license for exporting its products but it does not want the domestic market also to be affected.

He announced readiness of the company for meeting the demands of the domestic market and materialize the surge in production. Arzani said that the company has plans to increase its production capacity from 1.5m to 2m tons which are underway.

He also reiterated that some prerequisites are needed for boosting production capacity to 10m tons of steel in Hormozgan Province, adding that with the underway plans, the province can become the third pole of steel production in the country

Hashem Amini stated:

## Isfahan Province's Domestic Water Consumption is 11 Cubic Meters Per Month

**Amini added:** "One of the other projects of this scan, which was put into operation in March, is water supply to Baghshad city and 8 villages of Lenjan." We promise the people of Baghbahadoran that in the coming months, the people of this city will be connected to the Baba Sheikh Ali treatment plant. He expressed the hope that the Ajieh water treatment plant will supply water to the rural complexes of Falavarjan, etc., in the form of this scan, and that we will have water supply to Dehaghan, Golshahr and 13 other villages. Amini also called the elimination of paper bills one of the good actions of ABFA and said: "At the moment, all the services of the company's subscribers have been absent in order to realize e-government." In addition to saving time and reducing pollution, it is also effective in fighting corona. Referring to the 18% increase in water consumption during the outbreak of corona, he added: "In addition, in the peak of summer consumption, we are currently witnessing a 30 to 40% increase in water consumption in Isfahan." People should have better management of water consumption, despite observing health protocols. The CEO of ABFA of Isfahan Province pointed to some projects of ABFA in 2020 and added: Correction and reconstruction of 250 km of the province's water network in cities and villages, which was 237 km in 2019, as well as water supply studies to Fereydunshahr city, water supply studies These projects are



part of Ardestan rural complexes and water supply information to the central part and water supply of the central part of Isfahan. Emphasizing that water without income and waste of water in the urban area of Isfahan is 16.1%, the CEO of Isfahan Province ABFA Company said: Isfahan is the country's leader in reducing water without income. This rate of waste in the villages is 35%, which we are looking to reduce by reforming the network. Amini also referred to the development of 220 km of the province's sewerage network in 2020,



saying that this amount was 205 km last year. We will also develop 367 km of sewerage network this year. The CEO of Isfahan Water and Sewerage Company, pointing out that the consumption of domestic water per month in Isfahan province is 11 cubic meters, said: This amount is 15 cubic meters in the country and its standard is 20 cubic meters. He stressed that although Isfahan is in a water shortage, some say that Isfahan has no problem with water: "However, 88% of Isfahan province's subscribers consume less than 20 cubic meters of water." Amini emphasized that Isfahan province is not in tension in the field of drinking water, but is in crisis: in this regard, the implementation of water supply and water transfer projects to Isfahan is one of the demands of the people and managers of the province. He said that due to lack of water in the summer peak, we have introduced some wells into the water supply network. He said that less than 10% of the total water distributed in Isfahan in the peak consumption is supplied from well water, but mixing well water. However, it should be noted that ABFA strongly emphasizes the health and well-being of well water. The CEO of Isfahan Water and Sewerage Company said: the closure of Zayandehrud will eliminate and empty Felman wells. With the measures taken, we are looking to increase the capacity of water transfer from the Oshtorjan tunnel. This could make up for the loss of Felman's wells. He also told our correspondent about the gray water in Isfahan: "Isfahan Water and Sewerage Company has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Building Engineering System Organization to collect gray water." Some complexes, education, schools, etc. are supposed to return gray water to the cycle of some uses, including irrigation, and we hope that gray water will become one of the requirements for the construction of residential complexes.



**Isfahan -** Hashem Amini told reporters on the occasion of Water and Power Consumption Management Week in the country: "In the last decade, there have been severe droughts and pressure on ABFA." Proper culture, information, and transparency prevented heavy social tensions in a timely manner. This is due to the culture of the people and the creation of culture through the managers of the province and the media. The CEO of Isfahan Water and Sewerage Company emphasized: Isfahan province is not suffering from tension in the field of drinking water, but is in crisis. We have a problem with drinking water supply until the second water supply system of Isfahan enters the circuit, but it is predicted that this part of this project will enter the circuit next year. He pointed to the issue of integration and integration of ABFA and Abfar companies and added: "According to the law, this work was assigned to urban water and sewage and in Isfahan to water and Sewage Company of Isfahan province, which caused structural and organizational changes." The CEO of ABFA Company in Isfahan Province said: "Due to the lack of funds and facilities, we are witnessing a backwardness in the rural sector." This integration will affect government spending and improve the quality of services. Amini said one of the approaches in the 2020 budget was to be village-based. "We are looking to bring rural service levels closer to cities with a coherent program," he said. He stressed that the government has a supportive view of the villages, as in the past: "Accordingly, the costs of the villages will be different from those of the cities, and the villages will benefit from the discounted costs as before." The CEO of Isfahan ABFA also pointed to one of the important measures taken by the Ministry of Energy, which started in 2019, and said: "Iran's A-B scan" is a project that will be inaugurated every week in the country. It will continue in 2020.

**Amini added:** At the end of 2019, seven projects with 758 billion tomans of credit were put into operation in the form of this scan. He also added: Reconstruction of the municipal sewerage network has taken place over the past few years with foreign financing credits in neighborhoods such as Nazar, Mir, Mushtaq, Kamal Ismail, etc. This project was implemented with a credit of about 700 billion Tomans in the form of Chinese finance. The CEO of ABFA of Isfahan Province, emphasizing the need to build a sewerage network in the suburbs of Isfahan, said: The sewerage network of some of these neighborhoods has been implemented. We hope that with the planning programs, the sewage of Ji Shir, Roshan Dasht, Pinart and Shahid Keshvari neighborhoods will be implemented.



## U.S. House Passes Democratic Police Reform Bill

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. House of Representatives approved a sweeping Democratic police reform bill on Thursday, sending the measure to the Senate despite opposition from President Donald Trump and his Republican allies in Congress.

The Democratic-controlled House voted 236-181 roughly along party lines to adopt the legislation, one month to the day after George Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody sparked weeks of worldwide protests over police brutality, especially against African-Americans.

An initial tally showed three Republicans breaking ranks to join Democrats in voting for the bill.



