

Iran's Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Thursday That Some 226 More Iranians Have Died From Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

The Deputy Head of Iran's Police Said That Over 388 Tons of Illicit Drugs Have Been Confiscated by Police Forces in the Country in The First 4 Months of Current Year

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JCPOA Annexed to UNSC Resolution 2231

NEW YORK (IRNA) - The permanent ambassador of Iran to the United Nations said in a Twitter message that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is an annexation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 so the United States is obliged to implement both.

Majid Takht Ravanchi wrote, "The U.S.—with media stunts—continues to claim JCPOA has no legal standing at UN."

Takh Ravanchi added, "But JCPOA is annexed to UNSCR 2231, and US has legal obligations to implement BOTH."

"Article 2 of 2231 calls upon members to support implementation of JCPOA: the US is shirking its responsibility," he added.

Affronting the world and his country's long-term allies, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 accord that was negotiated and signed by the permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany and unanimously confirmed in the international security body. The agreement was accepted and respected worldwide.

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Tehran Dismisses Baseless Reports on S. Korea Ties

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released an announcement in response to the unfounded reports about the course of relations between Tehran and Seoul.

In a statement on Thursday, the Foreign Ministry responded to an article titled "Who emboldened the Koreans?" which was published in the Iranian press.

What follows in the text of the announcement, according to the Foreign Ministry's official website:

"1. Basically, there was no phone call between the spokesperson of the South Korean Foreign Ministry and the esteemed ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Seoul, and this is a baseless claim altogether.

2. The meeting which took place was between the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Seoul and the director general for Middle East affairs. In the meeting, no mention was made about the comments of the esteemed governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

3. Following the meeting, the Korean news agency Yonhap published a groundless report indicating the Iranian ambassador had been "summoned", and attributed certain remarks to the ambassador.

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U.S. Sanctions "Crime Against Iranian Nation"



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has slammed US sanctions on Tehran as "a crime against the Iranian nation".

"The sanctions applied by the Americans against the Iranian nation are a crime, and there is no doubt about it," the Leader said in a televised speech on Friday on the occasion of Eid al-Adha.

"The sanctions are a crime against a nation; even though it seems to be against the establishment, it is indeed against the entire nation," he added.

The Leader said surrendering to the enemy is not the way to lift the sanctions. "The only cure for sanctions is rather relying on domestic capabilities."

"Some argue and propagate the idea that if you want to stop the U.S. from bullying, you need to back off. No sir! A person who is accustomed to aggression will come forward if you back off. This is a clear and natural issue. If you accept the U.S. demands, they will raise new demands," he noted.

"What the U.S. wants is that we totally abandon our nuclear industry, reduce our defensive equipment to one-tenth, and give up our regional power," he said.

"Unfortunately, some people, under the influence of the enemy, say what good nuclear power has for us. Nuclear power is the definite need for our country in the future. We need at least 20,000 or 30,000 megawatts of nuclear power, which we cannot get through another means or it is not cost-effective. What should we do on the day we needed it? Whose door should we knock? Should we beg from America and Europe to give us electricity or do enrichment for us? Will they do that? We have to think about tomorrow. These are not the needs that will be ready in a few months or two years. It must be prepared in advance and we have prepared the ground for this."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the principle part of the nuclear industry has been maintained despite numerous damage Iran incurred because of the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Leader pointed to the U.S. call for negotiation with Iran, and said, "Those who call for talks with Iran seek to negotiate over these issues. Everyone must pay attention; I have said this for several times, and I have to repeat it, because some either fail to understand or pretend they can't understand."

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Iran, Pakistan to Tap Livestock Sector

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Fakhar Imam on Wednesday termed Pakistan's agro-economy a major turning point for the overall economy.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Iranian Ambassador Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini that discussed issues of mutual interest and cooperation in the field of agriculture and livestock.

Pointing to the relations between Pakistan and Iran, the minister said both countries relished the friendly ties while people of the two countries were tied in cultural and religious bonds that had expanded over centuries.

Imam stressed that Islamabad significantly valued its relations with Tehran and discussed the current situation in relation to desert locusts in both countries, which were part of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)'s South West Commission on Desert Locust.

Highlighting the huge potential for economic cooperation between the two countries, including cooperation in the field of agriculture, the federal minister noted that they may explore new areas of cooperation in the field of livestock.

Iran could share experiences and knowledge about animal breeding and improving production with Pakistan. A technical team could be constituted in a bid to take advantage of experiences of both countries, the two officials discussed. Moreover, Pakistan showed interest in exporting Halal meat and its products to Iran. Pakistan has 36 registered slaughterhouses for meat export. Its meat processing companies have the potential to produce meat products according to needs of importing companies with the help of the country's research institutes in animal vaccine production and pathogen characterisation.

Appreciating the grant of market access by Iran to Pakistani agricultural products ie, mangoes, after finalisation of the pest risk analysis, the minister pointed out that currently Plant Protection Organisation (Iran) had approved 22 hot water treatment plants of Pakistan for disinfecting and exporting mangoes to Iran.

By July 22 this year, Pakistan exported 20,209 tons of mangoes to Iran. Pakistan has granted Iran market access to fresh fruits (dates, grapes, apple and plum) and fresh vegetables (tomato), chickpeas, dried fruits (pistachio, raisin, almond, walnut and dry coconut).

The minister went on to say that plant protection organisations of both countries may have more frequent collaboration with each other to amicably resolve quarantine issues in order to promote trade between the two countries.

Iran expressed its desire to export tractors and other agricultural machinery to Pakistan. Moreover, Iran showed interest in cooperation in the field of silkworms and fisheries.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

New Achievements In This Year's Drills

This year, the IRGC's military drills so-called Payambar-e A'zam (The Great Prophet) had different atmosphere than before. The IRGC's missile and naval military maneuvers so called "Payambar-e A'zam (S) 14" were held in the Persian Gulf and the Hormuz Strait and according to the schedule of the drills, some exercises like anti-ship ballistic and cruise missile, offensive and defensive against a mock aircraft carrier and firing missiles from air, sea and the coast were conducted. One of the most important characteristics of this year's drills was employing a mock U.S. aircraft carrier and conducting offensive and defensive maneuvers around this dummy U.S. carrier and this move caused the American to cry foul both because of their fear and protests against the IRGC's drills.

One of the most valuable innovation of the IRGC in this maneuver was to herald this strategy that the policy of developing military industry in the armed forces either in the Army or in the IRGC is to review enemies' weak and strong points and to manufacture weapons to rectify the weak points and to enhance the strong points.

Of the other astonishing achievements of the IRGC was an unknown achievement which had been designed domestically and its production was displayed to the world. Missiles without having any launch-pad were fired from the depths of the Earth in a completely camouflaged way to hit the pre-defined targets. It means the buried missiles suddenly break the ground open, without using common launch pads and facilities, and hit their targets with accuracy and enemies will be in fact unable to trace its location of firing.

One of the other goals of the maneuver was to test surface-to-surface Hormuz missiles. The missile can trace enemies' radars and hit the radar centers and destroy them. In this maneuver, the IRGC set the assimilated American anti-ballistic missile defense system THAAD as the target on its agenda. In the previous maneuvers, IRGC had successful operations on destroying assimilated American surface-to-air missile system Patriot with firing missiles with the range 250-kilometers but this year it was totally a different story. THAAD system is one the U.S.'s most powerful systems which has defensive application. The IRGC had assimilated THAAD for its maneuver. Production and operation units of Aerospace Force of the IRGC in this year's maneuver targeted the assimilated THAAD system with its ballistic missiles successfully.

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Ukraine Welcomes Constructive First Talks With Iran

KYIV (Reuters) - Ukraine said on Friday that its first round of talks with Iran about the downing of a Ukrainian airliner shortly after takeoff in Tehran in January had been constructive, and that it was determined "to bring Iran to justice".

All 176 people on board - including 57 Canadians - were killed when the Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 jet was shot down. Iran said they mistook the passenger plane for a missile at a time of high tensions with the United States.

"The talks ended late last night. The talks lasted 11 hours. In general, they were constructive," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a video briefing after meeting with an Iranian delegation. Kuleba said the sides had agreed the terms of next round of talks and that Kyiv would not allow anyone to drag out the negotiations.

Later on Friday, the Ukrainian prosecutor general's office said the next round was set for October.

"Of course, if the negotiations with Iran are unsuccessful, then we will go to international courts and I have absolutely no doubt that we will bring Iran to justice. But this is plan B," Kuleba said. "And plan A is negotiations with Iran and the solution of all these issues and the payment of compensation. We saw Iran was disposed to a serious and substantive conversation," he said.

Senior Diplomat Calls for Better Services to Students in Turkey

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's deputy foreign minister responsible for expatriates and parliamentary affairs called for better ways of reaching out to the Iranians residing in Turkey, especially students, businessmen as well as helping Iranian prisoners.

In a webinar conversation with the Iranian envoy to Ankara Mohammad Farazmand, Hossein Jaber Ansari referred to the coronavirus crisis and asserted that the Iranian Foreign Ministry

offices are must work closely with the missions of Iran in Turkey in order to solve the problems of Iranians living in the country, especially the 7,000 students studying in Turkish universities.

During weekly webinars with Iranian missions in different countries of the world, Iran's deputy foreign minister responsible for expatriates and parliamentary affairs examines the situation of Iranians living abroad and discusses appropriate solutions to solve their problems.

