

Statistics of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade Showed That Production Volume Of Steel Ingot Registered a 7.5 Percent Growth in the First Two Months of the Current Year

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali and Russian Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan Exchanged Views on the Latest Regional Developments and Issues Concerning Afghanistan

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Iranians Never Succumbs to Pressure

TEHRAN (IP) - President Hassan Rouhani underlined that in these two years and several months of fighting the sanctions and five months of fighting the Coronavirus, the Iranian nation has shown that they have enough strength and power to face and resist the pressures and will never give in.

Speaking on Saturday morning at the session of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, Hassan Rouhani stated: "The Iranian nation has been facing the dangerous Coronavirus for more than five months and the country has entered the sixth month. If there are 10 more pressures which tend to divert people from the right path, people will make every big problem easy with cooperation."

Rouhani added that it's been more than two years and two months that the nation has been dealing with severe U.S. sanctions and the country has entered the second year and the third month.

Stressing that very difficult months and years have passed for our dear and noble nation, the Iranian President added, "People have experienced economic problems during these years. There have also been debates about the health and well-being of the people, and social distancing creates social and emotional problems that people have to endure."

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195 More Iranians Die of COVID-19 in 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health Ministry spokeswoman says 195 patients have died of the novel coronavirus in the past 24 hours, increasing the overall death toll to 15,484.

In her press briefing on Saturday, Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 2,316 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 288,839.

The spokeswoman said 251,319 patients have so far recovered from COVID-19, but 3,670 are still in severe conditions of the disease.

She stressed that so far 2,302,634 COVID-19 tests have been taken across the country.

As in previous days, she said, the red zones include Mazandaran, Fars, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Khorasan Razavi, Alborz, Khuzestan, Lorestan, Golestan, Kerman, Zanjan, and Ilam provinces.

Era of Judicial Hit-And-Run Is Also Over



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – An official in Iran's Judiciary says Iran will soon show the U.S. government that the era judiciary of hit-and-run is also over.

Reacting to the harassment of an Iranian passenger plane by two American fighter jets, the Head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights slammed it, reiterating that like in the past that Iranian armed forces proved it to the U.S. that the era of hit-and-run is over, Iran's Judiciary will also show the American bullies ruling in the White House that the era of Judicial hit-and-run is also over.

Ali Baqeri-Kani denounced the dangerous maneuvering by the U.S. warplanes close to the Iranian airliner in the Syrian airspace as an example of aerial banditry and a serious threat to global aviation security, saying lack of severe action against such an American move would violate international peace and security.

Denouncing the U.S. government for "systematic rudeness" in breaching international rules and regulations, he said, "The terrorist CENTCOM's harassment of the Iranian passenger plane over Syria was in violation of aviation security, freedom of civilian flights, and the fundamental and basic rules and principles of international humanitarian law."

Baqeri-Kani also emphasized that the Iranian Judiciary will resort to the domestic legal procedures, such as the "law on counteraction against the violation of human rights and the U.S.' adventurist and terrorist measures in the region," to seriously pursue the case against those who ordered, perpetrated, aided and abetted the harassment of the Iranian jetliner for the threat of violation of the passengers' right to life and for the physical and mental damages to them.

Prosecution of the violators of public rights will be on the agenda of the Iranian Judiciary at the international level according to the law, Baqeri-Kani concluded.

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

A video posted on Friday 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.

The 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, the IRIB reported.

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

Company to Make Purchases on Iran's Behalf to Settle Iraq's \$5b Debt

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - An Iranian trade official said Friday a company has been established in Iraq which will make purchases on behalf of the Iranian government to settle Baghdad's accumulated debts to Iran amounting to \$5 billion.

The secretary-general of the Iran-Iraq chamber of commerce Hamid Hosseini told Fararu website in Tehran that the money in question is deposited in Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI). He added that based on a mutual agreement Iran will provide the new company with list of "goods, commodities and raw materials" it needs, and the company will buy the goods and ship it to Iran. Iraq owes Iran money for gas and electricity and other goods imported from Iran which due to U.S. sanctions cannot be transferred to Iranian banks or the country's overseas accounts.

Iran's Central Bank Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati after a visit to Iraq on June 17 said an agreement had been reached for the payment of Iraq's debts by food and medicine exports to Iran.

According to Hamid Hosseini, the money which is currently held in a special account by Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) will be used to pay for the "basic commodities" purchased by the newly established company on behalf of the Iranian government. Iraq, however, enjoys a U.S. waiver which allows electricity imports from Iran.

Iranian officials have repeatedly spoken about Iraq's \$2 billion debt for gas and electricity imported from Iran. Hosseini has not disclosed if the \$5 billion debt includes the said \$2 billion.

Iranian officials say Iran's trade with Iraq amounts to around \$12 billion a year but details of the trade between the two countries has not been announced since the spring of 2019 when Iraq stopped publishing statistical data on its foreign trade. During the recent visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Mostafa al-Khadimi to Tehran Hassan Rouhani reiterated that the volume of the trade between the two countries should increase to \$20 billion a year.

No End to U.S. Criminal Acts

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Fri. that there is no end to the criminal acts of the United States.

The criminal actions taken by U.S. in threatening lives of ordinary people, ranging from economic terrorism to aviation terrorism, are not over, Kazem Gharibabadi added. In his reaction to two U.S. warplanes' harassment on an Iranian passenger plane over the Syrian sky, he called the U.S. government move "unacceptable".

Gharibabadi called on the international community to stand up against such malicious behaviors and force the United States to behave like a normal country.

"The criminal acts of the United States in threatening the lives of ordinary people, ranging from economic terrorism to aviation terrorism" are not over. Isn't it time for the international community to stand united in the face of these acts in violation of U.S. international law, which also threatens international peace and security, and to force it (United States) to act as a normal state? Threatening ordinary people and children and women to achieve political goals is the dirtiest kind of politics that will certainly fail," he wrote in his Instagram page.

In response, spokesperson the U.S. Central Command terrorist organization said a single F-15 had made a "visual inspection" of the Iranian airliner "in accordance with international standards... to ensure the safety of coalition personnel" at the military base in al-Tanf.

Washington Fails To Isolate Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Former representative of Iran to the United Nations said that Iran-China's cooperation is strategic, and the U.S. has failed to isolate Iran.

Referring to the various dimensions of Iran-China 25-Year Cooperation Roadmap, Gholam Ali Khoshroo called the cooperation a turning point in the relations between the two countries, as well as comprehensive development in their relation.

He described the Iran-China 25-Year Cooperation Plan as a roadmap for the two countries to use each other's existing capacities to strengthen and develop bilateral and regional cooperation.

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All Must Respect Safety Of Civilian Flights

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations, referring to the recent harassment of an Iranian passenger plane by two US warplanes, stressed that all countries must respect the safety of civilian air travel.

"As a matter of principle, the safety of civilian air travel should be respected by all," said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric during a daily press briefing on Friday, when he was asked about the incident.

On Thursday night, U.S. warplanes operating illegally in Syrian airspace conducted aggressive maneuvers dangerously close to an Iranian Mahan Air flight over Syria's al-Tanf region. Dujarric stressed that the world body had no specific information on that incident yet, adding that what he said about the safety of civilian air travel was just a principled position.

"I don't have any [information], at this point, we don't have any specific information on this incident," he further said. "I checked with my colleagues in Montreal at ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization]. They have nothing. They have not received anything as of yet," Dujarric added. Tehran has condemned the incident and the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran has already said that it would pursue the matter and file a complaint with the ICAO.

