

**Iran's Health Ministry  
Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari  
Said on Friday That Some  
142 More Iranians Have Died of  
Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)  
Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Russian Permanent  
Representative to the UN,  
Vassily Nebenzia, Said There Is  
No Chance of Succeeding for the  
U.S. Draft Resolution on Extending  
The UN's Arms Embargo on Iran**

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## Iran to Continue Responding to U.S. Rant, Rhetoric

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran Major General Mohammad Bagheri said that Iran will continue responding to the U.S. rant and rhetoric.

During the meeting which was held between Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran Major General Mohammad Bagheri and Syrian Defense Minister General Ali Abdullah Ayyoub, the two sides discussed the situation in Syria, stressing the need for the withdrawal of foreign troops who entered the country illegally.

Emphasizing that Iran will strengthen Syria's air defense systems in accordance with strengthening military cooperation between the two countries, Bagheri said that Turkey has been slightly delayed in fulfilling its obligations under the agreements reached in Astana for the withdrawal of terrorist groups from Syria.

Turkey should know that the country's security problems can be resolved through negotiations and understanding with the Syrian side, not through a military presence on Syrian soil, he added.

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## Iran's Non-Oil Exports Could Reach \$41b This Year

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian president says the country's non-petroleum exports could touch \$41 billion, which would be a surplus to domestic needs.

In comments on Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani further described exporters as "soldiers and commanders at the forefront of the campaign against US terrorism."

He urged all producers and exporters to redouble their efforts to give fresh impetus to production and exports.

"The enemies, led by the U.S., seek to create problems for the country with regards to the supply of foreign exchange, but this U.S. conspiracy will be foiled as all of us become active in the production and exports sector," said the president at a ceremony to inaugurate projects of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade in a number of provinces.

"The inauguration of Rls. 58 trillion worth of projects in a single day indicates the failure of sanctions and certain acts to impede our efforts," he noted. "This year, a total of 200 industrial and mineral projects with an overall price tag of Rls. 1,700 trillion will come on line," he said.

"Despite propaganda campaigns in cyberspace, I'm telling people that through unity, making efforts, consultations and working on the path to production, we can stand up to the enemy well and solve problems," the president said.

## Tehran Hails UN Report on Gen. Soleimani's Assassination, Raps U.S. Reaction



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi has commanded a new report by UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Executions Agnes Callamard regarding the U.S.' January assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, criticizing the U.S. for its impudent reaction to the report.

In a statement on Thursday, Mousavi referred to the U.S. officials' defence of assassinating the top Iranian commander, saying it is nothing new for professional criminals to try to justify their atrocities.

However, he added, it is a source of regret and indicative of America's arrogant nature to see their rude reaction to the UN and its rapporteur who has described as "unlawful" the U.S. move to assassinate General Soleimani as part of her official mission.

"General Soleimani was the most influential force against expansion of terrorism and violent extremism, especially the type staged by ISIS, across the region and the world; therefore, it is quite normal to see that the US regime – whose incumbent president has played the key role in the formation and expansion of wild terrorist movements in West Asia – does not stop its hate speech against and defamation of the top commander," Mousavi said.

"All of these points indicate that the U.S.' regime's fear of General Soleimani's ethos and cause has even grown bigger compared to the time when the hero was alive," he added.

"Assassination of this national hero and defender of regional peace and security proved that [fighting] ISIS and terrorism is [only] part of the U.S.' ploy for plundering the region, and that Washington's claim of fighting terrorism is a completely hollow and baseless claim," Mousavi said.

"This explains why ISIS was the first to celebrate the assassination, and of course the Zionist regime was the only entity that offered congratulations to the murderers of General Soleimani on his assassination."

"The fact that the cruelest people on earth and the worst outlaw regimes were General Soleimani's enemies is enough to prove how great he was," he added.

"The U.S. assassinated General Soleimani and his companions by violating the compelling norms and fundamental principles of the international law and also in violation of all fundamental humanitarian and moral elements. The act is a clear instance of state-sponsored terrorism, and entails clear international responsibility for America."

Mousavi said the U.S.' assassination of General Soleimani is yet another item in the long list of Washington's evil and hostile moves against the Iranian nation, which started with the 1953 coup, continued with the strengthening of the oppressive and violent monarchy, went on in the form of all-out support for Saddam during the 1980s war, culminated in the slaughter of 300 passengers of the Airbus flight, and has continued up to now in various forms including the imposition of cruel sanctions and economic terrorism.

The spokesman finally called on the United Nations and its Human Rights Council to do their part in addressing and condemning such dangerous measures as the one taken by Washington, which clearly violates the UN Charter, human rights, and the international law.

The UN and its Human Rights Council are expected to prevent normalization of bullying, unlawfulness, and organized manslaughter by the U.S.' regime, Mousavi said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will spare no effort in demanding justice and claiming its rights and those of its citizens," he added.

## West Alarmed by Iran-China Strategic Partnership

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says it comes as no surprise to see Western countries expressing concern about Tehran's strategic cooperation with Beijing, as they are terrified that Iran would be linked to China's global potentialities.

Gholam-Reza Ansari, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for economic affairs, says some of the criticisms recently raised about a 25-year strategic cooperation deal between Tehran and Beijing are "ridiculous".

Speaking in a televised interview on Thursday night, Ansari referred to the U.S. State Department spokesperson's comments about the deal, and said Washington expresses sympathy with the Iranian nation while it has imposed the harshest sanctions ever against the Islamic Republic even at the time of the coronavirus outbreak.

"Since Iran's relations with China are serious, and that forms the basis of economic and strategic cooperation between the two states in the 25-year document, it is quite normal for Western countries to be worried about such relations," he noted.

Ansari said China is currently the only country in the world which is buying Iran's oil officially.

"The policy of the U.S. and Britain—Anglo-Saxons in general—is to focus on pressuring Iran in a bid to keep it away from China and Russia," he added.

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## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



## Transfer of China's Forex Reserves to West Asia

Concerns about economic condition in the U.S. have made think-tanks in the world to look at the future of the U.S. with a few doubts and uncertainties. Huge and unrepayable amount of the U.S. in the condition that the country is facing the Coronavirus pandemic, growing public and national anger towards racism, social gap, and ever-increasing of its isolation on course to pulling out of its global obligations have exacerbated these concerns.

According to reports, the government and non-government debts of the U.S. totaled at 75.28 trillion and if the debts are to be repaid in a period of 10 years, share of each American citizen from the debts will be \$227,963 on average and share of each household from the debts would be \$900 on average, and since 90 percent of the Americans are grappling with poverty, these debts seem irreparable. The U.S. government debts to the people and countries just equal to one-third of this reported figure and China's share of these dues is 13.5 percent. So in this declining economic condition in the U.S., it is logical that creditors would think seriously of pulling out their assets from the U.S. By the way, the Republican Party's policies of administering the country have led to instability and isolation of the country.

The U.S. pullouts of World Health Organization (WHO), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Paris Climate Agreement, Iran's nuclear deal the JCPOA, and whispers on pulling out of the Open Skies Treaty are all indicators of the U.S. hidden condition and its inability for protecting its hegemonic show-off in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Meanwhile issues like China's interference in Hong Kong and Taiwan and accusing China of its weak handling of the Coronavirus pandemic have escalated the tension between both countries.

In Hong Kong, the government and China's Communist Party proposed the national security law and Washington opposed it. In Taiwan, the U.S. has decided to sell the country \$18m of Torpedoes which angered China seriously.

The report of Washington's torpedoes sale came just after Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, during her sworn-in ceremony of her second term in office, had emphasized that she would enhance Taiwan's defense capabilities. In the Coronavirus issue, Washington leaves the WHO unilaterally by accusing the organization of favoring China. Regardless of those issues, the U.S. has seen a mammoth budget deficit this year whose amount has been revealed to be at over \$3.31 trillion. So the ratio of the budget deficit to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the U.S. is nearing to 5 to 6 percent of its national domestic product (NDP) this year. See Page 7

## Iran Warns of Consequences If Foreign Role in Natanz Blast Proven

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says it is still early to talk about the main cause of the recent explosion at Natanz nuclear facility, but there will be consequences if it is proven that foreign elements have been involved.

"It is still too early to talk about and make any judgment regarding the main cause and reason for the blast [in Natanz], and relevant security bodies are investigating all the details of the incident," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday.

"If they conclude that foreign elements have been involved, they will announce it, and there will be consequences," he told reporters during a visit to central Isfahan province.

On July 2, Iran said an incident affected a shed under construction at the Natanz complex, but it caused no casualties and failed to stop enrichment work at the facility.

Last Friday, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said the "main cause" of the explosion in Natanz nuclear facility has been determined and will be announced at an appropriate time.

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# Governor Rejects Rumors on Blast in Shahr-e Qods

TEHRAN (MNA) – In reaction to some rumors about the explosion in the west of Tehran, Governor of Shahr-e Qods rejected the rumors on the explosion in the city.

Regarding the rumors about the widespread power outage and the explosion that took place last night in this city, Leila Vaseghi, the Governor of Shahr-e Qods said that she did not confirm any explosion in Shahr-e Qods and Garmadareh.

“The power outage also occurred in a limited area for five or six minutes, and power outages did not occur extensively,” she added.