Pakistan Urged to Seriously Prevent Anti-Iran Actions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri during a meeting with Pakistan's ambassador to Iran Rahim Hayat Qureshi, stated that Iran's firm approach is to prevent any border security measures against Pakistan and expects that same procedure from Pakistan's side.

"Security, peace, friendship, and tranquility on the common borders of the two countries are necessary for the development of Tehran-Islam economic cooperation." Jahangiri highlighted.

Jahangiri stressed that bilateral relations and the level of trade and economic cooperation between Iran and Pakistan should be improved, adding that Iran is ready to expand its cooperation with Pakistan in all fields, especially in the field of energy.

Recalling regional issues, the Zionist regime's atrocities against the oppressed people of Palestine, and the issues of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, the Vice President stressed the need to expand Tehran-Islamabad cooperation to fight terrorist groups.

"The solution to the region's problems is the non-intervention of powers



outside the region," Jahangiri stressed.

Pakistan's ambassador to Iran Rahim Hayat Qureshi, referring to the historical, religious, and cultural commonalities of the two countries, said: "Tehran and Islamabad have always supported each other in international forums."

Qureshi thanked the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the Government of Iran for their clear and decisive positions on the Palestinian cause saying that Iran has always taken strong positions on various issues, especially those related to Muslims and the Muslim Ummah.

Referring to the 950-kilometer common border between the two countries, the ambassador said: "By tightening border surveillance, both human and drug trafficking will be prevented and border security will be improved."

Regional Cooperation Sole Way to Ensure Security

TEHRAN (IFP) - President of Iran Hassan Rouhani says security and stability in the region would be attainable only through regional cooperation.

In a telephone conversation with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on Thursday, President Rouhani emphasized the necessity for the expansion of relations between Tehran and Doha given the delicate situation in the region. "Security and stability in the region would be achievable only within the framework of regional cooperation, and we can undoubtedly bring about better conditions in the region with the promotion of cooperation," the Iranian president said.

He also congratulated the Qatari government and nation on Eid al-Adha, and hailed the positive ties between Iran and Qatar as two age-old neighbors. "The Islamic Republic of Iran sees no obstacle and limit to the expansion of relations and cooperation with Qatar as a friendly and brotherly country," President Rouhani noted.

He finally expressed hope that the efforts made by the officials of the two countries in Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Commission would give a boost to economic cooperation and that the two states would be able to hold a face-to-face meeting in the near future.

For his part, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani congratulated the Iranian government and nation on the Muslim festival of Eid-al- Adha, calling for the enhancement of economic interaction between the two states.

Highlighting the significance that Qatar attaches to the promotion of ties with Iran, the emir expressed hope that overcoming the problems and difficulties would help the two nations make great strides in broadening their ties in all fields.

Iran and Qatar have stepped up diplomatic and economic relations in recent years, particularly after the Islamic Republic helped Qatar secure supplies when a Saudi-backed boycott was first imposed in 2017. President Rouhani has repeatedly expressed Iran's readiness to share its experiences in the fight against the novel coronavirus with Qatar.

Iran, Turkmenistan to Develop Trade Exchanges, Economic Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP) - In the phone call between President Rouhani and Turkmen President, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, Tehran-Ashgabat stress efforts to further develop trade exchanges, economic cooperation and exchanging experiences in combatting coronavirus.

The Presidents of Iran and Turkmenistan referred to the friendly, brotherly relations between the two countries, and stressed the need for the efforts of the two countries' officials to further develop and strengthen Tehran-Ashgabat relations and cooperation in order to ensure the interests of the two nations.

President Rouhani in the phone call with Turkmen president Gurbanguly said, "Iran is ready to cooperate in the field of health and fighting coronavirus, and the communication between the officials and the exchange of experiences of the two countries in this regard should continue more than before."

The President assessed some measures taken to solve the problems of transportation and exchange of goods between the two countries, such as the construction of a

new road bridge on the Sarakhs border and the resumption of rail traffic in order to develop trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, as positive, and stressed the importance of continuing these efforts.

Rouhani expressed hope that the containment of COVID-19 and the efforts of officials will lead to the further development of cooperation and relations in various economic fields.

Meanwhile, Berdimuhamedow, for his part, referring to the deep-rooted and historical relations and cooperation between the two countries, said, "Fortunately, Iran and Turkmenistan have very good relations and common grounds in various economic, political and cultural fields and cooperation in international organizations".

Praising the Iranian President for his efforts to develop relations and cooperation between the two countries, Berdimuhamedow called for the development of cooperation for the development of border exchanges and the development of related guidelines, as well as scientific and health cooperation and joint ventures.

IRGC Will Take Firm, Resolute Action to Defend Iran Interests: Statement

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says its forces will spare no sacrifice in defending the achievements of the Islamic Revolution as well as the Iranian nation and the Islamic establishment.

In a statement released at the end of large-scale IRGC drills in Iran's southern waters, codenamed Payambar-e A'zam (The Great Prophet) 14, on Thursday, the public relations department of the IRGC said the elite force will take resolute action to defend the country's interests and will spare no sacrifice to this end.

The statement hailed that the exercise had achieved its predetermined goals, adding that the exercises "ended successfully with implementation of all [determined] sequences and combined operational drills across the land, sea, air, and space."

The IRGC also enumerated some of the "elaborate operational drills" carried out during the event, such as unprecedented firing of ballistic missiles from underground launch facilities, destruction of enemy radar facilities, and successful firing of coast-to-sea and sea-to-sea missiles that led to destruction of enemy warships.

The maneuvers, which enlisted the IRGC's Aerospace Division and Navy, spanned the general area of the Hormozgan Province, west of the strategic Hormuz Strait, and the Persian Gulf.

They saw the IRGC staging "all-out and multilayer" strikes against the life-size replica of a Nimitz-class US aircraft carrier. The IRGC's servicemen began the episode by destroying the mock carrier's accompaniment with coast-to-sea fire. State television aired footage showing the damage caused to the model vessel following the operational juncture, and the IRGC commandos' rappelling onto it.

The drills have been monitored by Iran's first military satellite Nour (Light)-1 that was launched by the Corps into orbit in April. Simultaneously, the satellite relayed a high-resolution vivid image of al-Udeid Air base in Qatar that is reportedly the largest U.S. base in West Asia.

The IRGC's Thursday statement also named effective drone attack against the command bridge of the model aircraft carrier and commandeering of enemy vessels during helicopter operations that were accompanied by backup missile firepower as some other measures honed during the exercise.

The drills, it said, carried the message of "compassion, conviviality, peace, and friendship" to the Islamic Republic's friendly and neighboring countries, while serving to display the Corps' power and steadfastness as well as being in the service of collective security for the Persian Gulf's littoral nations, the IRGC's statement added.

The event, though, also bore another message for the Islamic Republic's enemies, the global arrogant powers, and those casting covetous eyes on the country's interests, the Corps said. It was meant to assure them of the preparedness, alertness, confrontation-readiness, and steadfastness of the Iranian nation and the Armed Forces defending the Islamic Revolution and the Muslim homeland, the statement noted.

The IRGC finally expressed certainty that the "memorable event" had managed to clearly convey the latter message to the country's enemies.

Envoy Criticizes British Lawmaker's Anti-Iran Position

LONDON (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to the UK Hamid Baedinejad in a message criticized Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom Tom Tugendhat for his anti-Iran stances, saying he never stops attacking Iran.

"The level of hatred that MP Tom Tugendhat has manifested towards Iran is beyond imagination," Baedinejad wrote on his Twitter account.

"He never stops attacking Iran and has deep misconception regarding Iran's regional policies, which possibly was generated from his earlier association in the army in Afghanistan and Iraq," he added.

"His close work with anti-Iran circles in US congress and friendship with opposition lobbies like Alinejad and MEK members have all reinforced his illusion about realities in Iran," Iranian diplomat said in a separate message. "To his disappointment, his radical positions has gained no support from the House and the UK government," he noted.

Tom Tugendhat has recently in a letter to UK's Deputy Foreign Minister James Cleverly called for sanctioning Iranian officials.

He also criticized that no IRGC official had been included in the UK's new sanctions list. Tugendhat accused Iranian official of violating human rights.

Iran Arms Embargo Removal, Among JCPOA Obligations

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIX DESK

TEHRAN - The Chief of Staff of the President of Iran Mahmoud Vaezi called the lifting of the arms embargo on Iran as one of the important obligations of JCPOA.

Vaezi in his latest tweet that the U.S. officials' recent move to impose their will upon the members of the UN Security Council to extend arms embargo on Iran is not only considered as the violation of the most basic rules approved by the international community but also serves as an insult to its independence of opinion as well as political will.

Stressing the fact that safeguarding the joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is considered as the duty of the P4+1 group highlighted added that the lifting of the arms embargo against Iran is one of the main obligations of the JCPOA whit out which it will not continue.

Larijani in Hospital With COVID-19 For Second Time

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The former Majlis Speaker and current member of the Expediency Council Ali Larijani has been hospitalized for COVID-19 for a second time. Larijani tested positive for COVID-19 in early April for the first time.

Larijani is reportedly in an unnamed hospital for "complemental treatments" and his health condition is "satisfactory". According to these reports, the former Speaker is expected to be released from hospital within the next few days given the improvement in his condition.