The Civil Aviation Organization of Iran urged the ICAO to immediately address the move, which is a clear violation of the international law and aviation standards and regulations.

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Iran Exports to Russia up 20% Amid Coronavirus

TEHRAN - A 20% increase in Iran's exports to Russia over the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (starting 19 March) shows that coronavirus outbreak has not affected bilateral trade relations, said an official.

Chairman of Iran-Russia joint Chamber of Commerce Hadi Tizhoosh Taban said that Iran's exports to Russia increased over 20% growth despite coronavirus outbreak and its impact on economic interactions in the world. Iran is looking after creating a network in 12 southern Russian provinces for improving trade ties, he added referring to creating Iran-Eurasia national office.

Any Criminal Act By U.S. to Accelerate Zionist Regime's End

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis Speaker has reacted to the recent aggressive maneuvering by two U.S. warplanes close to an Iranian airliner over Syria, saying that any misconduct by the U.S. will lead to a sooner end of the Zionist regime.

In a tweet on Friday, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said he had been briefed about the U.S. terrorists' misconduct against a Mahan Air's plane in a telephone conversation with the airline's head.

"The Americans are lying about their routine maneuvering route, and Mahan Air pilot had to reduce altitude as he received traffic collision avoidance system (TCAS) twice after the two aircraft got too close to the plane," Qalibaf said.

"The Americans tried to provide the grounds for a possible error in the hope of reaching their evil goals," he said.



The speaker stressed, "Any crime by the Americans, will definitely accelerate the humiliating destruction of the arrogant [elements] in the region, especially the sinister Zionist regime."

Two U.S. warplanes put the lives of tens of Iranian and Lebanese civilians in danger after conducting dangerous maneuvering near Beirut-bound Mahan Air's Flight 1152 on Syria's air on Thursday night. The airliner's pilot reportedly reduces flight altitude to avoid colliding with the warplanes which has led to several injuries among passengers.

Iran Not to Retaliate in Kind for U.S.' Harassment of Passenger Plane

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says the Islamic Republic has no intention of retaliating in kind for the harassment of an Iranian airliner by two US warplanes in Syrian airspace.

Mohsen Baharvand said on Saturday the US act was an unlawful move, and retaliation in kind is not necessarily the response to such an act. "Two bad moves will not necessarily lead to a good result," said Baharvand, the deputy Iranian foreign minister for legal and international affairs.

"If the U.S. military has committed such an act against a civilian airplane, the Iranian Armed Forces will not endanger the lives of innocent individuals simply because of Washington's unlawful act," he said.

"While being brave and sturdy, our armed forces abide by professional, ethical and human principles, and this is the difference between us and powers which try to settle all their issues through bullying," he noted.

"Their main support base is material power devoid of morality," said the top official.

He said the harassment of a passenger plane is an unlawful act and runs counter to international regulations.

"No one has the right to jeopardize the safety of airplanes of a country intentionally," he said, adding, "The United States' militarism has put international peace and security in danger."

"It is no honor for a modern jet fighter to harass and imperil the safety of a defenseless civilian plane carrying defenseless men, women and children as passengers," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he touched upon the illegal presence of the U.S. military in Syria.

"This incident happened in the skies over Syria, which, itself, is one of the victims of the US militarism," he said.

"Basically, the presence of American aircraft in that area is an illegal act and seen as a violation of the UN Charter," he said.

FDI at \$2.1b in Industrial Parks by Last Year

TEHRAN (MNA) – The official statistics of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade revealed the attraction of \$2.1 billion worth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Iran's industrial parks up to the end of last year (March 20, 2020).

In the same period, some 231 foreign investors made investment in Iran's industrial parks and areas, based on which, 19,862 employment opportunities were generated through FDI in these areas.

These statistics show that the government has thrown its weight behind Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) before the termination of last year (ended March 20, 2020).

Accordingly, 1,100 industrial and production units are busy active in country's industrial parks and areas with the annual export value of \$12.640 billion at large. In this line, a number of 62 Export Management Company (EMC) were identified in country's industrial parks with \$236 million exports value, in which, 72 export consortia were also established with \$352 million worth of exports annually.

Another statistic indicates that 23 Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were inked between Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and various countries in order to develop and enhance international cooperation.

Supporting presence of 41,631 industrial units to take part in prestigious domestic and international exhibitions, dispatching 176 expert managers of industrial units to Germany for getting familiarity with market of this European country, finding new target markets, establishing a long-term tie with German firms, etc. are of the other salient measures taken by the government in this field.

Diplomat Advises Waiting for Details of Iran-China Agreement

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Gholamreza Ansari advised waiting for details of Iran-China draft agreement, saying that air flights to China have been cancelled due to lockdown in the aftermath of coronavirus pandemic, so that negotiations on long-term political and economic cooperation agreement with China was postponed.

Ansari said that draft document for comprehensive Iran-China cooperation will be finalized as soon as possible.

The draft agreement, its release and whether it will remain as a cooperation document or it will become an agreement depend on the context of negotiations, he noted.

In response to a question whether Iran will have such an agreement with other countries like Russia or India, Ansari said that naturally the Foreign Ministry suggests to create more certain ground with other countries to develop ties and economic cooperation.

Army Produces All Military Equipment Domestically



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Coordinator of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, Rear Admiral Sayyari said that all military parts and equipment needed in Iran's Army are manufactured domestically.

A very high percentage of Iran's Army military equipment is domestically manufactured, Habibollah Sayyari added. Speaking in his visit to Shahid Borhan Industrial Company, affiliated to Iran's Army Ground Force, on Sat., he pointed to the high capability and potential of experts in this unit in the field of confronting the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and stated, "production volume of disinfectants and face masks are constantly monitored in this unit."

Various types of disinfectants and face masks are produced in this industrial unit, he said, adding, "in addition to meeting requirements of Army's Ground Force, this industrial unit is able to meet demands of other Armed Forces of the country optimally."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Sayyari pointed to domestic manufacturing of military equipment as one of the components of deterrent power and reiterated, "today, Iran's Army does not have anything to be produced abroad while a very high percentage of the Army's equipment is domestically produced."

Turning to Iran's Army cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in the field of dealing with coronavirus, COVID-19, he said, "since the beginning of outbreak of coronavirus in the country, we wrote a letter to the health minister, saying that Iran's Army is ready to cooperate and collaborate with the ministry in line with containing the disease."

To date, more than 12,000 personnel of Army's forces are cooperating with the Health Ministry in the fight against coronavirus, he said, adding, "accordingly, we could control the disease at garrisons throughout the country appropriately."

Iran-Uzbekistan Stress on Developing Road Transport Ties

TEHRAN (IP) - Stressing on developing road transportation, Iran-Uzbekistan bilateral meeting on Joint Road Transport Committee was held in the presence of the Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, the Deputy Minister of Transport and the Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tehran and the representative of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tashkent via video conference.

Referring to Coronavirus outbreak in the world, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran Mr. Abdolhassem Hassannia said, "development of Iran-Uzbekistan economic cooperation has always been of importance for senior officials of the two countries."

Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran said that Iran is ready to develop cooperation in knowledge-based transfer and experience, maintenance of roads and facilities, and intelligent transportation systems. He added, "Road transport relations between the two countries are in good condition and growing."

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran stated, "In the framework of multilateral cooperation, the two countries have good cooperation in the field of Ashgabat Agreement and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), it will also pave the way for further cooperation, using the capacity of the Chabahar Agreement to access the high seas of the Indian Ocean."

