

Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday That Some 215 More Iranians Have Died From Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan's Karachi Handed Over Hundreds of Corona Safety Kits to the Red Crescent Society in Southern Sindh Province

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Iran, Self-Sufficient In Strategic Agricultural Products

TEHRAN (IP) - President Hassan Rouhani says that Iran is self-sufficient in strategic agricultural products like wheat.

President Rouhani made the remarks on Thursday at the inauguration ceremony of national water and soil projects held via video conferencing, saying: "The government's plan is to reach 23,000 hectares of greenhouse cultivation by the end of the twelfth government. However, with the efforts of the government during the past 7 years, we have created more greenhouses, compared to the last 30 years."

"With the cultivation and harvesting of strategic and food products in the country, the situation is desirable and satisfying and Iran is self-sufficient in this regard," he said, noting that many countries are storing major agricultural and food products following the Coronavirus pandemic and are refusing to sell them.

The Iranian President added, "Despite the drought and lack of rain, the people of Yazd and Hormozgan provinces are using modern irrigation systems. And greenhouse cultivation in different agricultural sectors has succeeded in producing very good products and we are witnessing good developments in these areas in the agricultural sector."

In this ceremony, some 809 projects and greenhouse complexes with an area of 473 hectares throughout Iran, the operation of 5 water and soil projects with an area of 73,500 hectares and the operation of 16,800 hectares of rain-fed garden development projects on sloping lands throughout Iran was commenced by the order of the President.

These projects will be implemented with a total credit of 3,400 billion tomans and by exploiting them, sustainable employment will be created for 10,340 people.

Iran, China Deal Nothing Out of Order About It

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations says the long-term deal that awaits finalization between the Islamic Republic and its Asian ally, China, is nothing out of the ordinary and stems from age-old relations between the two countries.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Russia's RT news channel, Majid Takht Ravanchi said relations between Iran and China "go back centuries," adding, "So, it is natural for these two countries to get together, to discuss different issues, [and] collaborate on many issues of interest to both sides, including in the field of economy."

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Iran Calls Harassment of Its Civilian Plane 'Violation of Int'l Law'



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Vice-President for Legal Affairs Laya Joneidi says the U.S. jet fighters' harassment of an Iranian passenger plane over the Syrian airspace was a violation of the international law, and can be legally pursued at international tribunals.

"Harassment of a civilian airplane is a violation of the principles of the international law, and can be legally pursued at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council and the International Court of Justice," Joneidi said on Friday.

She said the behavior of U.S. jet fighters towards the Mahan Air Flight 1152 was harassment of a passenger plane in a third country's territory, which is a blatant violation of aviation safety and a breach of the freedom of the air for civilian flights.

Joneidi said the move contradicts the Article 3 and Article 44 of the 1947 Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) as well as the 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (known as Montreal Convention).

The explanations provided so far have not been convincing or justifiable, she said, adding that the U.S. government is held accountable for its jet fighters' behavior towards the Iranian flight.

Meanwhile Minister of Roads and Urban Development said that Iran expects International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to issue a statement about U.S. move taken against Mahan Airliner.

Mohammad Eslemi pointed to the harassment of two U.S. warplanes for Iran's Mahan airline flying over Syrian sky, which resulted in injury for several passengers of the flight and added, "Mahan plane was traveling on the international trade route and this U.S. violation is a terrorist act that should be prosecuted in the international body."

The international community should condemn this move taken by the United States against the Iranian airliner, he said, adding, "Islamic Republic of Iran will follow up the case against the United States through its representative in ICAO in next few hours."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eslemi said that the harassment is a clear violation to legal rights and against the safety of passengers and added, "according to ICAO rules, all countries have a duty to ensure the safety of flights in their own country, and this is a requirement for all countries."

No fighter jet has the right to enter the commercial route of aircraft, he said, adding, "commercial and international flight routes are known and no warplane has the right to invade or enter the commercial route. Mahan Airlines has a flight license and its route is quite clear, so, there is nothing ambiguous on this flight and all issues related to this flight are clear."

Later Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi says Tehran is investigating the details of the Thursday night's incident involving a Beirut-bound Mahan Air flight.

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India Optimistic About Chabahar-Zahedan Railway Project With Iran

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Sounding an extremely optimistic note on Indian participation in the crucial Chabahar-Zahedan railway line project, India on Thursday said Iranian Deputy Minister and head of Iranian railways Saeed Rasouli had invited the Indian Ambassador in Tehran for a "good" meeting on Monday "to review the cooperation under this project", adding that Mr. Rasouli had stated that "vested interests" are behind reports that Iran has excluded India in this project.

The Iranian sea-port of Chabahar has proved crucial for India as it provides sea-land connectivity to Afghanistan bypassing the land route through Pakistan. Zahedan in Iran is located near the Afghan border and the Chabahar-Zahedan rail route could further help smooth movement of Indian goods to Afghanistan.

It may be recalled that amid recent reports of deep rumblings in Indo-Iranian bilateral ties, India had last week said that an Indian company had significantly scaled up operations at the strategically-located Iranian sea-port of Chabahar in the past two years despite the difficulties posed by US sanctions on Iran but at the same time had put the onus on Tehran regarding the Chabahar-Zahedan railway line in the west Asian country, saying Iran "was to nominate an authorised entity to finalise outstanding technical and financial issues" and that "this is still awaited" by New Delhi. New Delhi had further assured that "proactive measures are currently underway to increase the usage of Chabahar Port, both for Afghanistan and Central Asia".

On Thursday, MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "Our Ambassador was invited by the Deputy Minister and head of Iranian railways Saeed Rasouli (on July 20) for a meeting to review the cooperation under this project and they had a good meeting. The ongoing cooperation was reviewed in that meeting. ... I would like to particularly draw your attention to the statement of the Deputy Minister and head of Iranian railways who said that vested interests are behind reports that Iran has excluded India in this project."

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Libya and Avarice Of the Octopuses

2011 has been named disastrous year for the Libyan people and in this year since its first months, namely, since January and February which were the beginning of public protests, the grounds for toppling the Muammar al-Qaddafi government were laid. Since the second week of February of this year which Qaddafi's government started bloody crackdown on Libyan people in Benghazi, the world oil-devouring powers began their moves for entering Libya for looting this country's oil and they laid the ground for toppling Qaddafi's government. The more atrocity and blood-shed resulted from Qaddafi's anger, the more the plan for the future of the country deepened. Forasmuch as one or two countries were unable to own the oil of Libya for itself and actually other countries did not like this idea, either, the global cruel joint-stock company which has been named by them the "United Nations" stepped into the issue and in just few months, it approved five consecutive resolutions regarding interference and dissolving Libyan government. Resolutions 1970, 1973, 2009, 2016 and 2017 each one was approved in short time by the consensus or unanimous votes of participating members in the UNSC while each of members benefitted from the resolutions.

By killing of Qaddafi and collapse of his ruling system in September 2011, the National Transitional Council was formed to transfer power from the despotic ruler to the Libyan people and the imaginary theory of Responsibility to Protect which had been created by some of the UN members took shape. The "Responsibility to Protect" is a global political commitment which was endorsed by all member states of the United Nations in order to address its key concerns to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. But it seems the theory has been just set as a pretext for looting of these people.

Since then till now, Libya has never enjoyed even single day of peace and tranquility. Nine years of war and bloodshed and internal fratricide with support of aliens has created a calamity for the Libyans that faces a vague ending. Today Turkey and Libya have expressed their greed to Libyan oil more openly than others. Egyptian government claims it considers Libya its strategic country due to its 1300 kilometers of joint borders and it is more interesting that Turkey is after revival of the glorious days of Ottoman Empire this time in North Africa. Beside these two countries, there are probably more actors in Libya, too. Russia with forces of Wagner Company, Italy with its military's direct support of the formed the Government of National Accord in Libya, France with deployment of its forces in the Libyan borders and Algeria and the U.S. with their direct supports of Egyptian government are the other major actors in this octopus-like greed towards Libya.

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Iran Among High Human Development Nations

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Human Development Index (HDI) has increased by 38.3 percent between 1990 and 2018, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) announced in its Human Development Report 2019, listing the country in the high human development category.

The main premise of the human development approach is that expanding peoples' freedoms is both the main aim and the principal means for sustainable development. If inequalities in human development persist and grow, the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will remain unfulfilled. But there are no pre-ordained paths. Gaps are narrowing in key dimensions of human development, while others are only now emerging.

Inequalities in human development hurt societies and weaken social cohesion and people's trust in government, institutions and each other. They hurt economies and are a defining bottleneck in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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U.S. Turned Into Rogue State After Leaving JCPOA

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the U.S. has turned into a "rogue" country after leaving the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal in defiance of international law and re-imposing economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

In an interview with Russia's Sputnik news agency on Wednesday, Zarif said the U.S. violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231 by pulling out of the deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). "The United States has certainly become a rogue and lawbreaker state" after ditching the deal," he said. "Therefore, the U.S. is not in a position to talk about the JCPOA. Russia, Iran and China have similar positions on that."

Health Protocols Compliance Result in COVID-19 Declining Trend

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that the news suggests a declining trend of the COVID-19 spread in many provinces throughout the country, which is the result of the wider implementation of health protocols and physical distancing.

Speaking at the meeting of the specialized committees of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, President Rouhani pointed out that from the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19, the Islamic Republic of Iran put a serious fight against its spread on the agenda according to scientific and international standards.

He said, "All measures taken in this direction, from the development of health and care protocols to the establishment of restrictions in the first round of the Coronavirus spread, both in terms of policy-making and the manner of implementation of these policies and the resulting decisions, have repeatedly been endorsed and praised by specialized international institutions, especially the World Health Organization".