Several former and current Iranian officials including former lawmaker Fetemeh Rahbar, Assembly of Experts member Hashem Bat'hai-Golpaygani and former Iranian ambassador in Lebanon Hossein Sheikh ol-Eslam have died of coronavirus since the outbreak in February.

Many other officials including First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi, spokesman of the cabinet of President Ali Rabiei as well as several lawmakers have tested positive for the virus.

The 61-year-old Larijani presided over the Iranian parliament for twelve years but decided not to run in the February elections.

Protecting People's Health, Top Priority for National Task Force

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani described the protection of people's health and lives as the first priority of all discussions, instructions, and resolutions of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus and emphasized that in the instructions for holding the entrance exam and mourning ceremony of Imam Hussein (AS), protecting the health and lives of people is the first priority and has received special attention.

Speaking on Thursday at the meeting of the heads of the committees of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, President Rouhani said, "After careful studies by experts and taking advantage of the opinions of all agencies about the manner and process of holding the entrance exam and mourning ceremony for Imam Hussein (AS), the matters have been reviewed first by the Security, Social and Medical Committees and then by the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus".

The President stressed that the guidelines for holding the exam and mourning ceremonies are also fully in line with the World Health Organization's global standards.

Rouhani stated that all the necessary health protocols have been announced, especially for those who are responsible for holding the ceremonies, because observing the health protocols are people's right and the mourning ceremonies of Imam Hussein (AS)

cannot be in a place where the rights of the people are not observed.

The President also called for monitoring the implementation of health protocols and stressed that regulatory bodies should fully monitor the implementation of the guidelines and, if necessary, deal with violators in order to protect public health.

He said, "There is no doubt that with the cooperation of health departments and those responsible for holding the ceremonies, health standards could be improved".

In another part of his speech, Rouhani expressed his regret over the increase in the number of people infected with coronavirus and the death toll, saying, "The new wave of coronavirus depends on our own behavior more than that of the virus".

"Negligence in care and the process of observing health protocols has played an important role in increasing the spread of this disease, which is expected to decrease within the next two weeks due to the increase in people's sensitivity and increasing care and observance of health protocols," said Rouhani.

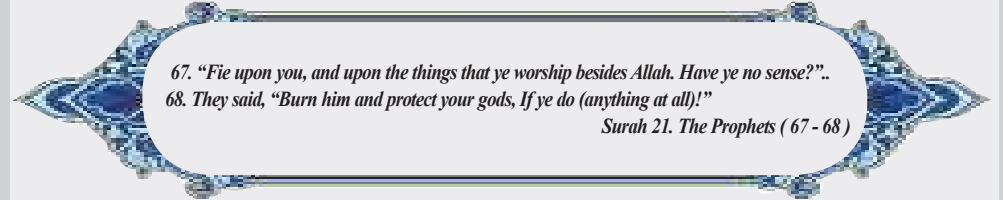
He stated, "It is necessary to change our lifestyle in order to adapt to the current conditions of coronavirus and make the observance of health instructions a mandatory part of any life plan".

During the meeting, it was also decided to suspend Tehran's limited traffic zone scheme for one week.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:28
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:37
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:13



President Inaugurates Industrial Mining Projects All Across Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The inauguration of industrial and mining projects in the different provinces of Iran is underway with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani in attendance via video conference.

Inauguration of industrial and mining projects in the different provinces of Iran including Mazandaran, Khuzestan, and Fars provinces is being carried out with President Rouhani in attendance via video conference.

It is also noteworthy that Hassan Rouhani's adviser for Supervision and Strategic Affairs, Head of Plan and Budget Organization, Mohammad Bagher Nobakht has left Tehran for Shiraz, South Central Iran to inaugurate and break ground on several construction projects.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony President Rouhani said the country is making progress on the economic front despite the pressure caused by sanctions and the Coronavirus pandemic.

He said the Iranian nation is standing up to economic hardship and will move forward with domestic production and national development.



"The enemies won't be able to force the great Iranian nation into submission," said Rouhani in a ceremony where several development, production and infrastructural projects were inaugurated.

"As the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has named the current year as the year of "jump in production", the trend of production will move full steam ahead, and as new projects come on stream in the country, we will see more job opportunities created in the country," he said.

President Rouhani noted that Iranian people are resisting both the coronavirus pandemic and sanctions.

"We should all join hands to establish a constructive engagement atmosphere between all branches of government as well as between the private sector and the state sector, so that people's problems will be solved as soon as possible," he said.

He said a close relationship between the private and state sectors coupled with the lifting of restrictions will give fresh impetus to production, boost development and disappoint the enemy.

Netherlands' Import of Iranian Roses Tops 5 Tons in Q1

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's customs office (IRICA) says exports of rose to the Netherlands, where the flowers are auctioned for resale to other countries, have continued unabated despite growing restrictions imposed across Europe over the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

IRICA spokesman Rouhollah Latifi said on Thursday that Iran's exports of rose flowers to the Netherlands had topped five metric tons in the three months ending June 20.

Latifi said total value of flowers and other horticulture products shipped from Iran to other countries in the first three months of the calendar year had reached more than \$5.3 million.

He said Iraq, Vietnam, the Netherlands and Armenia were main buyers of Iranian flowers over the period.

However, the official regretted that Iran, a major producer of flowers in the world with an output of more than 300 billion items each year, has yet to gain its real share in the global market.

"We are the 17th biggest producer of flower and related plants in the world but when it comes to the exports, we are placed in the 107th position," said Latifi, adding that Iran can generate around \$200 million in annual revenues from flower exports at the current output capacity.

Experts believe that a gradual easing of restrictions imposed over the pandemic on weddings and funerals across Europe could help boost Iran's trade of flowers to countries like the Netherlands.

Latifi said high freight costs have always hindered Iran's plans to increase flower exports to Europe. That comes as those costs have further increased in recent months because of the impacts of the pandemic on airline traffic around the world.

Increasing Coronavirus Cases in Tehran Worrying

TEHRAN (IP) - Interior Minister said that the increasing number of coronavirus cases in Tehran is worrying and the infections are increasing.

On the sideline of the social meeting on COVID-19, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, Iran's Interior Minister told Iran Press that Tehran is the center of most of the jobs and social and economic activities; therefore, observing hygienic protocols must be intensified.

It is expected that all people follow and implement health protocols seriously, he noted.

Tehran, Tbilisi Discuss Economic Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Tbilisi Javad Ghavam Shahidi met and held talks with Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava on the expansion of economic cooperation.

Referring to the cooperation capacities of the two countries, Iranian Ambassador stressed the need to try to revive the growing trend before the coronavirus pandemic, as well as deepen economic cooperation based on health protocols.

He expressed concern over the decrease in trade between the two countries due to coronavirus.

While supporting economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Natia Turnava, for her part, said that coronavirus pandemic is one of the most important factors in reducing trade relations between the two countries.

Appreciating the Islamic Republic of Iran, she described the move towards optimizing the structure of cooperation an undeniable necessity, saying returning to the successful and smooth conditions of the past is also the wish of the Georgian side.

Tehran, Moscow Sign Agreement at 11th Transport Cooperation Summit

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Shahram Adamnejad said that at the 11th meeting of transport cooperation between Iran and Russia, an agreement was signed on transportation to pave the way for appropriate infrastructural investments.

Shahram Adamnejad on the sideline of the 11th meeting of the Iran-Russia transport cooperation working group in Tehran, referring to the agreement signed between the two countries, said that the working group was active from 6 to 8 of Mordad (July 27 to 29, 2020) and several committees were active in the various fields of transport cooperation working group which finally agreed on the discussed subjects.

Shahram Adamnejad stressed that the connection between Iran and Russia in the region can be effective in the field of transit and international transportation. Russian's cargo transportation through Iran is very effective not only for Russia but also for India and China. That is why in the north-south corridor, the role of Iran and Russia is prominent.

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran emphasized that the result of the 11th transport summit between Iran and Russia was positive and we hope to see its practical results in the next few months.

On July 16, The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Russia, Kazem Jalali in a video conference with officials of the Chamber of Commerce, Customs, Ports, and Shipping Organization, Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, Aquatic Production and Trade Union, Agricultural Union and Food Industry Association of Iran has said that Iran seeks to facilitate land, rail, and sea trade with Russia in order to expand non-oil exports.

Iran Among Top 3 Countries in COVID-19 Research Projects

ARAK (IP) - The Islamic Republic of Iran is among the top three countries in the world in the research projects of COVID-19 after the United States and China, the deputy minister of health said.

Kamel Taqavinejad at a provincial meeting of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Arak, Markazi Province, said: "Several research projects in the field of coronavirus have been accepted from Iran and are under consideration."

"To support research on COVID-19, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has allowed the withdrawal of \$1 billion from the National Development Fund, 30% of which has been allocated to the universities," added the official.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is among the countries that have a good record in the field of combating the coronavirus," the deputy minister of health said.

According to the latest statistics, so far, nearly 300,000 people in Iran have been infected with the coronavirus, and around 260,000 of the total infected people have been discharged so far.

Swiss Pharma Firm Delivers Iranian Aid Via Back Channel

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A Swiss pharmaceutical group has delivered a cancer drug to Iran through a new humanitarian channel that conforms to U.S. sanctions, Bern said Thursday.