## Russia Quits U.N. System Aimed at Protecting Aid in Syria

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Russia said on Thursday it has quit a voluntary United Nations arrangement that aimed to protect hospitals and humanitarian aid deliveries in Syria from being hit by the warring parties.

Russia made the decision following an internal U.N. inquiry in April found it was "highly probable" the Syrian government or its allies carried out attacks on three healthcare facilities, a school and a refuge for children in northwest Syria last year.

Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused "various 'opposition groups' and terrorists through their proxies" of abusing the humanitarian deconfliction process. Russia believed the United Nations should give any relevant information to Syrian authorities, he said.



## Iraqi Forces Raid Militia Base in Baghdad



BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Iraqi security forces raided a headquarters belonging to a powerful militia in southern Baghdad late on Thursday and detained more than a dozen members of the group, government officials and paramilitary sources said.

The raid was the most brazen action by Iraqi forces against a major militia group in years and targeted the Kataib Hezbollah faction, which U.S. officials have accused of firing rockets at bases hosting U.S. troops and other facilities in Iraq.

Iraqi government officials and paramilitary sources then gave contradicting versions of what followed.

The paramilitary sources and one government official said those detained were transferred shortly afterwards to the security branch of Iraq's paramilitary umbrella grouping, the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF).

A second government official denied any such transfer and said the militiamen were still in the custody of other security services. The sources gave different numbers for those detained. A PMF official said it was 19. A government official said it was 23.

The raid was the first sign that the government of Iraq's new prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, intends to make good on pledges to take tough action against militia groups that have targeted U.S. installations.

It took place after a number of rocket attacks near the U.S. embassy in Baghdad and other U.S. military sites in the country in recent weeks.

But the incident also highlighted how difficult it could be to take on the militias. A senior PMF official said after some negotiation, those detained were handed over to paramilitary security forces.

One government official told Reuters three commanders of Kataib Hezbollah had been detained during the raid, carried out by Iraq's elite Counter Terrorism Service. One of those commanders was an Iranian, he said.

A second PMF official said no commanders of Kataib Hezbollah were detained.

A spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Iraqi paramilitary sources denied any of those detained had been handed over to the U.S. military, after a government official said three had been.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran especially on Iraqi soil have been high for at least a year.

## Turkey Blasts Bolton's Book On Trump



ISTANBUL (AFP) - Turkey has denounced as "misleading, one-sided and manipulative" the explosive book by former U.S. national security advisor John Bolton's that describes interactions between Turkish and US presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Donald Trump.

In the book "The Room Where It Happened", which is filled with damning allegations against Trump, Bolton contends that the U.S. leader was inclined to offer "personal favors to dictators he liked."

Trump was said to be receptive when Erdogan mentioned a criminal probe into one of his country's largest banks over violating U.S. sanctions on Iran. Bolton wrote that Trump told Erdogan "he would take care of things," explaining that New York prosecutors handling the case were appointed by his predecessor Barack Obama and could be replaced.

## Germany, France Shore Up support for WHO

PARIS (Dispatches) - Germany and France expressed political and financial backing for the World Health Organization in its fight against the coronavirus on Thursday, with Berlin saying it would give a record half a billion euros in funding and equipment this year - while also calling for reform of the embattled agency.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the agency, criticised by the United States for being slow off the mark in tackling the pandemic, was getting the support it needed and that talks with members states had been "very productive".

"We are getting today all the support we need, politically and financially. Both Germany and France are long-standing friends of WHO and global health," Tedros told a news conference at WHO headquarters.

U.S. President Donald Trump said last month that the United States was cutting ties with the "China-centric" WHO, but he has still not formally notified the UN agency.

The United States is the biggest overall donor to the Geneva-based WHO, contributing more than \$400 million in 2019, roughly 15 percent of its budget. "Isolated national answers to international problems are doomed to fail," German Health Minister Jens Spahn said.

He announced additional donations of funds and medical equipment to WHO that would bring Germany's total support to €500 million (\$561 million) this year, the "highest amount ever", as it assumes the EU presidency.

"We need a strong, efficient, transparent and accountable WHO today more than ever," Spahn said, though warning that continued support was conditional on reform of the multi-national body.

"Germany will do its part to give the WHO the political, financial and technical backing that is needed. This comes with the expectation that remaining challenges are adequately addressed and needed reforms are pushed forward," he added.

France said it would give €90 million to a WHO research centre in Lyon as well as an additional contribution of €50 million.

## Hamas Says West Bank Annexation Would Be Declaration of War

GAZA CITY (AFP) - Israel's planned annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank would be a "declaration of war", Gaza rulers Hamas said Thursday, as a UN envoy warned the move could fuel extremism.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu aims to table annexation plans from July 1, despite opposition from the Palestinians and much of the international community.

In a televised address, Hamas's military wing said such a move would prompt a war with the Palestinians.

"The resistance considers the decision to annex the West Bank and the Jordan Valley to be a declaration of war on our people," said spokesman Abu Ubaida.

Gaza has been under a crippling Israel blockade since 2007, when Islamist movement Hamas took control of the Palestinian enclave.

Hamas and Israel have fought three wars in recent years, with the latest conflict in 2014 killing 2,251 Palestinians and 74 people on the Israeli side.

There are no official relations between the two sides and the Palestinian Authority, a separate administration based in the West Bank, last month cut its cooperation with Israel.

Israel's proposal to annex its settlements in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley form part of a broader U.S. peace plan published in January.

The proposals foresee the ultimate creation of a Palestinian state on the remaining West Bank territory and including the Gaza Strip.

But the plan falls far short of Palestinian aspirations, with a state on reduced territory and without east Jerusalem as a capital. Palestinian officials cut diplomatic relations with Washington in 2017, over its pro-Israel stance, and have rejected the U.S. peace plan.