Appreciating people's trust, support, and cooperation with the government's measures and programs against the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the President added: "The good cooperation and support of the people, especially during the first wave of the Coronavirus outbreak in Iran, was praised by the international community."

Rouhani stated, "The important point obtained as a result of accurate assessments and estimates is that the reason for the resurgence of the Coronavirus in some parts of the country was not economic and social activities, but the lack of accurate and complete observance of health protocols and holding gatherings such as weddings,



funerals, and mourning ceremonies".

Referring to the beginning of the second wave of Coronavirus outbreak in many countries around the world, the President stated, "The National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus designed two macro policies to combat the second wave of Coronavirus outbreak in our country, based on which using masks indoors and in public and high-risk areas was implemented".

The president added, "After a week or two, the assessments indicate a declining trend of the spread in many provinces throughout the country, which is the result of the wider implementation of protocols and the use of more masks and physical distancing."

Emphasizing the need to change the lifestyle to prevent the recurrence of the new stage of Coronavirus, Rouhani said: "The treatment committee of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus should inform each province about the extent of heeding the protocols and using masks to help transform people's lifestyle".

The President also emphasizing the special importance of the mourning ceremony of Imam Hussein (AS) and its great spiritual benefits for the society, which cannot be ignored, saying that proper health protocols should be implemented.

Recent Fires Have Nothing to Do With Cyber Attacks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has rejected claims that recent fires in Iran were caused by cyber attacks, but said the country reserves the right to deliver a "proper" response to any such operation in the future.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Abbas Mousavi said thousands of cyber attacks target Iran's infrastructure on a daily basis and most of them are repelled by the country's defense systems and cyber incident response teams.

The cyber assaults, which have targeted the country's infrastructure over the past months, have even had "a wider dimension," said the official, adding that analysis later showed that the attacks had been sponsored or carried out by governments.

"Fortunately, the aggressors failed to achieve their main objectives in these attacks. Through technical and forensic electronic surveys, domestic experts have identified the governments supporting and leading the attacks, along with the groups that oversaw them," Mousavi said.

The spokesman was also asked about whether the recent fires in Iran were caused by cyber attacks given US President Donald Trump's secret order that gave the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) more powers to undertake such activities.

"No," he replied. "The recent fires have nothing to do with cyber attacks. Regarding Mr. Trump's order, it is quite natural to say that from now on, the US government will be the main suspect behind any cyber raid on Iran unless proven otherwise."

Citing former U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the matter, Yahoo News reported earlier this month that the CIA has conducted a series of covert cyber operations against Iran and other targets after Trump issued the secret authorization in 2018.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mousavi emphasized that Iran will pursue Trump's "illegal and criminal order" at the international level, adding that "we reserve the right to legitimate defense as well as due and appropriate response to any aggression and damage to our country through cyber or non-cyber attacks."

He noted that the Islamic Republic may use cyber space or other warfare tools in its response to cyber attacks.

"Let me make it clear that claiming responsibility unofficially for any incident that happens in our country or empty bluffs (about them) by others shows that their desperation is at its peak" and that their hands are tied in dealing with Iran, he added.

Mousavi further said "limited fires in forests, refineries, etc., especially in summer are neither strange nor specific to this year."

Ugly Face of U.S. Policies Has Become Transparent

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian ambassador to China said that the ugly face of US policy has become transparent following by closure of Chinese Consulate General in Houston.

In his twitter account, Iranian envoy wrote that the United States has once again demonstrated its hegemonic nature to the world by violating international law by closing the Chinese Consulate General in Houston, and the ugly face of its policies has been exposed.

"The United States has once again shown its hegemonic nature to the world with violating international law by closing the Chinese Consulate General in Houston," he wrote in Twitter, referring to the US move to close the Chinese Consulate in Houston.

A country that claims to be the savior of the world is in fact causing chaos in the world, Keshavarzadeh added. Iran's ambassador to China said that the United States is masked by unilaterally withdrawing from Iran's nuclear deal, JCPOA, and imposing a policy of maximum pressure on Iran and invading Iraq based on baseless allegations and imposing war on Afghanistan and trade war and all-out pressure on China.

The United States' view of international law and diplomacy not only threatens world peace and stability, but the consequences of this behavior will be to the detriment of the United States itself, the envoy continued.

The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns the US government's decision to close the Chinese consulate in Houston, believes that China will certainly respond appropriately, Keshavarzadeh maintained.

Bolstering Economic Ties With Baku Iran's Top Priority

TABRIZ (IRNA) - Iran's newly-appointed Ambassador to Azerbaijan Republic Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday that boosting economic relations between Tehran and Baku is Iran's highest priority.

Prior to kicking off his new mission, the ambassador held a meeting with the Governor-general of East Azerbaijan Mohammad Reza Pourmohammadi.

During the meeting, Mousavi stated that the development of economic relations with the neighboring states will have an important role to play in the future of Tehran's political and diplomatic relations with other countries due to cruel sanctions imposed against Iran.

Border provinces of Iran have a crucial role to this end, he said, adding that East Azerbaijan is of prime importance as the province enjoys the appropriate commercial, economic and industrial infrastructures.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mousavi outlined the development of cultural, academic, and scientific relations as other priorities of Iran's diplomacy with Azerbaijan, noting that the exchange of students and holding joint conferences can be effective in the expansion of bilateral relations.

Javad Jahangirzadeh has previously served as Iran's Ambassador to the Azerbaijan Republic.

Pakistan Embassy Organizes Interactive Session With Pakistani Students on Kashmir

TEHRAN (Press Release) - To deliberate upon the implications of the arbitrary decision of the Indian Government to abrogate the special status of Kashmir in violation of International Law and the relevant UN resolutions, the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran arranged a virtual interactive session with the Pakistani students in Iran.

Highlighting the legal, security and humanitarian aspects of the decision of the extremist Indian government, the participants discussed the Hindutva driven policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his attempt to end the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019 that was accorded in the Indian Constitution, said a press release received on Thursday from Tehran.

By abolishing the articles 35A and 370 of the Constitution, Indian government has malevolently attempted to turn the Muslim majority into minority in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) with ultimate objective to absorb it in the Indian Union territories.

The decision tramples the inalienable right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people and is also violative of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The participants also condemned the human rights violations and freedom of the Kashmiri people in IOK that have spiked after the abrogation of articles 370 and 35A.

Currently, the Kashmiris are under strict lockdown and are facing worst atrocities at the hands of the Indian security forces especially in the wake of Covid19. Continuous lockdown has crippled life in Kashmir. The students were also briefed that the Indian action constituted the material change to the situation in Kashmir which was prohibited under the UNSC resolutions including 38 and 91.

The efforts made by the Government of Pakistan were also highlighted. Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute that must be settled in accordance with the UNSC resolutions and according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Pakistan will continue to extend diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmir issue. The students appreciated Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for his support to the Kashmiris in their struggle on different occasions.

Iran's Sidewinder Air-to-Air Missiles Can Now Travel 12 Miles

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The deputy commander of the Iranian Army's Air Force has highlighted the country's progress in developing air-launched missiles, saying the Islamic Republic has successfully extended the range of its Sidewinder air-to-air missiles to 12 miles.

"We have succeeded in increasing the range of Sidewinder air-to-air missiles from five to eight-twelve miles," Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi made the remarks in an interview with Tasnim news agency. The improved range, he added, could notably boost aerial combats.

Vahedi further said the Air Force had started to develop a heavyweight fighter jet after manufacturing the home-grown Kowsar warplanes, which were first unveiled in August 2018.

He described Kowsar as an Iranian jet with indigenized avionics and homegrown engines that has nothing to do with the F-5 fighter jets.

Kowsar, a fourth-generation all-indigenous interceptor jet, is equipped with advanced avionics and fire control systems and can be manufactured in both single- and double-cockpit types, the latter of which can be used for advanced pilot training missions in addition to its combat capability.

Iran has launched the mass production of a fourth-generation all-indigenous interceptor jet in a major step toward the renovation of its Air Force.

UAE Not Issuing Visas for Iranians

TEHRAN (ISNA) - The United Arab Emirates is not issuing visas for Iranian nationals although its flag carrier Emirates has resumed flights to/from the Iranian capital Tehran after some six months of halt over the coronavirus pandemic, ISNA reported.

On July 17, Ali Kashani, a senior official at the Imam Khomeini International Airport, announced that Emirates "resumed its flights to Tehran this morning after a six-month suspension", offering daily services to Iranian passengers "under specific circumstances."

At the same time [on July 17], Morteza Qorbani, the secretary of the Association of Air Transport and Tourist Agencies of Iran (AATAI), announced that the UAE had resumed issuing visas for Iranian nationals as of Thursday [July 16] and said Iranians can apply for tourist visas, the report added.

However, inquiries from travel agencies concluded that the UAE had not responded to visa applications from Iranian citizens during this period. However, Iranian and UAE airlines have operated flights from Tehran to Dubai, which were mostly used by people residing in the UAE, the news agency said.

"The Emirates bureau in Tehran also says that the state-owned airline operates two flights a week on Saturdays and Mondays on the Tehran-Dubai route, but it does not accept any responsibility for passenger visas. Other travel agencies are not currently applying for UAE visas due to the current situation (coronavirus pandemic)."

Ali Qorbani, an official with the AATAI, confirmed the ISNA news, saying "The UAE has not responded to [visa] requests since it announced it had opened its air borders.... This way, the issuance of visas for Iranian citizens has practically been stopped."