The Swiss economic affairs ministry (SECO) confirmed that the first transaction by a Swiss drug company had been completed under the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) created in February.

"The shipment was for a cancer drug used to treat iron overload caused by repeated blood transfusions," spokeswoman Nadine Mathys told AFP in an email.

SECO did not identify which pharmaceutical firm was involved, and gave no details on the size of the shipment.

The system was created to allow Swiss companies in the food, pharmaceutical and medical sectors to send aid to Iran without drawing Washington's wrath for breaching sanctions against Tehran.

"The SHTA is progressing," Mathys said Thursday, adding that "a number of companies have already been approved, (and) more companies will follow. Further transactions should be carried out shortly. "An initial pilot transaction was conducted on January 27 after the Swiss government approved the agreement in principle, allowing for payment for the shipment of cancer drugs and medicines needed for organ transplants.

Materializing Surge in Production Relies On Reinforcing Economic Infrastructures



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives Bahman Abdollahi during his meeting with the specialized commissions of Majlis said materialization of surge in production needs reinforcing economic infrastructures of the country and called for more interactions between the chamber of cooperatives and Majlis.

Mr. Abdollahi said that boosting social assets through the real support of economic activists and winning their trust regarding the establishment decisions will be impossible without real participation of cooperative and private sectors in the process of decision-making on micro and macro-economic decisions.

He expressed his support to the proposed package by Majlis Speaker on making the economy public-centered, emphasized more interactions between chambers of cooperative with Majlis lawmakers on the cooperative issues.

He then pointed to the recent MoUs signed between the chambers with some ministries for facilitating the activities of cooperatives, reiterating these MoUs are valuable opportunities for those involved in cooperative sector to institutionalize cooperative in the country.

Abdollahi then pointed to the 20th International Exhibition of Building and Construction Industry which is to be held on 9-12 August in Tehran. He said despite all restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the exhibition will be held on time by observing all health protocols. He noted the exhibition has been warmly welcomed by the companies despite the pandemic.

He said the achievements of the exhibition can help a great deal the qualitative and quantitative growth of the leading industry of economy in the construction sector.

Abdollahi also referred to holding International Cooperative Day in Tehran through video conference with officials of Organization International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and called for maximum utilization of capacities and advantages of ICA for boosting international interactions.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



PERMIT NO : 1399.2171

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY - AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9250340

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY (NISOC) INTENDS TO PURCHASE THE FOLLOWING GOODS:

ITEMS	MATERIAL DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
27	P/F BROOM & WADE AIR COMPRESSOR MODEL V100 SER. NO. E044 1558 & 1559 REF. BROOM & WADE LTD.	1,715

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to qualitative assessment Form no.1, available at www.nisoc.ir not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for Participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 3,096 EURO or 593,187,000 RIAL in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials through technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via:

www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN.
PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex, kony-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel / NO.: +98-61-34123455 Fax No.: +98-61-34457437

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Former Taiwan President Dies Aged 97

TAIPEI (AFP) - Taiwan's former president Lee Teng-hui, who defied China and earned the nickname "Mr Democracy" for the part he played in the island's transition away from authoritarian rule, died Thursday aged 97.

He was credited with paving the way for Taiwan to become a modern, free society after decades of one-party dictatorship and became a champion of the island's bid to be treated as a sovereign state internationally.

Lee had been in hospital since February after choking on some food and had a history in recent years of chronic illnesses.



Russia Jails U.S. Ex-Marine for 9 Years

MOSCOW (AFP) - A Russian court on Thursday sentenced former U.S. marine Trevor Reed to nine years in prison for assaulting police officers while drunk last year.

His conviction follows the high-profile trial of another former U.S. marine Paul Whelan last month on espionage charges in a case that has fuelled speculation of a prisoner exchange with the United States.

Reed, a 29-year-old student and former marine from Texas, allegedly attacked police after attending a party in Moscow.



Trump Raises Possibility of Delaying the Election



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Donald Trump on Thursday raised the idea of delaying the Nov. 3 U.S. elections, which the Constitution does not give him the power to do, words Democrats and some of his fellow Republicans immediately condemned and called an attempt to distract from devastating economic news.

Trump's statement on Twitter comes as the United States is living through the greatest crises of a generation - with more than 150,000 dead in the coronavirus pandemic, nationwide protests against police violence and racism, and on the morning the country reported its worst economic contraction since the Great Depression.

Trump, who polls show losing ground to and trailing Democratic challenger and former Vice President Joe Biden, also said he would not trust the results of an election that included widespread mail voting - a measure that many observers see as critical given the coronavirus pandemic. Without evidence, he claimed that mail voting would be rife with fraud.

"With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the USA," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???"

The U.S. economy contracted by 32.9% in the second quarter, as the fast-spreading coronavirus sparked widespread lockdowns.

The United States has held elections for more than 230 years, including during the Civil War, the Great Depression and two world wars. The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to set the timing of elections, and the 20th Amendment ends a president and vice president's term in office on the Jan. 20 following a general election.

Democratic U.S. Representative Zoe Lofgren, who chairs the House committee overseeing election security, rejected the idea of a delay.

"Only Congress can change the date of our elections," Lofgren said in an email to Reuters. "Under no circumstances will we consider doing so to accommodate the President's inept and haphazard response to the coronavirus pandemic, or give credence to the lies and misinformation he spreads regarding the manner in which Americans can safely and securely cast their ballots."

Trump's tweet came without warning and surprised some White House staffers. The White House referred questions about the Tweet to Trump's re-election campaign, which in a statement said the president was simply raising a question.

"The President is just raising a question about the chaos Democrats have created with their insistence on all mail-in voting," said Hogan Gidley, the campaign's press secretary. "Universal mail-in voting invites chaos and severe delays in results."

Former Trump campaign adviser Barry Bennett said he did not believe the message was serious: "I think he's just trying to create news, something else for people to talk about."

Trump had previously suggested he would not trust election results - complaints similar to those he raised going into the runup to the 2016 election - but had not so directly suggested changing the Nov. 3 date.

Trump without evidence has cast doubt on the legitimacy of mail-in ballots, which have been used in far greater numbers in primary elections amid the pandemic. He has also made unsubstantiated allegations that voting will be rigged and has refused to say he would accept official election results if he lost.

Many states earlier this year rescheduled primaries due to the fast-spreading coronavirus.

U.S. Fuelling New Cold War Due To Presidential Election

LONDON (Reuters) - China accused the United States of stoking a new Cold War because certain politicians were searching for a scapegoat to bolster support ahead of the U.S. presidential election in November.

U.S. President Donald Trump identifies China as the West's main rival, and has accused President Xi Jinping of taking advantage over trade and not telling the truth over the novel coronavirus outbreak, which Trump calls the "China plague". Asked if he saw a new Cold War, China's ambassador to London, Liu Xiaoming, said the United States had started a trade war with China and that there would be no winner from such an approach.

"It is not China that has become assertive. It's the other side of the Pacific Ocean who want to start new Cold War on China, so we have to make response to that," Liu told reporters. "We have no interest in any Cold War, we have no interest in any war."

"We have all seen what is happening in the United States, they tried to scapegoat China, they want to blame China for their problems," he said. "We all know this is an election year."

The envoy did not mention Trump or Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden by name, but he said some U.S. politicians were doing and saying anything to get elected.

"They want to do anything including treating China as an enemy," Liu said. "Probably they think they need an enemy, they think they want a Cold War but we have no interest, we keep telling America, China is not your enemy, China is your friend, your partner."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said earlier this month that the United States wanted to build a global coalition to counter China as he accused Beijing of exploiting the coronavirus pandemic to further its own interests.

Asked if relations with the United States had deteriorated beyond repair, Liu said: "I don't think we have passed the point of no return."

Thai Pro-Government Rally Raises Risk of New Confrontations

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Dozens of Thai demonstrators singing patriotic songs and shouting "long live the king" rallied in the capital on Thursday in response to a series of anti-government protests led by student groups in recent weeks.

The crowd, a mix mainly of the retired and some vocational students gathered at Bangkok's Democracy Monument to show support for the monarchy and the government of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, the royalist former army chief who ousted an elected administration six years ago.

Some recent protests against Prayuth have seen veiled negative references to the powerful monarchy, despite a law forbidding criticism of the king. Such references would once have been unthinkable. "Many Thais have been concerned about offensive things against the monarchy, especially on social media, and no group has come out to defend (the monarchy)," said Totsapol Manoonayarat, a representative of the Vocational Students for the Nation, a group backing the rally. Many protesters wore yellow, a colour associated with the royal family.

Prayuth's party campaigned in last year's election on a vision of traditional Thai culture and loyalty to King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

But public opposition to Prayuth has grown in recent months.

University and high school students have rallied to demand the dissolution of parliament, an end to harassment of government critics, and amendments to the military-written constitution that critics say virtually guaranteed victory for Prayuth's party last year. Hundreds of anti-government protesters held a separate rally in Bangkok on Thursday, with university student groups unperturbed by the pro-government demonstration.

"If we continued to stay silent, I feel ashamed of myself. The student's movement needs support," said a 31-year-old who attended the protest, who requested his name not be used due to concern about his safety.

If the pro-establishment rally marks the start of further counter demonstrations, it could raise the risk of confrontations between pro-democracy and conservative movements.