## U.S. Increases Pressures On Nations, Despite Global Opposition

*IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK*

**TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker has said that despite the global demands to decrease U.S. pressures and sanctions against the world’s nations including Iran, the U.S. still is increasing its maximum pressures.**

In his Thursday speech at the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) virtual meeting, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf stressed the strong condemnation of the US’ inhuman act as a necessity for the international community.

Iranian Majlis Speaker stressed that the prevention of sanctions in the post-coronavirus era should be regarded as the main axis of the legislative process in the world’s parliaments.

Qalibaf said opportunities and threats created by the coronavirus crisis go beyond the geographic boundaries.

Iran believes the opportunities must be benefited through parliamentary multilateral interactions as well as reducing the negative effects created out of the coronavirus outbreak, he noted.

Iranian senior officials referred to the economic consequences of the coronavirus crisis and highlighted the need to review the trade strategies in order to reconstruct the economy.

The Speaker pointed to the experiences created for the Asian Parliament Assembly member states with regards to the medical and health experiences on fighting coronavirus, and said by exploiting, deepening and diversifying the experiences, flexibility would be given to the new arrangement of the trade and economic relations between countries in the current and future conditions.

He supported ‘Parliamentary Economic Diplomacy’ as a way to progress economic boosting among the assembly member states and suggested the secretariat of the APA



to prepare a report on the roles and capacities of the Asian parliaments to bring the trade and economic horizons of countries and parliaments closer together and to increase synergy among them.

Qalibaf also put emphasis on formulating legal frameworks, finding developmental, facilitative and accelerative solutions for economic relations and support of bilateral and multilateral agreements, creating supportive and incentive mechanisms, supporting the creation of new frameworks in new platforms, and preventing any illegal restrictions and biased ideas such as oppressive sanctions that hinder the expansion of economic relations.

He stressed that the Israeli regime’s new occupation plan of annexing the West Bank to the occupied territories is new aggression on the Palestinians’ rights which can instigate a new crisis in the region.

Qalibaf voiced the Iranian Parliament’s support of the Palestinian nation and condemned the Israeli regime’s anti-human intentions.

He also called for the international bodies including APA to take a decisive stance to immediately stop the Zionist regime’s aggressive and occupation actions.

In the end, the Speaker stressed that Iran welcomes further strengthening of relations and effective consultations with the world countries’ parliaments, seeking to expand and deepen constructive parliamentary interactions, and is fully ready for contribution in reaching this very goal.

## IRGC Commander Stresses Continued Battle Against COVID-19

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Major General Hossein Salami urged all IRGC forces and the Iranian people to remain sensitive and active in the field until the coronavirus is uprooted in the country.

“The coronavirus is not weakening and is still active, affecting new areas every day, and we should not show weaknesses,” Major General Salami said on Thursday during a videoconference meeting with provincial commanders of the IRGC.

Stressing that all should remain sensitive to the needs



of people as the coronavirus situation continues to get worse in the country, he said the production and distribution of face masks and other health supplies in order to eradicate the viral disease will continue.

“As no decisive treatment currently exists, we can only tackle this disease by following the health protocols and taking preventive measures,” the IRGC chief said.

Iran’s Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari on Wednesday said the total number of people tested positive for COVID-19 in Iran had risen to 248,379 following the detection of 2,691 new cases since Tuesday.

## Lying, Accusations Major Elements of U.S. Foreign Policy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran dismisses the recent US allegations that American and “partner” forces have seized a vessel taking “Iranian weapons” to Yemen as continuation of Washington’s policy of leveling accusations and hatemongering against Tehran, which this time seeks to prolong a UN arms embargo against the Islamic Republic.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi made the remarks on Thursday, a day after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told a news conference about alleged capture of the vessel by the so-called allied forces on June 28.

“Lying, throwing accusations, and hatemongering are among the major elements of the U.S.’ foreign policy, especially under the current [American] regime,” Mousavi said, adding, “The remarks by the ‘hatemonger’ U.S. secretary of state boil down to the selfsame approach,” he added.

He roundly rejected the claim about the arms shipment to Yemen, saying the U.S. has come up with the allegation at a time, when it feels it is failing to have the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) extend the arms ban against Tehran. Pompeo was the first U.S. official to announce Washington’s intention to have the embargo extended. The ban that prevents sales of conventional weapons to the Islamic Republic will expire in October under a historic 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mousavi suggested that Pompeo’s recent allegation is aimed at having the UNSC reinstate the arms embargo, create an excuse for retention of Trump’s trademark policy of “maximum pressure” against the Islamic Republic, and help Washington further its “evil goals” concerning Tehran.

The U.S. and its regional ally Saudi Arabia are trying to shirk responsibility for the 2015-present war and siege on Yemen, by instead conjuring up false and unfounded accusations against others, the spokesman noted.

“Instead of being held accountable for their crimes in Yemen, these two regimes are trying to absolve themselves of responsibility and accountability for their inhumane and criminal behavior by leveling baseless accusations against others,” Mousavi said.

## Iran Blames Growing COVID-19 Toll on “Criminal U.S.”

TEHRAN (IFP) - Health Minister Saeed Namaki has held the U.S. accountable for the growing number of coronavirus cases in the Islamic Republic.

In remarks, Namaki said “the criminal U.S.” which has imposed the worst, the cruelest, and the most unfair sanctions on Iran is to blame for the worsening situation in the wake of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

He also warned that escalation of economic woes and loss of livelihoods under the pressure of poverty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak could result in insurrection.

“This country’s president must think about the people’s livelihood. This country’s administration, the security forces, the law enforcement and the military

forces must think about the livelihood and prevention of formation of insurrection,” he added.

The health minister then pointed to the coronavirus stimulus packages in the other countries, saying while the UK government, for example, has provided even the foreign students with a sum of 20,000 pounds to deal with the coronavirus problems, Iran does not have sufficient financial resources to support the businesses affected by the pandemic.

Namaki finally noted that the Health Ministry was obligated to stop opposing the reopening of businesses when the government is unable to provide financial support for a booth owner, a taxi driver, or a shopkeeper.

## President Urges Reinstating Smart Restrictions Proportionate to Each Region



TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that given the authorities delegated to governors general, restrictions should be applied intelligently and in proportion to the causes of the outbreak in each region.

Addressing a meeting of the heads of the specialized committees of the National Coronavirus Taskforce on Thursday, he called on governors general to reinstate lockdown taking into account conditions of the regions.

Referring to Iran’s standing in terms of the severity of pollution in the early stages of the coronavirus outbreak, he said, “Fortunately, with proper policymaking, accurate and practical implementation of the plans, coordination among all institutes in the country, as well as the unceasing and honorable efforts of the medical staff, we were able to control the first wave of coronavirus in provincial capitals and reach relative calm in May and June.”

President Rouhani, meantime, hailed Iran’s achievements in fighting the deadly disease in recent months, its plans and measures in the field drew World Health Organization’s admiration, as most of the countries called for using Iran’s experiences in fighting the virus.

The main reason behind the success was full public support and cooperation in the implementation of health protocols, the Iranian president said.

Describing ignoring protocols in friendly gatherings and various circles as the main reason behind return of coronavirus, the chief executive said that new wave of the disease will render the medical staff tired and exhausted.

The Social-Security Committee of the National Coronavirus Taskforce should carefully implement programs to prevent holding of rallies and various gatherings, as the main cause of spread of the disease, he said.

## Iranian People Fight COVID-19 Under Toughest Sanctions

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Mohammad Shariatmadari stressed that Iran’s healthcare system and economy, in the most difficult conditions of sanctions, were able to deal with Coronavirus crisis.

Shariatmadari at the International Labor Organization’s virtual meeting entitled “COVID-19 in the Working World” referring to the application of oppressive U.S. sanctions against the Iranian people, noted, “That the path of access of a nation, especially patients to medicine and medical equipment, being sanctioned and blocked under false pretenses, cannot be justified by any moral principle.”

He further added that the outbreak of the Coronavirus has proved that the world has not been able to take steps towards real security, justice, and stability.

Explaining Iran’s efforts to reduce the social and economic consequences of the Corona outbreak, Shariatmadari said, “Iran has put on its agenda the strengthening of the economy and employment, the support of enterprises, jobs and incomes, the support of workers in the workplace, and social dialogue to find solutions.”

Washington’s unilateral, oppressive and inhuman sanctions, which include basic, necessary, and even medical items, have caused many problems for the Iranian people, especially those infected with COVID-19 disease.

On July 8, Health Minister Saeed Namaki described the US sanctions as the biggest obstacle in the fight against the coronavirus and said that the biggest culprit in the current situation of the coronavirus in Iran is the criminal United States that has cowardly imposed sanctions on Iran.

According to the spokeswoman for the Ministry of Health 250,458 people in the country have been infected with the coronavirus, and 212,176 of total infected people have recovered. 12,305 people lost their lives.

## Enemies Want Iran-China Cooperation to Cut-Off

TEHRAN (IP) - The Special Assistant to the Speaker of Iran’s Parliament for International Affairs said the foreign enemies seek to cut off Iran-China cooperation by using propaganda against it.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian wrote on his Twitter account on Thursday that the reason behind adversaries’ propaganda is to stall mutually beneficial cooperation between Iran and China.