"The UAE has not yet given an official explanation or reason for stopping the visa issuance, but according to some Dubai agents, the increase in the number of coronavirus patients in Iran may have been the reason for the issue."

Iran-Uruguay to Boost Cooperation By Linking Science Parks

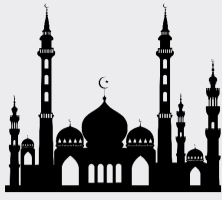
TEHRAN (MNA) - In meeting at the Iranian Ministry of Science, the officials of Iran and Uruguay agreed to expand scientific and technological ties and exchange their knowledge and technology by linking science parks of the two countries.

The ambassador of Uruguay to Tehran Carlos Sgarbi von Steinmann met with Hossein Salar Amoli, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Science, Research and Technology for International Scientific Studies and Collaboration.

In this meeting, Amoli pointed to the Ministry's cooperation with different countries in various fields including the exchanging of professors, students, joint researches, Persian language, and science and technology parks, and announced Iran's readiness to expand ties with other countries in all fields.

According to a Memorandum of Understanding which has been signed between the Ministers of the two countries in November 2019, the two sides expressed their readiness to expand scientific and technological ties through linking and introducing one of their science parks to each other in order to exchange knowledge and technology.

The ambassador said that the new government of Uruguay, which has different policies in comparison to the previous one, would be accompanying Iran in UN resolutions.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:34
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:29
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:08

55. They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?"
56. He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing): and I am a witness to this (Truth)."
Surah 21. The Prophets (55 - 56)

Iran Targets 50m Tons of Daily Transit

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Road and Urban Development said that due to its strategic and geopolitical position, Iran intends to increase its share of daily transit cargo, and its initial target is 50 million tons of transit.

On the importance of commodity transit between Iran and regional countries, Mohammad Eslami said that transit is one of the economic advantages of any country, especially Iran, which is located at the crossroads of world transit.

He further stated that many enmities with Iran are due to its strategic and geopolitical position.

He said that it is important for Iran to expand transit routes through bilateral and multilateral memorandums and agreements.

Iran intends to increase its share of daily transit cargo, and its initial target is 50 million tons of transit, he remarked.

Eslami added that the agreements between Iran, Russia, India, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and other countries in the region have been formed to develop transportation routes.

Increasing the transit capacity between the north and south of Iran can increase the transit capacity of the Indian Ocean countries with Russia and Europe in the form of a south-north corridor Eslami said.

Referring to Iraqi delegations' visit to Iran heading by Iraq's prime minister, Mohammad Eslami said that all previous agreements for the transportation of goods between the two countries were emphasized.



The Minister of Roads and Urban Development said that he had a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart and had detailed negotiations and agreed on a number of issues.

Eslami expressed hope that these agreements will be used to form a committee both for the transit discussions and to remove obstacles from the Shalamchah-Basra railway.

Meanwhile later the minister also said Iran intends to improve its ties with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan mainly on transport, transit, and trading.

Speaking at a trilateral video meeting between Iran, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan, Eslami stated while the whole world is grappling with the coronavirus, cooperation is required differently.

He added that establishing a trilateral committee can enhance road transport networks, adding Iran has long-lasting historical and cultural ties with the two countries.

The Iranian official went on to say that Iran is willing to enhance and boost the infrastructures between the three states aiming at increasing exported and imported product quality.

Eslami expressed hope that the coronavirus outbreak would not weaken future ties.

Iranian Researchers to Build a Satellite System

TEHRAN (IP) - The senior member of a team working on the construction of a satellite system at Khajeh Nasir Toosi University of Technology (KNTU) has said that the system includes 60 CubeSats, which will be sent to an altitude of 550 km above the Earth.

"The satellite system's conceptual design have been complete and is under construction," said Mojtaba Namvar.

The project's estimated cost is 80 to 100 million dollars.

The senior member of the satellite system project continued: "The mission of 60 satellites is designed for maritime activities to meet the needs of the country and even other countries in the field of navigation and automatic detection system. This satellite is also used for military activities and finding the origin and destination of sea routes."

Recently, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) successfully launched and placed the country's first military satellite, dubbed Nour-1 (Light-1), into orbit.

The satellite was launched via the Qassed (Carrier) satellite carrier during an operation that was staged in the Dasht-e Kavir, Iran's sprawling central desert. The satellite was placed into orbit 425 kilometers above Earth's surface.

Iran Reopens Khosravi Border

TEHRAN (IP) - Announcing the reopening of the Khosravi border, Iran's customs spokesman added that Until now, there has been no restriction on the acceptance of goods from Iran by the Iraqi side.

Seyed Ruhollah Latifi stated that the officials of the Iraqi Monzariyah border, by announcing the acceptance of Iranian goods, have said that they have no restrictions on the acceptance of goods through this border.

The customs spokesman added, "This border, which is located between the provinces of Kermanshah in Western Iran and Diyala in Eastern Iraq, was reopened today - Thursday, July 23, and so far no restriction has been announced for the acceptance of goods from Iran by the Iraqi side."

Khosravi border is one of the oldest official borders of the country.

Iranian, Iraqi Railways To Connect Soon

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Qassim al-Araji, Iraq's national security adviser, announced on Thursday that the Iraqi and Iranian railways will be connected in the near future.

Al-Araji tweeted that a rail link between Iran and Iraq would soon be established via the Shalamchah route.

He added: "We need joint efforts to dredge the Shatt al-Arab (Arvand River) to return to sailing and protect the legal rights of Iraq under the 1975 agreement."

Khorramshahr-Shalamchah railway project (17 km long) was commissioned in 2011, and its continuation to the city of Basra, 7 km long, has been interrupted and remains on Iraqi soil for various reasons, including ISIS's invasion of Iraq in 2014.

Simultaneously with the completion of the remaining 4 km of the line, the Khorramshahr railway will be connected to the Iraqi national railway, and through this route, a large flow of trade exchanges and passenger movement from Iran to the Middle East will be established.

Iran Successfully Tests 5G In Lab in Tehran



TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian deputy telecoms minister says a first trial in the country for the high-speed 5G mobile internet technology has been successfully carried out in a laboratory in Tehran.

Sattar Hashemi said that the test conducted in the ICT Research Center in downtown Tehran had reached a speed of 1.5 gigabits per second (Gb/s).

"The 5G is a major improvement on 4G regarding the delay in sending information and we managed to reduce the delay by 5 to 6 milliseconds in this test," Hashemi told the semi-official Mehr news agency.

A separate report by the official IRNA news agency said the testing site had been launched by Iran's second largest mobile operator MTN Irancell.

The report said Iranian President Hassan Rouhani oversaw the trial through a video conference call from his Cabinet session.

Hashemi did not elaborate on any exact timetable for rolling out the fifth generation of mobile internet in Iran.

He said high-ranking government officials would soon hold a ceremony to officially unveil 5G in the country and announce the terms of its regulation and pricing systems.

Previous statements by ICT officials have suggested that Iran's largest mobile operator MCI would launch a first batch of 5G masts in at least six locations in Tehran by the end of summer.

Hashemi said the test trial in ICT research center would enable all stakeholders of the technology in Iran, including other mobile operators, to contribute to the project.

He said speeds of up to 20 Gb/s, which are much higher than the one reached during the Wednesday lab trial in Iran, would depend on various factors, including the size of investment in the project.

"However, the average considered for this (5G) will be a speed between 1.5 to 2 Gb/s," he said.

Iran has not disclosed any information about which global supplier it is using to launch the 5G mobile network. However, the MCI and other operators have been engaged in partnerships with major Chinese telecommunication companies in the past.

Around 70% of Afghan Transit Trade Carried Through Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) in a recent report said that around 70 percent of Afghan transit trade has been carried out through Iran due to lower costs, more attractive security deposit, and detention tariffs.

Local media on Thursday said that Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM) Annual Report 2019, stated Pakistan is still facing a severe challenge in reducing structural barriers for road transport that keep costs high, says the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

It said Pakistan took robust actions to improve the environment for transit trade, yet still faced a severe challenge in reducing structural barriers for road transport that keep costs high.

The CPMM data reported Torkham and Chaman border-crossing points (BCPs) continue as two of the most time-consuming nodes monitored by the CPMM.

It further added although Afghanistan has traditionally relied on Pakistan as a gateway to international shipping routes, recent trends indicate that 70 percent of Afghan transit trade is now diverted through Iran.

This shift has been driven by lower costs from foreign ports and more attractive security deposit and detention tariffs for transit containers from shipping lines that operate at Iran's seaports.

Furthermore, diesel fuel in Iran (\$0.06 per liter) is significantly less expensive than in Pakistan (\$0.86 per liter), providing an additional edge in terms of cost competitiveness. In the absence of a formal agreement, shippers and carriers face uncertainty in transit procedures, it added.

The report further stated that the CPMM trade facilitation indicator (TFIs) reported longer average border-crossing time, although relatively unchanged average border-crossing cost.

Total average transport cost showed an improvement, but both measures of speeds showed that trucks did not move as fast compared to 2018. The average border-crossing time increased to 38.2 hours.

Over 21,000 Tons of Pistachio Exported in Q1

TEHRAN (MNA) - Spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said that more than 21,000 tons of pistachio were exported from the country in the first three months of the current year (started March 21).

Seyed Rouhollah Latifi made the remarks, and added, "some 21,720 tons of pistachio, valued at \$154,128,000, were exported from the country to more than 54 countries in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to June 20)."

China, Germany, Iraq, Russia and Kazakhstan were Iran's main pistachio export markets in this period, he said, adding, 5,547 tons of pistachio, valued at \$35,409,000, were exported to China in this period."