Belarus Accuses Russians, Lukashenko Critics of Unrest Plot

MINSK (AFP) - Belarus investigators on Thursday accused Russian mercenaries and critics of President Alexander Lukashenko of working together to plot mass unrest as tensions increase in a pre-election crackdown.

The announcement was the latest twist in an extraordinary election campaign that has seen the 65-year-old leader, who has dominated Belarus for nearly three decades, jail major rivals ahead of the August 9 vote.

On Wednesday, the Belarusian KGB security service said it had arrested more than 30 Russian mercenaries on a mission to destabilise the ex-Soviet state, something the Kremlin dismissed as "insinuations".

On Thursday, the Belarusian Investigative Committee said it had launched an enquiry into the Russians, who were suspected of "preparations for mass riots".

Minsk says the 33 detained men are members of the Wagner group, a shadowy military contractor reportedly controlled by an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin that supports his interests in Syria, Libya and elsewhere.

Investigators said the Russian mercenaries were collaborating with top Lukashenko critics Sergei Tikhanovsky and Mikola Statkevich, both of whom are in jail.

Authorities have opened a criminal case against

"Tikhanovsky, Statkevich and 33 detained Russian citizens," Investigative Committee spokesman Sergei Kabakovich told AFP. "They acted together."

Tikhanovsky, 41, is a popular blogger, while Statkevich, 63, is one of the country's best-known opposition leaders.

Tikhanovsky's wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is running against Lukashenko and has become his main rival.

The blogger, who nicknamed Lukashenko the "cockroach", has not been allowed to run himself.

An Investigative Committee statement said another criminal probe had been launched against Tikhanovsky for inciting "social hostility" and calling for violence against law enforcement officers.

Belarusian authorities warned that security measures would be tightened as Tikhanovskaya prepared to hold a large rally in Minsk later Thursday. In 2010, Statkevich challenged Lukashenko in a presidential poll and was afterwards sentenced to six years in prison.

He was released in 2015 but has not been allowed to participate in the current election.

Earlier Thursday, Belarus said it was still tracking down dozens of other mercenaries. Moscow vehemently denied any involvement, pointing out that Belarus was a close ally.



EU Warns of Risk of Syringe Shortages for Possible COVID-19 Vaccine



BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Union has warned member states of the risk of shortages of syringes, wipes and protective gear needed for potential mass vaccinations against COVID-19 and urged them to consider joint procurement, according to an EU document.

The bloc has also asked EU governments to consider jointly buying more shots against influenza and increase the number of people vaccinated to reduce the risk of simultaneous flu and COVID-19 outbreaks in the autumn.

No vaccine against COVID-19 has yet been fully developed or approved, but countries around the world are seeking to secure supplies of potential shots so that, if and when vaccine candidates prove effective, immunisation campaigns can start quickly. Some countries hope that may be as early as this year.

Should a shot prove effective, manufacturing and distribution issues could become hurdles.

"COVID-19 vaccines, once developed, may come without syringes and other items," the EU Commission, the bloc's executive arm, told health experts from European countries at a meeting last week, according to a summary report on its website. "There could be shortages," it warned, asking governments about their stocks of syringes, wipes, alcohol and personal protection equipment such as face masks.

It urged EU states to consider joint procurement, with representatives of Italy and the Netherlands expressing interest, according to the document. Joint purchase schemes are considered useful to obtain better prices and avoid EU governments vying against each other.

A spokeswoman for the Netherlands' National Institute for Health confirmed the EU's plans and said the country of 17 million had already begun a process on its own to acquire 10 million syringes and needles.

A spokesman for the Commission declined to comment, as preparations for the possible launch of procurements are confidential.

The EU executive also said at the meeting that it had approached vaccine makers about whether additional doses of influenza vaccine were available, according to the document.

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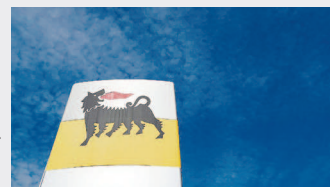
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Eni Cuts Dividend After Net Loss

MILAN (Reuters) - Italy's Eni cut its dividend and announced further spending cuts after swinging to an adjusted net loss in what it described as the oil and gas industry's worst-ever quarter.

All big energy companies have been hard hit by the impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns to curtail its spread, which have sapped demand and weakened the outlook for energy prices.

Eni, which had already flagged asset writedowns for the period, reported an adjusted net loss of 714 million euros (\$839 million) in the second quarter versus a profit of 562 million a year earlier.



U.S. Economy Shrinks Record 33% in Q2

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. economy shrank at a dizzying 32.9% annual rate in the April-June quarter — by far the worst quarterly plunge ever — when the viral outbreak shut down businesses, throwing tens of millions out of work and sending unemployment surging to 14.7%, the government said Thursday.

Last quarter's drop followed a 5% fall in the January-March quarter, during which the economy officially entered a recession triggered by the virus, ending an 11-year economic expansion, the longest on record in the United States. The contraction last quarter was driven by a deep pullback in consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of economic activity. Spending by consumers collapsed at a 34.6% annual rate as travel all but froze and shutdown orders forced many restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and other retail establishments to close.

Business investment and residential housing also suffered sharp declines last quarter, with investment spending sinking 27% and residential housing plunging 38.7%.

State and local government spending, diminished by a loss of tax revenue that forced layoffs, also fell at an annual rate of 5.6%.

But overall government spending was up 2.7%, powered by a 17.4% surge in federal spending, reflecting the more than \$2 trillion in relief packages that Congress enacted to provide \$1,200 payments to individuals, aid to small businesses and supplemental unemployment benefits.

The job market, the most important pillar of the economy, has been severely damaged. Tens of millions of jobs vanished in the recession. More than 1 million laid-off people have applied for unemployment benefits for 19 straight weeks. So far, about one-third of the lost jobs have been recovered, but the resurgent virus will likely slow further gains in the job market.

President Donald Trump has pressured states to reopen businesses despite concerns that the virus remains a threat to workers and customers at many service industry jobs that require frequent face-to-face contact.

So dizzying was the contraction last quarter that most analysts expect the economy to produce a sharp bounce-back in the current July-September quarter, perhaps of as much as 17% or higher on an annual basis. Yet with the rate of confirmed coronavirus cases having surged in a majority of states, more businesses being forced to pull back on re-openings and the Republican Senate proposing to scale back government aid to the unemployed, the economy could worsen in the months ahead.

The Trump administration is betting against that outcome in asserting that the economy will undergo a V-shaped recovery in which last quarter's plunge would be followed by an impressive rebound in the current quarter — a hoped-for dose of good news that would be reported in late October, not long before Election Day.

Yet many economists note that the economy can't fully recover until the pandemic is defeated — a point stressed Wednesday at a news conference by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. The Fed chairman warned that the viral epidemic has been endangering a modest economic recovery and that as a result, the Fed plans to keep interest rates pinned near zero well into the future.

Headache for OPEC as Oil Market Structure Signals Return of Glut

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Rising OPEC and U.S. oil supply, coupled with stalled economic and crude demand recovery, have pushed the futures market structure back to indicating a surplus, last observed during oil's collapse in April and May amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The development is a headache for OPEC, which had been hoping demand would recover quicker after a round of record global output cuts. The group will either have to consider further production cuts or tolerate lower oil prices for longer.

The surplus market structure, when prompt prices are weaker than future prices, is also a boon for traders, as they can store crude in the hope to resell it later at a profit. Royal Dutch/Shell, Total, Eni and Norway's Equinor have all reported bumper trading profits over the past week.

Front-month September Brent futures in the past week have been trading at a discount of \$2 per barrel to March 2021, the steepest discount since May, when lockdown measures against the virus outbreak cut global oil demand by a third.

The structure is known as contango and usually indicates an immediate oil surplus and hopes for a demand recovery in future months. The opposite structure is known as backwardation.

"OPEC's experiment to increase production from August could backfire as we are still nowhere near out of the woods yet in terms of oil demand," said Bjornar Tonhaugen, Rystad Energy's Head of Oil Market Research.

"The market will flip back into a mini-supply glut and a swing into deficit will not happen again until December 2020."



German Economy Shrinks by Record 10.1% in Q2

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German economy shrank by a record 10.1 percent in the second quarter as coronavirus lockdowns took their toll, official data showed Thursday, but experts say a recovery is already under way.

Federal statistics agency Destatis called the quarter-on-quarter decline in gross domestic product "historic" and far bigger than any slump seen during the 2008-2009 financial crisis.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier had warned earlier this year that the pandemic would push Europe's top economy into "the worst recession" in its postwar history, ending a decade of growth.

Analysts had expected a slightly smaller contraction of around nine percent from April to June.

Destatis said efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak had led to "a massive slump" in exports and imports, although government spending had increased over the period.

The agency also revised its first quarter data, saying output declined 2.0 percent from January to March, slightly better than the previously announced 2.2 percent.

The worst of the pain may already be over.

Thursday's data "is nothing more than a look in the rearview mirror", ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski said, expecting "a strong rebound" in the third quarter. But the road to recovery would be "uneven" and long, he warned, with government stimulus likely to buoy services and construction at home, while the rebound in manufacturing will depend heavily on foreign demand and how other nations cope with the virus fallout.