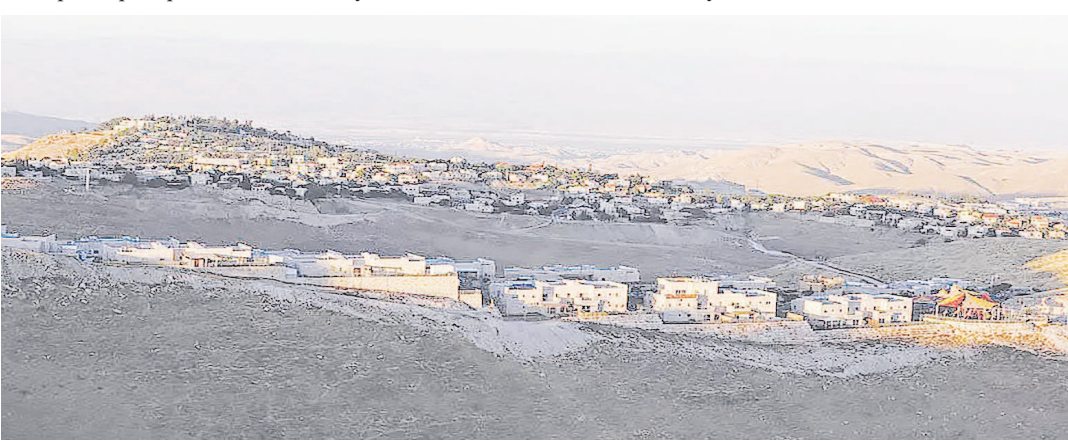
The United Nations has raised alarm bells in recent weeks over Netanyahu's intentions, warning they could do irrevocable damage to Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Speaking in Jerusalem on Thursday, the UN's Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov said annexation may also fuel extremism.

If Palestinians "feel that there is no prospect of a peaceful resolution to the conflict, that only creates opportunities for radicals," he told journalists.

Mladenov pointed to a "long litany of such developments" in the Middle East, referring to the rise of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria.

Mladenov was speaking a day after a UN Security Council session in which Secretary General Antonio Guterres, as well as European and Arab powers, called on Netanyahu to end his annexation ambitions.



## Belarus President Accuses Russia, Poland of Election Interference



MOSCOW (AFP) - Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday accused Russia and Poland of interfering in upcoming presidential elections, claims that were quickly denied by the Kremlin.

The interference is coming from "those who live in Poland and those who incite from Russia," Lukashenko said according to the Belta news agency.

Lukashenko said he would discuss the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin during a meeting in the near future but cautioned that the situation remained "extremely difficult." The strongman leader of authoritarian ex-Soviet Belarus is seeking his sixth term as president in elections scheduled for August 9.

Many of his critics have been jailed in recent weeks and opposition figures who enjoy robust support from the public have fought hard to get on the ballot, observers say. The Kremlin flatly denied allegations it was meddling in the elections, saying it did not interfere in election campaigns in other countries, particularly close allies.

Russia "isn't meddling, and isn't going to meddle in the electoral processes of any country, let alone those underway in our ally, Belarus," presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Lukashenko's main election rival Viktor Babaryko was arrested this month on suspicion of committing financial crimes and the next day the president announced his government had foiled a foreign plot to stage a popular uprising in Belarus. Authorities in Minsk claim Babaryko is in cahoots with "puppeters" from Moscow.

The Belarusian leader on Thursday accused Russia and Poland of being responsible for fake news circulating on the internet that aimed to discredit the authorities ahead of the August vote.

The run-up to the vote has seen a flurry of opposition activity which has stood in stark contrast to the incumbent's traditional Soviet approach to campaigning.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, an international election and war monitor, has not recognised any polls in Belarus as free and fair since 1995.

Lukashenko visited Moscow this week to participate in a grand military parade to mark 75 years since the Soviet Union's defeat over Nazi Germany.





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## Free Trade Pact Would Bolster U.S.-Turkish Ties

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - An eventual free trade agreement between the U.S. and Turkey would serve to greatly enhance bilateral relations and fast-track cooperation in Africa, Senator Lindsey Graham said Wednesday.

Addressing the Turkey-U.S. Business Council during a virtual panel discussion, Graham said he thinks “the anchor

tenet of the relationship” will be “a free trade agreement.”

“If you ask me what the one thing the United States and Turkey could do to change the relationship for the better, it would be a free trade agreement -- not just aspiring to have more trade to hit \$100 billion, but actually integrate the economies through a free trade agreement,” said the Republican senator.



## IMF Slashes Forecasts For the Global Economy

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund slashed its economic forecasts once again on Wednesday and warned that public finances will deteriorate significantly as governments attempt to combat the fallout from the coronavirus crisis.

The IMF now estimates a contraction of 4.9% in global gross domestic product in 2020, lower than the 3% fall it predicted in April. “The Covid-19 pandemic has had a more negative impact on activity in the first half of 2020 than anticipated, and the recovery is projected to be more gradual than previously forecast,” the IMF said Wednesday in its World Economic Outlook update.

The fund also downgraded its GDP forecast for 2021. It now expects a growth rate of 5.4% from the 5.8% forecast made in April (the positive reading reflects that economic activity will be coming from a lower base following 2020's heavy contraction). The Washington-based institution explained that the downward revisions were due to social distancing measures likely remaining in place during the second half of the year, with productivity and supply chains being hit. And in those nations still grappling with high infection rates, the fund expects that longer lockdowns will dent economic activity even more.

Global public debt projected to reach more than 100% of GDP this year. The IMF cautioned that the forecasts are surrounded with unprecedented uncertainty and economic activity will depend on factors such as the length of the pandemic, voluntary social distancing, changes to global supply chains and new labor market dynamics.

“The steep decline in activity comes with a catastrophic hit to the global labor market,” the IMF said Wednesday, indicating that the global decline in work hours in the second quarter of the year is likely to be equivalent to a loss of more than 300 million full-time jobs. Hundreds of unemployed Kentucky residents wait in long lines outside the Kentucky Career Center for help with their unemployment claims.

Hundreds of unemployed Kentucky residents wait in long lines outside the Kentucky Career Center for help with their unemployment claims. “The hit to the labor market has been particularly acute for low-skilled workers who do not have the option of working from home. Income losses also appear to have been uneven across genders, with women among lower-income groups bearing a larger brunt of the impact in some countries,” the IMF said.

Looking at country forecasts, the United States is expected to contract by 8% this year. The IMF had estimated a contraction of 5.9% in April. Similarly, the fund also downgraded its forecasts for the euro zone, with the economy now seen shrinking by 10.2% in 2020.