“Being aware of talks for Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Strategy. This is in the interests of both nations,” he noted. The Special Assistant to the Speaker of Iran’s Parliament further wrote: “World is in transition. We’ll pass enemy’s all-out sanction terrorism with strength and prudence.”

Earlier on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi, in response to the recent claims published in cyberspace regarding the 25-year deal between Iran and China, said: “According to the 2015 agreement between the Presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People’s Republic of China, Hassan Rouhani and Xi Jinping decided to draw up a comprehensive 25-year roadmap between the two countries to lay the ground for the comprehensive development of political and economic relations between Iran and China in the coming years.”

## Qalibaf Felicitates Turkish Parliament Speaker on Re-Election

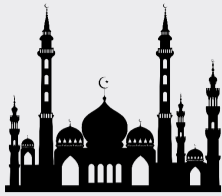
TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf in a message on Wed. congratulated reelection of Mustafa Sentop as Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

In his message, the Iranian Parliament speaker emphasized development of parliamentary cooperation between Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

While expressing satisfaction with the growing trend and deepening amicable and friendly relations between the two neighboring and Muslim countries, Qalibaf stated, “I am confident that the development of parliamentary cooperation between the two countries in various fields will open a bright horizon ahead of bilateral ties.”

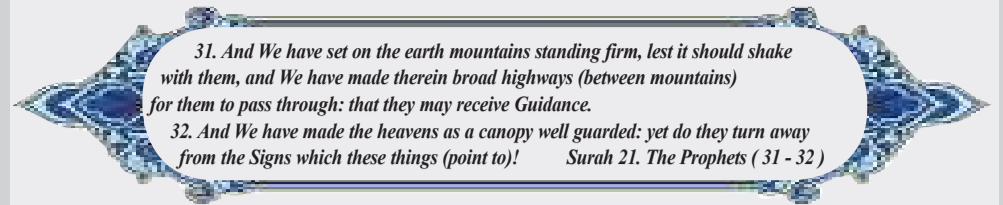
In addition, expansion of parliamentary cooperation between Iran and Turkey will lead to lasting peace and security in the region, he stressed.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Qalibaf wished evermore success to Turkish Parliament speaker and lawmakers as well as prosperity and wellbeing for the government and people of neighboring Turkey.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:42
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:15
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:58



## Iranians Rank Second in Buying Properties in Turkey

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Minister of Roads and Urban Development says Iranians ranked second in buying homes in Turkey in 2019, adding that major capitals in housing sector have entered other countries and implementation of law for taxing unoccupied residential properties will reduce exodus of some part of this capital to other countries.**

Mohammad Eslami on Thursday highlighted some of measures of his ministry for organizing the housing market, claiming that the inflation in the housing sector is mostly because of events in the parallel markets like forex and gold markets and devaluation of national currency.

He added that it is natural that any fluctuation in other markets would have their own impacts on other markets like housing sector.

Eslami added that the government has sustainable plan for helping people to own houses. He then pointed to the statistics regarding trades in the housing sector in the country, saying that the amount of trades in housing sector has declined by 70 percent comparing to the same period last year. He noted that 60 percent of trades in housing sector belongs to the big and luxury houses which is sign of speculation and profiteering



in this sector which causes chaos and inflation in the market. He added that trades in the small units and the areas with appropriate prices have smaller share of the trades.

Eslami pointed to some of major actions of the ministry for organizing the rents, adding that the government had never interfered in the housing market in the past.

He also reacted to the threefold or fourfold increase of rents by house owners, adding that this made the government to take action and set ceiling for raising the rents for houses for up to 25 percent in Tehran and the figure is set 20 percent for seven other big cities. He claimed that this decision has its impact on the market and the price of rents is visible and the peace has returned to the market.

On the project of National Housing, he said that the project is on the agenda and the ministry is working on it to increase the capacity of this project for covering more people of the society. He said that 1.6m people have registered for getting houses through the project and the ministry is screening the applicants in order to identify the qualified people for getting houses.

## Executive Operation of HYCO Project of Karoon Co. Starts



**TEHRAN – The executive of construction of hydrogen and carbon monoxide (HYCO) unit of Karoon Petrochemical Company (KRNPC) started.**

The CEO of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company in the inauguration ceremony pointed to the projects which are underway by the holding, adding that projects like Karoon Petrochemical Company's HYCO project can remove hurdles in way of production especially it emphasizes employing the domestic capabilities.

Mr. Jaafar Rabiei said that Karoon's HYCO project is aimed at obtaining self-sufficiency in providing hydrogen and carbon monoxide in the complex.

He said that execution of the project by a reputed Iranian contractor is of the strong points of the project, adding that he hopes the project would be completed and delivered according to the schedule and would come on stream next year, and as the result, one of the hurdles in way of Karoon Petrochemical Company would be lifted.

He also pointed to the role and full cooperation of Bandar Imam Petrochemical Company Ltd. as the major share-holder of Karoon Petrochemical Company and its role in removing hurdles. Rabiei reiterated that one should not let problems stop companies from using its maximum capacity and by using domestic capabilities, all hurdles in way of production should be removed with observing all safety issues and speed.

He added that primary measures for construction of HYCO unit has started since years ago with the budget around 50m euros and after problems were solved, the project stepped into the executive phase this year.

Meanwhile the CEO of Karoon Petrochemical Company Mr. Alireza Seddighzadeh said by launching this unit, the company can produce 35,000 tons of monoxide and 8,000 tons of hydrogen annually, adding that by constructing the HYCO unit at the southwestern side of the company, the company can reach its nominal production capacity and it can earn more profits. He added that the unit can provide the company with self-sufficiency and sustainable production of these two important materials.

The CEO of the company said that the company is currently working with 70 percent of its capacity and lack of monoxide and hydrogen is the main factor that the company is working with less than its nominal capacity.

## Chabahar to Become Iran's Third Commercial Port



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Caretaker of Industry, Mine and Trade Ministry says by the double growth of berths at Chabahar Port, Chabahar will become Iran's the third logistic and commercial port.**

Speaking on the sidelines of ceremony for inaugurating some projects, Hussein Modarres Khashbani said today was the fifth station of campaign on production and continuation of hope, adding that so far and in five weeks, 25 important industrial projects worth 1300b tomans with an eye for creating 3000 jobs have been inaugurated. He added that on Thursday, six new projects were inaugurated, noting that two mega mining projects came on stream with an eye to produce 3.5m tons of pellet and 1.8m tons of sponge iron with an investment around 5000b tomans.

Mr. Modarres said that during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> governments, the steel production has been doubled, noting that the same amount of growth has also been seen in other chains of steel production, namely, the production of iron concentrate has been doubled in the same period and iron pellet production has grown by 120 percent, and sponge iron production has almost grown by 90 percent.

He further said by implementation of these two mega projects in Fars Province, the total iron pellet production capacity can hit 56m tons and the total sponge iron production capacity will touch 36.8m tons. He further said another industrial project, dubbed Shadineh Aran Hasht Behesht, came on stream in Isfahan with investment around 540b tomans which creates 300 jobs and it can produce 95,000 tons of different glucose, gluten and starch.

Baft Baluch textile plant in Sistan and Baluchistan was the other project which came on stream on Thursday. This project was inaugurated yesterday after 5 years hiatus due to arson and on Thursday, its first phase started operation with an investment around 200m tomans.

Modarres Khashbani pointed to the growth in berths of vessels at Chabahar Port, saying that in the first quarter of the year, over 100,000 tons of goods, more than the total amount of goods last year, have been loaded or unloaded at the port and the port's logistic is being expanded.

He expressed hope that by developments at the port, Chabahar would become the country's third major commercial port. He reiterated the total amount of investment for six projects which were inaugurated on Thursday stood at 5800b tomans.

## Tehran, Vienna Stress Expansion of Trade, Economic Cooperation

**TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's new ambassador to Austria Abbas Ardakani met and held talks with the Austrian deputy Minister for Economic and Digital Affairs Michael Sterl on the expansion of trade and commercial relations between the two countries.**

During the meeting, the two sides agreed to hold the two countries' joint commission soon.

In addition, it was decided that the working groups established under the important document 'Roadmap for Economic Relations', which was signed in 2016, will be continuously strengthened by pursuing further agreements.

The meeting was also attended by the Director-General of Economic Cooperation, the Planning Adviser to the Minister of Economy, and the Director



of the Middle East (West Asia), the United States and Africa Office of the Austrian Ministry of Economy.

Ardakani submitted his credentials to the Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen in a ceremony held At the Austrian Presidential Palace last week.

He conveyed the friendship message of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to the Austrian president and full readiness of the Iranian government for the development and expansion of relations with Austria in all the political, economic, cultural fields Based on historical and long-standing relations between the two countries.

The Austrian President also extended his greeting to his Iranian counterpart and voiced his readiness for the expansion of bilateral ties.

## Iran's March-June Tire Output Boom by 27%

**TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian tire manufacturers have seen their output boom by 27 percent in the first three months of the current calendar year that ended June 20, shows a report.**

The Thursday report by the IRNA news agency said that total tire output in Iran over the three-month period in question had reached 10.527 million units, an increase of 27 percent compared to the similar period last year.