For the whole of 2020, the German government forecasts that GDP will contract 6.3 percent before expanding by 5.2 percent in 2021.

By contrast, the European Commission expects the economies of France, Italy and Spain to shrink more than 10 percent this year.

Germany has withstood the coronavirus shock better than many of its neighbours so far.

Stable infection rates saw it reopen factories, shops and restaurants from early May, allowing economic activity to pick up again. Germany has also been able to avoid mass layoffs thanks to subsidised shorter-hours schemes, with separate data on Thursday showing unemployment held steady at 6.4 percent in July, the same rate as June.

Chinese Banks Advised to Avoid SWIFT Messaging

BEIJING (Dispatches) - With the economic and political battles between the U.S. and China heating to a boil, one of China's top banks is urging financial institutions (FIs) to cut their use of the SWIFT financial messaging network for cross-border transactions. The bank's messaging applies to Hong Kong and Macau as well.

With U.S. sanctions against China looming, state lenders there have reportedly been developing contingency plans. According to the Bank of China's new report, sanctions could have

the U.S. adopting measures such as locking Chinese banks out of SWIFT, Reuters reported. SWIFT (the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) is the main network used by FIs to process transactions.

The bank's report commented: "A good punch to the enemy will save yourself from hundreds of punches from your enemies."

China's invasion of Hong Kong has ramped up tensions between the two countries by giving even more ammunition to the superpower's critics in the U.S. "We need to get prepared in advance, mentally and practically" for sanctions, the Bank of China said.

According to Reuters, the report urges increased use of the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) instead of the Belgium-based SWIFT system. In theory, this would help protect China's global payments data from possible U.S. actions.

SWIFT is the world's largest electronic payment messaging network, although it does not itself do any of the funds transfers.

Saqib Sheikh, global head of SWIFT's ISO 2022 program, recently spoke to PYMNTS about the network's commitment to instituting a new standard in cross-border payments: ISO 2022.

"All major reserve currencies — the euro, the dollar and the pound sterling — plan to adopt ISO 2022 within the next two to five years, and several countries have already instituted the standard," Sheikh said. He added that, as market infrastructures in many major countries use the network, "we are receiving more inquiries from banks with questions about how to accelerate their own move to ISO 2022."

Iraq Increases Oil Exports in July

LONDON (Reuters) - Iraq's crude oil exports have increased so far in July, shipping data showed and industry sources said, suggesting OPEC's second-largest producer is still undershooting its production cut target under an OPEC-led deal.

Exports from Basra and other southern Iraq terminals to July 29 averaged 2.75 million bpd, based on figures from Refinitiv Eikon and an industry source. That is up 50,000 bpd from June's official figure for southern Iraq exports.

"No massive change, Basra is still 2.7-2.8 million bpd," the industry source said, referring to the change in exports seen since the first 20 days of July. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as OPEC+, began



a record supply cut in May to bolster oil prices hammered by the coronavirus crisis. Iraq is cutting output by 1.06 million bpd under the deal.

The July figures imply Iraq is still some way from fulfilling its pledges and is exporting far more than a July loading program indicated.

Iraq says it is committed to the OPEC+ agreement and will boost compliance. Iraq had told OPEC+ it would make up for over-production in May and June through larger cuts in later months.

The south is the main outlet for Iraq's crude, so a good part of its OPEC+ cut should show up in lower exports.

Baghdad was reluctant to join previous OPEC-led supply cut efforts that began in 2017. Iraq has said it is in the country's interest to comply with the current deal.

Renault Hit by Historic €7.3b Loss



PARIS (Dispatches) - French automaker Renault reported its biggest half-year loss ever on Thursday, with revenue slashed by a third as dealerships worldwide were emptied by the coronavirus crisis.

The dire results underscored the challenges facing CEO Luca de Meo, who was brought in this month to revamp a company reeling from strategic missteps and the ousting of former boss Carlos Ghosn last year on financial misconduct charges.

Net losses reached 7.3 billion euros (\$8.6 billion), compared with a profit of 970 million euros in the same period last year. More than half the loss was due to Renault's 43 percent stake in its Japanese partner Nissan, which also reported this week a huge hit from the COVID-19 pandemic that has battered the global economy.

Revenues plunged 34 percent to 18.4 billion euros as demand withered for nearly all its brands in all its markets, including the low-cost Dacia models that have been hugely successful in recent years.

The company has warned overcapacity will require it to close or restructure four production sites in France and cut 15,000 jobs worldwide, and last month it secured a five-billion-euro emergency loan backed by the French government. "Although the situation is unprecedented, it is not final," De Meo, a former top Volkswagen executive, said in a statement, confirming that Renault would cut costs by 600 million euros this year, a third of the total targeted by 2022.

The half-year loss follows the first annual loss in Renault's history last year, when it was rocked by Ghosn's 2018 arrest in Tokyo on suspicions he under-reported his income while chairman at Nissan.

He denied the charges and later escaped to Lebanon to avoid "persecution" by Japanese prosecutors, but his downfall proved disastrous for a company that, together with Nissan and its other alliance partner Mitsubishi, was briefly the world's biggest seller by volumes, ahead of Toyota and Volkswagen.

"We're currently touching the bottom of a negative curb that started several years ago," De Meo said in a conference call with analysts on Thursday, adding he would lay out his recovery plan by January. "We know what we have to do... We will move the whole system from volume to value," he said, adding that "a lot will happen in this house in the next six months".

Iranian Students Win 4 Medals In Chemistry Olympiad

TEHRAN (MNA) – Minister of Education Mohsen Haji Mirzaei congratulated Iranian students on winning 4 medals in the 52nd International Chemistry Olympiad.

In a tweet on Friday, Haji Mirzaei congratulated Iranian students on winning four medals in the 52nd International Chemistry Olympiad and wished them prosperity. Iranian

students won one gold, two silvers, and one bronze medals in the 52nd International Chemistry Olympiad in Turkey. Mohammad Shahabuddin Daneshvar won one gold, Ramin Asempour and Mohammad Aryan Taghvaei Arabi both received bronze and Amir Mahboubi earned one bronze medal in the competition.



Huawei Dethrone Apple, Samsung to Become Biggest Smartphone Brand

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese tech giant Huawei shipped more smartphones than any other company in the second quarter of 2020, making it the first quarter in which a company other than Samsung or Apple led the market in nine years, according to a new report from research firm Canalys.

Huawei shipped 55.8 million devices in the quarter, which is down 5% year-over-year but still enough to beat Samsung, which shipped 53.7 million smartphones in Q2. For Samsung, that's a decrease of 30% compared to Q2 2019, the report says.

A key driver behind Huawei's success has been its growth in China, which has seen its economy start to recover from the coronavirus pandemic as COVID-19 case numbers have spiked in other markets like the United States and Europe. Huawei has largely relied on sales in China after US trade restrictions have barred the phone maker from loadings its phones with Google's popular apps.

The restrictions have damaged Huawei's international sales, as domestic shipments were down 27% in the second quarter. But the company is a dominant player in China, as it now sells more than 70% of its phones in mainland China, reports Canalys.

The COVID-19 pandemic has decimated the global smartphone market overall, with the International Data Corporation forecasting that the market could decline by 11.9% year-over-year in 2020. But Huawei's reliance on the China market has given it a boost, reports Canalys.

"This is a remarkable result that few people would have predicted a year ago," Ben Stanton, a senior analyst at Canalys, wrote in a statement announcing the report's findings. "If it wasn't for COVID-19, it wouldn't have happened. Huawei has taken full advantage of the Chinese economic recovery to reignite its smartphone business."

Samsung, however, has a small presence in China according to Canalys, which reports that the South Korean electronics giant accounts for less than 1% of the market share. The report did not mention Apple, but China is the iPhone maker's third-largest market according to its most recent earnings report, coming after the United States and Europe.

But Huawei's spot at the top could be limited; the report notes that dominance in

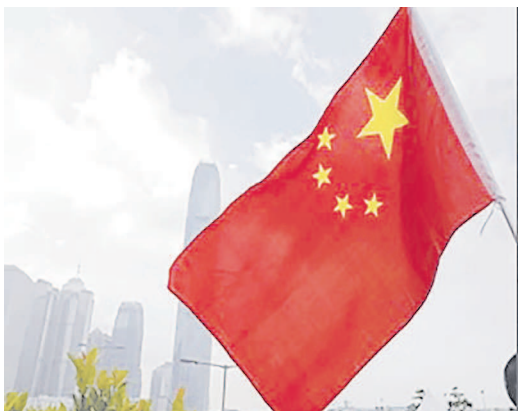


the Chinese market won't be enough to sustain Huawei over the long term as the global economy recovers from COVID-19.

The report also comes just as Samsung and Apple have been leaning into selling cheaper devices to combat a global slowdown across the industry as consumers have held onto their devices for longer periods of time. Both companies are also expected to launch new high-end devices in the coming weeks and months, and rumors suggest Samsung could debut a new version of its Galaxy Note next month.

Apple, meanwhile, is expected to debut its first 5G iPhone in the fall. And if Apple's 5G-enabled iPhone sells as well as the iPhone 11 lineup, Apple could become the market leader for 5G phones, according to Strategy Analytics.

China Warns India Against Forced Decoupling Of Their Economies



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China warned on Thursday that a "forced decoupling" of its economy with India, following a Himalayan border clash last month that killed 20 Indian soldiers, would hurt both countries.