Meanwhile Uzbekistan Deputy Minister of Transport Davron Dekhkanov, stressed the importance of holding the meeting to resolve transport issues between the two countries, saying: "Due to some problems in road transport routes, we have replaced other routes, which is hopeful. As a result of holding these meetings, more suitable conditions should be provided for the development of transportation relations."

Adding Iran-Uzbekistan are cooperating in the form of several bilateral and multilateral agreements in the road transport field, the Uzbek official said resolving issues in this area will certainly have a significant impact on increasing the development of transport ties.

Iran, Senegal Discuss Cooperation In Fight Against COVID-19

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian envoy to Senegal and Senegalese minister of health held talks on cooperating with regards to battle the coronavirus global pandemic.

Iranian Ambassador to Senegal Mohammadreza Dehshiri met and held talks with Minister of Health and Welfare of Republic of Senegal Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr on Friday.

In this bilateral meeting, the two sides exchanged views about the possibility of establishing medical centers in Iran and Senegal in various fields of general, specialized, sub-specialized, dental and laboratory.

The envoy said that Iran is ready to invest and send specialized medical staff and also medical supplies to Senegal as well as meet pharmaceutical requirements of this African country in the fight against COVID-19 according to the international standards.

For his part, Senegalese minister of health welcomed Iran's proposal in sharing its experience with Senegal in the fight against coronavirus.

It was decided that a Memorandum of Understanding should be formulated within the framework of the 5th Joint Commission between the two countries subsequently.

U.S., Israeli Worry About Iran Influence in Middle East

TEHRAN (ILNA) - A former Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has said the US and Israeli officials are concerned about Iran's influence in the Middle East.

Ramin Mehmanparast, also a former ambassador to Poland, said that U.S. and Israeli officials feel that their plans for the region have no result.

Referring to the recent incidents to Mahan Air passenger plane, the ex-diplomat added "In order to keep the Islamic Republic of Iran away from the region, they do not even hesitate to threaten our passenger planes."

Former Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said that they shaped the biggest anti-human terrorist movement in our region; we will not forget the crimes committed by Daesh group (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria.

Mehmanparast pointed to the next presidential election and confirmed "US presidential election is fast approaching, and Trump is not in a strong position due to his failed policies in the regional and domestic sectors, including the fight against coronavirus, as well as the racist debate that he and his friends have supported."

He added that so Washington is trying to divert the public opinion from realities.

Iran Urged to Give a Crushing Response to U.S. Terrorist Act

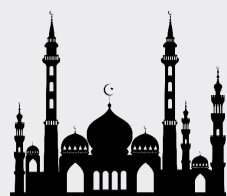
TEHRAN (MNA) – A member of Parliament's Presiding Board said that the Parliament should give a decisive response to the recent U.S. terrorist act in harassing Iran Air's Mahan in its flight over Syrian sky.

Seyed Nasser Mousavi Largani in an interview said that the Iranian Parliament will not remain silent in the face of the US terrorist act.

He pointed to the harassment of an Iranian airliner by two U.S. warplanes and added, "certainly, the criminal act of the United States will not go unanswered and the Islamic Republic of Iran will give a decisive response to the heinous move taken by the U.S. which is against the law and in clear violation of international law."

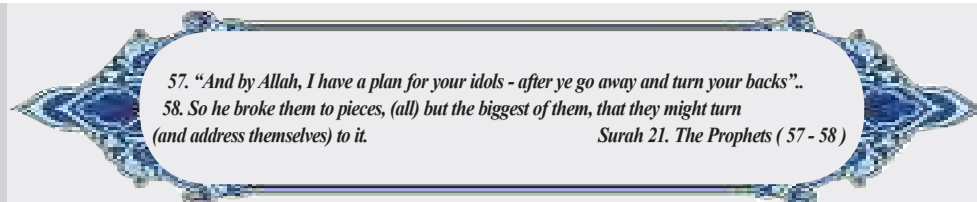
The Iranian nation considers the U.S. government a criminal. Americans have always had a temperament of domination and aggression and do not give up their malicious behavior, he highlighted.

He pointed to a statement of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, saying that the era of hit and run has ended and emphasized, "Cowardly harassment of a passenger plane means nothing more than state terrorism, and the United States must wait for a response to this barbaric act."



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 13:10 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 20:33 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 04:30 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:09 |



Iran, Italy To Boom Economic Relations

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The think tank European House - Ambrosetti in partnership with the Italian Embassy in Tehran and the Tehran's Chamber of Commerce - hosted today a virtual Business Forum on "Economic relations between Italy and Iran in the current context: non-oil sectors, SMEs' role, EU support".

More than 800 Italian and Iranian representatives from the private sector, business consultants and professionals attended the online event, aimed at discussing avenues for economic cooperation, building on a longstanding tradition of friendly relations and vibrant economic bonds between Italy and Iran.

The online event offered participants the opportunity to analyze the current economic context and lay the premises for increased cooperation. Furthermore, a special virtual B2B session was held where participants established direct contact, with a view to exploring options for further cooperation and exchange.

In his opening remarks the Italian Ambassador in Tehran, Giuseppe Perrone, highlighted Italy's wish to bring economic and trade relations with Iran back on a positive trajectory.



While appreciating the commitment and professionalism by Iranian private sector, he pointed out the deep historical ties existing between the two Countries as well as the significant number of Italian companies who over the years have built strong relationships in Iran and look forward to the opportunity of advancing their cooperation.

On his part, the Chairman of Tehran's Chamber of Commerce, Masoud Khansari, encouraged participants to bet on Iran's important economic potential and to develop effective partnerships, including by seizing the opportunities available in the broader region.

Khansari also recognized the special role Italy has always played as a key partner to the Iranian private sector in trade and investment activities, wishing that Italian companies continue to be a reference point for their Iranian counterparts.

The event also included a presentation by experts from the European Union, of new tools made available at the EU level to facilitate trade relations between European companies and Iranian ones.

Pandemic Hits Iran's Exports To Turkey, China and India

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The outbreak of Coronavirus has been the major factor in slump in Iran's exports to Turkey, China and India in the first five months of 2020.

According to reports, Iran's exports to Turkey in the first five months of 2020 have declined by 87.1% due to the pandemic and closure of borders.

The report reiterates that Iran's imports and exports have been seriously hit by the pandemic and they are facing a serious challenge because most of borders with neighboring countries are close or half-closed and it has led to decline in the volume of trade. This happens while this year has been named as Year of Surge in Production and one of the factors in surge in production is the increase of non-oil exports.

The statistics show drastic fall in exports in the first five months comparing to the same period in 2019. Although there is a sign of rise in oil products, the total volume of exports has fallen by 3.4 percent.

The trade with Turkey has been seriously hit due to the pandemic, and exports to India and China have also been affected by the virus.

Pipelines of 2nd Stage of Phase 13 Of S. Pars Ready for Exploitation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The operator of Phase 13 of South Pars announced the end of operation for pre-launch and launch of pipelines of platforms A13 and C13 in the South Pars gas field.



According to Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), Payam Motamed pointed to the installation of main platform A13 and satellite platform C13 in March, 2019, as well as launching the offshore pipelines B13 and D13, adding that after evacuating water, drying and deoxygenation in intra 18 and 23 inch pipelines in the second stage of Phase 13 of South Pars with a length around 100 kilometers, these lines have been completed and are ready to transfer enriched gas to the onshore refinery with capacity of one billion cubic feet per day.

