

Health Ministry Spokeswoman,
Sima Sadat Lari, Said on Friday
With 154 New Deaths in the Past
24 Hours, the Death Toll of
COVID-19 Has Reached 11,260

IRAN NEWS

Sweden's Foreign Minister Said
Tehran Agreed to Compensate the
Families of the Foreign Victims of a
Downed Ukraine Airlines Jetliner
And Negotiations Will Continue Soon

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Iran Making Progress In Energy Sector

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani has highlighted Iran's major advances in the water treatment and electricity industries, saying the administration takes pride in launching new projects under the pressure of the U.S. sanctions and the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic.

Addressing a ceremony, held on Thursday via videoconference to open 10 infrastructural and development projects in the water and electricity industries in the provinces of Fars and Kermanshah, President Rouhani said his administration alone has brought 37 water treatment facilities into operation over the past seven years.

He said the Islamic Republic takes pride in making advances in the energy industries while it is under the pressure of sanctions, is fighting against the coronavirus pandemic, and is dealing with the situation when "a tyrant and superpower like the U.S. is mounting pressures, threats and sanctions" constantly.

The people of Iran may rest assured that the administration is fully ready to serve the nation and reduce the problems despite the pressures and sanctions, President Rouhani underlined.

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Iran Envoy Urges Lifting of Sanctions Amid Pandemic

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi has underlined the need for lifting unilateral sanctions which are weakening the capacity of targeted countries to effectively respond to the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Takht Ravanchi made the remarks while addressing a UN Security Council meeting at the UN headquarters on Thursday night local time to review the implications of Covid-19 on the maintenance of international peace and security.

He said that "serious outbreaks of certain diseases with a high mortality rate, entail security implications in conflict situations. One example is the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in the conflict situations in our region from Yemen to Palestine to Syria.

In these countries, the pandemic has worsened the socioeconomic situations, negatively impacted de-escalation efforts and peace negotiations and, by adding a new layer to the already existing problems, has further complicated the overall situations.

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Natanz Complex Not Affected by Incident, Enrichment Continues



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi said on Thursday that there were no casualties in Shahid Ahmadi Rowshan Natanz Complex as a result of the incident occurred this morning, and the normal process of enrichment continues far from the site of the incident.

He further noted that on Thursday, around 2:00 o'clock, an incident occurred, as a result of which material damage was caused but, thanks God, there were no casualties.

There has been no nuclear material at the site, so there has been no pollution, contrary to the propaganda and rumors of the dissident and counterrevolutionary media that speak of pollution, he said.

Noting that production of enrichment materials at this important site continues unabated, he said that the experts are investigating to determine the cause of the accident and extent of damages.

"We have started enrichment since Iran's move to scale down commitments, and currently we have no commitment both in terms of the level and of amount of enrichment, and we are now producing materials over 3.67 percent and above 300 kilograms," he said.

Kamalvandi said the incident in Natanz nuclear site did not affect its centrifuge operation or cause any release of radiation. Pre-fabricated steel framework of Natanz out-door site has broken, he added.

Some rumors have been spread by the opposition media claiming spread of pollution, which is not true at all, Kamalvandi added. Expert teams from the AEOI have been deployed to investigate the factors leading to the damage of the pre-fabricated steel framework, he added.

Ali Akbar Salehi, Head of Iran Atomic Energy Organization, was also present in the site, the spokesman said, adding the AEOI experts are investigating the issue.

The enrichment site has not interrupted performance, and the site continues to do so, he said.

A fire broke out early Thursday at a building above Iran's underground Natanz nuclear enrichment facility. Officials said it did not affect its centrifuge operation or cause any release of radiation.

Meanwhile Head of Iran's Passive Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali yesterday said that very limited cyberattacks waged against facilities of the country since the start of the current Iranian year (March 20).

Security is never absolute and there are always ways to penetrate it, he said, adding, "modern and up-to-date technologies, in addition to rendering quality services to people, are threatening due to their advanced and intelligent cyber elements."

Turning to this point that new technologies are a combination of threats and opportunities, he stated, "for instance, social networks are one of the essential functions of people and everyone uses them but social networks, that are dominated by foreign countries, are used to control people of other countries, create chaos and disrupt the order of countries."

In general, social networks, which are controlled and dominated by foreign countries, are used for security and economic attacks, Brigadier General Jalali added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said, "we use nuclear technology for medical diagnosis and treatment but ignoring the safety issues of this technology can be harmful."

Safety and security considerations are usually divided into three layers, he said, adding, "the first layer is safety while the other layer is security. The third is war and defense layer, in which, enemy and threat are raised."

Iran to Consider Potential Requests for Goods Supply From Venezuela

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran will consider possible requests for goods supply from Venezuela if Caracas officially submits them, despite opposition from the United States and sanctions imposed by it on both countries, Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei said in an interview.

"The trade exchange, including the process of sending and delivering goods, depends on an agreement between the two states ... If Venezuela's government and its people in the future need things that Iran can provide to them, we will consider this seriously", Rabiei said. Trade relations between Iran and Venezuela are based on international law and the needs of the two countries, the spokesman noted, adding that "the U.S. threats" will not affect legitimate commercial activities between Iran and Venezuela.

Over the past month, Iran has sent to Venezuela five tankers loaded with fuel and equipment for oil refineries that the Latin American country's crumbling oil infrastructure needs. The move was considered by the US to be a violation of restrictions imposed by it on both countries. In late June, the United States introduced sanctions against five Iranian ship captains who allegedly delivered oil to Venezuela.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Terror of 290 People In Sky of Persian Gulf

On Black Sunday (July 3, 1988), the American warship, the USS Vincennes, deployed in the Persian Gulf, fired two missiles at an Iran Airbus passenger plane and martyred 290 innocent passengers on board and the U.S. President not only refrained from apologizing but also he awarded the commander of the warship with the Legion of Merit decoration.

On that unforgettable night, Iran Air's Airbus Flight 655 (IR655) was flying over the Strait of Hormuz from the port city of Bandar Abbas to Dubai which was hit by two standard missiles at an altitude of 12,000 feet over the Persian Gulf and it crashed and all 290 people on board, including 46 foreign passengers and 66 under-13 children, were killed.

The USS Vincennes on May 28, 1988, had sailed to the Persian Gulf from Naval Station San Diego. The U.S., in an obvious process, was doing its best in order not to let Iranians be the winners of the Iraq-Iran war and it used to help Iraqi President Saddam Hussein with militarily aids in any condition. Seemingly, the USS Vincennes was aimed at identifying any flying object either plane or missile, processing the intelligence, following targets simultaneously and controlling fires in favor of Iraq. The warship was also equipped with different kinds of surface to air missiles like radar and laser-controlled ones with the range of over 408 kilometers.

On the other side of this human crime was Captain Mohsen Rezaeian, the Iranian experienced pilot, who was in charge of flying Iran Air Airbus Flight 655 who had over 7,000 hours of sorties of flight in his record. The duration of the flight from Bandar Abbas International Airport to Dubai Airport had been estimated at 28 minutes at an altitude of 14,000 feet. The first minutes of the flight were as the schedule and the plane was reaching the 12,000-feet altitude and Captain Rezaeian was constantly in touch with the control towers of Bandar Abbas and Dubai airports. At the time of the incident, Brigadier General Shahram Rostami was deputy commander of Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force. According to martyr Rostami's official remarks, the U.S. Army had conversation with Captain Rezaeian before firing the missile. The size of Airbus A300B2 is 53m X 5m excluding 45m of the wing, and the size of F-14 Fighter-Jet is 20 X 3.5m excluding 20m of wing. So distinguishing an Airbus passenger plane with a fighter-jet was not difficult although objects on the radar is not seen based on their true sizes, this type of Airbus due to its lower velocity comparing to F-14 Fighter-Jet and its length was distinguishable by the operator of the radar system and even the radar system.

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India-Funded Chabahar Port to Be Integrated With Free Zone

NEW DELHI (Dispatches)- India's first-ever port investment overseas at Chabahar in Iran is gaining momentum with the Persian Gulf nation approving the integration of the port with the Free Zone operating in the area and the opening of a branch by an Afghanistan bank soon.

The integration of Chabahar port with the Free Zone was approved by the Iranian Guardian Council. Subsequently, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Free Zone Authorities on June 9 for implementation of laws and regulations of the Free Zone in the port of Chabahar.

"The inclusion of the port in the Free Zone is expected to boost the cargo through the port," Arun Kumar Gupta, Managing Director of India Ports Global Ltd (IGPL), told BusinessLine. India Ports Global is a fully owned by Sagarmala Development Company Ltd, a company controlled by the Shipping Ministry.

The trade is also upbeat with the announcement that Ghazafar Bank of Afghanistan will soon open a branch in Chabahar, Gupta said. "It is understood that the bank has received requisite permit from Central Bank of Iran," he added.

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Rouhani Calls for Expansion Of Bilateral Ties With Belarus

TEHRAN (IP) - President Hassan Rouhani on the occasion of the National Day of Belarus in a message to President Lukashenko called for developing mutual relations.

In a message to the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday, President Rouhani hoped for improving bilateral ties between two countries.