The Chinese ambassador said China was not a strategic threat to India and that the "general structure that we can't live without each other remains unchanged".

The statement came after New Delhi's recent moves to ban or sideline Chinese business interests in one of the world's biggest markets, even as the border remains tense with many more troops on the ground than usual.

"China advocates win-win cooperation and opposes a zero-sum game," Ambassador Sun Weidong wrote on Twitter. "Our economies are highly complementary, interwoven and interdependent. Forced decoupling is against the trend and will only lead to a 'lose-lose' outcome."

Officials of the nuclear-armed neighbors have been talking regularly to de-escalate the border standoff after the June 15 clash in the Galwan Valley of India's Ladakh region.

Indian officials say Chinese troops have intruded on to its side in the remote western region, while China says it has not breached the disputed border and has asked India to restrain its frontline troops.

India's Ministry of External Affairs said in an online briefing that a troops disengagement process as agreed by the two sides had yet to be completed, and that another round of commander-level talks would be held soon.

"We expect that the Chinese side will sincerely work with us for complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas at the earliest," spokesman Anurag Srivastava said.

Analysts say the worst fighting between the giant countries in decades is likely to push India closer to the United States, both strategically and in trade.

China and India fought a brief border war in 1962 and China is a close ally of India's long-time foe, Pakistan.

U.S. Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

"If the enemy talks of negotiation, it means 'come to the negotiating table and don't develop missiles'. If you give in to their demands ... you'd make yourself defenseless; and if you don't, you'd have to face the same story: disputes, threats and sanctions again. This is what negotiation means."

The Leader said the reason for his opposition to negotiation with America is that "such negotiations have no use; of course they benefit from it [but Iran doesn't]."

"The old guy who is in office in the U.S. apparently took some propaganda advantages of negotiation with North Korea. He wants to use it [negotiation with Iran] for his personal gain in elections and elsewhere," the Leader noted.

However, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed, the US ruling system seeks to achieve broader "vital" objectives beyond what the incumbent president seeks to gain from talks with Iran.

"They say you should abandon your defensive equipment, your regional power and national might. No man of honor interested in maintaining the country's interests would give in to such demands. This is why I'm opposed to negotiation; moreover, we are in talks with the entire world, except for the US and the fake Zionist regime, and there's no problem with that," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the enemies of the Islamic Republic seek to achieve short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals by imposing sanctions against the Iranian nation.

In the short-term, they seek to impose so much pressure that the nation gets weary, exhausted, and disturbed, so much so that they stand against the establishment, he said.

"You know that last year they said and this year they say there will be a hot summer – meaning the people should come and stand against the establishment, but they themselves got the hot summer," the Leader said, apparently referring to anti-racism rallies which have been going on in the US for two months now.

Their mid-term goal, he said, is to prevent the country's development through sanctions. "They mainly seek to prevent the country's scientific development," he said, citing the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists as an example of the enemy's efforts to hinder the country's scientific progress.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the enemy's long-term goal is to lead the country and the government into bankruptcy.

"One of the other goals they pursue is to dismantle the country's economy; if a country's economy collapses, it is not possible to live in that country anymore."

The enemies also seek to achieve a collateral goal, which is to cut the Islamic Republic's ties with the resistance forces in the region, Ayatollah Khamenei noted. "That's because they know the Islamic Republic will keep helping them as much as it can."

"We have a strategic depth in the region, based on which many nations and governments are our supporters and interested in Iran, ready to strive in the service of our goals. The enemies say you 'should give this up', but even if we do that, they will not stop there.

"When you are willing to reduce your ability to defend yourself and destroy your authority in the region; when you are willing to totally abandon your nuclear industry which is vital to the country, the enemy will not be satisfied yet and will demand something new," the Leader said.

However, the Leader added, these dreams will never come true and as a Persian proverb says, "A camel dreams of cottonseed."

The Leader further pointed to a disinformation campaign, which works hand in hand with the sanctions and includes distortion of the truth and misrepresentation of the realities.

The main purpose of the disinformation campaign is to undermine the people's morale, and to offer wrong solutions to people's problems, Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The enemies, the Leader said, suggest if Iran wants the sanctions to be lifted, it must give in to U.S. demands. "This is the gist of what they say."

"Some people are influenced [by these insinuations] and exactly repeat what the enemies want, whether regarding the country's weaknesses or its points of progress which they play down and offer wrong solutions," the Leader said.

However, this campaign will fail to influence the majority of the Iranian people, because they have known the enemy and how biased it is, Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The Leader said the disinformation campaign tries to convince the Iranian people that the Islamic Republic must succumb to the U.S. demands.

"If the distortion process fails, so will the sanctions," the Leader said. "The arena is the arena of war of wills; when the process of sanctions is defeated and the will of the Iranian nation remains the same, it will prevail over the will of the enemy."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Iranian people are smart and have taken advantage of the enemy's sanctions, gaining achievements against the enemy's will.

He went on to say that the U.S.' secondary sanctions led the Iranian scientists and producers to indigenize what the country could not provide because of Washington's bans.

He pointed to the production of the advanced homegrown jet fighter Kowsar, the spare parts produced inside the country, the establishment of thousands of knowledge-based companies, the Persian Gulf Star Refinery built by the IRGC, and the major energy projects in southern and Western Iran as examples of the Islamic Republic's achievements under the sanctions.

"Had they sold us a jet aircraft, we would not have produced the jet trainer Kowsar inside the country," he said. "They [enemies] have admitted that Iran managed to manufacture so many defensive products at the time of sanctions."

New Achievements...

FROM PAGE 1

It is interesting to know that THAAD is one of the most powerful anti-ballistic missile defense systems which has been deployed in recent years by the U.S. in some of its regional bases like Al-Dhafra in the UAE. According to the U.S. allegations, these defensive systems have been deployed to defend American bases against the probable Iran's missile attacks.

The design of THAAD system began in 1992 by Lockheed Martin Company upon the order of the U.S. Army and ultimately in 2008, this system joined the U.S. Army to be tested. Between 2008 and 2015, in other words in five years, the system underwent several tests and finally got the nod to enter the U.S. Air Force. THAAD system is in fact a long-range anti-ballistic missile defense system designed to shoot down targets at ranges of 200km and altitudes of up to 150km.

The THAAD system is comprised of five parts of launcher, radar, firing control system, related systems and units of the missile which practically support the system of THAAD defense system. THAAD is equipped with an active radar so-called AN/TPY-2 which is a missile defense radar that can detect, track and discriminate ballistic missiles from a distance of thousands of kilometers. This radar is considered as the biggest and important radars in the world. Beside what was mentioned, THAAD is also equipped with a backup unit so-called BM/C31 which enables the system to share its intelligence with other forces or defense systems. This backup unit is comprised of three components of tactical operation base, launching operation base and the whole backup of the system. These three units with different arrays have different performances.

There are nine truck-mounted launchers in a typical THAAD battery as each truck carrying eight missiles, power generator and electronic system which can be prepared for operation in less than 30 minutes and it can be reloaded twice in the same period. Each battalion of THAAD firing system is usually comprised of six vehicles for the launch. Its missile is the one with a single stage solid fuel rocket motor with thrust vectoring which can increase its speed to 8.2 Mach. The missile is 6.17m in length, 37 centimeters in diameter and 900 kilograms in weight and it is equipped with a warhead with kinetic energy.

Regarding all these peculiarities of the system, one should take into consideration the significance of the IRGC's performance in assimilating the system and destroying it in the drills. Perhaps these statistics and information on the THAAD might be source of pride regarding our men in the IRGC for the common people who are unaware of the value of these equipment and defensive tools, but world armies and all strategic military think tanks are fully aware that with arrival of such equipment into the military and army structure of a country, capability for drawing up a war plan for attacking the country will be totally impossible.

Of course, the Supreme Leader as well as Foreign Ministry and some other Iranian bodies have repeatedly reiterated that the country does not intend to launch any attack or to conquest against any country and what is today termed as the military achievements in Iran is just for defensive purpose for the country and the countries aligned with the resistance, and neighboring countries of Iran should fully rely on these tools of security and count on Iran for protecting their securities.

JCPOA Annexed to...

FROM PAGE 1

Now Washington is claiming that the accord is not an international one and has no connection with the UNSC.

Trump's administration pursues the plan to separate the JCPOA from Resolution 2231 in order to be able to claim that Washington is still a part of the Resolution and thus gain the power to extend Iran's arms embargo that will come to an end in October. This is while the claim of Trump's administration has already been rejected by China and Russia as well as the U.S. European allies.

Tehran Dismisses...

FROM PAGE 1

4. Over the past two years, high on the agenda and a pivotal issue in Iran-South Korea relations has been to provide access to the financial resources of the central bank in South Korea. Accordingly, in addition to receiving South Korea's special envoy, dozens of meetings were held in Tehran and Seoul with South Korean authorities. Obviously, the nature of the responsibilities of the foreign ministry requires that it should not publicly announce all of its activities."

Earlier on Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi issued a fresh warning to South Korea over billions of dollars of Iranian funds blocked in the Southeast Asian country, signaling that Tehran would not be happy with a partial reimbursement through humanitarian shipments.