Motamed noted that all these activities have been done by Iranian contractors, adding that this important achievement is one of the honors of this project which was achieved amid the pandemic and through observing all health protocols and social distancing.

Currently some 1b cubic feet of gas is exploited from the first stage of Phase 13 of South Pars which is sent to the onshore refinery in Kangan. The refinery was inaugurated in March 2019 with the capacity for processing 56m cubic meters of sour gas and strategic hydro carbonic products.

KSC Sets 14 Records For Consecutive Melting

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Tireless staff of the steel-making unit No.2 of Khorasan Steel Complex Company set new records and they registered another success in saving consuming materials and improving productivity in this unit.



According to the public relations of the company, head of exploitation of Khorasan Steel Complex Company announced that the steel-making unit No. 2 of the company set 14 new records in consecutive melting.

Eng. Zare hailed the efforts of staff of all sections of the steel-making unit No.2 for their success and expressed hope in the year of surge in production, this positive trend of production in the company would continue through team work and empathy.

He noted that staff of the casting section in the unit No.2 succeeded in ingot casting of 14 consecutive melting in one sequence.

Meanwhile head of casting section of the steel-making unit No.2 delved into details of the success, adding that the unit succeeded in setting new record of 14 consecutive melting to improve its former record which was 13.

Eng. Rastgoo added that this success achieved while the unit saved significant amount of consuming materials and boosted its productivity.

He added that the new record was set in just 11 hours.

MSC Hailed for Sustainable Power Network

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN - The managing director of Isfahan Regional Electric Company (IREC) by sending a letter of appreciation to Mobarakeh Steel Company hailed the company's cooperation with the IREC in managing and reducing its electricity consumption in its production lines in order to avoid any electricity outage happening in the province.

Rasoul Mousa Rezaei in his letter of appreciation said the national electricity network has faced with electricity production due to the significant rise in consumption because of the summer heat. He added that for this reason, the company had to use all capacities of its industrial subscribers in order to pass the peak time of consumption, and fortunately Mobarakeh Steel Company like the past years had very effective cooperation with the company by reducing its consumption despite its great need in its production lines, and this assistance helped the IREC to manage electricity supply to its subscribers and to avoid power outage.

Mousa Rezaei in his letter expressed his gratitude to MSC for its assistance to the company for passing the peak consumption behind.

Reinforcing Water Supply From Isfahan Water Treatment Plant



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN - Deputy for Water Exploitation and Development of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company says by implementing the 12.3-kilometer-long water transfer pipeline from Shirkhaneh in Najafabad to the water distribution control center of the city of Isfahan in Felman, the capacity for water supply to the towns which are under coverage of Great Isfahan's water treatment plant will be reinforced.

Naser Akbari said that since early April till now, six kilometers of the water transfer pipeline with 1400 millimeters of diameter and with the cost over 35b tomans has been carried out while it is predicted that for the remaining six kilometers of the project, the company needs 70b tomans of budget.

He reiterated that by implementing the project, some 300 liters per second of water will be added to the water transfer capacity from Ashtarjan Tunnel to Isfahan. Akbari also added that currently, the ultimate water transfer capacity from Isfahan's First System is around 11.5 cubic meters per second while the water demand in the province in its peak hours of consumption is around 15.5 cubic meters per second.

He pointed to the capacity for provision of drinking water in the province, adding that in the summer, some 11.5 cubic meters per second of water from the First System in Isfahan as well as some 1.5 cubic meters per second of water from other resources like Felman wells or other wells are provided and ultimately the capacity for drinking water supply in Isfahan Province will reach 13 cubic meters per second.

Akbari admitted that during the peak hours, the company faces with shortage of 2.5 cubic meters per second of drinking water to supply its subscribers but due to measures and management in consumption, this shortage is comparatively covered.

He reiterated the implementation of water transfer pipeline with 1400 millimeters of diameter can reinforce the water supply to Isfahan.



SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

PERMIT NO : 1399.2022



CALL FOR PUBLIC TENDER

(FIRST/SECOND PUBLISHER ONE STAGES TENDER)

• Subject of Tender:

| Tender No. | Description |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| FP/12-99/058 | P/F "VARCO" TOP DRIVE |

• Tender descriptions:

| The Tender holder | Registration No. through national electronic tendering system | Tender No. / Indent No. | Estimated value (Rial) |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|
| National Iranian Drilling Company | 10,603,765 | Tender No. :FP/12-99/058 Indent No.:08-22-9845172 | 1,625,000,000 |

• Qualitative evaluation of tenders

| Method | Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject. |
|--------|--|
|--------|--|

• Purchasing & Submitting

| Tender Document Distribution by Company | The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof (10 AUG 2020) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Distribution Place | Submitting Method |
| Documents Receiving Method | Closing date | • 35 Days after the last time of Purchasing. (19 SEP 2020) |
| | Address | Hall No. 107, 1st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569 |

• Tender Guarantee

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|--------------|
| Value of guarantee | 1,625,000,000 Rial / 11,026 Euro | Regarding Tender No | FP/12-99/058 |
| Type of guarantee | Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. | | |
| Duration of credit & quotation | Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration. | | |

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)

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Chinese Researcher Takes Refuge in San Francisco Consulate in U.S. Custody

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A Chinese researcher who took refuge from U.S. authorities at China's consulate in San Francisco is now in American custody and is expected to appear in court on Monday, U.S. Justice Department officials said.

According to court filings in U.S. District Court in San Francisco this week, Juan Tang, who worked at the University of California, Davis, falsely claimed on her visa application that she had not served in the Chinese military. She was charged with visa fraud on June 26.

The Chinese embassy did not respond to a request for comment on the case.



Trump Eases Controls On Armed Drone Exports

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The Trump administration moved Friday to ease controls on exports of armed drones, saying that allies need U.S. technology and that other countries outside of a non-proliferation pact were taking over the market.

The White House announced that President Donald Trump had approved a move to diverge partly from the 1987 Missile Technology Control Regime, in which 35 countries agreed to restrict the sales of unmanned weapons delivery systems.

The MTCR was aimed at controlling the spread of missiles that could deliver large payload like nuclear weapons.



Australia Rejects Beijing's South China Sea Claims



SYDNEY (AFP) - Australia has rejected Beijing's territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea in a formal declaration to the United Nations, aligning itself more closely with Washington in the escalating row.

In a statement filed on Thursday, Australia said there was "no legal basis" to several disputed Chinese claims in the sea including those related to the construction of artificial islands on small shoals and reefs.

"Australia rejects China's claim to 'historic rights' or 'maritime rights and interests' as established in the 'long course of historical practice' in the South China Sea," the declaration read.

"There is no legal basis for China to draw straight baselines connecting the outermost points of maritime features or 'island groups' in the South China Sea, including around the 'Four Sha' or 'continental' or 'outlying' archipelagos."

The declaration comes after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared Beijing's pursuit of territory and resources in the South China Sea as illegal, explicitly backing the territorial claims of Southeast Asian countries against China's.

Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea based on a so-called nine-dash line, a vague delineation from maps dating back to the 1940s.

The latest escalation comes ahead of annual talks between Australia and the United States, with ministers travelling to Washington for the first time since Australian borders were closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The meetings come at a "critical time" and it is essential they are held face-to-face, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said in a statement on Saturday.

U.S. relations with China have markedly deteriorated in recent months, especially over trade disputes, the coronavirus pandemic and Beijing's crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong.