The report said that production for passenger car tires had also surged by 27 percent to reach nearly 5.1 million units.

It said, however, that increased production in the passenger car section was more visible when the sheer weight of the output is taken into account, meaning that tire manufacturers had boosted their output for tires used by SUV cars and crossovers.

An industry source said that major tire companies and auto manufacturers had collaborated successfully through research and development programs to increase production for tires compatible with SUVs and crossovers amid a surge in popularity for those cars in Iran in recent years.

"That comes as in the past we had no option but to rely foreign assistance to change the tires (production) generation," said Mostafa Tanha, a spokesman of the Iranian Tire Syndicate.

Tanha said that output for passenger car tires in Iran had reached 36,512 metric tons, an increase of 30 percent year-on-year.

He added that total tire output, including tires produced for heavy trucks, buses and agricultural machinery, had increased by 24 percent in volume terms to reach 67,734 tons in the first quarter of the calendar year.

## Iranian Railway to Provide Landlocked Afghanistan With a lifeline

**TEHRAN (PressTV) - A 610-kilometer railway connecting Iran's only ocean port of Chabahar to Zahedan near the eastern border would provide a lifeline to the landlocked Afghanistan, a country where the transport system has been hampered by years of war and a fierce rivalry between two major neighbors of India and Pakistan.**

Afghans were offered a fresh glimmer of hope on Wednesday when Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced that the country was making a major progress in its plans to finish the Chabahar-Zahedan railway.

Rouhani said during a Cabinet session that a major part of the work for laying tracks on the route will finish by the end of current calendar year in March. He

expressed hope that the route will be almost ready by the end of his term in August 2021.

The announcement came a day after Iran's transportation minister Mohammad Eslami travelled to the far south-east to order the beginning of track-laying operation from Zahedan, the capital of Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province.

According to the plans, tracks on more than 150 kilometers of the length of the railway covering the distance between Zahedan to Khash and from Chabahar to Iranshahr will be laid until March.

Iran has drawn nearly 300 million euros from its sovereign wealth fund to speed up the project as it is a key part in plans to frequent the port of Chabahar on the Sea of Oman.

## Iranian Agrifood Export Volumes Up, But Value Down

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Export of Iranian agricultural and food products accounted for 14% of the overall non-petroleum export in the last fiscal year (ending in March).**



Seven million tons of agrifood worth over \$5.82 billion was exported to register a 2.34% growth in tonnage and 8.93% decline in value year-on-year, said the Ministry of Agriculture.

In-shell pistachio (fresh and dried) topped the list of exports in terms of value as companies exported \$724.2 million worth of the crop in the period. Apple was the second major export in terms of value with \$362.27 million followed by tomatoes \$259.21 million, unshelled pistachios \$240.58 million and watermelon \$175.97 million.

In terms of tonnage, watermelons topped the list with 748,090 tons, followed by apples 740,220 tons, tomatoes 572,940 tons, potatoes 480,440 tons, and onions and Persian shallot 394,990 tons.

Horticultural products accounted for 1.95 million tons worth \$2.72 billion of the total exports, up 30.03% and 19.72% in volume and value respectively. Exports of agricultural products reached .41 million tons worth \$2.09 billion, down 5.2% and 20.42% in volume and value, respectively.

Iran's total non-oil exports during the period earned \$41.3 billion, according to Mehdi Mirashrafi, head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration.

"China was Iran's main export destination purchasing \$9.5 billion worth of non-oil goods last year, followed by Iraq with \$8.9 billion, Turkey \$5.4 billion, the UAE \$4.5 billion and Afghanistan \$2.3 billion.

According to financialtribune.com, the top five partners in exports were Asian countries and mostly neighbors. Other countries imported \$10.9 billion worth of our non-oil goods last year.

## Ukraine Says Forest Fires Under Control

KIEV (AFP) - Ukrainian firefighters have brought under control forest fires that have killed five people and left dozens homeless, the interior ministry said on Thursday.

Large-scale blazes erupted on Monday in the eastern Lugansk region and engulfed a village not far from the front line of Ukraine's war with Moscow-backed separatists.

On Thursday, interior ministry spokesman Artem Shevchenko told AFP the situation was "better" and that the fires had been localised but declined to give further details.

About 1,500 firefighters, rescue workers and National Guard are involved in an effort to put out smoldering forest floor spots.



## WHO Launches Pandemic Response Probe

GENEVA (AFP) - The World Health Organization, which faced fierce U.S. criticism over its handling of the coronavirus crisis, launched an independent panel on Thursday to review its response to the pandemic.

The Independent panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response will be headed by former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark and former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

"Through you, the world will understand the truth of what happened and also the solutions to build our future better as one humanity," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at the UN agency's headquarters in Geneva.



## Seoul Mayor in Apparent Suicide



SEOUL (AFP) - The mayor of Seoul, a former human rights lawyer and potential South Korean presidential candidate, died in an apparent suicide a day after being accused of sexual harassment.

The death of Park Won-soon, whose body was recovered early Friday on a mountain in the capital, is by far the most dramatic end to a #MeToo case in South Korea, a highly patriarchal society where the women's movement has brought down scores of prominent men in multiple fields.

If Park does prove to have killed himself he would be the highest-profile South Korean politician to do so since former president Roh Moo-hyun, who jumped off a cliff in 2009 after being questioned over corruption allegations involving family members.

There were no signs of foul play, police said, and according to Yonhap news agency Park was presumed to have taken his own life.

He had been reported missing by his daughter on Thursday, who said he had been unreachable after leaving a message that sounded like "last words".

A heavyweight figure in the ruling centre-left Democratic party, Park ran South Korea's sprawling capital -- home to almost a fifth of the national population -- for nearly a decade.

He won three elections while promoting gender and social equality, and did not shy away from expressing his ambitions to replace incumbent President Moon Jae-in in 2022.

But his death came a day after his former secretary filed a police complaint -- said to involve sexual harassment -- against him.

South Korea remains male-dominated despite its economic and technological advances, but the country has seen a widespread #MeToo movement in the last two years, sparked by a prosecutor who publicly accused a superior of groping her at a funeral.

The perpetrators have included a former provincial governor who sought the presidency in 2017 but was jailed last year for sexual intercourse by abuse of authority after his female assistant accused him of repeatedly raping her.

According to a document purporting to be the statement of Park's victim, who worked as his personal secretary from 2015, he committed "sexual harassment and inappropriate gestures during work hours", including insisting she hug him in the bedroom adjoining his office.

## Serbian President Accuses Hooligans of Violent Protests



BELGRADE (AFP) - Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic on Thursday accused "criminal hooligans" of driving the violence in protests that have erupted in Belgrade and other cities over his government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Clouds of tear gas and smoke filled central Belgrade on Wednesday evening for a second night after a peaceful gathering descended into confrontations between protesters and police, 10 of whom were reported injured by the government.

The first demonstration was triggered on Tuesday after Vucic announced the return of a weekend curfew to combat a second surge of coronavirus infections.

The president later backtracked on the plan but the protests continued, turning into a general rebuke of his government's handling of the crisis.

Critics accuse the authorities of under-reporting the death toll and hastily lifting almost all virus restrictions ahead of a national election in late June.

The poll, which was boycotted by much of the opposition, cemented Vucic's grip on power.

"I have promised you that we will be able to protect peace and stability, despite the violent attacks by criminal hooligans which shock us all," Vucic said as he travelled to Paris for a meeting with his French counterpart, according to state broadcaster RTS.

He has branded the protesters -- who pull from a wide spectrum of political leanings -- as "fascists" and conspiracy theorists.

Rights groups accuse the 50-year-old of amassing autocratic rule over Serbia during his nearly eight years in power, first as prime minister and now as president. Early on Thursday, Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said 10 officers had been injured, including one with broken legs.

Regional TV channel N1, however, quoted hospital sources saying 19 police officers and 17 protesters were injured.

Demonstrators threw flares, stones and other objects at police who responded with tear gas in running battles around the city centre.

## Mexican Leader Lauds Trump Despite Past Tariff Threats, Insults

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador lavished praise on President Donald Trump at their first meeting on Wednesday, saying the U.S. leader treated Mexico with respect despite his history of threatening tariffs and insulting Mexicans.

The leftist Mexican leader made his first foreign trip as president to the White House, where he and Trump accentuated the positive in their public remarks while largely glossing over their differences on business, illegal drugs and migration.

"What I most appreciate is that you have never tried to impose anything on us that violates or damages our sovereignty," Lopez Obrador said in Spanish, turning to look at Trump as the two spoke in the Rose Garden before signing a joint declaration.

"You have never attempted to treat us like a colony," he added. "I am here to say to the people of the United States that your president has treated us with kindness and respect." The White House said the Mexican delegation, including Lopez Obrador, were tested for the coronavirus before they met with Trump.

Mindful of the pandemic, which is still surging in Mexico and the United States, the men did not shake hands when Trump greeted Lopez Obrador on his arrival. Neither wore face masks.

There were no tangible signs of progress on such issues as counter-narcotics and Lopez Obrador's attempts to renegotiate billions of dollars worth of energy infrastructure contracts. The two men signed a joint declaration that hailed the July 1 start of United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement that Trump, a Republican, reviled.