President Rouhani congratulated the National Day to the government and people of Belarus and said that it is hoped that bilateral ties between the two countries will be expanded in areas of mutual concerns.

President Calls On Media to Change National Life-Style

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday in a meeting of the heads of specialized committees of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, called on the Iranian media to change the lifestyles of Iranian society amid coronavirus outbreak.

President Rouhani criticizing the lack of compliance with the relative distancing in public transport, said this is another factor in increasing the number of patients and asked Social Security committee officials to intensify monitoring and care in this regard.

Rouhani expressed his happiness over the observation of the health principles in business centers and environments said, "The Advertising Committee should present a policy package and define specific tasks for culture building to change the lifestyle and new behavioral habits for citizens, taking the necessary persuasive and promotional measures."

Appreciating the effective role of the media in managing and controlling the disease, the President added, "From now on, in addition to the warnings and recommendations given to contain the virus, effective and convincing activities must be carried out to change the lifestyle and the Advertising Committee is obliged to take effective measures through the media, including providing the necessary training in this regard."

"According to the report provided by the Social-Security Committee and detailed studies, it was decided to apply new restrictions in areas with the alarm or red status in a completely intelligent manner," Rouhani emphasized.



The President emphasized, "Honorable people of Iran should be aware that due to the experiences gained in recent months, the restrictions are not going to be general and the application of new restrictions is in accordance with the identified environments and based on effective methods."

"And it is based on effective methods in increasing the incidence and prevalence of the disease, according to which the governors will be given the necessary authority for the red cities of the given province," Rouhani continued.

The President warned, "Failure to follow the health instructions and increase the number of patients will cause the country's medical staff to suffer from work and physical and mental exhaustion, and it will seriously damage the motivation of those who have worked with self-sacrifice and sacrifice."

"We should not let that happen," stressed Rouhani.

Emphasizing that all government agencies and environments in which government employees work should be at the forefront of following guidelines, the president said, "All ministries are required to submit a comprehensive plan for adaptation to the Social Security Committee. So that they would be reviewed and approved by the National task force for fighting COVID-19."

Pakistan Condoles With Iran Over Victims of Medical Center

TEHRAN (Pakistan Embassy) - The ambassador of Pakistan to Iran in a message has expressed condolences and heartfelt sympathies on victims of tragic incident at Sina At'har Medical Center in Tajrish.



Rahim Hayat Qureshi in a tweet on Thursday said, "We express our sincerest condolences and heartfelt sympathies on the tragic incident at Sina At'har Medical Center in Tajrish in Northern Tehran on 30th June, 2020."

He added, "We share the grief of the families who lost their loved ones and those injured in the explosion. May the Almighty comfort these families and give them the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss. We also pray for the early recovery of those who were injured. We share grief of families who lost loved ones and those injured. "May Almighty comfort these families and give them fortitude to bear this irreparable loss," he said.

A fire erupted at Sina Athar Medical Center in the north of Tehran on June 30, killing 19 including 15 women and 4 men doctors so far. Moreover, 14 have been injured.

Zionists Understand Only Language of Resistance

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that passage of time has proved that the Zionists understand only the language of resistance, and compromise and flexibility never works while dealing with them.

He made the remarks in phone conversation with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh late on Wednesday, adding that resistance of the Palestinian people and struggles of its combatants are admirable.

Qalibaf also hailed the role of the Palestinian groups in reinforcing resistance and victory over the Zionist enemy.

"We have always supported the Palestinian people and believe that the struggles of Palestinian fighters will block realization of plans such as the deal of the century, as well as the recent Zionist adventure to annex part of the West Bank," he said. The efforts by some parties to normalize relations with the occupying regime are a strategic mistake, he said.

Haniyeh, for his part, said that the Palestinian people and the Hamas movement will continue their resistance until the Zionists leave the occupied territories.

Criticizing the silence of some countries vis-a-vis the occupation of the Zionist regime and its expansionist policies, Haniyeh added, "We condemn the silence of certain regional countries seeking to normalize their relations with the Zionist enemy." He also appreciated Iran's supports to the Palestinian people's resistance, hoping that mutual cooperation will strengthen in a bid to thwart the occupiers' conspiracies, including the so-called deal of century and annexation of parts of the West Bank.

Escalation of Anti-Iran Sanctions Signals Failed Economic Terrorism

TEHRAN (IP) - Parliament Speaker's Special Aide for International Affairs called escalation of U.S. sanctions against Iran as the failed economic terrorism saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran would definitely find the way out of the newly imposed sanctions powerfully, depending on the internal capabilities.

Speaking at a meeting with the Italian Ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone on Thursday, Hossein Amir Abdollahian referred to Iran's success in passing through US sanctions, saying that Europe must find a way to avoid losing the chance for active economic cooperation with Iran.

Iran's Senior Diplomat called the unconstructive behavior of the United States, the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia as the destabilizing factors fomenting



instability in the region, saying that the US obvious support of the terrorist outfits, as well as its interventionist approach in the affairs of the regional countries, have led to the escalation of the crises.

Talking about the historical-cultural ties between Iran and Italy, Amir Abdollahian said that Iran's Parliament welcomes the expansion of parliamentary relations with Italy.

Giuseppe Perrone, for his part, pointed to the Tehran-Rome cooperation, saying that the Italian government's policy is aimed at cementing ties with Iran.

During the event, the two sides also exchanged views and discussed the latest regional and international developments including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the EU together with the COVID-19 crisis.

Persian Gulf Has Long Been Scene of U.S. Crimes

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a tweet on the 32nd anniversary of deliberate shooting down of an Iranian passenger flight that the US has been committing crimes against humanity for a long time in the Persian Gulf.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked, "What is U.S. human rights?"

Answer is: "Unparalleled commitment to killing people!"

It added, "Persian Gulf has long been the scene of US crimes against humanity."

Referring to the fact that "32 years ago, U.S. deliberately shot down an Iranian airplane" in which "290 were killed," the message read, "U.S. has not yet apologized nor embarrassed with committing such a heinous crime."

Iran Air Flight 655 to Dubai, as a part of a twice-weekly route flown by the airliner for over 20 years, was shot down shortly after it took off from Bandar Abbas by the United States Navy over the Persian Gulf.

After the tragic incident, the captain of the US Vincennes, Will Rogers III, was eulogized and awarded, which proved that the U.S. navy's attack at Iranian passenger plane has been a pre-meditated crime.

The aircraft, an Airbus A300, was destroyed by two surface-to-air missiles fired from the Vincennes killing all 290 passengers on board, including 66 children under thirteen, 53 women and all the 16 crew members. The plane had 46 foreign nationals on board from six countries.

Iranians commemorated the 32nd anniversary of the downing of its passenger aircraft on Thursday.

A memorial ceremony was held on Thursday on the eve of the tragedy's anniversary, with the participants, including the families of the victims and local officials, tossing flowers into the waters of Hormozgan Province near Hengam Island.

They also chanted slogans such as "Down with the US" and "Down with Israel."

Speaking during Thursday's commemoration ceremony in the port city of Bandar Abbas, Abbas Gholamshahi, a senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corp (IRGC), said "criminal America took the most inhumane action and committed the crime of the century in 1988 by downing a passenger plane."

The U.S. then "gave a medal of honor to the captain of the cruiser for his inhumane act," he added.

"However, they no longer dare do so and we witnessed how their most advanced drone was shot down for violating Iran's airspace after receiving a warning," he added.

Iran, Iraq Stress Security, Defense Cooperation

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Iran's military attaché in Baghdad Mostafa Moradian and the Chairman of the Security and Defense Committee in the Iraqi parliament, Mohammed Redha Al-Haidar, in a meeting in here on Friday, reviewed avenues of expanding security and defense cooperation.

During the meeting, the two sides underlined the need to implement the already signed military and defense agreements, urging the need to promote

further cooperation in these areas.

The Iraqi side appreciated Iran's support for Iraq during the country's fight against Daesh terrorist group, saying it was an example of brotherliness between Iran and Iraq.

The Iranian diplomat had also had a meeting with Iraqi Defense Minister Juma Anad Saadoun last week when they explored ways to expand military and defensive cooperation.

U.S. Seeking to Extend Iran's Arms Embargo at UNSC

TEHRAN (MNA) – Deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) for Political Affairs said that United States is seeking to extend Iran's arms embargo at the UN Security Council by using its influence over other countries.

Brigadier General Yadollah Javani pointed to the U.S. attempts to extend Iran's arms embargo, which is scheduled to terminate in Oct. 2020 under the UNSCR 2231 and added, "US behavior regarding implementation of Resolution 2231 and termination of Iran's arms embargo show that they are not committed to any kind of commitments."

He also pointed to the breaching several promises in the field of international treaties by the US officials over the past years as well as withdrawal of this country from Iran's nuclear deal, [JCPOA], in May 2018, Brigadier general Javani stated, "failure of U.S. official to adhere to the international treaties as well as nuclear deal has made it clear to our nation that the U.S. authorities are not committed to any treaty."