On Friday, Beijing ordered the U.S. consulate in Chengdu to shut in retaliation for the closure of its Houston mission over accusations of being a hub for intellectual property theft.

Payne and Reynolds also penned an article in The Australian newspaper on Saturday, labelling national security legislation imposed on Hong Kong last month as "sweeping and vague".

"We face a public health crisis, economic upheaval and resurgent authoritarian regimes using coercion in a bid to gain power and influence at the expense of our freedoms and sovereignty," they wrote.

Thousands of Hungarians March For Media Freedom



BUDAPEST (Reuters) - Thousands of Hungarians marched towards Prime Minister Viktor Orban's office on Friday in protest at perceived government attacks on media freedoms, as anger built at the sacking of the chief editor of the country's leading independent news website.

Earlier in the day, three editors at Index.hu and more than 80 journalists - almost its entire staff - resigned over what they called an "open attempt to exert pressure" on the site after its owner refused to reinstate Szabolcs Dull.

Dull's dismissal has increased concern that Orban's nationalist government, in power for over a decade, is intensifying efforts to muzzle critical voices.

"We are not necessarily here because we liked Index but we are now at a point where accessing information is jeopardised,"

said protester Istvan, 30, among the large crowd that set out from Index's headquarters to Orban's office in Buda Castle.

Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said his government was facing "untrue accusations" with respect to threats to media freedoms. "How would the state intervene in the decisions of a media which is privately owned?" he told a news conference on Thursday during a visit to Portugal.

Index, which about a month ago set its self-styled "independence barometer" to "in danger" to signal what it saw as outside attempts to influence its content, is by far the largest media organisation that is critical of the government.

"Index was the last outlet that bothered the government to this extent," Peter Uj, who co-founded Index in 1999, told Reuters. He quit in 2011 because of increasing pressure from Orban's Fidesz party.

"Less conspicuously, the system gobbled up not only titles but also ... ad agencies... The government controls three-quarters of the advertising market one way or another," he said. "This is a state market."

U.S., Russia to Hold First Space Security Talks Since 2013

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States and Russia next week will conduct their first formal, bilateral talks on space security since 2013, following a U.S. allegation that Russia tested a space-based anti-satellite weapon this month, a U.S. official said on Friday.

Washington hopes to promote norms of responsible behavior in outer space, the U.S. assistant secretary of State for international security and nonproliferation, Christopher Ford, said, calling for greater stability, predictability and crisis management tools.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said the talks would take place Monday in Vienna.

Ford told reporters the United States believed Russia and China have already turned space into "a war-fighting domain," noting the U.S. Space Command has said it has evidence that Russia tested a space-based anti-satellite weapon on July 15.

"What they're doing is signaling to the world that they're able to destroy satellites in orbit with other satellites, it would appear. That is a very disturbing, provocative, dangerous and ill-advised thing for them to be doing," Ford said.

"We hope that we can convey that message to them and work on a better way for countries to show appropriate restraint and responsible behavior in orbit, because this is the sort of thing that could get out of hand and go very badly rather quickly in the future," Ford added.

He declined to name who will lead the U.S. team or to address whether U.S. and Russian officials next week might discuss a possible replacement for the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which caps U.S. and Russian deployed strategic nuclear weapons warheads at 1,550 each.

The U.S. special presidential envoy for arms control, Marshall Billingslea, told reporters after June 22 arms control talks with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in Vienna that further talks were possible in late July or early August.

U.S. Charges 18 Portland Protesters

PORTLAND (Reuters) - U.S. prosecutors on Friday unveiled charges against 18 Portland, Oregon protesters ranging from assaulting police to arson and trespassing, a day after the Trump administration expanded the deployment of tactical police to Seattle.

The arrests came this week during clashes with specially equipped federal police agents sent to Portland, where 56 straight days of antiracism demonstrations have captured national attention.

The federal forces have drawn criticism from Democrats and civil liberties groups who allege excessive force and federal overreach by President Donald Trump.

The deployment of federal officers has also drawn the scrutiny of the Justice Department inspector general, who announced an investigation of their use of force, and prompted a federal judge to issue a temporary order limiting their use of force and blocking them from arresting journalists and legal observers of street protests.

The Trump administration sent a tactical team to Seattle on Thursday in anticipation of protests this weekend despite the objections of the Seattle mayor and Washington state governor, who warned of a Portland-like escalation of tensions.

U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington Brian Moran said in a statement that federal agents

are stationed in Seattle to protect federal properties and the work done in those buildings.

"Let's not let the violence that has marred the Portland protests damage peaceful movements here for a more just society," Moran said. "My hope is our community will speak with one voice to discourage those who seek to hijack peaceful protests with damage and destruction."

The Trump administration has also sent federal police to Chicago, Kansas City and Albuquerque over the objections of those mayors.

Trump, who is running for re-election on Nov. 3 in part on a campaign of law and order, has threatened to deploy federal forces in more cities run by Democratic mayors, who he accuses of being soft on crime.

The Portland team of tactically equipped, camouflaged officers fired tear gas canisters at Black Lives Matter demonstrators in central Portland early on Friday, taking on a policing role typically reserved for local law enforcement.

"I made clear to Acting Secretary (Chad) Wolf that deployments in Seattle - like we have seen in Portland - would undermine public safety and break community trust," Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan said on Twitter late on Thursday, referring to the acting secretary of Homeland Security.



More Than 40 Countries Accuse North Korea of Breaching U.N. Sanctions



NEW YORK (Reuters) - More than 40 countries accused North Korea on Friday of illicitly breaching a United Nations cap on refined petroleum imports and called for an immediate halt to deliveries until the end of the year, according to a complaint seen by Reuters.

The 15-member U.N. Security Council imposed an annual cap of 500,000 barrels in December 2017 in a bid to cut off fuel for North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. But in a complaint to the U.N. Security Council North Korea sanctions committee, 43 countries - including the United States, Britain and France - said they estimated that in the first five months of this year Pyongyang had imported more than 1.6 million barrels of refined petroleum via 56 illicit tanker deliveries.

The complaint said North Korean vessels continue to conduct ship-to-ship transfers at sea "on a regular basis as the DPRK's primary means of importing refined petroleum." North Korea's formal name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The countries asked the Security Council sanctions committee to make an official determination that North Korea had exceeded the cap and "inform member states that they must immediately cease selling, supplying, or transferring refined petroleum products to the DPRK for the remainder of the year." Similar requests to the committee in 2018 and 2019 were blocked by North Korean allies Russia and China. They are also the only two countries to have formally reported deliveries of refined petroleum to the Security Council sanctions committee.

"China and Russia collectively have reported 106,094.17 barrels of refined petroleum product transfers ... January through May," the complaint said. "The official accounting of the DPRK's imports vastly underrepresents the volume of refined petroleum products that actually enter the DPRK."

The 43 countries also urged the committee to call on states to "immediately exercise enhanced vigilance regarding the DPRK attempting to procure additional refined petroleum products and to prevent illicit ship-to-ship transfers of refined petroleum products to vessels owned, controlled, or acting on behalf of or working in cooperation with the DPRK."

Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

Mahmodieh Apt (\$3000)
260sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

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

Kamranieh (\$2300)
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J
balcony
F.F

Jordan Apt (\$1800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
balcony, pkg
Fullu Furn

Elahieh bldg (\$5000)
4storey, 12bdrs
enough pkg lots
renovated
F.F

Sa`adat abad (\$1200)
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WTO Largely Upholds Russia's Case Against EU

GENEVA (Reuters) - A World Trade Organization (WTO) panel on Friday largely upheld a complaint brought by Russia against European Union anti-dumping measures, the third such ruling lost by the bloc.