Some 2,982, 1,866, 1,455 and 1,129 tons of pistachio were exported from Iran to Germany, Iraq, Russia and Kazakhstan respectively, Latifi maintained.

Fresh and dried pistachio, according to Product Complexity Index (PCL), is a part of such global products, he said and reiterated, "accordingly, Iranian pistachio has

a major share of this trade in international arena."

United States (with exporting \$1.56 million), Islamic Republic of Iran (\$586 million), Hong Kong (\$303 million), Germany (\$112 million) and Turkey (\$52.3 million) are top and leading exporters of pistachio in the world, IRICA spokesman highlighted.

In recent years, with the U.S. entering pistachio export market, there has been a close competition between Iran and U.S. over this lucrative trade, he said, adding, "with the expansion of its fields in California, the United States has managed to increase its production to the level of Iran."

In order not to lose Iran's share in the trade of this product, farmers, traders and organizations related to foreign trade should increase their efforts in the field of boosting quantity, quality and marketing of this product. In this line, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration is ready to provide necessary facilities to exporters and producers for exporting pistachio to target markets, Latifi stressed.

Trade With EU Declines 6.5% to €1.8 Billion

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Trade between Iran and EU member states during January-May 2020 stood at €1.83 billion to register a 6.49% decline compared with last year's corresponding period, latest data released by the European Statistical Office show.

Germany, Italy and the Netherlands were Iran's top three trading partners in the European bloc with bilateral exchanges standing at €782.22 million

(up 24.69% YOY), €254.41 million (down 28.21% YOY) and €187.44 million (down 6.1% YOY), respectively. Iran's trade with Luxembourg (€720,939), Slovakia (€5.74 million) and Bulgaria (€69.03 million) increased by 457.25%, 162.78% and 102.27% respectively year-on-year—the highest among EU states.

Trade with Malta (€1,553), Finland (€1.94 million), Ireland (€4.39 million), Latvia (€380,681) and Greece (€8.22 million) saw the sharpest declines of 98.95%, 86.39%, 85.44%, 75.84% and 57.28% respectively.

Kuwait's Emir Travels to U.S. for Medical Treatment

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) - Kuwait's 91-year-old ruler Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah left for the United States Thursday to undergo medical treatment, his office said, days after he had surgery for an undisclosed illness.

The emir, who has ruled the oil-rich Persian Gulf state since 2006, had been in hospital since the weekend.

Sheikh Sabah "left the country today at dawn to go to the United States to complete his medical treatment", his office said in a statement cited by state news agency KUNA.



Melbourne Orders Compulsory Masks

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Anyone venturing out in Australia's second-biggest city was ordered Thursday to wear a mask as authorities struggle to contain multiple coronavirus clusters in the country's southeast.

Most people seen by AFP on the quiet streets of Melbourne's city center wore masks in the second week of a six-week local lockdown.

Victoria state, of which Melbourne is the capital, recorded 422 coronavirus cases on Thursday -- a dip from a record peak of 484 on Wednesday, but its 18th consecutive day of triple-digit rises.



China Orders U.S. to Shut Chengdu Consulate



BEIJING (Dispatches) - As the United States lashed out against the "new tyranny" of China, Beijing on Friday ordered the closure of the American consulate in Chengdu, a retaliatory move that threatens to drive the two powers into an even deeper divide.

Beijing blamed the Trump administration for the deterioration in relations, calling its own action justified after Washington told China this week to shutter its consulate in Houston and accused its diplomats of acting illegally. A Chinese official, in turn, denounced American diplomats in Chengdu, a southwestern city, for interfering in China's affairs.

In the Chinese telling, Beijing is under assault, as the Trump administration goes after it with increasing intensity on trade, technology and human rights. All in a matter of weeks, the United States has sanctioned Chinese officials over the ruling Communist Party's policies in Hong Kong and the western region of Xinjiang, cut off Chinese companies' access to American technology and challenged Beijing's claims in the South China Sea. The party's propaganda outlets struck a nationalistic note on Friday, vowing that Beijing would hold firm in the face of mounting pressure from the United States.

"The United States has recently stirred up troubles in relations with China to the point of hysteria," said the official Xinhua News Agency, in an editorial.

"The unprovoked closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston by the United States not only aroused the indignation of the Chinese people," the editorial read, "but also allowed the international community to see the true face of American bullying."

To the Trump administration, China has been the aggressor. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday accused Beijing of exploiting the West's willingness to engage with the Communist Party. He called on "freedom-loving nations of the world" to band together and "induce China to change."

It was a speech set against a symbolic backdrop. Mr. Pompeo spoke in California at the library of President Richard M. Nixon, whose visit to China in 1972 set in motion a new era of relations that, he said, disadvantaged the United States.

"If we bend the knee now, our children's children may be at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party, whose actions are the primary challenge today in the free world," said Mr. Pompeo, whose reference to the closing of the consulate in Houston was met with applause.

"General Secretary Xi is not destined to tyrannize inside and outside of China forever unless we allow it," he added, referring to Xi Jinping, China's leader. Chinese officials have reacted angrily to the administration, accusing Mr. Pompeo and others of embracing a Cold War mentality. In a tweet on Friday, Hua Chunying, a foreign ministry spokeswoman, criticized Mr. Pompeo for "launching a new crusade against China in a globalized world."

Macron Seeks EU Sanctions Over Turkish "Violations" In Greek Waters

PARIS (Reuters) - French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday demanded EU sanctions against Turkey for "violations" of Greek and Cypriot waters and said the European Union should act over the crisis in Libya.

Turkey and Greece are at loggerheads over overlapping claims for natural gas reserves, brought into sharp focus by attempts of EU member Cyprus to explore for gas in the Eastern Mediterranean amid strong Turkish objections.

Macron's comments came after Turkey's navy on Tuesday issued an advisory for seismic surveys in an area of sea between Cyprus and Crete, a move Greece said was an attempt by Ankara to encroach on its continental shelf.

It also comes as relations between Paris and Ankara, two NATO allies, fray, with Paris repeatedly pointing the finger at Ankara over its role in Libya. "I stand fully behind Cyprus and Greece in the face of the Turkish violations of their sovereignty. It is unacceptable that the maritime space of (EU) member states be violated and threatened," Macron told reporters alongside his Cypriot counterpart, Nicos Anastasiades.

"Those who are doing that must be sanctioned."

He said it would be a "serious mistake" for the EU to not respond. Ibrahim Kalin, chief adviser to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, told a think-tank event in Brussels on Thursday: "Even in the language of threats of sanctions will never fly here and will have no impact on Turkey's sovereignty or determination in pursuing the national interest."

On July 13, EU foreign ministers agreed to prepare additional listings within the existing sanctions framework on Turkey's drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean, as requested by Cyprus.

Macron has also criticised Turkey for months over Ankara's role in Libya, and on Thursday said the EU should now push for sanctions. He did not identify nations or people that should be penalised for their involvement in the North African country's conflict.



Portland Mayor Tear-Gassed in Another Night of Unrest

PORTLAND (Reuters) - The mayor of the U.S. city of Portland, Ted Wheeler, was stung by tear gas early on Thursday morning after he joined demonstrators protesting against racial injustice and police brutality.

Security forces have frequently tear-gassed and clubbed demonstrators during weeks of unrest and Wheeler, visiting the protest site outside the federal courthouse in downtown Portland, urged federal agents to be withdrawn from the city.

"They're not wanted here," he said.

But Wheeler, who is also the city's police commissioner, was jeered at by demonstrators who called on him to resign and chanted "Shame on You". Some said he should have done more to protect Portland's citizens.

The deployment of federal agents in Portland on July 4 is a flashpoint in a national debate over civil liberties that has roiled the United States since the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis on May 25.

Demonstrators and local officials see the move as a political ploy by U.S. President Donald Trump, a Republican, to drum up a "law and order" campaign as he faces an uphill re-election battle. Wheeler, a Democrat, has called the intervention an abuse of federal power and said it was escalating the violence. Wednesday saw bigger and bigger crowds of supporters joining the demonstrations. After a few demonstrators had set trash bags on the fire outside the courthouse, federal agents inside the Justice Center fired tear gas, flash bangs and pepper balls into the area.

Protesters use shields to block non lethal rounds and react to tear gas fired by federal law enforcement officers during a demonstration against the presence of federal law enforcement officers and racial inequality in Portland, Oregon, U.S., July 23, 2020. REUTERS/Caitlin Ochs

Wheeler stood at the front of the line, in a surgical mask and goggles, and began to cough, a Reuters reporter said. He experienced two rounds of heavy tear gas. His eyes and nose were running, his face was red and his eyes were bloodshot.

U.S. in Talks With Japan About Marine Force Overhaul

TOKYO (Reuters) - The United States has begun talks with Japan about deploying mobile U.S. Marine units in Okinawa armed with anti-ship and air defence missiles that would work closely with Japanese forces on islands that prevent easy access to the Pacific for China's military, the Marine Corps commandant said on Thursday.

"You want to deter, to prevent any potential adversary from taking the next move," General David Berger said in a telephone interview. "If you are looking out from China, that's what you should see, a rock-solid alliance," he added.

In March, Berger published "Force Design 2030" a plan to trim aircraft numbers, dump most cannon artillery and cut heavy armour, including all its tanks, and create "Marine Littoral Regiments" equipped with missiles and drones that could deny an adversary control of contested areas by threatening their ships and planes.

That overhaul begins with tensions between the United States and China growing as Washington accuses Beijing of using the coronavirus pandemic to further territorial claims in the South China Sea and increase its influence elsewhere in Asia.