Brazil, Mexico and South Africa are also expected to contract by 9.1%, 10.5% and 8%, respectively. In order to mitigate some of the economic impact from the pandemic, governments across the world have announced massive fiscal packages and new borrowing. As a result, public finances are seen deteriorating significantly as a result. “The steep contraction in economic activity and fiscal revenues, along with the sizable fiscal support, has further stretched public finances, with global public debt projected to reach more than 100% of GDP this year,” the fund said.

Under the IMF's base case, global public debt will reach an all-time high in 2020 and 2021 at 101.5% of GDP and 103.2% of GDP, respectively. In addition, the average overall fiscal deficit is set to soar to 13.9% of GDP this year, 10 percentage points higher than in 2019.

## German Consumer Morale Improves Further

BERLIN (Reuters) - The lifting of restrictions imposed to contain the coronavirus has made German consumers more eager to take out their wallets and more positive about their income prospects, a survey showed on Thursday.

The consumer sentiment index, published by the Nuremberg-based GfK institute and based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, rose to -9.6 heading into July, rebounding from -18.6 the previous month and beating a Reuters forecast for -12.0. The pandemic is expected to sink Germany into its worst recession since World War Two and the government has approved two stimulus packages financed with record new borrowing to revive the economy, including lower value-added tax (VAT) rates from July 1 for six months to boost consumption.

“The extensive support provided by the economic stimulus packages, such as the announcement of a temporary reduction in VAT is certainly a contributing factor,” said GfK's consumer expert Rolf Buerkl.

He added: “Provided that retailers and manufacturers also pass these reductions on to consumers, it can be assumed that one or two planned purchases will instead be made in the second half of 2020, thereby supporting consumption this year.”



## Worst May Be Over for Battered British Economy

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's economy is shrinking at its fastest pace in centuries as the devastation wrought by the coronavirus pandemic saps demand, but it's likely to bounce back to growth next quarter as more businesses reopen, a Reuters poll found.

An historic downturn pushed the Bank of England to unleash unprecedented amounts of stimulus, and while it has slowed the pace of purchases, it is likely to increase its total spending again, the June 19-24 poll predicted.

The coronavirus has infected around 9.3 million people globally and Britain has the highest related death toll in Europe, despite a government-imposed lockdown that forced businesses to close their doors and citizens to stay home. Although the number of cases reported daily is dropping in Britain, a second wave of coronavirus infections was given as the biggest threat to the economic outlook, according to over three-quarters of respondents to an additional question in the poll.

As activity ground to a near-halt after the March 23 lockdown, the poll predicted the economy would contract 17.3% this quarter, not quite as bad as the 17.5% fall forecast in May. Forecasts ranged from to a 6.3% drop to 25.5%.

In a worst-case scenario it will shrink 19.0% this quarter, according to median forecasts.

But like other countries around the world, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has slowly started to ease lockdown restrictions and the economy was expected to bounce back and grow 10.5% next quarter as a result.

“April was undoubtedly the low point in activity. We'll probably see a more pronounced rebound during the third quarter as a broader range of businesses are expected to reopen,” said James Smith at ING.

“But even then, the economy will remain well below its pre-virus size, and we don't think it will be until late 2022 or 2023 until it has returned to those levels.” This year, the economy will contract 8.7%, medians in the poll of nearly 80 economists showed, and then grow 5.5% next year. To support the economy, the Bank of England has cut its key interest rate to a record low of 0.10% and restarted asset purchases, or quantitative easing (QE). Last week, it bolstered its firepower by a further 100 billion pounds (\$125 billion).

## China Taps World Bank Official for U.S.-Facing Finance Post

BEIJING (Reuters) - China is adding a new face to its trade negotiation team by appointing its chief representative at the World Bank to head the Finance Ministry's international cooperation department, three people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Yang Yingming, who has been Executive Director for China at the World Bank in Washington since 2016, returns to the

finance ministry months after Beijing and Washington completed a Phase 1 agreement that brought a truce to their bitter trade war, although bilateral tensions remain at their worst in decades.

Yang, who is among a group of rising Chinese economic policymakers with international experience, told some of his colleagues recently in Washington that he was returning to China to work on G-20 coordination and Sino-U.S. trade talks, two of them said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Yang, the finance ministry, and the World Bank's Beijing office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Yang, who studied English literature at Beijing Foreign Studies University and development economics at the University of Manchester in Britain, was also executive director for China at the Asian Development Bank until 2012, before moving to the finance ministry.

Yang is a fluent English speaker known for openness and a sense of humour, two of the people said, declining to be named as they were not authorized to speak to media.

The appointment further reflects Beijing's keenness to maintain engagement and prevent ties worsening, said Li Mingjiang, associate professor at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Beijing and Washington have had limited high-level engagement this year as they square off over a range of friction points, from the coronavirus to Hong Kong, although China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held talks in Hawaii earlier this month.

“Both sides still want to face their problems and resolve them through negotiation, instead of heading towards decoupling,” said Li.

## Oil Tankers Carrying Two Months of Venezuelan Output Stuck at Sea

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Tankers carrying nearly two months' worth of Venezuelan oil output are stuck at sea as global refiners shun the nation's crude to avoid falling foul of U.S. sanctions, according to industry sources, PDVSA documents and shipping data.

Washington is tightening sanctions to cut Venezuela's oil exports and deprive the government of socialist President Nicolas Maduro of its main source of revenue.

The OPEC member's exports are hovering near their lowest levels in more than 70 years and the economy has collapsed, but Maduro has held on, to the frustration of the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Washington has blacklisted ships and merchants this month for their role in trading and transporting state-run PDVSA's oil and threatened to add more to its list of sanctioned entities.

At least 16 tankers carrying 18.1 million barrels of Venezuelan oil are stuck at sea around the globe as buyers shun them to avoid falling foul of sanctions, according to Refinitiv Eikon data. That is the equivalent of almost two months of output at Venezuela's current production rate.

Some of the vessels have been at sea for more than six months, and have sailed to several ports but failed to unload. Oil cargoes are rarely loaded onto a tanker without a buyer. Those that are on the water with no buyers are generally seen as distressed in the industry, and typically sold at a discount.

Each tanker is incurring hefty demurrage charges for every day's delay in unloading. The cost for a vessel transporting Venezuelan oil is at least \$30,000 per day, according to a shipping source.