The panel found that the EU "cost adjustment" methodology for calculating dumping margins in the case violates WTO anti-dumping rules, particularly regarding prices for energy inputs.

But it rejected claims that the EU's framework anti-dumping regulation, known as "the basic regulation", breaks WTO rules.



EU Calls on U.S. to Lift Tariffs in Plane Dispute

PARIS (AFP) - The EU called Friday on the United States to lift tariffs imposed in a long-running dispute over aircraft subsidies after Airbus said it had brought itself into compliance with World Trade Organization rulings.

The billions of dollars in tariffs, which apply to a wide range of food and agricultural goods in addition to planes, have been even more burdensome due to the economic disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Airbus said Friday it had reached agreement with the French and Spanish governments that raises the interest rates on funds provided to help develop its long-haul A350 jet to levels the WTO considers appropriate.

The European Commission said this removes any grounds for the U.S. to maintain tariffs imposed on EU exports under WTO rulings as well as making a strong case for a rapid settlement of the dispute.

"Unjustified tariffs on European products are not acceptable and, arising from the compliance in the Airbus case, we insist that the United States lifts these unjustified tariffs immediately," EU trade commissioner Phil Hogan said in a statement.

An epic legal battle between Airbus and Boeing at the WTO began in 2004 when Washington accused Britain, France, Germany and Spain of providing illegal subsidies and grants to support the production of a range of Airbus products.

A year later, the EU alleged that Boeing had received \$19.1 billion worth of prohibited subsidies from 1989 to 2006 from various branches of the US government. The two cases were then tangled up in a legal quagmire, with each side being given partial vindication after a long series of appeals and counter appeals. In 2019 the WTO authorised the U.S. to impose up to 100 percent in taxes on \$7.5 billion of European goods, its biggest ever penalty.

Washington then slapped 25 percent tariffs on a number of EU goods including wine, cheese and olives.

A 10 percent tariff on Airbus planes was increased to 15 percent in March, which also affects US airlines which buy Airbus aircraft, as the manufacturer points out. In June the U.S. threatened to levy tariffs on another \$3.1 billion in EU goods as it has been authorized to do under a WTO ruling.

Airbus said the impact of those tariffs plus the coronavirus pandemic were the reason it was making the effort to resolve the dispute. "The tariffs imposed by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) are currently harming all targeted industry sectors, including US airlines, and are adding to a very difficult environment as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis," the firm said.

Airbus said Friday that it "considers itself in complete compliance with all WTO rulings" after increasing the interest rate paid on the government funds it received. The low interest rates on these funds were one of the arguments the US made that the EU was improperly subsidizing Airbus.

"After 16 years of litigation at the World Trade Organization, this is the final step to stop the long-standing dispute and removes any justification for U.S. tariffs," said Airbus.

In addition to there no longer being a justification for the tariffs, the EU believes that in light of the global recession triggered by the coronavirus pandemic it makes sense to resolve the dispute. "Especially under the current economic circumstances, the EU believes that it is in the mutual interest of the EU and the U.S. to discontinue damaging tariffs that unnecessarily burden our industries and agricultural sectors," the Commission statement said.

Hogan noted a WTO decision is expected soon that could give the EU the right to impose tariffs against the United States.

"In the absence of a settlement, the EU will be ready to fully avail itself of its own sanction rights," he warned.

Euro Zone Businesses Bounce Back in July

LONDON (Reuters) - Euro zone business activity grew in July for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic hit, as more parts of the economy that were locked down to curtail its spread reopened and people emerged from their homes to work and spend money.

Across the world almost 15.5 million people have been infected by the coronavirus but as the rate of infections has eased across much of Europe, governments have loosened some restrictions.

That unleashing of pent-up demand pushed IHS Markit's flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), seen as a good indicator of the bloc's economic health, to 54.8 in July from June's final reading of 48.5, its highest since mid-2018 and well ahead of the 51.1 forecast in a Reuters poll.

"The sharp rise... is an encouraging sign that the economic recovery continued at a decent pace. But we suspect that activity will remain below pre-crisis levels for at least the next couple of years," said Jack Allen-Reynolds at Capital Economics.

The headline index had been below the 50 mark which separates growth from contraction since March so a return to positive territory will be welcomed by policymakers and governments who have pumped trillions of euros into the economy.

European Union leaders agreed a 750 billion euro (683 billion pounds) pandemic recovery fund on Tuesday and with European Central Bank monetary policy expected to stay ultra-loose for a long time, optimism about the year ahead improved.

Markets are still expecting a V-shaped recovery - as are some economists - but while Friday's data indicated a bounceback of sorts, it is unlikely to support those views.

"A V-shaped recovery seems quite unrealistic, despite the encouraging numbers," said Bert Colijn at ING. French business activity rebounded far more than expected as a post-lockdown recovery in the service sector shifted up a gear, PMI data showed.

The headline index had been below the 50 mark which separates growth from contraction since March so a return to positive territory will be welcomed by policymakers and governments who have pumped trillions of euros into the economy. European Union leaders agreed a 750 billion euro (683 billion pounds) pandemic recovery fund on Tuesday and with European Central Bank monetary policy expected to stay ultra-loose for a long time, optimism about the year ahead improved. Markets are still expecting a V-shaped recovery - as are some economists - but while Friday's data indicated a bounceback of sorts, it is unlikely to support those views.

"A V-shaped recovery seems quite unrealistic, despite the encouraging numbers," said Bert Colijn at ING. French business activity rebounded far more than expected as a post-lockdown recovery in the service sector shifted up a gear, PMI data showed. Manufacturing activity in Germany stabilized, avoiding a contraction for the first time in 19 months, giving hope for a recovery from a long recession exacerbated by the pandemic. Meanwhile British businesses, outside the euro zone, experienced the fastest upturn in five years during July as more of the economy reopened and shoppers pushed their spending back up to within a whisker of pre-lockdown levels.

Official data showed Britain's economy shrank more than 25% in March and April, and recovered less than expected in May. A Reuters poll this week suggested the economy would contract more than 9% this year. As demand increased, euro zone firms cut their headcount at a shallower rate and purchasing managers were at their most optimistic since February, just before Europe began to feel the full brunt of the pandemic.



Turkish Economy To Shrink in 2020, Recover Next Year

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Turkey's economy is expected to contract this year for the first time in more than a decade as the coronavirus pandemic and related restrictions hit demand, but will bounce back next year, according to a Reuters poll published on Friday.

The median forecast in a July 21-23 survey of 42 economists in and outside the country was for a contraction of 4.3% in 2020, with drops in the second and third quarters of 12.2% and 3.1% respectively. But the Turkish economy is expected to grow next year by 4.5%, according to the median forecast.

"We are seeing a U-shaped recovery in the Turkish economy right now ... However, the uncertainties about a possible second wave of the outbreak necessitates a cautious approach to these economic recovery scenarios," said Enver Erkan, economist at Tera Yatirim.

There are downside risks to growth next year, Erkan said, adding that tensions between the United States and China will have an impact too. "I am not saying everything will be alright in 2021, we will be in a process of changing back," he said. The government had forecast 5% economic growth this year before the coronavirus outbreak and has since maintained the economy could still grow this year, following a robust 4.5% expansion in the first quarter.