Beijing insists its intentions in the region are peaceful and has accused Washington of trying to drive a wedge between countries in Asia.

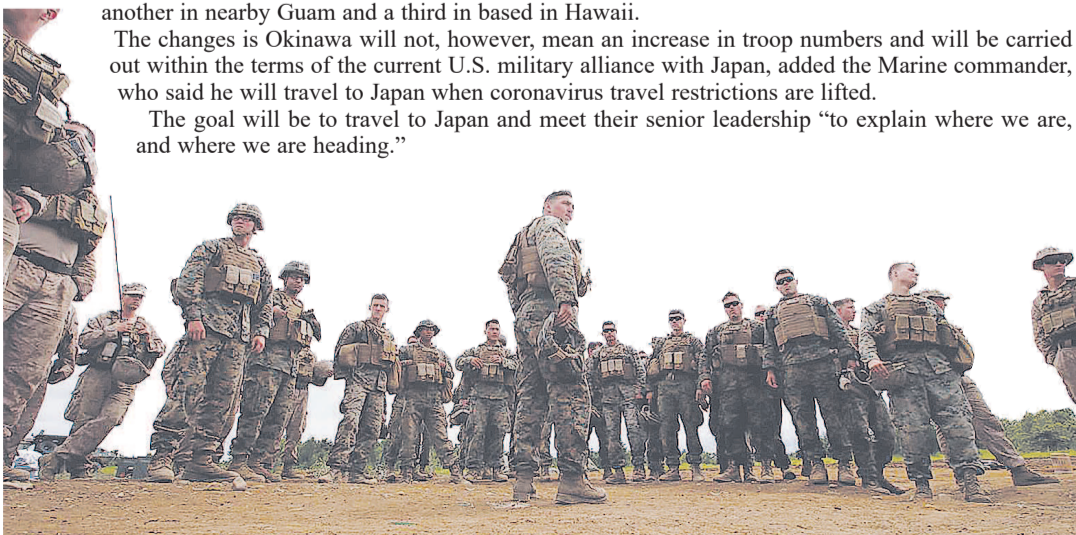
Japan's Okinawan islands are part of what military planners refer to as the "first island chain" stretching from Japan through the Philippines to Indonesia, that hems in China's growing forces.

In his proposal, Berger pointed to a shift in focus to "great power competition and a renewed focus on the Indo-Pacific region."

He said the Marine Corps will have an operational littoral regiment in Okinawa by 2027, with another in nearby Guam and a third in Hawaii.

The changes in Okinawa will not, however, mean an increase in troop numbers and will be carried out within the terms of the current U.S. military alliance with Japan, added the Marine commander, who said he will travel to Japan when coronavirus travel restrictions are lifted.

The goal will be to travel to Japan and meet their senior leadership "to explain where we are, and where we are heading."



WHO Chief Denounces Unacceptable Comments Questioning His Independence

GENEVA (Reuters) - The head of the World Health Organization said on Thursday that reported comments by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo questioning his independence were untrue and would not distract the organisation from its work in fighting the coronavirus. Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has come under criticism, especially from U.S. President Donald Trump and Pompeo, who have accused him of being pro-China.

"And the comments are untrue and unacceptable and without any foundation, for that matter," Tedros said in response to a question at a Geneva briefing about remarks by Pompeo reported in London on Tuesday. "Our sole focus - and the focus of the entire organisation - is on saving lives. "...And WHO will not be distracted by these comments. We don't want the international community also to be distracted."

A WHO advance team has been in China for nearly two weeks, organising a WHO-led international mission to investigate the origins of the virus. Scientists believe it emerged in a food market in the central city of Wuhan late last year.

"We are already beginning to reach out to experts at the international level to see who will be available and most appropriate to be able to support an international mission in the coming weeks," Mike Ryan, WHO's top emergencies expert, said.

Tedros said the WHO was seeing intense transmission of the coronavirus in relatively few countries.

"Two-thirds of all cases are from 10 countries. Almost half of all cases reported so far are from just three countries," he said, referring to the United States, Brazil and India.

Worldwide more than 15 million cases have been reported and nearly 620,000 deaths, he said. Recorded U.S. coronavirus infections exceeded 4 million on Thursday, with more than 2,600 new ones every hour on average, the highest rate in the world, according to a Reuters tally.



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J, L.balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Elahieh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
green gadren
Fully Furn

Parsian

Jordan (\$1800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
balcony, & F.F

Elahieh (\$2200)
220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, pkg, & F.F

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China Central Bank Weakens Midpoint by Most

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China's central bank weakened its official yuan midpoint by the most in nearly a month on Thursday, reflecting losses in the spot price a day earlier after Washington gave the Chinese consulate in Houston 72 hours to close.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) set the midpoint rate at 6.9921 per dollar prior to the market open, 203 pips or 0.3% weaker than the previous fix of 6.9718.



South Korea Enters Recession as Exports Plunge by Most Since 1963

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea plunged into recession in the second quarter in its worst economic decline in more than two decades as the coronavirus pandemic battered exports and social distancing curbs paralyzed factories.

Asia's fourth-largest economy shrank by a seasonally adjusted 3.3% in the June quarter from three months earlier, the Bank of Korea said on Thursday. That is the sharpest contraction since the first quarter of 1998 and steeper than a 2.3% fall seen in a Reuters poll.

South Korea joins Japan, Thailand and Singapore in technical recession, defined as two straight quarters of decline, as the pandemic slams Asia's trade-reliant economies. However, analysts and policymakers are looking at the prospect of a recovery that would be faster than those of its regional peers.

"It's possible for us to see China-style rebound in the third quarter as the pandemic slows and activity in overseas production, schools and hospitals resume," South Korean finance minister Hong Nam-ki said after the data was released, referring to China's return to growth in the second-quarter after a deep slump earlier in the year.

South Korea's gross domestic product fell 2.9% in year-on-year terms, the biggest fall since the fourth quarter of 1998 and worse than a 2.0% decline seen in the poll. Exports, which account for nearly 40% of the economy, were the biggest drag on growth, dropping by 16.6% on-quarter to mark the worst reading since 1963. South Korea's POSCO, the world's fifth-biggest steelmaker, reported an 84.3% drop in operating profit in the second quarter as global demand for steel plummeted. On Thursday, the world's No. 2 memory chip maker SK Hynix warned of uncertainty in the second half, even as its second-quarter operating profit tripled.

"While consumer spending should gradually recover, the threat from the virus is unlikely to fade entirely and some social distancing will probably have to remain in place," Capital Economics Asia Economist Alex Holmes said.

"Meanwhile, global demand is only likely to recover slowly which will weigh on the export recovery." South Korea has reported almost 14,000 infections and around 300 deaths since the start of the outbreak, relatively low numbers by global standards although the economic disruptions have been significant.

Construction investment fell 1.3% quarter-on-quarter, while capital investment declined 2.9%.

Output from manufacturing and the service sector fell by 9.0%, and 1.1%, respectively. One saving grace has been a 1.4% gain in private consumption from three months earlier, thanks to government cash handouts that boosted spending on restaurants, clothes and leisure activities. The government has rolled out about 277 trillion won (\$231 billion) worth of stimulus to fight the economic fallout from the pandemic so far. However, policymakers have little control over the global demand for the country's exports, which includes everything from memory chips to cars to petrochemical products.

"The worst seems to be over. The base effect and fiscal injection from supplementary budget will improve investment," said Park Sang-hyun, an analyst at HI Investment & Securities.

For the whole of 2020, analysts see the economy declining by a median 0.4%, which would be the first full-year contraction since 1998. But the International Monetary Fund estimates an even bigger 2.1% contraction.

Last week, the BOK's governor said a downward revision from its previous projection of a 0.2% decline for 2020 was inevitable.

Australia Warns Economy to Shrink Record 7% in Q2

SYDNEY (AFP) - Australia warned on Thursday that its economy will shrink at its fastest pace in history during the second quarter, while the budget deficit will be the biggest since the Second World War as the country battles to contain the impact of the coronavirus.

The government has stumped up tens of billions of dollars to fight the pandemic, which has ravaged global trade and forced the shutdown of much of the country earlier in the year, crippling the economy.

The reimposition of a six-week lockdown on five million people in Melbourne, the second-biggest city, has added to the struggles for a country already reeling from a prolonged drought and massive bushfires before the disease struck.

Officials said gross domestic product would contract seven percent in April-June, pushing the economy into recession for the first time in nearly three decades.

A recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction and the economy shrank 0.3 percent in the previous three months.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg also said the budget deficit would blow out to Aus\$185 (US\$132) billion -- almost a tenth of GDP -- in the year to June 30, having hit Aus\$86 billion in the previous 12 months.

"These harsh numbers reflect the harsh reality we face," Frydenberg said. "The economic outlook remains very uncertain."

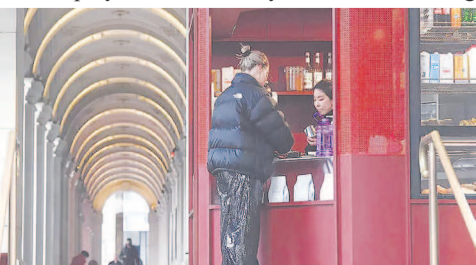
Much of the forecast deficit comes from massive stimulus spending designed to keep the economy afloat and prevent a full-blown economic depression. The government has rolled out around Aus\$289 billion in economic stimulus to cushion the country from the virus fallout, Frydenberg said, including support for workers, businesses and retirees.

Unemployment -- currently at a two-decade high of 7.4 percent -- is expected to peak at 9.3 percent in December.