“This is our third attempt to find a buyer,” said an executive from an oil company registered as PDVSA customer, which took a cargo of Venezuelan heavy crude in January and has been unable to sell it due to the possibility of sanctions. The cargo has accumulated demurrage fees in Africa for over 120 days, the executive said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Even PDVSA's long-standing customers are struggling to complete transactions that are permitted under sanctions- for debt payment or food swaps, the executive added. Buyers are concerned about sanctions even for those cargoes.

The Panama-flagged MT Kelly is one of the vessels stuck at sea. It sailed for Turkey in April with no charterer disclosed by PDVSA at its monthly loading schedule. The vessel entered the Mediterranean only to turn around, sail back through the Strait of Gibraltar and steam around the coast of Africa, according to the data.

PDVSA and Venezuela's oil ministry did not reply to requests for comment. Greece-based Altomare SA, listed by Eikon and other vessel tracking services as manager of the MT Kelly, said the tanker is not currently under its management control.

Most of the other tankers set sail for Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia or Togo, where they typically transfer their oil to other vessels at sea, sometimes disguising their origin before they are shipped to a refiner. The vessels have not discharged, but some have switched off the transponders that broadcast their position, according to the Eikon data.

## UN Chief Calls for A World Where Torture Cannot Happen



TEHRAN (UNIC) – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June 2020, called on all to honour the victims of torture and commit to work to achieve a world where such abuse cannot happen.

### *The full text of his message reads*

Torture is an egregious abuse of human rights. International law unequivocally prohibits torture in all instances. Yet, torture continues in many countries, even those where it is criminalized.

On this International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture, human rights defenders and survivors of torture around the world take the opportunity to speak out against this abhorrent denial of human dignity and they act to remember and support its victims.

Torture diminishes everyone and everything that it touches, including torturers and the systems and States where it occurs. Torturers must never be allowed to get away with their crimes, and systems that enable torture should be dismantled or transformed.

Victims and survivors and their families must be empowered and assisted to seek justice for their ordeal. To that end, I commend the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and call for its replenishment.

On this International Day, let us honour the victims of torture and commit to work to achieve a world where such abuse cannot happen.



## Iran Ready to Reopen Trade Border Points With Iraq

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Iran's deputy ambassador to Iraq said on Friday that Iran is prepared to open its trade border points with the neighboring country of Iraq by following health protocols.

Musa Alizadeh-Tabataee told al-Mirbad website in an interview that he hoped that the Iraqi officials would prepare the necessary grounds for resuming trade with Iran.

Alizadeh-Tabataee said that 80% of the Iranian border points with the neighboring countries are active by pursuing the health protocols against coronavirus.



## U.S. to Review Tariffs on EU Goods in Aircraft Subsidy Dispute

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States moved to maintain pressure on the European Union in a 16-year dispute over aircraft subsidies by flagging possible changes in tariffs on EU goods, as the date for a decision on reciprocal EU duties slipped to the autumn.

The latest development in the dispute over subsidies to Europe's Airbus and U.S. rival Boeing Co comes as the aerospace industry has been severely weakened by the coronavirus crisis and amid steps by some governments to support aviation via airlines or suppliers, as well as furlough schemes.

The U.S. Trade Representative's office added items valued at \$3.1 billion to its list of European goods eligible to be hit with duties - including black olives, beer and gin - and said it could switch gears to target other items on a previously published list or raise existing duty levels further.

Britain - one of four Airbus core nations and still part of the case despite leaving the European Union - urged Washington on Wednesday not to impose more tariffs, warning that tit-for-tat measures hurt businesses on both sides of the Atlantic.

A spokesman for the European Commission said Washington's approach could exacerbate problems caused by the coronavirus, and might even "go beyond what is authorized under the WTO." The EU's priority remained finding a negotiated solution, he said.

The U.S. move is part of a "carousel" approach aimed at maintaining pressure on the EU to reach a settlement and end a dispute that dates back to 2004, dragging through three U.S. presidents and five presidential terms of office.

Both sides have won partial victories at the World Trade Organization, and have signaled interest in settling the matter, but are waiting to see final rulings, according to sources familiar with the process.

Last year, the WTO allowed the United States to levy tariffs on \$7.5 billion worth of EU goods, including aircraft, wines and cheese, because of Airbus subsidies that it had deemed illegal.

Now it is considering the level of tariffs that the EU could impose in a parallel case involving illegal support for Boeing.



That decision, initially expected in May or June, has been pushed back to at least September due to the coronavirus health crisis, two people familiar with the case said, while a third said it could slip until October.

The WTO declined to comment.

The timing raises the possibility that the EU would be allowed to impose its own tariffs on U.S. goods weeks before the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election, although foreign states tend to avoid taking high-profile actions during such campaigns.

Analysts say both sides share an interest in settling the issue to provide a rule book for future competition with China, which is developing its own passenger jets. For now, each side claims to have obeyed the WTO, while accusing the other of ignoring thousands of pages of rulings.

## Cooperation, Reliable Data Vital to Addressing World Drug Problem



TEHRAN (UNIC) – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26 June 2020, said cooperation, reliable data and evidence-based action are just as vital to addressing the many challenges posed by the world drug problem.

### *The full text of his message reads:*

Mutual support and trustworthy information have proven to be pillars of responding effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic and saving lives.

Cooperation, reliable data and evidence-based action are just as vital to addressing the many challenges posed by the world drug problem, protecting people's security and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

This year's theme of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking -- "Better Knowledge for Better Care" -- speaks to the need to build solutions based on facts and shared responsibility.

The international community has a solid foundation for action, with an agreed legal framework and commitments outlined in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The United Nations, in line with its common position on drug policy, is also enriching the evidence base, including through the annual UNODC World Drug Report.

We must also strive to build on what works. As Prime Minister of Portugal more than two decades ago, my government launched a drug policy rooted in taking strong action in two areas. First, by cracking down on drug trafficking and those who profit from human misery. And, second, on making sure that those who need treatment get it. Those who develop an addiction to drugs are first and foremost patients and victims. That approach succeeded and drug consumption went down significantly, particularly among young people. Today, Portugal has one of Europe's lowest death rates from drug use.

Together, we can develop sustainable alternatives to illicit drug crop cultivation; tackle drug trafficking and related organized crime; and advance justice responses as well as prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services for drug use and related HIV interventions. And we can do so in ways that are sensitive to the needs of women, young people and marginalized groups and that respect human rights.