But economic activity declined sharply in the second quarter as Ankara shut schools and some businesses, closed borders and adopted weekend lockdowns to slow the spread of the coronavirus. It has started taking steps to re-open the economy since June.

Turkey's economy last contracted on an annual basis in 2009, by 4.7%. From 2010 to 2018, its average growth rate was more than 5% thanks mainly to a construction boom driven by cheap capital following the global financial crisis.

A currency crisis in 2018 was set off by concerns over central bank independence and tensions between Ankara and Washington. That led to three straight quarters of economic contraction and a modest annual growth rate of 0.9% last year. Since last year, the central bank has cut rates to 8.25% from 24%, at first to pull the economy out a recession and later to counter the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In the poll, economists predicted the central bank would cut its policy rate to 8.00% by the end of this year.

It has bought up government debt at record levels since the end of March in the face of the outbreak. Economists have said the bond buying scheme and use of reserves to boost the Turkish lira have left the central bank with less room to manoeuvre.

"(The central bank moves) bears the risk of raising inflation, further deteriorating investor confidence and triggering another balance-of-payments crisis," Allianz said in a note.

Allianz predicts Turkey will return to its pre-crisis level of GDP in mid-2022. Inflation, which has hovered around 12% the last few months, was expected to decline to 10.2% by the end of the year and to 9.9% by the end of 2021.

The current account balance, which recorded a rare surplus last year as the economy slowed, has since returned to a deficit. The deficit is expected to stand at 2.3% of GDP this year and next, according to the poll.

EU States Urged to Immediately Diversify 5G Suppliers

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - EU countries must take urgent action to diversify their 5G suppliers, the European Commission said on Friday, a move set to shrink Huawei's presence in Europe as the United States pressured the bloc to follow Britain and ban the Chinese company from 5G networks.

In November last year, the European Union agreed to take a tough line on 5G suppliers to reduce cybersecurity risks to next-generation mobile networks, seen as key to boosting economic growth and competitiveness. The strategy included reducing countries' and telecoms operators' dependency on one supplier. World No. 1 telecoms equipment maker Huawei competes with Finland's Nokia and Sweden's Ericsson.

While some progress has been made, a lot of work needs to be done, the Commission said. "Progress is urgently needed to mitigate the risk of dependency on high-risk suppliers, also with a view to reducing dependencies at (European) Union level," the EU executive said, reporting on the progress made by the 27 EU countries.

"Challenges have been identified in designing and imposing appropriate multi-vendor strategies for individual MNOs (mobile network operator) or at national level due to technical or operational difficulties," it said, citing the lack of interoperability or the size of the country as some of the problems.

In addition to Britain, France is also adopting a de facto ban on Huawei, sources told Reuters earlier this week. The United States says the Shenzhen-based company's gear could be used by China for spying, an accusation rejected by Huawei. EU officials said phasing out high-risk suppliers and additional costs will not derail the roll out of 5G across the bloc and that Ericsson and Nokia will be able to cope with the demand.

"If you look at the situation worldwide, Nokia and Ericsson have a large part of the world market in terms of contracts signed worldwide on deployment of 5G. The two combined have certainly more than 50% to 60%, 65%. I think that two European suppliers can provide what is needed not only for Europe but also for a large part of the world," one of the officials said.

Malaysia in \$3.9b Settlement With Goldman Over 1MDB

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) - Malaysia reached a \$3.9 billion settlement with Goldman Sachs Friday over the Wall Street titan's role in the 1MDB scandal in exchange for the country ending all criminal proceedings against the bank.

Billions of dollars were looted from sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad

in a fraud that allegedly involved former leader Najib Razak and his cronies.

Goldman's role came under scrutiny over bond issues totalling \$6.5 billion it helped arranged for the fund, with Malaysia claiming large amounts were misappropriated during the process.

Malaysia and the bank had been locked in long-running talks, and the country's finance ministry announced a breakthrough had finally been achieved.

The settlement comprises a cash payment of \$2.5 billion and a guarantee that at least \$1.4 billion in assets acquired with misappropriated funds would be recovered, it said.

"This settlement represents assets that rightfully belong to the Malaysian people," Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz said.

"We are confident that we are securing more money from Goldman Sachs compared to previous attempts, which were far below expectations."

Malaysia had charged Goldman and several of its former and current employees over the scandal, claiming the bank made misleading statements to investors.

But in a statement, Goldman said the agreement resolves "all the criminal and regulatory proceedings in Malaysia involving the firm".

"Today's settlement is an important step towards putting the 1MDB matter behind us and will help enable the Malaysian government to move forward with additional recovery efforts," it said.

A former Goldman partner, Tim Leissner, has previously pleaded guilty in the U.S. over his part in the controversy.

A Malaysian former managing director at the bank, Ng Chong Hwa, has also been charged in the US and Malaysia over the scandal.

France Pledges €15m to Lebanese Schools Crippled by Crisis



PARIS (Dispatches) - France's visiting foreign minister on Friday pledged €15 million (\$17 million) in aid to Lebanon's schools, which have been hit hard by the country's economic meltdown.

France will not abandon Lebanese youth, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told reporters as he visited a school in Mechref, south of Beirut, on the third and final day of his trip to Lebanon.

The French financial assistance will go to a network of over 50 French and Francophone schools in the country.

The announcement comes a day after Le Drian scolded Lebanon's leadership for failing to take the measures he said are necessary to save the country from collapse.

Lebanon's education sector has been hit hard by the crisis, with schools forced to let teachers and administrators go and many facing the risk of closure. Parents, struggling to pay private school fees, are increasingly enrolling their children in already overcrowded public schools.

The economic crisis has impacted almost all facets of life in Lebanon, a small Mediterranean country long considered a middle-income state. Since last year, unemployment has risen and poverty deepened, as foreign currency dried up and the local currency tumbled to lose more than 80 percent of its value against the dollar.

Le Drian, who arrived here late Wednesday, said France could only help Lebanon face the crisis if Lebanese officials do their part, urging them to introduce much-needed reforms.

Vinales, Rossi Lead Practice Runs

MADRID (Dispatches) - Yamaha rider Maverick Vinales and Valentino Rossi led the pack in Friday's two free practice sessions ahead of this weekend's Andalucia MotoGP in Jerez. Vinales, who finished second in last weekend's delayed opening race of the season at the same circuit, posted a time of one minute, 37.063 seconds to pip Italian teammate Rossi, who finished 0.142sec back in second. Championship leader Fabio Quartararo had a disappointing day on his Yamaha-SRT, finishing 14th.

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Zanardi Returning to Intensive Care in Milan

ROME (Reuters) - Italian former Formula One driver and Paralympic champion Alex Zanardi was returning to intensive care on Friday, three days after being moved to a specialist recovery centre to treat serious head injuries. The 53-year-old underwent three operations at Siena's Santa Maria alle Scotte hospital after being placed in an induced coma following the June 19 accident while taking part in a road race on a handbike.

Nadal Reveals How He Disconnects From Tennis

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal has been one of the most successful tennis players ever. He has achieved so much in the sport thanks to his training regime, which includes a lot of physical exercises. In a recent interview, he talked about this and also how he disconnects from his routines.

In recent tweets by the P14Nets Wellbeing Summit (translated using Google translate), Rafael Nadal talked about physical exercise and how it's good for every single person. The Spaniard said,

"The body feeling and satisfaction after having done a physical exercise is very positive. It not only helps you at the health level but also at the level of happiness."

Rafa clearly does a lot of physical exercise as part of his training routine. But, like any other player, he also needs to relax and disconnect from his routine. Rafa went on to talk about how he does this.