He pointed out that the U.S. officials do not comply with any agreement and seek to deprive Iran in various areas. As a matter of fact, Americans have shown throughout the history that they do not want Iranian nation to make progress and become stronger.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Brigadier General Javani pointed to the policies adopted by the US officials to dominate the West Asian region and reiterated, "In order to regain its control over the region and Iran, US is seeking to target power components of the Islamic Republic of Iran for realizing its malicious objectives."

In the recent year, "we have witnessed that U.S. officials sought to create permanent restrictions in Iran's nuclear activities with its exit from JCPOA. In addition, U.S. authorities have left no stone unturned to cut Iran's relationship with the resistance groups fundamentally."

Iran Condemns U.S.' Worthless Threat to Use Military Option

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has categorically condemned a U.S. official's threat to use military option against Iran, describing it as a "molded" option that has been collecting dust on the U.S. presidents' tables for years.

Brian Hook, the U.S. Special Representative for Iran, said Tuesday that the White House was willing to take military action against Tehran to prevent the country from what he called "acquiring nuclear weapons".

"The military option is always on the table," the U.S. pointman on Iran said in a visit to Jerusalem al-Quds.

On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi strongly condemned the threatening remarks as "baseless and worthless."

The U.S.' military option against Iran is "a molded option that has been collecting dust for years on the table of the delusional presidents of the United States," Mousavi noted.

The spokesman said the real threat to the region is the destructive and destabilizing presence of the US in the region, which has turned the Middle East into a number of military bases.

"As long as the U.S. officials talk about the military option against the Iranian nation being on the table, even though in vain, and delay their withdrawal from the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran will spare no legitimate efforts to boost its military power with reliance on domestic capabilities," he added.

It is Iran's inalienable right to enhance its defensive capabilities in order to defend the national interests of Iranians, he stated.

Mousavi said Tehran's principled policy in the military sector is absolutely clear and the nature of this program is totally defensive.

He further pointed to the US' "desperate" attempt to convince other members of the UN Security Council to extend an arms embargo against Iran, which is to expire in October as per Security Council Resolution 2231.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:09
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:08
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:54

21. Or have they taken (for worship) gods from the earth who can raise (the dead)?
22. If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! but glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him! Surah 21. The Prophets (21 - 22)

Iran-Eurasia Bilateral Trade Hits \$2.4b in 8 Months

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The total value of bilateral trade between Iran and the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has stood at \$2.4b in eight months since both sides implemented their preferential agreement.

Spokesman for the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration [IRICA] Mr. Seyed Ruhollah Lotfi said that since October 27, 2019 when the preferential trade agreement between Iran and Eurasia came into effect, the trade between Iran with the bloc has hit \$2.4b in eight months in terms of value and 6.8m tons in weight.

He noted that the figure has been registered while the country and the region have been challenging with the Coronavirus pandemic since March.

Latifi said that since the major basic goods needed by the country are purchased from Eurasian Union member states and the goods are imported through the northern ports, imports account for 72 percent of Iran's trade with the bloc and exports to the bloc account for 28 percent of the total trade.

He added that the amount of preferential imports from Eurasia was over \$1.169b



while the total imports stood at \$1.73b. By the way, the amount of imports in terms of weight stood at 5.2m tons.

Latifi further said the amount of Iran's exports to the Eurasian Union states stood at over \$681m in eight months and it was over 1.65m tons in terms of weight.

He noted that Russia was the major exporting Eurasian country to Iran as Iran's imports from Russia account for over 80 percent of its total imports from the bloc which valued at over \$1.39b.

Kazakhstan with \$287m and Belarus with over \$33m were the other major exporting Eurasian countries to Iran. Armenia with over \$10m and Kyrgyzstan with \$5.6 were the other exporters to Iran.

Latifi also pointed some major goods which were exported by Iran to the Eurasian states, adding that fresh apple was the main exports to the bloc which accounted for Iran's 14.5 percent of its exports. Pistachio, natural gas, fresh kiwi and dried for are the other goods which top Iran's exports.

He reiterated that basic goods topped Iran's imports from those states as the barley accounted for 27 percent of Iran's imports.

Iran Resumes Gas Exports to Turkey

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Oil Ministry says it has resumed exports of natural gas to Turkey despite reports in the media suggesting that exports could stop for good because of price disputes.

A spokesman of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said on Wednesday that Turkey had finished repair work on a pipeline that came out of service after an explosion on March 31, allowing Iran to resume exports.

"Exports have resumed now that repairs on gas export pipeline in the Turkish territory have finished," said Mohammad Asgari, adding, "Iran's gas exports to Turkey is going on as before."

The announcement puts an end to weeks of speculations about a potential decision by Turkey to halt imports of natural gas from Iran.

Reports in April had suggested that Turkey was unwilling to repair the damaged pipeline because it was unhappy with the price of gas supplied from Iran.

Iran says it would change the terms of its gas exports contracts after the pandemic.

Those reports said a sudden fall in international oil prices, which are used as a benchmark to determine gas prices, had caused Turkey to press Iran for a fresh negotiation on gas prices.

Authorities in Turkey had denied there was a major issue with the price, insisting that repair work on the pipeline had been delayed because of the spread of the new coronavirus in the region.

That comes as oil prices have rebounded in recent weeks mainly because of an international agreement to cut the output.

Turkey is entitled to receive around 8.5 billion cubic meters of gas from Iran each year under a 25-year contract which began in 2001.

Based on the agreement, any change in oil prices would take at least six months to have an effect on the price of gas delivered by Iran to Turkey.

Iran Exports to Kuwait Plummet By 40%



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Kuwait Joint Chamber of Commerce Hani Feysali says in recent months Kuwait has stopped letting Iranian wooden launches enter their waters and only food stuffs are exported to this country by refrigerated-containers and the total Iran's exports to Kuwait have fallen by 36 to 40 percent.

Speaking to ILNA, Feysali talked about the latest developments about Iran-Kuwait trade, saying that the trade exchange between both states has unfortunately been downtrend in recent years as the total trade volume from \$400m in 2020 fell to \$186m last year.

He noted that we should consider this point that Kuwait follows its elder brother Saudi Arabia's footstep and there are some hands in the Kuwait Government which does not let Iran have trade with this country easily.

Feysali added that the outbreak of the Coronavirus worsened the situation and Kuwait stopped letting Iranian wooden boats and launches to carry goods to this country due to the virus pandemic and Iran just is able to export food stuffs to Kuwait in refrigerated-containers. He added that these woes have affected Iran-Kuwait trade as Iran's exports to this country have fallen between 36 to 40 percent.

He criticized weakness of Iran's economic diplomacy, adding that among Arab states, Kuwait after Saudi Arabia is the major importing country and this potential creates suitable potential for Iranian traders to take the control of exports to Kuwait but Iran's weak diplomacy has robbed them of this opportunity.

Feysali reiterated that Iran's weak diplomacy and political consultation regarding this issue is undeniable. He further added that currently veteran Iranian traders are in charge of exports to Kuwait because the young traders are denied for visas despite the chamber's efforts to sort out this issue.

He added that if we see country like Turkey takes the control of all markets in the region is because of cooperation between the government and the private sector, and there is no hindering regulation in way of trade and even Turkish government grants certain facilities and concessions to traders while in Iran the regulations are the otherwise and obstacles.

Iran, Source of World's Safest Plasma

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Baqiyatallah Hospital's president Hassan Abolqasemi on Thursday called Iran as the safest source of plasma in the world to treat.

During the science promotion meeting organized by Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation, prominent figures discussed the convalescent plasma (CP) therapy to treat COVID-19 patients.

Addressing the meeting, Abolqasemi also added that While treating patients with COVID-19, establishing a plasma bank is required, and to treat patients, infected individuals' plasma is needed not the plasma provided by the healthy people who had never developed the disease.

"The world has shocked and challenged with COVID-19 and so far there is no definite method or medicine which has been found to be cured," he added.

"As long as Iran has been the second country after China facing Corona, it decided to apply Plasma therapy to treat Coronavirus diagnosed patients," highlighted Iran' stop health official

"Iran has grown significantly during 20 years in the plasma field, it also sends 400,000 liters' plasma to Europe annually to dispense medicine which is really expensive," he stressed.

He highlighted to the main features of plasma therapy and said it is safe and secure with zero risks for patients,



it is easily accessible and more importantly it does not let patients be hospitalized at ICU "Intensive Care Unite" requiring no ventilator at all.

Speaking as one of the other keynote speakers, head of Iran's Blood Transfusion Organization "IBTO" Peyman Eshqi, called Iran as the scientific forerunner of using plasma therapy.

Eshghi stated, "In an atmosphere of fear and dread, people adopt a rather negative approach in doing what they used to do previously."

"So, people all over the world started to get more reluctant to donate blood since the outbreak of COVID-19. This resulted in a shortage of plasma" he said.

"Another obstacle is that direct transfusion of the plasma of previously-pregnant women may cause allergic reactions in receivers, so they are excluded from donating plasma," he added.

Moreover, some groups like "patients with diabetes or high bold pressure might harm themselves by donating plasma," he continued.

"We asked many recovered COVID-19 patients to donate plasma. Although we have received a good quantity of plasma, we need it 10 times more than what we have now," he said.

Eshqi stated the world has panicked facing COVID-19 outbreak so the blood donation has painstakingly fallen.