Trump said the countries were committed to "a shared future of prosperity, security and harmony" and joked that he and leftist Lopez Obrador had forged "a great relationship ... maybe against all odds."

Critics argued Trump aimed to use the visit to gain support among Hispanic voters ahead of the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election in which he is expected to face Democrat Joe Biden.

Lopez Obrador was not scheduled to meet Biden, a former vice president who is favored by Hispanic U.S. voters, according to opinion polls.

## U.S. Invites China to Arms Control Talks, Seeing Opening

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States on Thursday again invited China to talks on arms control, saying it saw an opening with Beijing on three-way negotiations with Russia despite disagreements.

"The United States welcomes China's commitment to engage in arms control negotiations. As such, prudent next steps will need to include face-to-face meetings between the United States and China," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said.

President Donald Trump's administration has been demanding that a rising China take part in talks on a successor to the New START treaty, which caps the nuclear warheads of Cold War-era superpowers the United States and Russia.

China did not join initial U.S.-Russia talks last month in Vienna on the treaty, which expires in February.

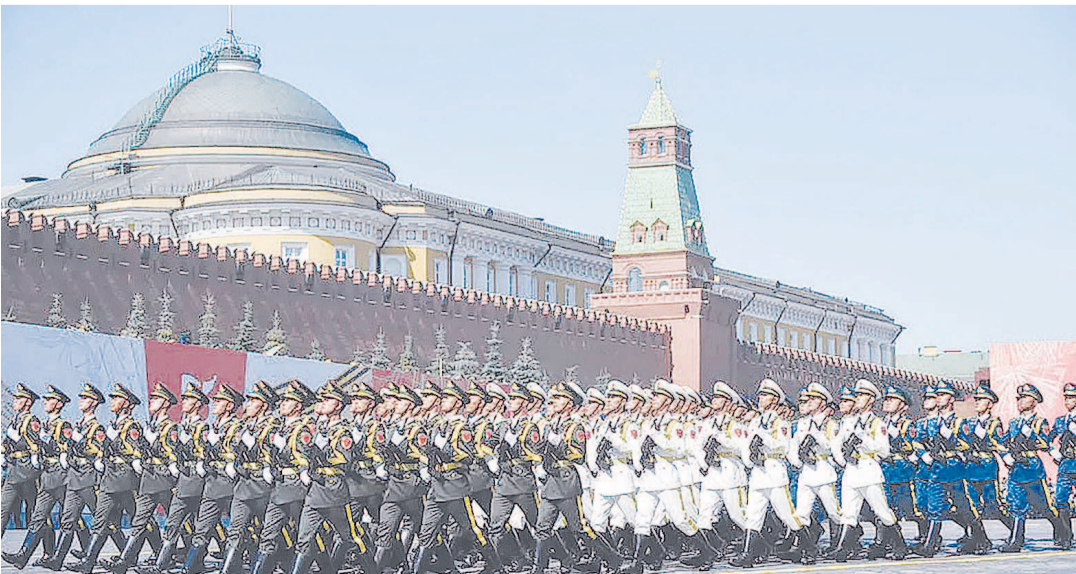
But China on Wednesday said it was willing to participate in arms control negotiations with the United States -- with the major caveat that Washington reduce its arsenal to the much smaller size of Beijing.

Fu Cong, director general of the Department of Arms Control at China's foreign ministry, charged that the U.S. stance was "nothing but a ploy" to let Washington leave New START and have a free hand in ramping up its nuclear program.

The United States nonetheless saw the glass as half-full and seized on the statement, saying that Marshall Billingslea, the U.S. negotiator, would invite China to talks to follow up.

"We will all bring different perspectives and objectives to the negotiating table and will surely have disagreements," Ortagus said.

"But it is time for dialogue and diplomacy between the three biggest nuclear weapons powers on how to prevent a new arms race."



## Japan, Australian Leaders Share Concern Over East, South China Seas



TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Australian counterpart, Scott Morrison, shared serious concerns over various moves in the East and South China Seas in their video meeting on Thursday, a Japanese government spokesman said.

Asked at a media briefing if the two leaders' concerns expressed in the meeting were directed to China, Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Naoki Okada declined to elaborate.

Australia too did not single out any particular country, though the meeting comes after several incidents involving China.

"They expressed serious concern about recent negative developments in the South China Sea, including the continuing militarization of disputed features, the dangerous and coercive use of coastguard vessels and 'maritime militia'," an Australian government statement read.

In April, Vietnam lodged an official protest with China following the sinking of a Vietnamese fishing boat it said had been rammed by a Chinese maritime surveillance vessel near islands in the disputed South China Sea.

China claims most of the energy-rich South China Sea, within a U-shaped "nine-dash line" on its maps that is not recognized by its neighbors, several of whom have overlapping claims.

The United States has accused China of pushing its presence in the South China Sea while other claimants are pre-occupied with the coronavirus pandemic.



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## Sri Lanka Central Bank Delivers Steep Rate Cuts

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Sri Lanka's central bank delivered an unusually large cut to two of its key interest rates on Thursday as it ramped up efforts to support an economy which has been battered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka eased monetary policy for the fourth time since March in a bid to boost growth "severely" hit in the second quarter and to encourage banks to "aggressively enhance lending" amid subdued inflation, it said in a statement here.

The CBSL cut its Standing Deposit Facility Rate (SDFR) and Standing Lending Facility Rate (SLFR) by 100 basis points (bps) each to 4.50% and 5.50% respectively.



## Global Economy to Contract by 5.2% in 2020

LONDON (Dispatches) - The global economy is likely to contract by 5.2 per cent in 2020 with the Coronavirus still spreading and the economic prospects of countries across the world looking muted, says a report. According to Dun and Bradstreet's Country Risk and Global Outlook Report, that covered 132 countries, the wider global context remains sombre and the global economy will not reach pre-pandemic levels of activity again before 2022.

"D&B is currently forecasting that the global economy will contract by 5.2 per cent in 2020 - the biggest decline since the Second World War and a far stronger contraction than the 1.7 per cent recorded in 2009 during the global financial crisis," the report said.

The Asia Pacific region is unlikely to shake off the economic effects before the end of 2020, it added. "Widespread quantitative easing means that financial asset prices globally are not reflecting the shock to fundamentals. But with many countries easing their lockdowns, a more varied picture of upgrades and downgrades has emerged," Dun & Bradstreet Chief Economist Arun Singh said.

Singh further noted that "worryingly, a sharp recession is still forecast, and we expect that the world economy will not attain pre-pandemic levels of activity before 2022."

The report said any recovery into 2021 (even without a second bout of the pandemic) is going to be curtailed by several factors. Foremost will be the presence of degrees of social distancing (despite the easing of lockdowns) and higher levels of post-lockdown unemployment and poverty.

Meanwhile, the number of cases around the world linked to COVID-19 has crossed 1.18 crore and the death toll has topped 5.44 lakh. In India, the death toll due to the disease rose to 20,642 and the number of infections increased to 7,42,417 on Wednesday.

Singh further said India's economy is expected to contract this fiscal year after four decades of positive growth.

"In March, we downgraded India's rating to DB5c from DB4d - both the magnitude of the downgrade and the risk level are the highest since 1994," Singh noted.

DB5 means high risk and denotes that "considerable uncertainty is associated with expected returns. Businesses are advised to limit their exposure and/or select high risk transactions only."

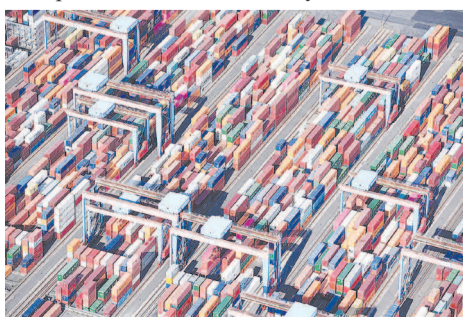
Dun & Bradstreet's Country Risk Indicator provides a comparative, cross-border assessment of the risk of doing business in a country. The risk indicator is divided into seven bands, ranging from DB1 to DB7, with DB1 being lowest risk.

Each band is subdivided into quartiles (a-d), with 'a' representing slightly less risk than 'b' (and so on). Only the DB7 indicator is not divided into quartiles.

## German Exports Rebound Less Than Expected in May

BERLIN (Reuters) - German exports rebounded less than expected in May as demand remained subdued despite the lifting of lockdown measures introduced to contain the spread of the coronavirus, data published on Thursday showed.

Seasonally adjusted exports surged by 9% on the month after diving by 24% in April, remaining almost 27% lower than their pre-crisis level in February, the Federal Statistics office said.



Imports rose by 3.5% after a slump of 16.6% the previous month, suggesting that consumption in Europe's largest economy remained weak. The trade surplus increased to 7.6 billion euros.

Economists polled by Reuters had expected exports and imports to rise by 13.8% and 12% respectively. The trade surplus was predicted to come in at 5.2 billion euros.

"All beginnings are difficult: The rise in exports is no reason to celebrate," Alexander Krueger of Bankhaus Lampe KG wrote in a note. "The road to past capacity levels is long and depends strongly on the revival of international demand."