"When I can go out to sea is when I disconnect more. Also the simple fact of visiting friends, coming home and having the feeling of being one more."

While Rafa clearly loves relaxing out at sea, his main focus right now will be on training. This is because the Tour is returning very soon and ATP has come out with a grueling schedule. Events will be played almost every week following the resumption of the season, and the two remaining Grand Slams, US Open and French Open, will be played in the same month.

Many are expecting Rafa to skip the US Open in favor of the French Open. While he hasn't confirmed this, the last few weeks have indicated it, as he was seen practicing on a clay court. Many want to see Rafa play both Slams but there's a good chance it may not happen. Meanwhile the two main tennis tours on Friday cancelled all of their remaining



tournaments in China for this year, including the flagship WTA Finals, in the wake of the country's ban on international sporting events due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The General Administration of Sport, China's highest sporting body, announced two weeks ago that only trial events for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics would be held in 2020.

The ATP and WTA had held out hope of getting exemptions for their events as they tried to play as many tournaments as possible in an already heavily disrupted season but released statements conceding defeat within minutes of each other.

"We are extremely disappointed that our world-class events in China will not take place this year," WTA Chief Executive Steve Simon said in a statement.

The WTA had seven tournaments in China in its provisional calendar for the remainder of 2020, including the season-ending WTA Finals. The Tour resumes on Aug. 3 after five months with the Palermo Open in Sicily.

The ATP have cancelled the Shanghai Masters, Asia's only ATP Masters 1000 tournament, the China Open in Beijing, an ATP 500 event, as well as the Chengdu Open and Zhuhai Championships, ATP 250 events.

"It's with a heavy heart that we announce ATP tournaments will not be played in China this year," said ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi.

Henderson Crowned Football Writers' Player of the Year

LONDON (AFP) - Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson was named the Football Writers' Association player of the year on Friday for leading the Reds to their first league title in 30 years.

The 30-year-old beat Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne, Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford and teammates Virgil Van Dijk and Sadio Mane to the prize.

As well as making his presence felt in 30 Premier League games this season as Liverpool have surged to the title with an 18-point lead at the top of the table, Henderson led by example off the pitch during football's three-month shutdown due to coronavirus.

He spearheaded the PlayersTogether initiative during the lockdown which saw players team up with to raise money for Britain's National Health Service.

"I accept it on behalf of this whole squad, because without them I'm not in a position to be receiving this honour. These lads have made me a better player, a better leader and a better person," said Henderson.

"If anything I hope those who voted for me did so partly to recognise the entire team's contribution."

As well as the top five, 10 other players received votes from FWA members.



Premier League

2020-21 Season to

Kick Off on September 12

LONDON (Reuters) - The 2020-21 English Premier League season will begin on Sept. 12 and the final round of matches will be held on May 23, the league announced on Friday.

The new season, originally scheduled to begin on Aug. 8, has been delayed this year after the Premier League suspended the 2019-20 season for three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current season will end with a final round of fixtures on Sunday, giving teams about seven weeks to prepare for the next campaign.

However, teams still competing in the Champions League and Europa League will have less time to prepare should they advance deeper into the knockout stages, with the finals of the two competitions to be held on Aug. 23 and Aug. 21 respectively.

The new season kicks off after the international break with European soccer's governing body UEFA announcing last month that Nations League matches would be played between Sept. 3-8.

The Premier League also added that they would continue to consult with the Football Association (FA) and the English Football League (EFL) regarding the scheduling of domestic competitions.

Support Slides For Pandemic-Hit Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO (Reuters) - Several dozen protesters in masks gathered in front of Japan's National Stadium on Friday, the day the Olympic Games should have begun, to protest against holding them next year given the danger of the novel coronavirus.

The Games were postponed in March as the coronavirus swept the world and the government is determined that they go ahead next year. But there's growing opposition in Japan to holding the Games, even next year, over doubts that a big sporting event can be held safely.

"I believe it's a massive mistake," said Kai Toyama, 44, an artist who travelled from the suburbs of Tokyo to attend the small rally.



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"We'll be very calm, organised, measured, thinking of everything," Mourinho told a news conference on Friday.

"Step by step we'll end with a better, more balanced squad, and keeping the great players

Mourinho Hoping to End Transfer Window With Balanced Squad

LONDON (Reuters) - Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho believes the club will approach the close-season transfer window with a clear sense of direction and resist the temptation to compete with high-spending rivals.

Premier League clubs will be able to start signing players when the window opens on Monday, but British media reported Mourinho will have limited funds to strengthen his Spurs squad.

"We'll be very calm, organised, measured, thinking of everything," Mourinho told a news conference on Friday.

"Step by step we'll end with a better, more balanced squad, and keeping the great players

we have is a very important thing.

"But we cannot react to what our opponents can do and what we cannot do. We have no doubts about what we need."

A win against Crystal Palace in the final game of the season on Sunday may not be enough for seventh-placed Spurs to secure a Europa League qualification spot.

For Spurs to guarantee a European spot, they must leapfrog Wolves into sixth-place with the hope that they drop points against Chelsea.

If they are to reach Europe's second-tier competition with a seventh-placed finish, Spurs must again depend on Chelsea to beat Arsenal in the FA Cup final next month.

"We have a couple of possibilities of playing in Europe next season but it's in the hands of others," Mourinho added.

"The only thing we can do is beat Palace and add three more points to our tally."

Klopp: We Are Not Arrogant

LONDON (AFP) - Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has hit back at his Chelsea counterpart Frank Lampard by suggesting the Blues boss still has a lot to learn after branding the new English champions "arrogant."

During Liverpool's 5-3 win between the sides on Wednesday, Lampard became embroiled in a row with Klopp's assistant Pepijn Lijnders over a foul that led to the free-kick from which Trent Alexander-Arnold scored to make it 2-0.

"Fair play to Liverpool Football Club, they've won the league, but also don't get too arrogant with it," Lampard said in a post-match interview.

Klopp rejected that suggestion and said Lampard should learn to let any confrontations during the 90 minutes go at full time. "You cannot hit me and my bench with something like that because we are not arrogant," said Klopp.

"Frank was obviously in a really competitive mood and I respect that a lot. From my point of view in this sort of situation you can say pretty much what you want. For me, after the game it is completely over."

"I said a lot in the past because it is pure emotion, he came here to win the game or get a point, to make Champions League qualification, and I respect that a lot."



Guardiola Hails Incredible De Bruyne After FWA Award Snub

LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes Kevin De Bruyne's impact on the Premier League cannot be overstated after the Belgian playmaker was snubbed for the Football Writers' Association's (FWA) Footballer of the Year award.

De Bruyne, who has recorded 11 goals and 19 assists in the league this season, finished runner-up to Liverpool's title winning captain Jordan Henderson in the annual FWA vote.

"I think (Kevin) speaks for himself what he gives to our team," Guardiola told a news conference on Friday. "It's not necessary to say how fantastic Kevin is. At the same time, congratulations to the captain at Liverpool."

"I would love for Kevin to score goals but he enjoys making assists too."

"The numbers are incredible, not just this season but also the year when we won the league with 100 points (in 2018). He was incredible and I will never forget how he played."

Sunday's home match against Norwich City will be David Silva's final league game in a Manchester City shirt.

Guardiola described Silva's 10-year spell at the Etihad Stadium as "extraordinary" after the influential Spanish midfielder helped the club win four league titles, two FA Cups and five League Cups.