Kazakhstan, One of Iran's Top Priorities for Extraterrestrial Cultivation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Majid Samadzadeh Saber on Wed. described Kazakhstan as Iran's priorities for extraterrestrial cultivation.

In addition to having vast and suitable lands for agriculture, Kazakhstan enjoys good transit situation and goods transport to this country is done easily, he added.

For this purpose, strategies for the development of extraterrestrial cultivation in Kazakhstan as well as pathology and removal of existing barriers were discussed in an expert-level meeting in the presence of activists of this field.

This expert-level meeting was held at the initiative taken by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in Kazakhstan on Wed. through video conference.

In this meeting, Samadzadeh Saber pointed to the capacities of Kazakhstan in the fields of agriculture, stockbreeding and fishery and described Kazakhstan as one of Iran's priorities in extraterrestrial cultivation.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Samadzadeh referred to the spread of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, and added, "following the outbreak of COVID-19, the transit of goods between Iran and some regional countries was halted but Kazakhstan was the only country that continued to import, export, transit and exchange goods with the Islamic Republic of Iran without any hiatus."

Price of Ethylene for Petrochemical Plants Reduced in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The price of ethylene for petrochemical plants has been reduced 10 percent by Iranian oil minister's order.

The price of ethylene has been reduced from \$220 to \$200 per ton to prevent further losses by production companies, said Bijan Zangeneh.

The issue of changing ethylene price was discussed during a meeting on June 22, which was attended by ethylene producers and consumers as well as officials of the National Iranian Petrochemical Company.

The price of oil product has been affected by coronavirus spread and reduction of demand due to the drop of oil price.

Reducing the price of ethylene will increase competition in the price of petrochemical products and effect the profit of related companies in stock market trading, said the minister.

Ethylene price floor was previously was \$220 per tons, while the price ceiling was \$440.

Over 3m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME in June

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - At the end of June 2020, different trading floors of the Iran Mercantile Exchange witnessed trading of more than 3 million and 88 thousand tons of commodities worth over \$4,750m.



According to the report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, during the last month, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of the IME played host to trading of 1,928,480 MT of commodities worth more than \$2,228m

On this trading floor, more than 454,287 MT of bitumen, 363,163 MT of polymer products and 129,840 MT of chemical products, 734,000 MT of VB feed stock, 118,000 MT of lube cut oil, 108,493 MT of sulfur, 4,920 MT of insulation, 7,600 MT of slaps waxes, 150 MT of argon as well as 8,027 MT of oil were traded by customers.

The metal and mineral trading floor witnessed trading over 1,156,368 MT of commodities worth more than \$2,500m

On this trading floor 1,036,628 MT of steel, 18,475 MT of copper, 600 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 90 MT of precious metals concentrates, 71,970 MT of zinc, 200 MT of lead ingot, 28,405 MT of aluminum, as well as 17 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

Furthermore, in agricultural trading floor of the IME more than 8 tons of saffron was traded by the customers.

The side market of the IME experienced trading of 3,176 MT of tomato paste, 60 MT of used locomotive engine oil as well as 606 MT of metal scrap.

Venezuela Reverses Decision To Expel EU Ambassador

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela has reversed its decision to expel the EU's ambassador to Caracas ordered by President Nicolas Maduro, a statement said on Thursday, ending a tit-for-tat diplomatic row.

Maduro on Monday gave the EU's Isabel Brilhante Pedrosa 72 hours to leave the country in response to European sanctions against 11 Venezuelans.

"The Venezuelan government decided to nullify the decision," said the statement from Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.



At Least 126 Killed as Myanmar Jade Mine Collapse Buries Workers

RANGOON (Reuters) - A landslide at a jade mine in northern Myanmar killed at least 126 people, with more feared dead, authorities said on Thursday, after a heap of mining waste collapsed into a lake and buried many workers under mud and water.

The miners were collecting stones in the jade-rich Hpakan area of Kachin state - the centre of Myanmar's secretive jade industry - when the "muddy wave" crashed onto them, after heavy rain, the fire service department said in a Facebook post.

By late afternoon rescue workers had recovered 126 bodies, the department said, but more were missing.



Kremlin Hails Triumph in Vote Extending Putin's Rule



MOSCOW (AFP) - The Kremlin on Thursday hailed as a "triumph" overwhelming backing in a national vote on constitutional reforms to extend President Vladimir Putin's rule.

The Central Elections Commission announced that 77.92 percent of voters had backed the reforms with a turnout of 67.97 percent after all votes had been counted.

The Kremlin "definitely considers this as a triumph," presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, describing the vote as a "referendum on trust" in the Russian president.

Russians began voting last week on the package of constitutional changes proposed by Putin earlier this year, including a reset of presidential term limits allowing him to run twice again after his current six-year term ends in 2024.

Other amendments strengthen presidential and parliamentary powers, enshrine traditional values including an effective ban on gay marriage and guarantee better minimum wages and pensions.

"Now that Russians have given such support for changes to the constitution, this will all become the foundation for a better future for our country," Peskov said.

"It was very difficult to predict the extremely high turnout and the extremely high support."

The result was seen by many as a foregone conclusion, however, and copies of the new constitution were already on sale in bookshops weeks ahead of the ballot.

Only the autonomous region of Nenets in the Russian Arctic came out against the reforms, with 55.25 percent of voters opposing the changes to the constitution.

The isolated and sparsely populated region where reindeer herding is the traditional way of life is facing unification with the neighbouring Arkhangelsk region in a move that has sparked a local opposition movement.

"You can't rule out that the topic of merging regions... influenced the result" Peskov said, while stressing that the region's voters were "an absolute minority."

Russia's two houses of parliament previously approved the amendments but Putin said they would only take effect if supported by a majority of voters.

Merkel Calls on Europe To Show Resolve

BERLIN (Reuters) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel has urged European Union leaders to reach agreement on a multi-billion euro coronavirus recovery fund, calling for resolve and saying Europe was facing the most difficult situation in its history.

Echoing Merkel's urgency as Germany took the helm of the bloc, the EU's chief executive Ursula von der Leyen joined the chancellor via video link to warn that the next six months were crucial after the region reacted slowly to the coronavirus and now faced a severe economic downturn.

"We are clear where the difficulties are but we all know it would be good if we agree in July. If we need more time it would be a less good variant," Merkel said, also referring to plans for the new seven-year EU budget.

"There must be a deal in the summer, I cannot imagine any other variant so we will work very hard to show a sign of our resolve. We know that Europe is in the most difficult situation in its history," she told a news conference.

With almost 35,000 deaths from COVID-19 recorded in Italy alone, lockdowns across most of the European Union have shuttered businesses, upended livelihoods and indebted governments as they seek to shield workers.

A Commission proposal for a 750 billion euro (676.41 billion pounds) rescue fund has been largely welcomed by EU leaders but must still be agreed, and fiscally conservative northern countries led by the Netherlands are loath to see their taxpayers pay for grants to southern European states.

"In such times, solidarity is a test," Merkel said, in a veiled reference to frustration across Italy and Spain, the EU countries most affected by the novel coronavirus and which have questioned the value of the union in the crisis.

Although the rotating, six-month presidency gives only limited power, as Europe's most respected leader Merkel faces huge expectations that she can negotiate a breakthrough on the recovery fund and a new 2021-2027 budget for the bloc.



UK Court Denies Venezuela's Maduro Access to Gold in Bank Vault

LONDON (Dispatches) - A judge in London has said the UK government had "unequivocally recognised" opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's president, in a battle over gold bullion held at the Bank of England.

The case was brought by the Banco Central de Venezuela, asking to release \$1bn in gold reserves to help fund the cash-strapped country's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The Bank of England said it was unable to act on instructions because it was "caught in the middle" of competing claims for the presidency after disputed elections in 2018.

A BCV board appointed by the government of Nicolas Maduro wants the gold released while a rival ad hoc board appointed by Guaido asked for the release to be denied.

Commercial Court judge Nigel Teare, sitting at the High Court of England and Wales, was asked to rule on who was authorised to make the demand - Guaido or Maduro.

In his judgement, he said on Thursday: "Her Majesty's Government does recognise Mr Guaido in the capacity of constitutional interim president of Venezuela and, it must follow, does not recognise Mr Maduro as the constitutional interim president of Venezuela."

Teare added that it was impossible to recognise both men as president.

Guaido has refused to accept the results of the 2018 elections, calling them flawed, and insists that he is interim president pending a fresh vote.

About 60 countries have since recognised Guaido as Venezuela's leader, including the United States, which has imposed sanctions on Maduro and his inner circle.

Maduro succeeded Hugo Chavez after his death in 2013. He has ruled with an iron first, presiding over the economic collapse of the oil-rich country.

NATO Puts Defense Plan For Poland, Baltics Into Action

VILNIUS (Reuters) - NATO has put a defence plan for Poland and Baltic states into action after Turkey dropped its objections, officials from Lithuania, Poland and France have said.

Turkey's foreign ministry declined to comment on Thursday.

The plan for Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, details of which are classified, was drawn up at their request after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. It was approved at a NATO summit in London in December.