The Statistics Office said exports to China were 12.3% lower than in May last year, while exports to the United States were down 36.5% year-on-year in May.

## UK Set to Borrow 350b Pounds and More Is Likely

LONDON (Reuters) - British government borrowing is on course to surge to around 350 billion pounds this year following new COVID-19 spending announced by finance minister Rishi Sunak, and could rise higher still, a leading think tank said on Thursday.

"Back in March, the government forecast a deficit of about 50 to 60 billion pounds this year. Our current estimate is it could well be around 350 billion pounds," IFS deputy director Carl Emmerson said.

The IFS said Sunak was likely to looking to support the economy again in the autumn although that next phase of help would probably be more targeted.

Sunak on Wednesday announced subsidies for firms that bring employees back from furlough, temporarily scrapped purchase taxes for properties costing under 500,000 pounds and cut value-added tax on spending at hotels and restaurants.

These and other recent measures would cost 30 billion pounds, while previous measures announced since March would cost 30 billion pounds more than first thought, according to the finance ministry.

Huge uncertainty surrounded exactly how much Britain would borrow this year due to the economic damage from COVID-19, but as a share of output it was on course to be its highest outside wartime in more than 300 years, Emmerson added.



Taxes would probably have to rise to bring down some of the borrowing once the economy was back to normal, but the current focus had to be on ensuring a strong recovery from the massive economic hit dealt by the coronavirus, the IFS said.

Sunak said earlier on Thursday that he would take steps to put the public finances back on a sustainable footing once he had a clearer view of how the economy

was recovering its deep recession.

It was too soon to judge if Sunak was right to stick to his plan to phase out his furlough scheme that supports more than 9 million jobs by the end of October, the IFS said.

But IFS deputy director Helen Miller said there was a strong case that the cuts in property purchase taxes and VAT were premature and poorly targeted.

Property transactions were already on track for a rebound as the lockdown lifted while VAT cuts meant help would flow disproportionately to hospitality firms that were less affected by coronavirus and are able to ramp up sales most quickly.

Encouraging people to eat in restaurants rather than take food away appeared risky on health grounds just days after the government lifted a ban eating in restaurants, Miller added.

## South Korean Oil Products Demand to Fall 1%

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Demand for South Korean oil products will fall by 1pc this year, reflecting economic weakness brought on by the Covid-19

pandemic, state-owned think-tank Korea Energy Economics Institute (KEEI) said.

Such a decline would represent demand loss of more than 9mn bl, or 25,000 b/d, as South Korean use of oil products last year totalled nearly 933mn bl, according to data from state-owned oil company KNOC. The country is on track for a larger decline than predicted by KEEI for 2020, after a 3.2pc drop to 373mn bl or 6mn b/d in January-May from a year earlier.

Transportation accounted for most of the downturn. KEEI expects demand from the sector to decrease by 5.9pc on the year.

Demand for transportation products totalled nearly 113mn bl or 623,000 b/d in January-May, down by 11pc year to date.

South Korea consumed 65,000 b/d of jet fuel from January-May, down by 39pc from the same period in 2019, according to data from KNOC. The country's jet fuel consumption rose by 149.7pc from April to 58,800 b/d in May, but this was still lower by 44.8pc from a year earlier.

## Merkel Says EU Must Prepare For No-Deal Brexit

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Germany will continue to push to seal a new partnership agreement with Britain by the end of the year, but the European Union should also prepare for an abrupt split from 2021, Chancellor Angela Merkel said.

Britain left the EU in January and is currently in a standstill transition period with the bloc to give the two sides time to fix a new relationship in everything from trade to security.

Last week's round of talks was cut short, with both sides saying that, while they wanted an agreement, they had yet to overcome the gulf in positions that could see Britain leaving the transition period without a trade deal.

British and EU officials meet in London this week for talks on goods, services, fisheries, governance, the so-called level playing field guarantees of fair competition and law enforcement after the two sides' negotiators had an informal dinner.

"Progress in negotiations thus far has been slim, to put it diplomatically," Merkel told the European Parliament as Germany assumed the EU's rotating presidency for the rest of the year.

"We have agreed with the UK to accelerate the pace of the talks ... I will continue to push for a good solution, but we should also prepare for a possibility of a no-deal scenario."

Britain has so far rejected EU pressure to commit to close ties in areas ranging from fisheries to harmonising competition standards - a 'level playing field' - since Prime Minister Boris Johnson - a key campaigner for Brexit - wants only a narrower trade deal.

A spokesman for Johnson described a dinner between Britain's chief negotiator David Frost and the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier as "a constructive opportunity for David and Michel Barnier to meet in a more informal way ahead of the specialised sessions that are taking place today".

On Wednesday, Barnier repeated that his team was working hard on fisheries and a level playing field - two of the elements that have blocked an agreement so far in talks.

Johnson late on Tuesday told Merkel in a telephone call that Britain would leave the transition period "on Australia terms" if no better deal was agreed. Australia does not have a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU.

Should such a no deal emerge, some businesses say major trade and travel disruptions could ensue.

## Japan's Machinery Orders Tick Up But Factory Demand Patchy



TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's machinery orders unexpectedly rose in May, offering policymakers some comfort capital expenditure has held up despite the hit to corporate profits from the coronavirus pandemic.

But the increase in headline orders was due to demand from the services sector, masking a plunge in external and manufacturing orders, clouding the outlook for Japan's export-reliant economy.

"The gain is likely to be one-off given weak demand from sectors like automobile, capital goods and general-purpose machinery, which hold the key to capital spending," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute.

"Japan's economy may have hit the bottom in May. But capital expenditure likely won't turn for the better as weak demand and the risk of a second wave of infection discourage manufacturers from boosting non-urgent spending."

Core orders, a highly volatile data series regarded as a leading indicator of capital spending, rose 1.7% in May after a 12.0% slump in April, the fastest drop since 2018. The increase confounded a 5.4% drop projected by analysts.

A 15.5% drop in manufacturers' orders was offset by a 17.7% increase in orders by non-manufacturers, the Cabinet Office data showed on Thursday. Overseas orders sank 18.5% from May to the lowest level since 2010, a sign the pandemic was hurting global demand.

"Machinery orders are hovering on a weak note," the Cabinet Office said, maintaining its assessment from May.

Japan slipped into recession in the first quarter as the hit from the pandemic added to woes for firms and households already reeling from last year's tax hike and soft global demand. But capital expenditure has been underpinned by investment demand for automation and technology to offset a chronic labour shortage in the fast-ageing population.

Big firms expect to increase capital expenditure by 3.2% in the current fiscal year to March 2021, the Bank of Japan's quarterly survey showed last week.

## Sri Lanka Central Bank Delivers Steep Rate Cuts

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"severely" hit in the second quarter and to encourage banks to "aggressively enhance lending" amid subdued inflation, it said in a statement here

The CBSL cut its Standing Deposit Facility Rate (SDFR) and Standing Lending Facility Rate (SLFR) by 100 basis points (bps) each to 4.50% and 5.50% respectively.



## UK to Resume Saudi Arms Exports Despite Yemen War Concerns

LONDON (Dispatches) - The United Kingdom will resume weapons sales to Saudi Arabia despite international concerns that some could be used in the war in Yemen.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss told Parliament on Tuesday that a government assessment suggested, "There is not a clear risk that the export of arms and military equipment to Saudi Arabia might be used in the commission of a serious violation of [international humanitarian law]"

Opposition legislators and campaigners against the arms trade slammed the "morally indefensible" decision by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government.

The move followed a court ruling last year that the UK's licensing of arms sales to Saudi Arabia was unlawful, after campaigners argued the government had failed to make a proper assessment of humanitarian risks.

While the court's decision did not mean the UK had to halt arms exports to Saudi Arabia, it did mean it had to pause the granting of new export licences to sell arms to the kingdom - the UK's biggest weapons purchaser.

Truss said the government had "now re-taken the decisions that were the subject of judicial review on the correct legal basis, as required".

"It follows that the undertaking [given] to the court -that we would not grant any new licences for the export of arms or military equipment to Saudi Arabia for possible use in Yemen - falls away," she said in a written statement.

The legal action against the British government was brought by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), which wants to end the global arms trade and argued that British weapons were likely to have been used in Yemen in violation of human rights law.

Truss said the review found Saudi Arabia had "genuine intent and the capacity to comply with IHL (International Humanitarian Law)".



"On that basis, I have assessed that there is not a clear risk that the export of arms and military equipment to Saudi Arabia might be used in the commission of a serious violation of IHL," she said.

"This is a disgraceful and morally bankrupt decision. The Saudi-led bombardment of Yemen has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and the government itself admits that UK-made arms have played a central role on the bombing," said the group's Andrew Smith of CAAT.

"We will be considering this new decision with our lawyers, and will be exploring all options available to challenge it."

## EU to Back Croatia, Bulgaria In First Step to Join Euro



BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Euro zone officials are ready to let Croatia and Bulgaria into the ERM-2 mechanism, a preliminary stage for adopting the euro as their currency in the next three years, four sources told Reuters.

The move would pave the way for the first enlargement of the euro zone since 2015, when Lithuania joined the currency bloc, which now has 19 members.

European officials said a decision was imminent after a final backing from euro zone and EU finance ministers, who hold video conferences later on Thursday and Friday.