The Australian dollar dipped 0.3 percent Thursday, while shares on the S&P/ASX 200 were flat.

However, the government is predicting a quick recovery with the economy returning to growth in the third quarter as easing virus restrictions bring increased activity. Frydenberg also predicted GDP would grow 2.5 percent in 2021, partially based on the assumption that international borders would open from January 1.

Australia has recorded more than 13,000 cases of COVID-19 and 133 deaths from the virus. The government is expected to deliver its budget in full in October, while economic growth figures are released in September.



Big Data May Help BOJ Guide Economy Through Pandemic Pain

TOKYO (Reuters) - Big data is providing some surprising results for the Bank of Japan and helping ease concerns about pressure on the economy during the coronavirus pandemic, which could influence the way the BOJ manages the world's most radical monetary stimulus.

By tapping data provided by Google showing people's movement via mobile phones, the BOJ found that households' discretionary spending rebounded faster and more vividly in Japan than in other countries after lockdown steps were lifted in May.

Other big data also showed a marked rebound in durable goods sales such as personal computers, which offset some of the weakness in spending on services including leisure, eating-out and travel. The revelation helped convince BOJ policymakers to conclude the economy has past the worst and did not need immediate, additional monetary support.

"We expect the economy to recover gradually and steadily," BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said after the bank's decision this month to keep monetary policy steady.

"Service sectors, such as sports and other events, may not recover to pre-COVID-19 levels easily ... But consumption and production of goods have hit bottom and are now rebounding sharply," he said.

Long seen as one of the most conservative central banks when it comes to data, the BOJ is now marshalling a 180-member statistics team to troll through cargo freight movement, traffic data collected from smart phones and satellite images of human activity around factories, for better insights into the economy.

Non-traditional data may also affect the way the BOJ gauges success in meeting its elusive 2% inflation target. An index tracking real-time trends using private data showed prices of some goods rose steadily even as services costs slumped, suggesting price moves may not be as deflationary as the official consumer price index (CPI) suggests.

The findings prompted the BOJ to warn in its quarterly report in July of the need to look at both the inflationary and deflationary impact COVID-19 could have on prices.

While CPI will remain the BOJ's key price gauge, its policy may become more detached from the index with more alternative information available, some analysts say. "The BOJ knows its conventional approach of simply tracking CPI won't work. While they won't change the 2% target, they will start looking at a wider range of data," said Tsutomu Watanabe, a former BOJ official and a pioneer of big data in Japan.

"Policymakers will have to fully rely on big data. That's already happening across the world and will only accelerate."

Major central banks are increasingly turning to real-time data to make quick calls on the pandemic-hit economy, as traditional indicators such as monthly retail sales and unemployment figures arrive too late to give a reliable picture of the impact of COVID-19. The Federal Reserve has led the drive, tapping numerous high-frequency data and exploring new ways like creating online polls and an index gauging changes in human movement.

The BOJ is playing catch-up.

Last year, the bank created a task force to better reflect big data findings into its economic projections -- a small but significant departure from the 140-year-old institution's traditional emphasis on theory and models.

Taiwan Proposes \$7b Extra Budget to Stimulate Economy

TAIPEI (Reuters) - Taiwan proposed a second supplementary budget for 2020 worth T\$210 billion (\$7.13 billion) on Thursday to ease the impact of the coronavirus outbreak as the trade-reliant economy is expected to slow to a five-year low this year.

Taiwan, whose largest trading partner is China, cut its estimate for 2020 economic growth to 1.67% in May, as the pandemic hit domestic consumption and tourism. Taiwan's cabinet said the new extra budget, which is subject to parliamentary approval, will be used to boost sectors hit by the pandemic including fishery, tourism and aviation.

"We hope to continue to help these sectors amid the difficult time," cabinet spokesman Evian Ting told reporters.

The government has stepped up support measures in recent months and is rolling out a stimulus package it expects will eventually be worth T\$1.05 trillion. It includes issuing "stimulus coupons" that the government said could boost consumer spending by T\$100 billion this year.

Academia Sinica, a government-backed academy, said this month the island's economy could recover gradually in the second half but that the escalating U.S.-China tension was a major concern.

Taiwan has kept the pandemic well in hand with only 8 active cases and no local transmission for more than three months due to early and effective prevention work and a strong public health system.

India to Offer Production Linked Incentives to Boost Manufacturing

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India is working on offering production linked incentives for up to five sectors to boost domestic manufacturing, a top finance ministry official said on Thursday, bolstering efforts to attract new investments in the coronavirus-stricken economy.

Asia's third-largest economy is expected to contract by as much as 10% in the current fiscal year beginning April, some private economists' estimate, after the outbreak crippled business and consumer activity since late March, compared to

government's earlier target of about 6% growth.

The government has announced a raft of measures including direct food subsidy to nearly 810 million people and credit guarantees of 3 trillion rupees (31.59 billion pounds) on loans to small businesses.

Tarun Bajaj, economic affairs secretary at the Ministry of Finance, told a virtual conference that incentives would be offered to sectors to push manufacturing and help struggling industries.

Bajaj didn't specify the sectors that may be eligible for incentives.

The government earlier announced production linked incentives for large scale electronic goods makers for five years, to attract investments in mobile phone manufacturing and electronic component units.

Incentives have also been announced for pharmaceutical companies for production of bulk drugs and on medical devices.

Speaking at a virtual conference organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Thursday, finance ministry official said the government was expecting a "V" shape economic recovery beginning next fiscal year.

Reuters earlier reported that India is drawing up an incentive scheme for the autos sector aimed at doubling exports of vehicles and components in the next five years.

Industry and government sources said sectors such as textile and food processing manufacturers could be offered production linked incentives.

The latest data on 14-15 economic indicators including railway freight and tax collections showed a pick up in economic activities, Bajaj said, adding the government was open to borrow more from the market to meet spending targets for infrastructure projects.

French Economy to Rebound To Pre-Crisis Levels by 2022

PARIS (Reuters) - The French economy is on course to rebound by 8% next year and should return to pre-crisis levels by 2022, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on Thursday.

Le Maire told the National Assembly recent economic data had been "satisfying but too fragile" for now to change forecasts for an economic contraction this year of 11%, the worst since modern records began.

"I won't resign myself to a -11% recession. If we step up the measures that we have already decided and make sure they are implemented well, we can do better than -11% in 2020," Le Maire said to open a debate on the public finances.

The government has committed more than 460 billion euros (418.12 billion pounds) in public funds to supporting the economy. Most will come in the form of state-guaranteed loans and tax breaks to help companies cope with a slump in business. Le Maire is drafting a recovery plan worth more than 100 billion euros to be presented on Aug. 24, aimed at bringing the euro zone's second-biggest economy back to pre-crisis levels.

Le Maire said that while he forecast a rebound in growth of 8% next year, the outlook was particularly difficult to project and depended in part on the depth of the recession this year.

"My objective is that we are able from 2022 to return to a level of growth and national wealth comparable to that before the crisis," Le Maire told lawmakers.

The government put France under one of the strictest lockdowns in Europe in mid-March, shutting down vast swathes of the economy.

Activity has steadily picked up since lockdown restrictions began to be lifted on May 11, although businesses such as hotels relying on foreign tourists continue to suffer. The INSEE official statistics agency said on Thursday business confidence gained further ground in July, though it remains far from pre-crisis levels.



Azmoun Named Top Goal Scorer Of Russian Football League

TEHRAN (IFP) - Sardar Azmoun, the Iranian striker playing for Zenit Saint Petersburg, has finished the 2019/20 season at the Russian Premier League as the top goal scorer after scoring against FC Rostov in the season's last fixture.

Both Azmoun and teammate Artem Dzyuba played 28 games, with both forwards scoring 17 goals, but the Iranian was ahead of

the Russian striker by virtue of fewer goals from the penalty spot. Azmoun scored one penalty, whereas Dzyuba scored seven.

In the history of the RPL, Azmoun is the third Zenit player to finish a season as top scorer.

Last month, in a poll conducted by the-afc.com, Azmoun was chosen as Asia's Greatest Russian Premier League player.



"Herd Immunity" Rejected as a Solution to COVID-19 Pandemic

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Academics from top universities discussed the efficacy of AI-assisted COVID-19 diagnosis system they had proposed months ago, during the 2nd round of MSTF Science Promotion Meeting held on Wednesday.

The 2nd round of MSTF Science Promotion Meeting hosted Hossein Ghanaati, head of Coronavirus think tank in Tehran province, and Hamid R. Rabiee, Member of The World Health Organization (WHO) AI committee, who have designed AI-Med—a system drawing on Artificial Intelligence for diagnosis of COVID-19 via chest CT scan.

Hamid R. Rabiee, professor at Department of Computer Engineering of Sharif University of Technology, stated that they have introduced this system to Indonesia, India, and some African countries.

"We have sent the system to different countries; it is available online, integrated into PACS, and on desktop. We've had meetings with a number of countries, and the meetings are to be continued," he added.

"We have received samples from other countries and entered them into the system," he continued.

He announced that they are designing a network which "can predict to what extent a COVID-19 patient has the chance of recovery, is at the risk of death, and how long they might be hospitalized."

"Other modes of data are being added into our new system, other than CT scan," he added.

He said AI-Med system facilitates the process of diagnosis during the peak time.

"It is integrated with hospitals' PACS. Different universities helped the introduction of this system into the hospitals," he continued.

He asserted that not only is this system specific and sensitive, but also it can detect the amount of infected area and its results are interpretable. Furthermore, the system updates itself according to the dynamic behavior of this virus.