But Turkey did not allow NATO chiefs to put the plan into action unless they recognized the Kurdish YPG militia in northern Syria as a terrorists.

"The Turks have dropped their objections," an official of the French Armed Forces Ministry said on Wednesday.

A NATO diplomat said that the plans were now finally agreed.

Although it was unclear if Turkey extracted any concessions



for agreeing, a second NATO diplomat said Ankara had acquiesced after pressure from the other 29 allies late last month.

The Poland and Baltics defense plan, known as Eagle Defender, has no direct bearing on Turkey's strategy in Syria.

"Putting in place the political decision, which was reached in London, is a success for all NATO," Lithuanian

Defence Minister Raimundas Karoblis told reporters. Pawel Soloch, head of Poland's National Security Bureau, also confirmed the deal.

Turkey began its offensive in northern Syria after the United States pulled 1,000 troops out of the area in October. Ankara's NATO allies have said the incursion undermines the battle against Islamic State militants.

NATO declined to comment directly, saying that it "has plans in place to protect all allies. Those plans are regularly revised and updated".

Fatah, Hamas Pledge Unity Against Israeli Annexations

RAMALLAH (AFP) - Palestinian rivals Fatah and Hamas pledged unity against Israel's West Bank annexation plans in a rare joint conference Thursday, as signs emerged of a rift between Israel and Washington over the project.

The relationship between Fatah, which controls the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority, and Islamist group Hamas -- in control of the Gaza strip -- has been plagued by divisions for more than a decade.

The joint press conference was spurred by common opposition against U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial peace plan, which paves the way for Israel to annex territory in the occupied West Bank, including Jewish settlements considered illegal under international law. "We will put in place all necessary measures to ensure national unity" in efforts against annexation, senior Fatah official Jibril Rajub said in Ramallah at the press conference, also addressed by Hamas official Saleh al-Arouri by video-link from Beirut.

"Today, we want to speak in a single voice," Rajub affirmed.

Arouri described the conference as "an opportunity to start a new phase that will be a strategic service to our people in the most dangerous stages."

Turkey Demands Apology From France Over Naval Incident Claim



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's foreign minister on Thursday demanded an apology from France over its depiction of a standoff between ships from the two countries in the Mediterranean Sea that prompted Paris to suspend its involvement in a NATO naval operation.

France says its frigate Courbet was "lit up" three times by Turkish naval targeting radar on June 10 when it tried to approach a Tanzanian-flagged civilian ship suspected of involvement in arms trafficking. The ship was being escorted by three Turkish warships. The Courbet backed off after the confrontation.

At the time, the French frigate was part of the Sea Guardian mission, which is helping to provide maritime security in the Mediterranean. France said it was acting based on NATO information and that under the alliance's rules of engagement such conduct is considered a hostile act.

Turkey has denied harassing the Courbet. Both countries are NATO allies. "France has not told the truth to the EU or to NATO," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said during a visit to Berlin.

"The claims that our vessels locked onto (French vessels) are not true," Cavusoglu added. "We have proven this with reports and documents and gave them to NATO. NATO saw the truth." NATO has confirmed only that investigators have submitted their report into the incident but said it was "classified" and declined to say what conclusions, if any, had been drawn.

"Instead of engaging in anti-Turkish activities and such leanings, France needs to make a sincere confession," Cavusoglu said. "Our expectation from France at the moment is for it to apologize in a clear fashion, without ifs or buts, for not providing the correct information."

The French government sent a letter Tuesday to NATO saying it is halting its participation in Sea Guardian "temporarily."

France has accused Turkey of repeated violations of the U.N. arms embargo on Libya and branded the Turkish government as an obstacle to securing a cease-fire in the North African nation, which Turkey firmly denies.

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A billboard for IRAN NEWS, PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS. The billboard is white with black and red text. The word 'IRAN' is in large, bold, red letters with a green outline. Below it, 'NEWS' is in large, bold, black letters. Underneath 'NEWS' is the text 'PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS' in a smaller, black, serif font. To the right of this text, there is contact information: 'TEL: 44253448-50', 'FAX: 44253234', and 'ADIRANNEWS@GMAIL.COM'. Below the contact information is a large, stylized graphic of a newspaper roll. At the bottom of the billboard, the word 'ADVERTISING' is written in large, bold, black letters, with each letter containing a different small image related to news or advertising. The billboard is mounted on a tall, dark metal structure. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a clear blue sky. The billboard is positioned in the upper half of the frame, and the city skyline is in the lower half. The overall scene is a clear, bright day.

Goldman Sachs Sees Oil Demand Returning To Pre-Coronavirus Levels by 2022

LONDON (Reuters) - Goldman Sachs said on Thursday a pick-up in commuting, a shift to private transportation and government efforts to improve economics with higher infrastructure spending should help global oil demand return to pre-coronavirus levels by 2022.

Demand is expected to fall by 8% this year, before

rebounding 6% in 2021 and fully recovering to pre-pandemic levels by 2022, the U.S. bank said in a note. "Oil demand has already started to recover with the initial pace of recovery surprising to the upside in economies like China and India. Demand is still below normalised level with June demand estimated to be 12% below last year levels," Goldman said.



Venezuela's Oil Exports Sank in June to 77-Year Low

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela's oil exports slumped in June to their lowest level since 1943 after half a dozen tankers, looking to avoid the threat of U.S. sanctions, sailed away from the nation's waters without loading, according to vessel tracking data.

The fall in oil exports has starved the socialist government of President Nicolas Maduro of its main source of revenue, contributing to an economic collapse in the OPEC nation and leaving authorities short of cash for essential imports such as food and medicine.

Maduro has held onto power despite the sanctions, frustrating the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump. Trump's team has increased pressure in recent months, expanding its list of sanctioned entities to include Mexican companies, oil tankers, international shipping firms and individuals that have played a role in Venezuela's oil exports.

Tighter sanctions have scared away many remaining customers of state-run oil firm PDVSA, and some shipping firms that had carried their cargoes.

PDVSA and its joint ventures shipped a total of 17 cargoes in June, carrying about 379,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude and refined products, according to Refinitiv Eikon data and the company's loading schedules. The low volume, unseen since 1943, was almost 18% below May exports, according to the same data.

The country's total crude output is slightly above those levels, according to daily PDVSA data seen by Reuters. PDVSA has had to cut output to match exports because most of the country's oil storage is full.

That would put output at a little more than 10 percent of the nearly 3.5 million bpd the country pumped in the late 1990s. Back then, Venezuela was one of the powerhouses in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. Now, Caracas is among the group's minnows, even though it sits on some of the largest crude reserves in the world.

Sanctions have also left more than a dozen loaded tankers in limbo around the world as suppliers struggle to find final buyers for the cargoes. Several of those vessels are off the waters of Malaysia and Singapore.

Exports to Europe ticked up in June to 130,000 bpd, boosted by larger deliveries to Spain's Repsol and Italy's Eni ENI.NI, the PDVSA documents showed. Those shipments are permitted under exemptions for debt payments and swaps.

Shipments to Venezuela's political ally Cuba also increased to 82,300 bpd from 67,000 bpd in May.

Heavy crude inventories at Venezuela's Jose port, the country's main oil terminal and storage site for exportable crude, closed the month at 14.5 million barrels versus a peak of 14.9 million barrels in mid-June, according to the PDVSA data.

Venezuela's fuel imports also declined last month, to 66,000 bpd from 77,100 bpd the previous month as most arrivals of Iranian gasoline discharged in May.



Confronting the Silent and Endemic Crisis of Harmful Practices

TEHRAN (UNIC) --Every year, millions of girls are subjected to practices that harm them physically and emotionally, with the full knowledge and consent of their families, friends and communities, according to the State of World Population 2020, released 30 June by UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency.

At least 19 harmful practices, ranging from breast ironing to virginity testing, are considered human rights violations, according to the UNFPA report, which focuses on the three most prevalent ones: female genital mutilation, child marriage, and extreme bias against daughters in favor of sons.

"Harmful practices against girls cause profound and lasting trauma, robbing them of their right to reach their full potential," says UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem. This year, an estimated 4.1 million girls will be subjected to female genital mutilation.

Today, 33,000 girls under age 18 will be forced into marriages, usually too much older men. Also, an extreme preference for sons over daughters in some countries has fueled gender-biased sex selection or extreme neglect that leads to their death as children, resulting in 140 million "missing females."

Some harmful practices are waning in countries where they have been most prevalent. But because of population growth in these countries, the number of girls subjected to them will actually rise in the coming decades, if urgent action is not taken.

Countries that have ratified international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child have a duty to end the harm, whether it's inflicted on girls by family members, religious communities, health-care providers, commercial enterprises or state institutions. Many have responded with laws, but laws alone are not enough.

Decades of experience and research show that bottom-up, grassroots approaches are better at bringing change, the UNFPA report states. "We must tackle the problem by tackling the root causes, especially gender-biased norms. We must do a better job of supporting communities' own efforts to understand the toll these practices are taking on girls and the benefits that accrue to the whole of society by stopping them," Dr. Kanem says.

Economies and the legal systems that support them must be restructured to guarantee every woman equal opportunities, the report adds. Changing rules for property inheritance, for example, can eliminate a powerful incentive for families to favor sons over daughters and help to eliminate child marriage.