Two sources said the decision was likely to be announced outside market hours, probably during the weekend, to prevent market speculation.

Officials said some minor issues remained to be settled in the coming hours. They could delay the announcement beyond the weekend, but were unlikely to derail the decision on accession to the ERM-2 exchange rate mechanism.

Once countries join the ERM-2, they remain in the mechanism for about two years before starting the practical preparations to join the euro zone, a process that takes roughly another year, making 2023 the earliest year for euro membership.

## Debt Reduction Only Way to End "Poverty Trap" for Some Countries

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Group of 20 major economies should extend a freeze on official bilateral debt payments by the world's poorest countries through 2021, and permanently reduce the debt load of some of the most heavily indebted ones, World Bank President David Malpass said on Wednesday.

Merely delaying debt payments would not solve the problems of countries that were already facing high levels of debt before the coronavirus pandemic, Malpass told a G20 debt conference. "In such cases, we need to not merely reduce debt service today, but reduce debt service tomorrow and permanently," Malpass said.

"This will create light at the end of the debt tunnel for the poorest countries. For some of the hardest hit, a systematic reduction of sovereign debt stocks is the only way to restart growth, make new investment possible and profitable, and avoid an even longer poverty trap," he said.

Developing countries and emerging markets face dire economic consequences from the pandemic given inadequate healthcare systems, a lack of resources to offset the impact of widespread lockdowns and,



in some cases, a collapse in commodity prices.

Malpass emphasized the need for increased transparency about lending and said all official bilateral creditors, including policy banks such as China's Development Bank, should take part.

He said a new Bank database of debt levels released in June would aid transparency and would be expanded in September. He said the goal was to add data on the terms of loans,

including interest rates, maturities and grace periods.

The G20 initiative should cover all external, publicly guaranteed debt, including loans made by state-owned enterprises, if they had implicit government guarantees, he said, an apparent reference to Chinese companies involved in its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

He also cited concerns about confidentiality clauses in official loan contracts and debt-like instruments such as long-term bilateral swap lines that are often used as funding sources by countries such as Mongolia.

Long-term contractual commitments for electricity purchases also posed a crushing burden on poor countries, he said.

## Protecting 30% of Planet Could Bolster Economy

LONDON (Guardian) - Mangrove forests are under threat, but scientists say restoring them would reduce economic losses from the climate crisis. Photograph: Ricardo Lima/Getty Images

Nearly a third of the world's oceans and land area could be placed under environmental protections without harming the global economy, and even produce bumper economic benefits if the right policies were followed, according to a global assessment.

Ecosystems around the world are collapsing or hovering on the brink of disaster, with a million species threatened with extinction. But if at least 30% of the planet's land and oceans were subject to conservation efforts, that mass extinction could be avoided and vital habitats restored, scientists estimate.

The report, from the Campaign for Nature charity, found about \$140bn (£110bn) a year would be required by 2030 to place 30% of land and sea under protection.

Anthony Waldron, the report's lead author, said: "Our report shows that protection in today's economy brings in more revenue than the alternative and adds revenue to agriculture and forestry, while helping prevent climate change, water crises, biodiversity loss and disease. Increasing nature protection is sound policy for governments juggling multiple interests. You cannot put a price tag on nature, but the economic numbers point to its protection."

Such a target would require a doubling of the area of land under protection, which is roughly 15% of land globally, and more than a quadrupling of marine protected areas, which make up only 7% of the oceans currently. About \$24bn is spent annually around the world on nature-protected areas.

With land and seas under fierce commercial pressure from agriculture, fishing and extractive industries, protecting nature has conventionally been seen as an economic cost.

The new assessment turns the conventional analysis on its head, showing that nature conservation is in fact a net contributor to the global economy, not a drain.

Achieving the target of 30% protection would lead to increased economic output of between \$64bn and \$454bn a year, the report found, depending on which areas were subject to conservation efforts, as well as generating other benefits.

"There is a large financial return if we protect 30% of terrestrial and marine nature," said Thomas Lovejoy, a professor of environmental science at George Mason University in Virginia, US. "Protecting the goose does indeed produce golden eggs."

Restoring nature is increasingly being seen as vital to tackling both the causes and impacts of climate breakdown, providing long-term protections against the effects of extreme weather such as flooding, storms and drought. Coastal mangrove swamps and coral reefs, for instance, have been destroyed over decades but when restored they provide valuable protection from floods and storm surges, as well as acting as nurseries for young fish.

The report found that protecting forests and mangroves would reduce the economic losses from the climate crisis and other harms by \$170bn to \$534bn a year by 2050.

Protecting land can produce benefits in the surrounding areas, such as vegetation reducing air pollution, and river systems providing clean water, as well as liveable habitats for numerous wild species. Nature conservation is projected to provide economic growth of 4-6% a year, compared with 1% a year for agriculture, fisheries and forestry, after the coronavirus pandemic subsides.

### West Alarmed...

FROM PAGE 1

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the former chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, says the West is terrified that Iran's growing capacities are connected to the huge global potentialities of China.

"This is why they have increased their efforts to undermine Iran-China relations following the announcement of talks between the two countries on a long-term deal," he added. The major agreement between Iran and China was announced in a joint statement during a visit to Tehran by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2016.

The cooperation roadmap consists of 20 articles, covering Tehran-Beijing ties in "Political," "Executive Cooperation," "Human and Cultural," "Judiciary, Security and Defense," and "Regional and International" domains, according to the statement released back then. In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi rejected the "lies" and rumors recently spread about the Sino-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

### Transfer of China's Forex...

FROM PAGE 1

In a period between 1980 to 2019, the U.S.'s worst budget deficit was registered in 2010 which was 9 percent, and its most budget surplus was registered in 2000 with 2.37 percent of its NDP. Currently the major items in the U.S. budget include \$1.26 trillion for healthcare, \$1.05 trillion for public security, \$677b for defense cost and \$289.5b for pensions. All major global financial bodies whose managers are even chosen by the U.S. influence have predicted that the U.S. economy will face with minus 7 percent growth.

All these factors and probably some other ones and statistics which have been kept in secret indicate that creditors are thinking of pulling out their capitals and collecting their debts from the U.S. The spokesman of China's State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) Ms. Wang Chunying in an interview with China's official news agency in January emphasized that in the current condition, China due to its robust financial infrastructure does not need immediately to return its forex reserves to China.

So it is natural that due to the economic chaos and uncertainties in the U.S., China and other countries think of saving their assets from the peril and transfer them to their countries. Recently, Iran and China have decided to operationalize a common interests plan worth \$400b in the upcoming years. Of course this decision has angered Washington and Tel Aviv. According to the authentic sources, China is also in talks with Iraqi and Syrian governments to boost its bilateral cooperation, and it shows on the whole that China's future strategic is wisely to transfer its forex reserves to the West Asia because this region enjoys considerable potentials for investment. Except China, other Arab states, which feel concerned about the fate of their capitals and money in the U.S., have implicitly whispered about putting this issue on their agenda.



### Iran to Continue...

FROM PAGE 1

Bagheri went on to say that the people and countries of the region do not welcome the presence of the United States.

Iran will continue responding to the U.S. rant and rhetoric, he stressed.

The signed agreement raises our will to work together to counter U.S. pressure, he added. Ali Abdullah Ayyoub, for his part, said that the U.S. would not hesitate if it was able to bring Iran, Syria, and the Resistance to its knees.

Referring to the U.S. sanctions against Syria, he added that Caesar's law fights the Syrians in providing food, medicine, and food for their children, and Syria is trying to deal with the consequences of this law. He noted that the Israel regime is a U.S. partner in the war against Syria and terrorist groups are part of the Israeli aggression.

The Syrian army will undoubtedly win, he stressed. Meanwhile on Thursday, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has said that the military cooperation signed between Tehran and Damascus is the result of years of cooperation in fighting terrorism.

"This agreement is the result of years of cooperation in confronting terrorism in Syria and hostile policies against Tehran and Damascus," Assad said during a meeting with Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri on Thursday, al Mayadeen reported.

Assad also said that the agreement shows the level of relations between the two countries.

Bagheri said that Iran attaches great importance to expansion of ties with Syria in various spheres.

### Iran Warns of...

FROM PAGE 1

SNSC Spokesman Keyvan Khosravi said that experts from different sectors started investigating "different hypotheses" about the incident at the Natanz site in central Iran immediately after its occurrence, and have determined its main cause.

"Due to some security considerations, the cause and manner of this incident will be announced at a proper time," he added.

In his Friday comments, Mousavi pointed to the media reports that attribute the explosion to Israel, and said such reports are aimed at portraying the "hollow" regime of Israel as powerful.

Israelis show up and claim responsibility for any incident happening anywhere in the world, he said, downplaying the claims that Tel Aviv is involved in the Natanz explosion. Following the incident, some Israeli officials were asked about the possibility of the regime's involvement in the Natanz explosion, but they have neither confirmed nor denied involvement.

The regime often practices a policy of deliberate ambiguity when it is involved in acts of sabotage in sovereign lands.

## Ryder Cup Postponed Due To Coronavirus

NEW YORK (Reuters) - This year's Ryder Cup, which was scheduled to be held in late September in Wisconsin, has been postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers said.