Rabiee further hinted at the integral role of culture making regarding the acceptance of this system everywhere for COVID-19 detection. "There is clinical evidence that this system gives the results more quickly, in addition to being cost-effective, sensitive, and specific," he remarked.

Hossein Ghanaati, professor of Neurointerventional Radiology at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, asserted that in Iran we have not passed the first wave of this disease yet.

He said that "Coronavirus is a real war; a war against the existence of human beings."



Expressing doubts about the efficiency of any COVID-19 vaccine produced in the future, he stated that "COVID-19's behavior is different from other viruses. The amount of IgG in recovered patients is reduced after a while."

He proposed 3 strategies which can help to control the current crisis worldwide: 1) prevention; 2) effective management by the governments; and 3) tracking.

Maintaining that the second peak is predicted to be in autumn, Ghanaati said "as people have more indoor activities in that time of the year, the risk of infection increases."

Emphasizing the importance of wearing masks by everyone, he asserted that "herd immunity, which occurs when a large portion of a community becomes immune to a disease by getting infected, does not help to curb COVID-19."

He said while RT-PCR test is not accurate and its result gets ready in 2 days, chest CT scan test done via AI-Med is more accurate and the result gets immediately ready.

Regarding the utilization of AI-Med in Islamic countries, he said that "so far, Afghanistan and Iraq have consulted with us and have used our pieces of advice."

Science Promotion Meetings are a series of meetings held by the Mustafa(pbu) Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF) in order to communicate science and scientific achievements to the public.

India Blamed for Wrong Policies Over Expulsion From Chabahar Project



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday said India faced "expulsion by Iran in Chabahar project due to its wrong policies", adding that the country had "gradually strained" its relations with all its neighbours — Pakistan, China, Nepal and Bangladesh.

In a statement, Qureshi said India was spoiling its relations due to a "Hindutva mindset". "The so-called impression of a 'Shining India' is over now owing to incumbent government's policies of hatred and bias," he added.

Earlier this month it emerged that Iran had dropped India from the Chabahar rail project citing delayed finances.

The railway project, which was being discussed between the Iranian Railways and the state-owned Indian Railways Construction Ltd (IRCON), was meant to be part of India's commitment to the trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan to build an alternative trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

India is also set to lose an ambitious gas field project in the country that had been in the pipeline for past 10 years.

India's Ministry of External Affairs in a statement said that Tehran would develop the Farzad-B gas field in the Persian Gulf region "on its own" and might engage India "appropriately at a later stage".

Regarding Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh, the minister said Pakistan wanted to maintain good bilateral ties by "forgetting bitterness of past and moving towards a good future".

The foreign minister also said that the president-elect of the United Nations General Assembly, Ambassador Volkan Bozkir, is due to visit Pakistan on Monday.

Qureshi said he would present to Bozkir Pakistan's position on Indian occupied Kashmir, which he said was suffering the "worst human rights situation" in the world.

Outbreak Postpones Iran-China Talks on Cooperation Document

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs said that the outbreak of COVID-19 has postponed face-to-face talks between Iran and China on a long-term political and economic cooperation agreement.

Gholamreza Ansari made the remarks on Fri. and added, "it takes a long time for a document to be finalized and the document may be finalized several

times, but its contents may be increased and decreased again. We hope that the document on Iran-China cooperation will reach its final stage as soon as possible and be ready for executive negotiations."

"The only thing we can do about the agreement between Iran and China is to wait," he said, adding, "we have to wait for the talks to start, for the content of talks to be clear, and for the agreements to be clarified."

Iran, China...

FROM PAGE 1

"So the agreement between Iran and China is not something unusual. We are in the process of finalizing the deal, which affects both countries," as it "deals with many issues of interest for both sides and I think it is natural for ... two countries to sign such an agreement provided that this is something necessary for two sides," Iran's envoy said.

The agreement is to serve as a "roadmap" defining the quality of the countries' strategic relations for the subsequent 25-year period. It is expected to ditch the dollar in bilateral trade by bringing in each side's legal tender instead and bypass the illegal and unilateral sanctions that the United States returned against the Islamic Republic in 2018.

The roadmap is expected to enable such level of coordination between Tehran and Beijing that could eat away at Washington's sway in the region and further frustrate its attempts at isolating Tehran.

Takht Ravanchi was then asked if the Islamic Republic was hammering out the agreement with China because it can't come to a deal with the United States and because the U.S. has pushed Iran away.

"No," he asserted, saying the deal "has nothing to do with the U.S."

Iran and China's relations go long back in history, the ambassador said, and declared that the two countries were "natural friends" both interested in "a strategic alliance." On the other hand, Iran is "not interested to beg anything from the United States," the official noted. It was Washington, itself, that left the negotiation table in the first place by leaving a historic 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and then re-imposed the sanctions that the deal had lifted, he stated.

Takht Ravanchi, meanwhile, reminded that the reinstated U.S. bans have blocked transfer of "food and medicine" to the Islamic Republic among other items, refuting Washington's claims that such items were "exempt" from the coercive measures.

India Optimistic...

FROM PAGE 1

But curiously, Iranian sources had last week confirmed that "in the absence of an active Indian engagement and partnership", Iran has gone ahead with the construction of the Chabahar-Zahedan transit route.

That had come at a time of reports of massive Chinese financial assistance to Iran amid the U.S. sanctions which have posed a huge strategic challenge to India. It is well-known that Iran has grown extremely unhappy in the past few months due to Indian strategic proximity to the United States under President Donald Trump who had imposed sanctions on Iran.

In its statement on July 16, the MEA had said, "Insofar as the proposed (Chabahar-Zahedan) railway line is concerned, IRCON was appointed by Government of India to assess the feasibility of the project. It was working with CDTIC, an Iranian company under their Ministry of Railways in that regard. IRCON has completed the site inspection and review of the feasibility report. Detailed discussions were thereafter held on other relevant aspects of the project, which had to take into account the financial challenges that

Iran was facing. In December 2019, these issues were reviewed in detail at the 19th India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting in Tehran. The Iranian side was to nominate an authorized entity to finalize outstanding technical and financial issues. This is still awaited."

Iran Among...

FROM PAGE 1

Inequalities in human development are not just about disparities in income and wealth. The 2019 Human Development Report (HDR) explores inequalities in human development by going beyond income, beyond averages, and beyond today.

The report is organized into seven sections, the first section presents information on the country coverage and methodology for the 2019 Human Development Report. The next five sections provide information about key composite indices of human development: the Human Development Index (HDI), the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), the Gender Development Index (GDI), the Gender Inequality Index (GII), and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

The final section covers five dashboards: quality of human development, life-course gender gap, women's empowerment, environmental sustainability, and socioeconomic sustainability.

Libya and...

FROM PAGE 1

Turkey's greed is because of restoration of interests of its presence in Libya because before the public uprising in Benghazi in 2011, Turkey was one of the biggest contractors of construction and development projects during Qaddafi's era. Till the last moments of Qaddafi's ruling, Ankara did its best for a compromise between the West and Qaddafi and it even voted against any NATO's military operation against Libya. But after the toppling of Qaddafi's government in Libya, Turkish companies lost some trade contracts worth 20b euros and some 26,000 Turkish workers who were involved in those projects with Qaddafi government lost their jobs.

When the city of Tripoli was on the threshold of collapse, one Turkish private defense consultancy, SADAT, took responsibility of transferring Syrian terrorist militia to Libya. This company is run by former Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) brigadier general, Adnan Tanriverdi, who is currently military advisor to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The motivation for attracting interests in Libya has continued after it under several strange pretexts. Turkey's support from the Government of National Accord in Libya is nothing but financial. But Egypt's support is different story and the country both pursues financial interest and its Godfather-like attitude in Africa. Egyptians have always claimed of having the biggest and strongest Army in the Arab world and it is not an exaggeration.

Egypt has the most number of Abrams tanks after the U.S. and its air force has a collection of American fighter jets. With such a backbone of power, if the country remains indifferent and passive regarding developments in its neighboring country Libya, it will definitely lose its credibility among Arab states.

Although Egyptian parliament has recently approved a law which lets the government have military intervention in Libya, it seems President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi still refrains from taking any military intervention in Libya and confronting with Turkey. Hereby, the octopus-like approach for seizing Libya's oil interests has put Libyan people on the eve of tenth anniversary of war and bloodshed and the United Nations which is supporter of this octopus-like taste has contracted the silence disease and the theory of Responsibility to Protect is not applicable.

Iran Calls Harassment...

FROM PAGE 1

In a statement, Mousavi said Iran will take necessary political and legal actions once the investigation is completed.

"Meanwhile, Iran's permanent representative and ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi has explicitly emphasized to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres that Iran will hold the US responsible if anything happens to this airplane in its way back," Mousavi added.

The message has also been conveyed to the Swiss ambassador to Tehran, whose country protects the U.S. interests in Iran, he noted.

Two U.S. fighter jets came close to a Mahan Air passenger plane in Syrian airspace, causing the pilot to quickly change altitude to avoid collision.

A video posted by Iran's IRIB news agency showed a jet from the window of a plane and blood on the face of a passenger - reportedly as a result from an injury sustained during the sudden altitude change.

IRIB initially reported a single Israeli jet had come near the plane but later quoted the pilot as saying there were two jets which identified themselves as American.

The pilot of the passenger plane contacted the jet pilots to warn them about keeping a safe distance and the jet pilots identified themselves as American, IRIB reported.

The plane later landed in Beirut, safely evacuating its passengers, some of whom were injured.

It immediately took off and returned to Tehran's Imam Khomeini without any harassment, media reports say.