Ending child marriage and female genital mutilation worldwide is possible within 10 years by scaling up efforts to keep girls in school longer and teach them life skills and to engage men and boys in social change. Investments totaling \$3.4 billion a year through 2030 would end these two harmful practices and end the suffering of an estimated 84 million girls, the report shows.

While progress has been made in ending some harmful practices worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse gains. A recent analysis revealed that if services and programs remain shuttered for six months, an additional 13 million girls may be forced into marriage and 2 million more girls may be subjected to female genital mutilation between now and 2030.

"The pandemic both makes our job harder and more urgent as so many more girls are now at risk," Dr. Kanem says. "We will not stop until the rights, choices and bodies of all girls are fully their own."

Global Employment Crisis Deepening, Equivalent of 400m Jobs Lost

GENEVA (AFP) - The coronavirus crisis has taken a much heavier toll on jobs than previously feared, the UN said Tuesday, warning that the situation in the Americas was particularly dire.

In a fresh study, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that by the mid-year point, global working hours were down 14 percent compared to last December -- equivalent to some 400 million full-time jobs.

That is more than double the number forecast by the UN organisation back in April, when it expected 6.7 percent of working hours to be lost by the end of the second three-month period of the year.

It is also far higher than the ILO estimate in late May, when it expected 10.7 percent of global working hours to vanish during the period. "Things are getting worse. The job crisis is deepening," ILO chief Guy Ryder told AFP in an interview.

"We are not through this yet," he warned.

The ILO said the new figures reflected the worsening situation in many regions in recent weeks, especially in developing economies. Its report pointed out that 93 percent of the world's workers live in countries still affected by some sort of workplace closures, with the Americas experiencing the greatest restrictions.

The United States and Latin America are currently the areas hardest-hit by the pandemic, which has killed more than 500,000 people worldwide and infected more than 10 million.

Soaring transmission rates in the United States, which alone accounts for a quarter of all infections and deaths globally, and in countries like Brazil, which accounts more than 1.3 million cases, have hit the labour market hard.

The crisis is "hitting particularly hard the Americas, where we see the loss of jobs as being the worst in the world," Ryder said.

Overall, the Americas lost over 18 percent of working hours during the second quarter, equivalent to 70 million full-time jobs, the ILO said.

South America has shed a full 20.6 percent of all working hours, while North America has seen its working hours dip 15.3 percent, the study found.

By comparison Europe, the Arab states, and most of Asia saw working hours dwindle by around 13 percent, while they fell just over 12 percent in Africa. The crisis had also hit women harder, threatening decades of progress, said Ryder.

Women are more likely to be in the sectors most affected by the crisis and they also bear most of the additional burden brought on by closures of schools and care facilities.

"All the evidence is that women are being hit harder than men," he said -- and the crisis risked aggravating gender inequalities in the workplace.

"The stumbling, slow and glacial gains made towards gender equality in recent decades runs the risk of simply being sent into reverse."

The ILO painted three possible scenarios for the second half of the year, but Ryder acknowledged "we cannot see a scenario in which we get back to the starting point with which we began the year."

The most pessimistic scenarios assumes a second wave of the pandemic that significantly slows recovery. Global working hours would still be 11.9 percent (the equivalent of 390 million jobs) lower at year-end than at the end of 2019, the study said. The most optimistic scenario, which assumes a rapid recovery, would still see a 1.2-percent year-on-year loss of global working hours -- equivalent to 34 million jobs.

That is "still a very, very hard hit on the global economy", Ryder said.

He called on countries to work together to implement the policies needed to help workers and "build back better". "The decisions we adopt now will echo in the years to come and beyond 2030," he said.

"I remain hopeful that because of the obvious and stark need of international cooperation, the world in some way will recover its appetite for multilateral cooperation," he said.

Uzbekistan Offers Central Asian States to Consolidate Transport Strategies

TASHKENT (Dispatches) -- The Virtual C5+1 High-Level Dialogue was held.

Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi, Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Chingiz Aidaibekov, Foreign Minister of Tajikistan Sirojiddin Muhridin, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov, Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo participated in the event, the Foreign Ministry of Uzbekistan said.

The Ministers discussed relevant aspects of strengthening of regional economic cooperation, addressing current challenges and threats, the Foreign Ministry of Uzbekistan said.

Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov suggested to focus cooperation in such areas as development of digital economy, consolidation of national transport strategies, encouragement of innovations in agriculture, increase of energy capacity of the countries of the region, intensification of efforts in improvement of socio-economic situation in Aral Sea region.

Secretary Pompeo reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the C5+1 diplomatic platform to address shared security interests, including peace in Afghanistan, and to advance regional connectivity and trade. He emphasized the U.S. Government's steadfast support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the five Central Asian states. The Secretary also highlighted U.S. efforts to improve the economic resiliency and connectivity of Central Asian countries and to ensure regional food security in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Tehran, Yerevan Emphasize Expansion of Bilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian ambassador to Yerevan Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri and Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Development Suren Papikyan, in a meeting in Yerevan on Friday, stressed promotion of bilateral relations.

During the meeting, the Armenian minister expressed hope

that relations between the two neighboring countries will further expand during the tenure of the Iranian ambassador to Yerevan, Armenpress reported.

Papikyan said that the joint development plans by Iran and Armenia is indicative of the high level of cooperation between the two countries.



India Steps Up Economic Offensive Against China

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Chinese companies will no longer be allowed to participate in Indian highway projects, including through the joint venture route; China will not be allowed to invest in India's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector; and imports from China will be discouraged, Union minister for road transport, highways and MSME, Nitin Gadkari, has said.

The minister's statement, in an interview with the news agency Press Trust of India, is part of India's efforts to impose economic costs on China in the wake of continued Chinese aggression at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and a part of India's signalling to China that this aggression cannot coexist with preferential economic ties, according to two officials familiar with the decision-making process in government.

Gadkari's comments come in the backdrop of India's ban on 59 Chinese apps earlier this week, decisions by various government departments to cancel contracts with Chinese firms, reports of imports from China getting stuck at ports, and an earlier decision, in April, to tighten foreign direct investment inflows from neighboring countries — with an eye on China — by requiring them to go through a more rigorous government approval process.

On Wednesday, Gadkari said, "We will not give permission to joint ventures that have Chinese partners for road construction. We have taken a firm stand that if they (Chinese companies) come via joint venture in our country, we will not allow it." He added that a policy will be out soon banning Chinese firms, and relaxing norms for Indian companies to expand their eligibility criteria for participation in highway projects.

To be sure, according to both industry stakeholders and sectoral experts, there are a limited number of highway projects which have Chinese involvement at the moment. But Gadkari said rebidding will be done if there are any Chinese joint ventures, even as the decision will be implemented for current and future tenders. The minister also said that a process to relax financial and technical norms has been set in motion to ensure that Indian companies can qualify for larger projects and do not need foreign partners.

"Even if we have to go for foreign joint venture in the areas of technology, consultancy or design, we will not allow Chinese," he said.

Industry stakeholders pointed out that the significance of the decision lies in the relaxation of norms to encourage Indian firms. "There have not been many highway projects with Chinese investment either in the past or at present. Only a couple of projects are awarded in which joint ventures exist with Chinese as the minority partners with their Indian counterparts, mainly present for technical expertise. It is more like a technical collaboration than on ground work. This is also the reason the minister has mentioned that there is a need to revisit the technical qualification on the bidding process," said Rajeshwar Burla, vice president, corporate ratings, ICRA Limited.

But officials pointed to the larger message behind the decisions. An official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "Aggression at the border and preferential treatment on cross-border trade, commerce and investment cannot go hand-in-hand." He said China

had chosen the wrong time and the wrong country to antagonise. "It will be foolish on part of any country to enrich an aggressor by allowing preferential trade and commerce while the aggressor country is threatening its territorial integrity and sovereignty."

The second official, who represents an economic ministry and did not want to be named either, said that China had surplus capacity which its domestic economy cannot consume, making it largely dependent on exports for growth and survival. "India was its large and growing market and China has hurt the entire nation. It is the duty of all citizens, businessmen, government agencies and public sector companies to rely more and more on Made in India products than goods from an enemy country. This is the national sentiment that is getting reflected everywhere in the country now."

This larger message assumes significance in the wake of a drastic increase in Chinese economic engagement in India over the past decade, particularly after 2014. A monograph by journalist Ananth Krishnan for Brookings India in March 2020, titled Following the Money: China Inc's Growing stake in India-China relations, pointed to the difficulties in estimating the exact quantum of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) for various reasons — there is no exhaustive list of Chinese companies operating in India with either government because of the routing of investment through various countries; the presence of different FDI routes to India, which means a single government agency does not have all the data; and the fact that the Chinese government is not forthcoming with the information it has, among other reasons.

But with these caveats, the report suggested that while in 2014, net Chinese investment across sectors was \$1.6 billion, and by 2017, it rose to \$8 billion, the total investment exceeds official figures "by at least 25%". If announced projects and planned investments are taken into account, it crosses, according to the paper, at least \$26 billion.