## Maersk Heads Zero-Carbon Drive in Shipping Sector With \$60m Research Center

COPENHAGEN (Reuters) - The world's largest container shipper, A.P. Moller-Maersk MAERSK.CO, will team up with industry majors to set up a research center in Denmark with the aim of reducing carbon emissions in the shipping industry.

Denmark's Maersk, which aims to be carbon-neutral by 2050, said on Thursday the research center would combine knowledge from industry, academia and regulators towards "decarbonizing" the industry by developing carbon-neutral fuel and technologies.

The shipping industry, which carries around 80% of global trade and accounts for around 3% of global carbon emissions, pledged last year to have ships and marine fuels with zero carbon emissions ready by 2030.

The move would be funded by Maersk's majority owner, the A.P. Moller Foundation, which has donated 400 million



Danish crowns (\$60.36 million) towards building the Copenhagen-based research hub set to initially employ 100 people, Maersk said.

Denmark, which has one of the world's most ambitious climate goals of cutting emissions by 70% by 2030, is home to renewable energy majors like wind farm developer Orsted and turbine maker Vestas.

"With this donation, The A. P. Moller Foundation wishes to support the efforts to solve the climate issue in global shipping," chairman of the foundation's board, Ane Uggla, said.

The center, which would be an independent nonprofit organization, is founded by shipping firms Maersk and NYK Lines as well as Siemens Energy, MAN Energy Solutions, ABS, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and trading conglomerate Cargill Inc.

## U.S. Layoffs Remain Elevated

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Weak demand is forcing U.S. employers to lay off workers, keeping new applications for unemployment benefits extraordinarily high, even as businesses have reopened, buttressing views the labor market could take years to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A resurgence in confirmed coronavirus cases across the country, linked to the reopening of businesses, is also dimming the outlook. Roughly 29 million people were collecting unemployment checks at the end of May.

The Labor Department's weekly jobless claims report on Thursday, the most timely data on the economy's health, is unlikely to show a big improvement, more than a month after many businesses resumed operation after closing in mid-March in an effort slow the spread of the respiratory illness.

Companies are hiring, but others are cutting jobs at nearly the same pace. The economy slipped into recession in February.

"There were some businesses that tried to maintain their workforce, waiting to see what would happen as businesses reopened," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. "Even as the economy is picking up they are not seeing a lot of demand and are deciding that they don't need that many workers."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits likely totaled a seasonally adjusted 1.3 million for the week ended June 20, down from 1.508 million in the prior week, according to a Reuters survey of economists.

Claims have dropped from a record 6.867 million in late March, but the pace of decline has slowed and they are still more than double their peak during the 2007-09 Great Recession.

From manufacturing to transportation, retail and leisure and hospitality industries companies are restructuring to adapt to a vastly changed landscape, leading to layoffs and bankruptcies. State and local governments, whose budgets have been squeezed by the COVID-19 fight, are also cutting jobs.

Rising coronavirus infections in many parts of the country, including California, Texas and Florida, are likely to hurt employment as some people stay away from restaurants and other consumer-facing establishments, even if businesses are not shut down again.

"It's looking like a bumpy ride," said Josh Wright, chief economist at Wrightside Advisors in New York.

In a busy calendar for economic data, other reports out Thursday are expected to show a big rebound in orders for big-ticket goods in May and to confirm the U.S. economy shrank at a 5% annualized rate in the first quarter, the biggest contraction since the financial crisis more than a decade ago.

When second-quarter output is reported next month, the pace of contraction could exceed 30%.



## Premature Death of...

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian satellite "Noor" sends precise pictures and images of the U.S. and occupied Palestine to the information centers of the Resistance. All of the world talk about Iranian military supremacy in the region even Israeli newspaper Jerusalem Post recently pointed to the ballistic missile operation which was carried out by IRGC years ago. Missiles which hit targets in Syria and Iraq and ultimately hit the U.S. base Ain-Al-Asad in Iraq in retaliation to the U.S. assassination of martyr Qasem Soleimani, the hapless U.S. was in a position that it had no response to this attack.

Meanwhile Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies believes Iran's latest blow to the U.S. indicates Iran's superiority in the air force with using precise missiles that even the U.S. Air Force were unable to confront with it.

These events happen while we are in the complicated condition in the world due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

The ultimate tale of the history and victory of the U.S. model has vanished in views of the nations in the world, and the fake copy of the sanctions has run aground. The current dispatch of Iranian fuel tankers to Venezuela or flight of Iranian drones over the U.S. vessels in the region indicate the prudence of Resistance accompanied with a front with farsighted studies.

The Supreme Leader's order to the IRGC for deployment of its forces in the Indian Ocean by setting up a permanent base is an indication that the country is moving to concur the bases of stabilizing authority.

Sending these messages by the Resistance Axis addressed the Zionist Regime and its Western lords in a short period does not actually seem to be ordinary and unplanned. Today the condition and stand of Resistance will not let anyone make any offence to anyone in the region. In the past, whenever the Westerns felt feeble, they used to attack with policy of projection and the process of projection is a void copy.

Zionist regime itself knows better than anyone that the condition is moving in favor of its gradually collapse and the time for childish measures like annexing the West Bank to the occupied lands will not even last in the speech.

## U.S. Fails to...

FROM PAGE 1

Takht Ravanchi, however, added that in a later report released by the US State Department, the American side made no mention of how members of the Security Council reacted to Washington's anti-Tehran resolution.

"Perhaps reason was their UNANIMOUS call for full implementation of #JCPOA & UNSCR 2231," he concluded. Iran's UN ambassador says the U.S.' call for an extension of the UN Security Council's arms embargo on Tehran lacks legal standing in international law.

The U.S. attempt to extend the arms embargo against Iran was part of Washington's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. France, the UK and Germany -- all signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which is officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) -- argued against lifting the arms embargo against Tehran, resonating the U.S. claims.

## Iran Sold Gasoline...

FROM PAGE 1

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

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

However, both Venezuela and Iran have shown they are more than willing to cooperate in defiance of the US threats. According to the Washington Post, Venezuela and Iran have "just proved" that the Trump administration's sanctions are failing. "By showing that they were able to trade to mutual benefit", Iran and Venezuela "not only successfully circumvented U.S. sanctions; they also scored public relations points in the process," the paper wrote last month.