Marquez Absence Hands

Opportunity to Title Rivals in Jerez

MADRID (Dispatches) - Marc Marquez will miss this weekend's Andalucia Grand Prix after breaking his arm in Jerez last week, leaving his rivals with an excellent chance to steal an early march in the MotoGP title race.

The six-time elite-class world champion crashed out of the delayed season-opening Spanish Grand Prix last Sunday as France's Fabio Quartararo took his maiden MotoGP victory.

Honda will not replace Marquez in their factory team for the race, also in Jerez, while LCR-Honda's Cal Crutchlow faces a battle to be fit in time after he underwent surgery on his left wrist.

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Palermo Open Will Bear Losses

To Get Tour Going Again

MUMBAI (Reuters) - The Palermo Ladies Open will lose money when it gets the WTA Tour going again next month but tournament director Oliviero Palma says they will carry that burden to prove professional tennis can resume safely.

When action on the clay courts of the Sicilian capital gets underway on Aug. 3, it will mark the first time a tennis ball has been hit in anger across the WTA or ATP Tours since they were suspended in early March because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Liverpool Celebrate Long-Awaited Title in Front of Empty Kop

LIVERPOOL (Reuters) - Liverpool's players finally got their hands on the Premier League trophy on Wednesday in a muted presentation ceremony in front of an empty Kop after a thrilling 5-3 victory over Chelsea in their last home game of the season.

The club's first English title for 30 years had been sealed almost a month ago with seven games remaining, following a three-month stoppage because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kenny Dalglish, the last Liverpool manager to deliver the title, presented the medals wearing a red face mask before handing the trophy to captain Jordan Henderson who raised it to the night sky as fireworks and tickertape filled the air.

Sadly, because of the pandemic that interrupted Liverpool's charge to the title, the fans missed out on what would have been a momentous night at Anfield stadium. Merseyside police had issued a 48-hour dispersal order to stop fans gathering in large numbers across the city, as they did when the title was won on June 25 when nearest rivals Manchester City were beaten by Chelsea.

Many did gather outside, however, letting off flares and fireworks.

Despite the sanitised ceremony in the 53,000-seater stadium, Liverpool's players did their best to fill the void, belting out a rendition of the club's anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" along with manager Jurgen Klopp and his staff. "If you don't see that we do it for you I can't help you," Klopp said when asked for his message to the fans. "You made us happy, we all should celebrate at home. Prepare for a party and when this virus has gone we will have a party."

Liverpool chief executive Peter Moore said the players and fans will "come together to celebrate" when the time is right.

"It's been an amazing season," Henderson told former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher at pitchside.

"It's been a journey, a process, and every single player has been part of it."



A trophy presentation without fans was always going to feel a little flat, although the real fireworks have been provided over a sensational season by a superb Liverpool side.

Liverpool missed out by a point last year to Manchester City despite losing only one game. Although they won the Champions League title last June, the English crown is what the red half of Merseyside has craved for three decades.

During that time they have watched arch-rivals Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester City dominate the league.

The manner in which Liverpool took it back suggests it will not be a one-off.

"This won't be the last one for this team," former Liverpool midfielder Graeme Souness said. "This club is geared to be a very successful football club, this is Liverpool back to where they were 30 or 40 years ago."

"They will be challenging for this and the Champions League for the next decade."

Earlier on Wednesday Liverpool geared up to lift the Premier League trophy with a 5-3 win over Chelsea in a goal feast at Anfield to ensure they went an entire league season unbeaten at home.

Naby Keita opened the scoring with a thunderous effort, Trent Alexander-Arnold made it 2-0 with a curling free kick and they added another through Georginio Wijnaldum's half-volley from close range, before Olivier Giroud pulled one back on the stroke of halftime.

Roberto Firmino restored the three-goal advantage in the 55th minute but Chelsea scored through Tammy Abraham and Christian Pulisic to threaten a dramatic comeback before Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain put the result beyond doubt.

Man United Will Be 100% Fresh for Leicester Clash



LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester United have had a hectic schedule recently but will be "100% fresh" for Sunday's Premier League game at Leicester City as they look to secure a Champions League spot, manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

United, beaten 3-1 by Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-finals last Sunday, looked tired in Wednesday's 1-1 home draw against West Ham United, the fourth match in nine days for Solskjaer's side.

"... We've not been dealt the best of hands with the recovery times in the last couple of weeks but that's because we've been in the FA Cup," Solskjaer told Sky Sports.

"That's how it is, but we've got three days now ... the extra day before Sunday will make us 100% fresh. We've given ourselves a great opportunity."

"We wanted to give ourselves the chance to head there and get into the Champions League by beating them. Now, we'd be OK with a draw, but we'll be going there to win. You'll prepare as you always do to go and win the game."

Manchester United are third with 63 points, above Chelsea on goal difference.

Bangladesh Mull Sri Lanka Tour Following World Cup Postponement

DHAKA (Reuters) - Bangladesh are planning to reschedule their three-test series in Sri Lanka in October following the postponement of this year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia, according to a report.

The series was originally scheduled in July-August but had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic which also derailed the World Cup which was to begin on Oct. 18.

The governing International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday announced new dates for the Twenty20 World Cups in 2021 and 2022 as well as the 50-overs World Cup in India in 2023.

"The ICC's announcement of the three major tournaments has provided what window we can work with, as now that we know that the tournament dates are fixed, we can work around with our schedule," Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury told ESPNcricinfo website.

"Both boards are positive about the test series going ahead later this year. We are in talks with SLC (Sri Lanka Cricket)."

Sri Lanka, which has managed to keep COVID-19 numbers relatively low, is likely to be the venue when international cricket returns to the sub-continent from its coronavirus shutdown.

"Sri Lanka is in a better condition than any of the other sub-continent countries at the moment, and since the situation is not favorable here, we are more keen on the away matches," said Chowdhury who did not respond to Reuters calls seeking details.

The BCB is also looking to reschedule its Ireland tour as well as the home series against Australia and New Zealand which could not take place because of the pandemic.

"We will be in talks with Cricket Ireland as well, though the weather in Ireland is going to be a factor. We will also discuss in due time when Australia and New Zealand can tour Bangladesh," Chowdhury said.



Thiem Commits to U.S. Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Dominic Thiem says if the US Open is contested as scheduled, he'll play.

Thiem told CNN Sport's Patrick Snell if the U.S. Open plays as scheduled starting on August 31st, he will be there.

The three-time Grand Slam finalist reiterated remarks he made in Berlin last weekend: he's all in on the Open if it's contested as planned.

"If [the U.S. Open is] going to happen, I'm very sure that it's safe and that

I'm also going to play," Thiem told CNN Sport. "Because I guess it's time that the normal Tour is coming back."

The Citi Open in Washington, DC officially cancelled yesterday.

However, the USTA said in a statement it is committed to hosting the Western & Southern Open and U.S. Open in succession—without fans or media—in a safety bubble at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center next month.

The third-ranked Thiem came within one set of capturing his first career Grand Slam title before bowing to Novak Djokovic in a gripping five-set Australian Open final in February.

The defending champion survived a storm of shot-making from Thiem and mid-match dizziness fighting back for a 6-4, 4-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 triumph to capture his 17th career Grand Slam championship in Melbourne.

Late Fofana Winner Delays Juventus Title Celebrations

MILAN (AFP) - Seko Fofana scored the winner as Juventus fell to a shock 2-1 defeat at struggling Udinese on Thursday to miss the chance to seal the Serie A title for the ninth time in a row.

Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt had put the defending champions ahead three minutes before the break in Udine. But a diving Ilija Nestorovski header seven minutes after the interval got Udinese level, with Fofana completing a comeback for the north-eastern side in injury time.

Juventus remain six points ahead of second-placed Atalanta with three games left to play, and have another chance to seal the title for the 36th time on the pitch at home against 14th-placed Sampdoria on Sunday. Maurizio Sarri's side need just three more points and the coronation could even come on Saturday, depending on the results of their rivals Atalanta and Inter Milan, who play AC Milan and Genoa respectively.

"We paid for a lack of order after a good first half because we wanted to win at all costs," said Sarri. "In this way we took the game to a dangerous level, and after the 90th minute, we lost it."

The coach added: "In this period we are physically and mentally tired."

Juventus's performance against the minnows from Udine, close to the border with Slovenia, was worrying ahead of their crunch Champions League last 16 game against Lyon on August 7. "At the moment I am not thinking about the Champions League, in my mind there is only Sampdoria," added Sarri.



Ferrari Restructure F1 Technical Department

LONDON (Reuters) - Ferrari announced a restructuring of their Formula One technical department on Wednesday after struggling in the first three races of a season so far dominated by Mercedes.

The sport's oldest, most glamorous and successful team — last year's runners-up — are fifth in the championship with Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc pushed into more of a midfield battle.

Ferrari said in a statement the team would have a more focused and simplified chain of command, with the heads of each department given "the necessary powers to achieve their objectives."

Ferrari said Enrico Cardile would head up a new Performance Development department.

Other roles stay the same, with Enrico Gualtieri overseeing the power unit, Laurent Mekies remaining as Sporting Director in charge of trackside activities and Simone Resta head of chassis engineering.

"We are making changes to the technical side of the organization so as to speed up the design and development on the car performance front," said principal Mattia Binotto.

"A change of direction was needed to define clear lines of responsibility and working processes, while reaffirming the company's faith in its technical talent pool. "The department run by Enrico Cardile will be able to count on the experience of Rory Byrne and established engineers such as David Sanchez. It will be the cornerstone of the car's development."