The government is applying the same broader principle — of discouraging Chinese investment and encouraging Indian capacity — to MSMEs, widely considered the backbone of the Indian economy in terms of employment generation and contribution to the GDP. While Gadkari said the idea was to encourage both local capacity and foreign investment, this will not include the Chinese. "For upgradation of technology, research, consultancy and other works, we will encourage foreign investment and joint ventures in MSMEs, but in case of Chinese we will not entertain them," he said.

On reports of the stopping of consignments of imports from China, the minister said there is "no arbitrary stopping of goods" at Indian ports and that he had urged departments concerned to expedite clearance of consignments which were booked two to three months before the current situation took shape, according to PTI. But the minister added that government was initiating path-breaking reforms to help MSMEs and businesses in a bid to make the country self-reliant. "It is a good step. The imports from China will be discouraged and the country will take large strides towards self-reliance."

Iran Envoy...

FROM PAGE 1

In Yemen, where the nation is already experiencing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the death toll from the virus could "exceed the combined toll of war, disease and hunger over the last five years", as stated by the UN officials present in that country.

At the same time, due to the inaction of the Security Council in confronting the foreign aggression against this country, the aggressors are emboldened, by taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic, to even escalate airstrikes and tighten the siege against ports and airports which channel humanitarian assistance to the people in need. Such unlawful measures have no other designation than war crimes and must be prevented.

In Palestine, the Israeli regime has continued over a decade-long inhumane blockade against Gaza Strip even during the Corona virus outbreak leading to further deterioration of the already fragile humanitarian situation there.

In Syria, where the situation in many parts of the country were improving as a result of the defeat of terrorists and restoration of the Government's control over its territory, the outbreak of COVID-19 has relatively slowed down the return of displaced persons and reconstruction efforts.

However, the humanitarian situation has worsened as a result of an irresponsible policy of a permanent member of the Security Council, imposing unlawful unilateral sanctions against the Syrian people.

As a country experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the Coronavirus and one of the most inhumane sanctions of the U.S., the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully aware as to how such sanctions drastically hinder national responses of targeted countries in effectively preventing the spread of the virus.

In practice, such unlawful sanctions hamper the import of humanitarian goods, particularly medical equipment and medicine, mainly targeting the patients -- the most vulnerable component of every society. This alone indicates how immoral, inhumane and illegitimate such sanctions are, particularly when the entire world is facing a highly contagious virus targeting the whole human family, and the only way to push it back is "solidarity in action" and well-coordinated international cooperation. Moreover, it shows that the application of unilateral sanctions under the current unprecedented global health crisis involving all nations is against the common interests of the whole of humanity.

Despite strong international calls for their immediate removal, made including by the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and some other international dignitaries as well as many former and current statesmen and stateswomen, parliamentarians, religious leaders, academia, non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions, the application of these illegal sanctions continues.

Furthermore, it must be born in mind that measures such as the inhumane siege of Yemen and Gaza Strip as well as the imposition of unlawful unilateral sanctions such as the one recently imposed on Syria, might contribute not only to the spread of deadly diseases but also to the deterioration of the conflicts. While the impacts of serious outbreaks of certain diseases with a high mortality rate in conflict situations need to be addressed, the immoral and inhumane nature of unilateral sanctions and their impacts on extending the pandemics and worsening the conflicts must not be overlooked.

India-Funded...

FROM PAGE 1

India Ports Global started operations from two berths at Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar on December 25, 2018 and has since handled container, bulk cargo, livestock and heavy lift cargo vessels.

"Transit of export consignment from Afghanistan through Chabahar commenced in February 2019 as a trickle but has now started showing a healthy upward trend. On June 30, the IPGL terminal loaded 76 twenty-foot equivalent units or TEUs (all refrigerated) for India. This is a record single loading and is a milestone in growth path of Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar, Gupta stated.

On June 28, the port also handled the fourth consignment (300 TEUs) of wheat cargo from India to Afghanistan. This is part of the 75,000 tons of wheat that India is supplying to Afghanistan as humanitarian aid.

The port has a water-front of over 1,200 mts (with 70 hectares of back up area), where four post panama vessels can berth.

With "exceptions" granted by the U.S. to the port project from the sanctions it has imposed on the Persian Gulf nation, Chabahar is all set to scale greater heights, Gupta added.

India Ports Global and Aria Banader Iranian Port & Marine Services Company (ABI) of Iran signed a deal in May 2016 to equip and operate the container and multi-purpose terminals at Shahid Beheshti – Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of \$85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of \$22.95 million on a 10-year lease. Cargo revenues collected will be shared by India and Iran as per an agreed formula.

Located in the Sistan-Baluchistan Province on Iran's South-eastern coast (outside Persian Gulf), Chabahar port gives India a sea-land access route into Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran's eastern borders. The project is considered a strategic venture for development of regional maritime transit traffic to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Terror of 290 People...

FROM PAGE 1

Former Commander of USS Sides warship David Carlson in an interview with Newsweek weekly talked about the incident and said, "Iranian Airbus was sending signals that it was a commercial plane and at the same time it was rising high with the lower speed comparing to F-14

Fighter-Jet plane. Even in such a circumstance, if they had been identified the plane as a fighter-jet, I doubt a fighter-jet like F-14 could be considered a serious threat for the USS Vincennes, or the USS Sides or any other vessel (because Iranian F-14s were not equipped with air to surface weapons and the existing F-14s at sixth and ninth air bases of Bushehr and Bandar Abbas only were being used to fly to protect Iranian oil tankers against the air strikes and they were in charge of protecting the Navy and marine forces). Even operators in charge of radar system of the USS Forrestal aircraft carrier identified the plane as a commercial one. Deployed F-14 Fighter-Jets on the USS Forrestal could have distinguished the identity of the approaching plane to become sure of its being civilian if the USS Vincennes Captain William Rodgers had asked them, but due to some reasons he refrained."

Pro-West media from BBC to other major media outlets tried to justify this horrible crime as the error of Captain Rodgers, the commander of the USS Vincennes, but according to later remarks and interviews, Captain Rodgers has confessed that he did it to scare Iran and he has committed this crime intentionally. Americans have become falsely and hypocritically famous for opposing terrorism. Their explicit support of terrorist Iranian grouplet Mujahideen Khalq Organization (known as Monafeqeen Khalq) with a bloody record of 17,000 terrors in Iran and President Donald Trump's official announcement of assassinating Martyr Qasem Soleimani and his Iranian and Iraqi comrades are just two out of thousands of leaves of the U.S. official terrorism record. This terror of 290 innocent people in the sky of the Persian Gulf has been one of these kinds of the U.S. methods for safeguarding the hellish power of the White House.



Iran Never to Surrender To U.S. Bullying

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations Kamal Kharrazi said on Friday that over the past 40 years, Iran has shown that it will not give in to the bullying of foreigners and mounting U.S. pressure has made the Iranians more determined to continue on their path.

The unilateral and misguided policies of the three European member states of the JCPOA, led by the U.S., to stop Iran's peaceful nuclear activities have always backfired, as Iran has been more determined to develop its nuclear technology, he said.

The U.S. push to extend Iran's arms embargo in the UN Security Council and the three European countries' anti-Iran move in the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as the suspicious behavior of its director general will not only fail to deter Iran, but it will undoubtedly lead to the collapse of JCPOA as well, Kharrazi said.

Iran to Consider...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile the U.S. federal prosecutors are reportedly seeking to seize four tankers sailing towards Venezuela with gasoline supplied by Iran, the latest attempt to disrupt ever-closer trade ties between the two heavily-sanctioned anti-U.S. allies.

The civil-forfeiture complaint filed late on Wednesday in the District of Columbia federal court alleges the sale was arranged by a businessman, Mahmoud Madanipour, with ties to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organisation.

"The profits from these activities support the IRGC's full range of nefarious activities, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, support for terrorism, and a variety of human rights abuses, at home and abroad," prosecutor Zia Faruqui alleges in the complaint.

The Associated Press news agency reached out for comment to the Iranian mission to the United Nations but did not receive an immediate response.

The Trump administration has been stepping up pressure on ship owners to abide by sanctions against U.S. adversaries like Iran, Venezuela and North Korea.

On Thursday, the U.S. Treasury Department lifted sanctions on eight vessels that were recently found to have transported Venezuelan crude.

The move followed an auction on Wednesday of 100,000 barrels of gasoline seized from a Greek-managed ship whose owner suspected the cargo was heading towards Venezuela. As commercial traders shun Venezuela, President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government has been increasingly turning to Iran.

Gomes Leaves Man United After Rejecting New Contract

LONDON (Reuters) - Highly-rated young attacking midfielder Angel Gomes has left Manchester United after rejecting a new contract offer, the Premier League club said on Wednesday. Gomes worked his way through the ranks to become the first player born in the 2000s to represent United, making his debut against Crystal Palace at the end of 2016-17 season. But the 19-year-old struggled for regular first-team opportunities under manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, featuring in six matches across all competitions this season.