## U.S. Keeps...

FROM PAGE 1

The sanctions came after back-to-back signs that the bans have failed to adversely affect the country's metal works.

A report in May showed that daily crude steel output at the Chadormalo factory, a major mill located in eastern Iran, had reached an all-time high of 3,887 metric tons. In January, the country had reported that it expected its steel exports to touch 10 million tons in the year running to March 21, 2020.

Iran expects its steel exports to touch 10 million tons in the year to March 21, 2020 despite "tyrannical" sanctions imposed on the country, a senior official says. Back in July 2019, the country operationalized its first alumina refinery, setting a milestone in its production of the strategic metal.



## Manquillo, Carroll Agree Newcastle Contract Extensions

LONDON (Reuters) - Newcastle United defender Javier Manquillo and striker Andy Carroll have agreed contract extensions, the Premier League side said on Thursday.

Former Atletico Madrid player Manquillo has signed a four-year deal while Carroll, who returned to his boyhood club last August after being released by West Ham United, has agreed another year.

Newcastle also agreed short-term deals with others whose contracts were due to expire at the end of June and before the end of the COVID-19 delayed season.

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<b>Public Relations Tel:</b> (+98)(21) 44253450	<b>ISSN 1024-6053</b>
Editorial Board: 44253449	<b>P.O. Box:</b> 15875-8551
<b>Public Relations Fax:</b> (+98)(21) 44253395	<b>Address:</b> No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
<b>Advertising Department:</b> Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234	<b>Printed by:</b> Honar Sarzmin Sabz
<b>Website:</b> http://www.irannewsdaily.com	<b>Distributed by:</b> Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute
	<b>Managing Director:</b> Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Dortmund Confirm Favre Will Remain Head Coach Next Season

BERLIN (AFP) - Borussia Dortmund will go into next season with Lucien Favre still the head coach as they bid to break Bayern Munich's monopoly on the Bundesliga, sports director Michael Zorc confirmed Thursday.

"We will have the same set up in the new season. We want to go on the attack," Zorc said ahead of Dortmund's final game this season at home to Hoffenheim. There is a year left on Favre's contract, but there has been speculation he may leave as his Dortmund side has finished second to Bayern for the last two league seasons.

# Thiem Extremely Sorry for Adria Tour Antics

LONDON (Reuters) - World number three Dominic Thiem is "extremely sorry" for the way players conducted themselves at Novak Djokovic's Adria Tour exhibition event after which four players tested positive for the novel coronavirus, the Austrian said on Thursday.

Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki tested positive after playing in the charity tournament in Serbia and Croatia, which drew big crowds and saw players pose for pictures together.

Images and videos of the players hugging at the net, playing basketball together and partying at the event have also been posted on social media.

Australian Open finalist Thiem played in and won the Belgrade leg, which was staged at Djokovic's tennis centre by the Danube River.

The 26-year-old, who lost to Djokovic in the Melbourne final, said he was "shocked" when he got the news from the Adria Tour. The event was called off following the second leg in Zadar, Croatia.

"We played without an audience for weeks, so we have been more than happy about the fans at the event," Thiem said in an Instagram post. "We trusted the Serbian government's corona rules, but we have been too optimistic."

"Our behaviour was a mistake, we acted too euphorically. I am extremely sorry."

Though the players were not breaking government protocols during the tournament, it highlighted the risks of athletes from different countries mingling without adhering to what have become social distancing norms.

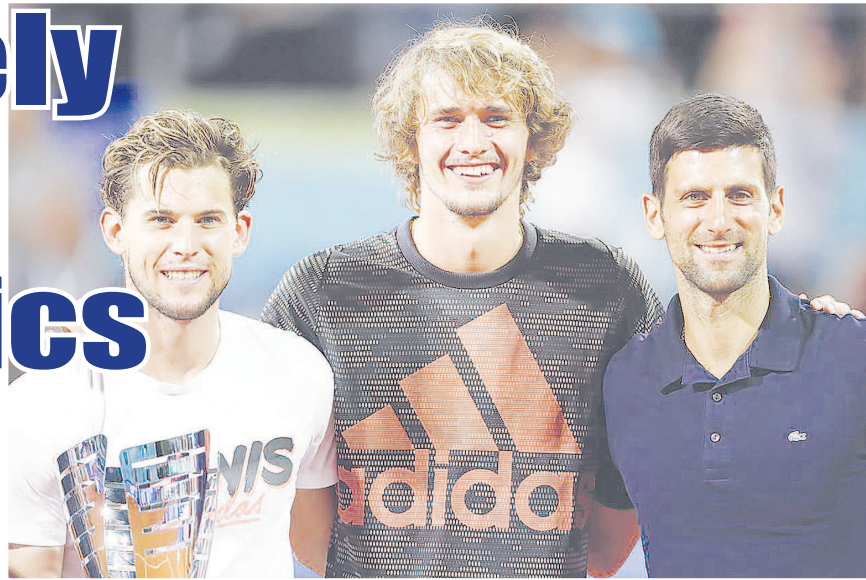
Thiem, also a two-times finalist at Roland Garros, did not play in Zadar as he had signed up to join the Ultimate Tennis Showdown, which is being held on weekends at Patrick Mouratoglou's academy in France.

"I've now got tested five times within the last ten days and the result was always negative. I wish everyone who is infected all the best and quick recovery," Thiem added.

Meanwhile Andy Murray criticized world number one Djokovic for staging the Adria Tour exhibition tournament without adopting any COVID-19 precautions after the Serbian and three other players tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Grigor Dimitrov, Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki also returned positive tests after playing in the Balkan tournament where players were seen hugging at the net, playing basketball, posing for pictures and partying like they did in pre-COVID-19 days.

Murray said he hoped the players and



their family members who tested positive recovered soon and added that the tournament should not have gone ahead in hindsight.

"Obviously it's not surprising how many players have tested positive when you see the scenes and the images and the videos from the tournament and the players party with no social distancing in place," Murray said on Tuesday.

"I've seen some people say this puts the U.S. Open in doubt but the measures and the protocols they have in place are completely different to what was going on in Serbia and Croatia."

"For a start, there will be no fans and the players will now know we can all be affected by this, it doesn't matter who you are, we need to respect the rules."

The players, however, did not break any government protocols in Serbia or Croatia with both countries easing lockdown measures weeks before the event.