The hotly-contested biennial team competition between the United States and Europe, known for its raucous, partisan crowds, was originally scheduled for Sept. 25-27 at Whistling Straits. It will now be held Sept. 24-26, 2021.

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## Woods Ready to Return, Commits to Memorial

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Tiger Woods announced on Thursday that he will compete at next week's Memorial Tournament in Dublin, Ohio, the 15-times major champion's first PGA Tour event in five months.

"I'm looking forward to playing in the @MemorialGolf next week," Woods said on his Twitter account. "I've missed going out and competing with the guys and can't wait to get back out there."

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SPORTS

SATURDAY JULY 11, 2020

# Djokovic Accuses Critics of Witch-Hunt, Undecided on U.S. Open

BELGRADE (Reuters) - Novak Djokovic has accused critics of subjecting him to a "witch-hunt" after his regional Adria Tour tennis event ended in a novel coronavirus fiasco and said he was still uncertain whether he would play at the Aug. 31-Sept 13 U.S. Open.

Images and videos of the players hugging at the net, playing basketball together and partying at the tournament were posted on social media.

World number one Djokovic, fellow Serb Viktor Troicki, Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov and Croatian Borna Coric all tested positive for the virus and the event had to be called off.

Djokovic, who tested positive for COVID-19 after the Adria Tour's second leg in Croatia, pulled no punches in slamming his peers and pundits who said he was irresponsible to stage the event amid the pandemic.

"I can only see criticism lately and much of it is malicious," Djokovic told Wednesday's issue of Serbia's daily Sportski Zurnal.

"It's obviously more than just criticism, it's like an agenda and a witch-hunt are on. Someone has to take the fall, a big name.

"I still haven't decided whether I will play in the U.S. Open, the upsurge in registered COVID-19 cases in the United States and New York in particular are not playing into the event's hands," added Djokovic who was back in training on Tuesday with Troicki.

Djokovic tested negative after the second test he took last week and, having conceded after the failed tournament that it came to soon, he reiterated that he had acted in good faith.

"My intention was pure, I was whole-heartedly committed to organising a humanitarian event to help players and tennis federations in the (Balkan) region," he said.

"We complied with all the laws and regulations. But we've learned our lessons and some things could have probably been done in a different way."

The first leg in Belgrade held on June 13 and 14 with no social distancing rules in place drew a sell-out 4,000 crowd and



as many fans turned up in Zadar's Visnjik tennis complex with a capacity of 9,000 a week later.

Fans in Zadar were ordered by the Croatian government to stay two metres apart but the final, due to feature Djokovic and Russian Andrey Rublev, was called off after Dimitrov tested positive for the virus.

The remaining two legs in Montenegro and Bosnia were scrapped.

Meanwhile Australia's Nick Kyrgios has slammed Dominic Thiem for defending players who competed at the ill-fated Adria Tour and subsequently tested positive for COVID-19.

Kyrgios has repeatedly criticised organisers and players at the abandoned event in the Balkans, where Novak Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki all tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Thiem, who also played in the charity event but did not contract the virus, told Austrian media that Kyrgios had "made a lot of mistakes" and should not criticise others.

The comment triggered a rebuke from Kyrgios on social media.

"What are you talking about @ThiemDomi? Mistakes like smashing rackets? Swearing? Tanking a few matches here or there? Which everyone does?" Kyrgios wrote on Twitter.

"None of you have the intellectual level to even understand where I'm coming from. I'm trying to hold them accountable."

Kyrgios said that players who were seen partying while the pandemic raged proved they thought it was a "joke".

"People losing lives, loved ones and friends, and then Thiem standing up for the 'mistake,'" he added.

## Asian Champions League To Resume in Hubs in September, October

KUALALUMPUR (Reuters) - The Asian Champions League will resume in two regional hubs in September and October with a single match deciding the title in early December, the Asian Football Confederation said on Thursday.

The continent's elite club competition, which was suspended in early March because of the novel coronavirus outbreak, will resume first in West Asia on Sept. 14 and in East Asia on Oct. 16 at centralised venues as yet to be confirmed.

While group matches will be played in full in a round robin format as originally planned, fixtures in the latter stages of the tournament from the round of 16 onwards will be single knockout matches rather than the usual two-legged format.

The teams will play among themselves on East-West lines throughout the tournament until the final between the best team from each region in the western hub on Dec. 5.

Four matches involving teams from the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Iraq will get the western zone back underway, while Australia's Perth Glory will play China's Shanghai Shenhua in the opening match in the East.

The AFC Cup, the competition for more minor football playing nations in the continent, will also resume in centralised venues in East and West Asia starting in late October with a one-off final scheduled for Dec. 12.

"Notwithstanding the challenging times, I am delighted that we are seeing more encouraging progress on the return of many domestic Leagues to the field and with them comes an expectation that we can conclude both the AFC Champions League and the AFC Cup in the coming months," AFC General Secretary Windsor John said in a statement.

The postponed Asian under-19 championship will now take place in Uzbekistan from Oct. 14-31, while the under-16 tournament has been rescheduled for Nov. 25-Dec. 12 in Bahrain.



Video footage of the incident during Tottenham's defeat by Norwich City in the FA Cup fifth round showed the England international climbing over seats to confront a home supporter before being restrained by security guards and other fans.

The FA banned Dier and fined him £40,000 (\$50,460) on Wednesday.

"My feeling is that, in the majority of the cases, football is not protected by the people that is powerful and doesn't belong to this world," Mourinho said ahead of

# Mourinho Criticizes FA Over Dier Ban

LONDON (Reuters) - Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho has criticised the Football Association's decision to ban Eric Dier for four games over a confrontation with a fan in March.

Video footage of the incident during Tottenham's defeat by Norwich City in the FA Cup fifth round showed the England international climbing over seats to confront a home supporter before being restrained by security guards and other fans.

The FA banned Dier and fined him £40,000 (\$50,460) on Wednesday.

"My feeling is that, in the majority of the cases, football is not protected by the people that is powerful and doesn't belong to this world," Mourinho said ahead of

Tottenham's trip to Bournemouth later on Thursday.

"They don't have the know-how and it's very, very difficult to lead something when you don't have a clue about the world that you are leading."

Dier told the FA he jumped into the crowd to protect his younger brother, who was involved in an altercation with the fan, but the FA did not accept that was the player's sole intention, saying his actions were "clearly threatening".

Mourinho added that the fan had apologised to Dier.

"I want fans back very, very much," the Portuguese said. "Even that specific fan, especially because the fan had the opportunity to meet the player, to apologise to the player, to understand that we are very well paid but we are not robots.

"It was a good opportunity for that fan to turn his profile and become a different fan."

## Suarez Scores as Barca Condemn Espanyol to Relegation

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Barcelona kept up their pursuit of leaders Real Madrid in the La Liga title race by beating city rivals Espanyol 1-0 at home on Wednesday, also condemning their neighbours to relegation from the top flight.

Luis Suarez struck the only goal of the game in the 56th minute, lashing a loose ball into the net for his 195th goal with Barca which took him past Hungarian Laszlo Kubala as the club's third top scorer of all time.

The goal came shortly after both sides had been reduced to 10 men in a frantic start to the second half.

Barca's teenage forward Ansu Fati was sent off for a reckless tackle five minutes after coming off the bench but Espanyol's numerical advantage lasted only three minutes as Pol Lozano was dismissed, also following a VAR review.

Barca, chasing a third consecutive Spanish title, are on 76 points after 35 games while Real Madrid are top with 77 and can restore their four-point advantage when they host Alaves on Friday.

Espanyol, one of Spain's most prestigious clubs, were relegated for the first time since winning promotion back to La Liga in 1994. They are bottom of the table on 24 points after 35 games.

Barca had produced one of their best performances of the season by hammering Villarreal 4-1 away on Sunday but they looked sluggish at an empty Camp Nou, which normally would have been in full voice on derby day.



## Salah Double Keeps Liverpool On Track for Points Record

BRIGHTON, England (Reuters) - Mohamed Salah scored twice as champions Liverpool moved on to 92 points with a 3-1 win at Brighton and Hove Albion in the Premier League.

The victory kept Liverpool on target to secure a record Premier League points tally, with Jurgen Klopp's side needing nine from their remaining four games to beat the mark set by Manchester City, who amassed 100 points in 2017-18.

Liverpool were 2-0 up within eight minutes after Brighton paid heavily for sloppy work in their attempt to play the ball out from the back. Naby Keita robbed Davy Propper and slipped the ball to Salah who confidently drove home to open the scoring in the sixth minute.

Two minutes later and Brighton were caught out again by Liverpool's pressing, this time Salah setting up Jordan Henderson who finished with a perfect drive.

Graham Potter's 15th-placed team pulled a goal back on the stroke of halftime with Leandro Trossard sweeping home a first-time shot after a pinpoint cross from Tariq Lamptey.

Brighton, who recovered well from their poor start, should have drawn level on the hour when the ball fell to an unattended Dan Burn at the back post but he failed to test Alisson with a poor connection.

Egyptian Salah wrapped up the win, Liverpool's 30th in their 34th game of the season, with a superbly angled near post header from an in-swinging Andy Robertson corner.