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Mavididi Joins Montpellier From Juventus

PARIS (Reuters) - English forward Stephy Mavididi has joined Montpellier from Juventus, the Ligue 1 club said on Thursday. The 22-year-old was loaned to Ligue 1 club Dijon for the 2019-20 season and scored eight goals in 28 matches in all competitions. Mavididi, who started his professional career at Arsenal before joining Juve in 2018, becomes Montpellier's first English player.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY JULY 4, 2020

Sanchez shines as Inter Milan Score Six Past Brescia

MILAN (Dispatches) - Alexis Sánchez set up two goals and scored a penalty as Inter Milan thrashed relegation-threatened Brescia 6-0 to consolidate third place in Serie A on Wednesday.

Inter were already 3-0 up at halftime thanks to the penalty and goals from Ashley Young and Danilo D'Ambrosio. Roberto Gagliardini, Christian Eriksen and Antonio Candreva netted after the break.

Inter moved seven points above fourth-place Atalanta, who hosts Napoli on Thursday. They are eight points behind league leader Juventus. Brescia remained eight points from safety.

Inter Milan needed to win to hold off hard-charging Atalanta in the race for third and took the lead in the fifth minute when Young was left unmarked to volley in Sánchez's cross.

Sánchez got on the scoresheet himself 15 minutes later, striking a penalty into the bottom left corner after Victor Moses was tripped by Aleš Matějů.

Inter confirmed earlier in the day that the Manchester United forward will remain on loan until the end of the Serie A season.

"We brought him here for his qualities," Inter coach Antonio Conte said. "He's now starting to find his feet, even if he's still not the Sánchez I was such a big fan of in England. "What I can say however, is that he's on the right track, he put in a great performance today."

Hamilton Says Silence Criticism Was Not Aimed At F1 Rivals

LONDON (Reuters) - Six times world champion Lewis Hamilton says he was not targeting Formula One rivals when he condemned the sport's silence on racial injustice and the lack of diversity.

Hamilton, who starts his bid for a record equalling seventh title in the season-opening Austrian Grand Prix on Sunday, has been vocal in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and racial equality.

The 35-year-old Mercedes driver, who will be in black overalls and driving a black car with the message 'End Racism' on it this season, last month criticised those who failed to speak out.

"I see those of you who are staying silent, some of you the biggest of stars yet you stay silent in the midst of injustice," said the Briton, referring to the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died after a white U.S. police officer knelt on his neck.

Hamilton, the sport's only Black driver, explained in a video released by Mercedes' parent company Daimler as part of a 'We Care, We do, We Move' series on Thursday that he was addressing the world of motorsport as a whole. "People perceived it as (if) I was targeting drivers," he said.

"I really wasn't. It was targeted at the whole industry. And it's been something I've been aware of for a long, long time, and not really seen anyone doing anything about it.

"People being silent is something that I've experienced for such a long time, and now is not the time to be silent. This is a time to help spread the message, the time to pull together. We need as many voices as we can to push for change.

"That was really a calling to people within the industry for accountability, for all the brands. They need to do more. The sport needs to do more. The (governing) FIA need to do more. We all need to do more. So that was really what the message was about."

Formula One drivers, who responded to Hamilton's initial comments with their own messages against racism, are expected to show further support this weekend.

McLaren's Lando Norris has suggested they could 'take a knee' as a gesture before the race at the Red Bull Ring.



on Candreva, Eriksen and Romelu Lukaku midway through the second half and the latter two combined for Inter's fifth in the 83rd minute, with Eriksen tapping in after Lukaku's effort was parried.

Candreva, who had earlier hit the crossbar, finished off the scoring five minutes later. AC Milan was gifted an equaliser as 10-man Spal threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 and give up precious points in their bid to escape relegation.

Spal defender Francesco Vicari diverted a cross into his own net in stoppage time. Spal had played the entire second half with 10 men after Marco D'Alessandro was shown a straight red card for a challenge on Theo Hernández.

Milan struggled to create anything before Zlatan Ibrahimović made his comeback from injury as a 65th-minute substitute. The Rossoneri immediately appeared more dangerous and Rafael Leão got his side back into the match 11 minutes from time.

Spal had scored both their goals in the first half hour. The first was a scrappy goal from Mattia Valoti but the second was a magnificent lob from 30 yards by Sergio Floccari. Spal moved off the bottom of the table but they are still seven points from safety.

Hellas Verona beat Parma 3-2 to climb above its opponents in the race for Europa League spots.

It moved a point below Milan and three behind sixth-placed Napoli.

Lecce remained a point from safety after losing 2-1 against Sampdoria, with all goals coming from penalties.

Samp moved four points clear of the relegation zone.

Fiorentina lost 3-1 at home to Sassuolo and Bologna drew 1-1 against Cagliari.

Hakimi Joins Inter Milan From Real Madrid

MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan have completed the signing of defender Achraf Hakimi from Real Madrid.

The Morocco international full-back, who has impressed while on loan at Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga over the past two seasons, has signed a five-year contract with Inter. Sky in Italy previously reported that the clubs had agreed a £36.3m (€40m) fee for the 21-year-old.

Inter confirmed Hakimi's transfer by releasing a statement via their website on Thursday. "Achraf Hakimi is officially an Inter player," the statement said.

Hakimi made 17 appearances for Real Madrid "The Moroccan, who was born in 1998, has joined the Nerazzurri on a permanent basis from Real Madrid and has signed a contract which will last until 30 June 2025."

Hakimi made just 17 senior appearances for Real Madrid after coming through the club's academy, but became a key contributor for Dortmund, who had been interested in signing him permanently.

Despite additional interest from Bayern Munich and Manchester City, it is Antonio Conte's side who have sealed a deal for the talented youngster. A Real Madrid statement said: "The club wants to thank Achraf for all these years of dedication, professionalism and exemplary behaviour since he came to our academy in 2006 and wishes him good luck in his new phase."



Aubameyang Nets 50th Premier League Goal

LONDON (Reuters) - A terrible error from goalkeeper Tim Krul gifted Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang his 50th Premier League goal as Arsenal thumped Norwich City 4-0 at the Emirates on Wednesday, pushing the Canaries ever closer to relegation.

Krul foolishly attempted to fake a long kick and dribble past the Gabon striker in the 33rd minute, but he nicked the ball off the keeper's foot and rolled it into the net to reach a half-century of goals in the English top flight.

The Gunners scored a brilliant second four minutes later as David Luiz started an attack with a superb cross-field ball to Kieran Tierney. His pass found Aubameyang, who teed up Granit Xhaka to score with a sweet first-time shot.

Norwich manager Daniel Farke made three changes at the break and his side started the second half brightly, with replacement striker Adam Idah forcing a save in the first minute of the second period. However, Norwich's penchant for mistakes came back to haunt them, and Aubameyang killed the game off with his second goal in the 67th minute after the visitors lost the ball from their own throw-in.

Cedric Soares came off the bench to score his first goal for Arsenal in the 81st minute as the London club climbed to seventh place on 47 points. Norwich remained bottom on 21 points, six behind 17th-placed West Ham United with six games left.

Man City Gatecrash Liverpool's Champions Party With 4-0 Rout

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester City reacted with a vengeance to being dethroned as Premier League champions by Liverpool to thrash the Reds 4-0 on Thursday.

City sent a warning shot of their intentions to take the title back next season as Kevin De Bruyne, Raheem Sterling and Phil Foden all struck before half-time to inflict just Liverpool's third league defeat in 71 games. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's own goal rounded off a miserable night for Jurgen Klopp's men, who could have conceded many more in the second half.

The gap at the top of the table between the two remains 20 points, but Liverpool's charge to better a series of records set by City two seasons ago was stalled on a chastening night for the champions.

City began the evening by giving a guard of honour to their opponents in their first match since ending a 30-year wait to win the league.

The early signs suggested Liverpool would be able to pick off a leaky City defence that has cost them their title. Mohamed Salah struck the post and Sadio Mane headed wastefully wide as chances came and went for the visitors.

Fireworks were then set off outside the stadium, reportedly by celebrating Liverpool supporters, but City soon set some off themselves on the field with three goals in 20 minutes.



Real Madrid Go Four Points Clear After Edging Getafe

MADRID (AFP) - Real Madrid took a big step towards winning La Liga on Thursday by battling past Getafe to move four points clear of Barcelona, with five games left.

Sergio Ramos' late penalty proved the difference at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium where Madrid were made to feel uncomfortable by Getafe but dug out a gutsy 1-0 victory worthy of champions.

This was arguably Madrid's toughest fixture remaining and with a four-point advantage over Barca, as well as the superior head-to-head, the trophy is now firmly within their grasp. It is Madrid's biggest lead over Barcelona since September and their biggest cushion at the top of the table all season.

If they can beat Athletic Bilbao at San Mames on Sunday, Madrid could even pull seven points clear before Barca face a difficult game away at in-form Villarreal a few hours later.

Barcelona's 2-2 draw at home to Atletico Madrid on Tuesday, coming on the back of another 2-2 draw away at Celta Vigo last weekend, gave Zinedine Zidane's side an opening and they have taken full advantage. Six wins out six since the restart, with only two goals conceded, has made for a relentless run of form and it would take a monumental collapse now to let Barca back in.

Eden Hazard was left out of the squad as he continues his recovery from a troublesome foot injury but Ramos and the excellent Karim Benzema led the way again.