Iran has had enough of various promises made in South Korea about returning the funds that have been illegally blocked by two banks over US sanctions, Mousavi said.



Reus Still Injured, To Miss Pre-Season Start

BERLIN (Reuters) - Borussia Dortmund captain Marco Reus will be sidelined for an indefinite period after failing to recover from injury, the Bundesliga club said as they began pre-season training on Thursday.

Germany international Reus has missed most of the year already after suffering a groin problem in February, yet his comeback has now been delayed due to another injury.

"Borussia Dortmund will still have to be without Marco Reus," the club said in a statement.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax: (+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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Man City Agree Deal To Sign Ake

LONDON (AFP) - Manchester City are set to sign Netherlands defender Nathan Ake from Bournemouth after agreeing a £41 million (\$53 million) deal, according to British media reports on Thursday.

City are reported to have negotiated a £40 million fee with relegated Bournemouth, with the deal potentially rising by a further £1 million depending on clauses. Ake's likely arrival at the Etihad Stadium comes after City endured a poor season defensively following the departure of Vincent Kompany to Anderlecht last year.

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SPORTS

SATURDAY AUGUST 1, 2020

Murray Calls for More Mixed-Gender Events

LONDON (Reuters) - Tennis is "missing a trick" by not including more team events involving both men and women on the main tours, three-times Grand Slam winner Andy Murray has said.

Mixed doubles is currently played only at the four Grand Slams on the professional tennis circuit. "I think sports miss a bit of a trick with this stuff," said Murray, who is taking part in the Battle of the Brits exhibition featuring male and female players.

"The Hopman Cup, for example, was a brilliant event in my opinion. The players enjoyed it. I played there a bunch of times and I loved it."

The inaugural ATP Cup men's team competition took the Hopman Cup's Australian Open warm-up slot in 2020 but organisers have said it will return.

"Putting match-ups in tennis like Serena Williams and Roger Federer on the same court, it is so brilliant for our sport," Murray told British media.

"We are able to do that in tennis and we should embrace it a little bit more, not necessarily every single week but at times it would be great. I would like to see Rafa (Nadal) on the court with some of the top female players. "When I watched Roger and Serena playing, it was great. They were into it and I'm sure they enjoyed it as well."

Murray said there was opportunities for other sports to embrace mixed-gender events.

"Golf is another sport where I think it would be interesting to see a mixed Ryder Cup event," he said.

"Again it's a sport where they are able to do it and they just miss out a little bit. I do think people really enjoy watching it, and the players like it too."

Meanwhile world number one Ash Barty will skip the U.S. Open and the tournament preceding it in New York due to concerns over the coronavirus pandemic.

Italian GP at Monza to Run Without Spectators

ROME (Reuters) - This year's Italian Formula One Grand Prix at Monza, a highlight of the calendar for diehard Ferrari fans, will be held without spectators due to the COVID-19 pandemic, organisers said on Wednesday.

The Italian Grand Prix website said tickets would be fully refunded. "The 2020 edition of the Italian Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Nazionale Monza from 4-6 September will be held behind closed doors, that is without spectators," it added.

The blow is likely to be lessened, however, by Italy being handed three races this season for the first time — the others being at Imola and Ferrari-owned Mugello, neither racetrack far from the team's Maranello factory.

Ferrari are also struggling this year, languishing fifth in the standings.

The first three races of the season that started this month in Austria have been held behind closed doors, with Britain's Silverstone hosting two more without spectators this weekend and next. The Italian and British Grands Prix are the only races to have appeared on every calendar since the world championship started in 1950.

Monza, a temple to all things Ferrari, usually provides one of the sport's great atmospheres with the start-finish straight a sea of red after the race as fans flood the track to get close to the overhead podium.

Saudi-Backed Group Ends Takeover Interest In Newcastle United

LONDON (Reuters) - A Saudi Arabian-backed consortium has ended its interest in taking over English Premier League side Newcastle United, Sky Sports reported on Thursday.

The group, which included Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund PIF, PCP Capital Partners and Reuben Brothers, was reported to have made a 300 million pounds bid to buy United from British businessman Mike Ashley. "With a deep appreciation for the Newcastle community and the significance of its football club, we have come to the decision to withdraw our interest in acquiring Newcastle United Football Club," the group said in a statement to Sky Sports.



involved due to COVID-19 and I don't feel comfortable putting my team and I in that position.

"I wish the USTA all the best for the tournaments and look forward to being back in the U.S. next year."

The Western and Southern Open, which is held annually in Cincinnati, has been moved to New York this year and is set to start in mid-August.

The U.S. Open kicks off on Aug. 31 and will be held in its usual home in Flushing Meadows, Queens, but will be played without fans in attendance to limit the spread of the virus.

The reigning French Open champion will decide later whether to defend her title at Roland Garros starting in late September.

"I will make my decision on the French Open and the surrounding WTA European tournaments in the coming weeks," she said.

World number one Novak Djokovic and 23-times Grand Slam champion Serena Williams are among players expected to compete at the U.S. Open despite concerns about undergoing mandatory quarantine when travelling to Europe, which would have them miss tournaments in Madrid and Rome ahead of the French Open.

Deaths from COVID-19 surpassed 150,000 in the United States on Wednesday, more than any other country and nearly a quarter of the world's total, according to a Reuters tally.

Ibrahimovic Likens Himself to Benjamin Button



MILAN (Reuters) - Irrepressible AC Milan forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic likened himself to film character Benjamin Button after scoring twice in a 4-1 Serie A win at Sampdoria.

"People tell me I'm old and tired but I'm just getting warmed up," the 38-year-old Swede told Milan's TV channel after taking his tally to nine league goals since he returned for a second stint at the club in January.

"I'm like Benjamin Button, except I've always been young, never old," he added, referring to the main character in a 2008 Oscar-winning Hollywood movie about a man who ages in reverse.

After struggling in the first half of the season, Milan have lost only twice since Ibrahimovic's arrival.

"It's obvious that Ibra has been very important for our improvement, although it wasn't just his arrival, it was also the work we did in the previous months," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli, whose side are sixth in Serie A.

Ibrahimovic's contract expires at the end of the season and Pioli said it was up to the club directors to negotiate an extension.



momentum after George Floyd's death in police custody in May.

Europe's Champions League, which has been suspended since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will resume next month.

Boateng Urges Players to Take A Knee in Champions League

BERLIN (Reuters) - Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng says players must use the platform provided by the Champions League to continue sending messages about racial equality by taking a knee.

Athletes from around the world have taken a knee in a show of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) campaign, which gained

momentum after George Floyd's death in police custody in May.

Europe's Champions League, which has been suspended since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will resume next month.

"It's very powerful and very important that we continue this in the Champions League, especially in the final, because the whole world will look," said Boateng, whose side hold a 3-0 lead over Chelsea heading into the second leg of their last-16 tie on Aug. 8.

"Hopefully in some sports that are not back yet, they will join us. I think it's very important."

The German defender, who has been the victim of racial abuse in the past, said he had spoken to his Bayern team mates about the issues raised by the BLM movement.

"We talked about it before our break, I talked actually to Joshua Kimmich and Leon Goretzka about it," the 31-year-old said.

"They asked me how to support, how does it feel, what happened to you when you were younger, so I could tell them my story, what were my experiences, and why is it so painful and hard to hear those things."

Swiss Launch Criminal Probe of FIFA Boss Infantino

ZURICH (Reuters) - Criminal proceedings have been opened against FIFA president Gianni Infantino by a special prosecutor looking into dealings between the head of the global soccer body and Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber, Swiss authorities said on Thursday.

The special prosecutor Stefan Keller, appointed last month to review complaints against the two men and others, had found indications of criminal conduct related to their meetings, according to the AB-BA watchdog which oversees the Attorney General's Office.

"This concerns abuse of public office, breach of official secrecy, assisting offenders and incitement to these acts," the watchdog said in a statement.

Both Lauber and Infantino have denied wrongdoing. FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Infantino was elected in 2016 to replace disgraced Sepp Blatter, who also became the subject of criminal proceedings in 2015.

Blatter, suspected of criminal mismanagement, was banned by FIFA's own ethics committee although the investigations against him are still ongoing and he has not been charged. He denies wrongdoing. On being elected, Infantino promised to clean up FIFA and to put the focus back on football.



Hamilton Can Pass Schumacher Records

SILVERSTONE (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton is poised to pass Michael Schumacher and become Formula One's most successful driver, according to Ferrari chairman John Elkann.

Hamilton can tie Schumacher's all-time record with a seventh world title this season.

Elkann said Hamilton was "an exceptional driver" who "can become the most successful ever... He has been able to work with concentration and intelligence."

"His move from McLaren to Mercedes was not an easy one. It was not obvious and it was a winning choice." Responding to the Briton's call for the Italian team to do more to promote diversity during an interview with Italian daily La Gazzetta dello Sport, Elkann defended Ferrari.

"The civil commitment he is carrying out is important and dear to us," said Elkann, who succeeded Sergio Marchionne as chairman of Ferrari in 2018.

He added that Ferrari was the first company in Italy to implement 'Equal Salary certification for equal pay for women and men with the same qualifications and duties' and stressed that showed "commitment to a work environment that is inclusive and respectful of differences".

Hamilton, the sport's only black driver, was critical of Ferrari when he spoke to the media following his victory at the Styrian Grand Prix.