On Tuesday Murray enjoyed a winning return to action as he beat Liam Broady in the 'Battle of the Brits' charity tournament at the national tennis centre in west London.

The twice Wimbledon champion and former world number one eased to a 6-2 6-2 victory over the British number six in his first competitive match since the Davis Cup Finals in November.

## Murray Confident Will Play at High Level Again



LONDON (Reuters) - Andy Murray took his defeat to Kyle Edmund at the 'Battle of the Brits' event in stride and the former world number one says he is on the right path to playing at the highest level again after a seven-month layoff due to hip problems.

Murray beat Liam Broady on Tuesday in the charity tournament in his first competitive match since the Davis Cup Finals in November, before the twice Wimbledon champion lost 6-7(2) 7-6(5) 10-5 to Edmund on Wednesday.

"To be honest, I am not bothered about the results of the match, after a match like that I hope my hip is OK, and I pull up well from it," said Murray.

The week-long event, organised by Murray's brother Jamie while professional tennis remains suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is being played behind closed doors with strict health protocols in place.

Murray has said he is looking forward to competing at the U.S. Open and French Open later this year. "I know if my hip is good, my tennis will only improve and get better over the next few months. If I can get consistent practice," he said.

## Australia to Take Learnings from Adria Tour Shutdown



MELBOURNE (Reuters) - Tennis Australia will take "a fair few learnings" from the abandoned Adria Tour, a senior TA official told Reuters on Wednesday, after the exhibition series ended abruptly amid a slew of COVID-19 infections to players and staff.

World number one Novak Djokovic confirmed he had contracted COVID-19 on Tuesday, becoming the fourth player infected during the Balkan series, which featured heaving crowds and players partying without social distancing.

"There were a fair few learnings that have come out of that (Adria Tour)," TA's Chief Operating Officer Tom Larner said.

"And whilst, certainly the whole event was actually really well-intentioned in terms of raising money for charity, the execution was clearly not great, as were the processes in place."

The U.S. Open is the next Grand Slam on the calendar, to be held as scheduled from Aug. 31 in New York, with no crowds and under strict biosecurity protocols.

Australia, with 7,500 infections and 103 deaths, has been relatively successful in containing COVID-19 but fears of a second wave are growing with several clusters breaking out across Melbourne, the Australian Open's home city.

Professional tennis returns in Australia this weekend with the A\$450,000 (\$311,000) UTR Pro Series and TA are taking no chances. The series will be held at closed venues and players interaction will be limited, measures that could be in place at Melbourne Park in January if necessary.

"I think it will be great preparation for us and the playing group," Larner said of planning for the series. "We obviously knew, as the government indicated, that there's a risk of the virus flaring up again in Australia."

## Serie A Title Race Far From Over Despite Lazio Defeat



MILAN (Reuters) - Serie A's resumption after the coronavirus stoppage could not have gone much better for titleholders Juventus who won their opening match and saw rivals Lazio and Inter Milan both slip up.

As Juve extended their lead over Lazio to four points, it was hard to avoid the familiar feeling that the Turin side were about to ride off into the distance, just as they have done in previous seasons, and claim a ninth successive title. "This defeat complicates the road towards the title," said Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi, after his side squandered a two-goal lead and lost 3-2 at Atalanta on Wednesday.

"We hadn't lost for 21 games but Atalanta were one of the worst opponents we could have faced on our restart. Now we have to get our energy back and make sure the players recover. We haven't even been lucky with the fixture list."

Looking at the weekend's fixtures, Inzaghi's gloom may seem justified.

Juve's match is at home to relegation-threatened Lecce (Friday, 1945 GMT) who have shipped 15 goals on their way to losing their last three games. Lazio have a tougher proposition at home to Fiorentina on Saturday (1945) while Inter Milan, eight points behind Juve in third after their 3-3 draw at home to Sassuolo on Wednesday, visit seventh-placed Parma on Sunday.

Yet it is far from over. Even though the Serie A season ends in just over one month's time, there are still eleven matches each still to play — which in terms of games is almost one third of the season.

## Football Can Help Fight Racism



LONDON (AFP) - Manchester City defender Benjamin Mendy says football can be a powerful weapon in the fight against racism as Premier League players continue to show their support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

Since the English top-flight resumed last week, players have taken the knee after kick-off to show their support for the battle against racism. France international Mendy, 25, grew up in an inclusive culture and hopes the powerful messages football has the capacity to send can make a big impact in wider society.

"I grew up in Paris and we all go to school, to the academy with white people, mixed-race people, Asian people, black people," he said. "The way I lived with them we are all the same, all a family."

Mendy said football had the platform to make a difference.

"We can find a solution but I think we need to be all together and send a big message because what happens is not normal," he said. Mendy joined City in 2017 but his first two seasons at the club were ravaged by injury, including two serious knee problems that required surgery.

He now feels in good shape and is determined to make his mark at the Etihad Stadium.

"This is my time," he said. "All the time I lost was not the same because I was injured."

"The way Manchester City, the staff, the players were behind me, helped me, pushed me, I want to give them the real Mendy back."

## Man City Stumble Again At Chelsea to Crown Liverpool Champions



LONDON (AFP) - Manchester City's Premier League title defense came to an end on Thursday as Liverpool were crowned champions after Chelsea boosted their chances of a top-four finish with a 2-1 win over Pep Guardiola's men.

The defensive mistakes that have undone City's title challenge were in evidence as Christian Pulisic punished two errors by Benjamin Mendy to open the scoring.

Kevin De Bruyne's brilliant free-kick brought the visitors level, but Liverpool's 30-year wait to win a league title was ended when Fernandinho was sent-off for palming the ball clear off his own goal line and Willian converted the resulting penalty 12 minutes from time.

A huge three points for Frank Lampard's men moves them within a point of third-placed Leicester and opens a five-point advantage over Manchester United and Wolves in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League.

As it stands, City are banned from European competition for the next two seasons, but still have aspirations to win the Champions League for the first time when the competition resumes in August. However, Guardiola was given another reminder that his side's defending must improve to compete with Europe's best.

After a slow start, Chelsea began to enjoy the better of the chances as Olivier Giroud failed to connect with a dangerous Ross Barkley cross before Andreas Christensen's header was well saved by Ederson.