

Iranian Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday That Some 169 People in Iran Have Died as a Result of the Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

The Russian Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Mikhail Ulyanov Said the Next Meeting of the Commission Dealing With the Iranian Nuclear Deal Could Take Place Soon

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No Place Safe for Murderers of Gen. Soleimani

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian military commander says the enemies should know that no place is a safe haven for them.

Commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said on Thursday the enemies created a constant source of "danger and revenge" for themselves by assassinating senior Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

"The killing of General Soleimani will be avenged," he said. "The martyrdom of this glorious commander breathed new revolutionary life into the body of Islamic territories and brought everlasting glory upon the Islamic Revolution, the Establishment, the Iranian nation and the IRGC," said commander Salami.

He underlined the flag that late general Soleimani raised will never fall to the ground.

Commander Salami then described the "geography of the Islamic Revolution" as an arena for "constant confrontation" with enemies of Islam.

"What all these confrontations had in common was that there was the Islamic Revolution led by Iran on the one side, and global arrogance led by the US on the other," he added.

The top general said the passage of time has shown that the Islamic Revolution, thanks to the vigilance and prudence of its leaders ... has always had the upper hand in these arenas," he noted.

He then underscored the key reason behind the United States' failures is a lack of wisdom and common sense in the system leading the country.

Oil Tankers Seized By U.S. Had Nothing To Do with Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's ambassador to Venezuela has denied media reports that the US has seized Venezuela-bound oil tankers belonging to the Islamic Republic.

In a post on his Twitter account, Hojjat Soltani described the allegation as a lie and another psychological war launched by the U.S. propaganda machine against Iran.

Soltani stressed that the vessels seized by the U.S. are not Iranian-flagged or owned by the country.

"The terrorist president of the U.S. cannot make up for his defeat and humiliation against the great Iranian nation by using false propaganda," he said.

The U.S. has reportedly seized the cargo of four tankers it says was targeting for transporting Iranian fuel to Venezuela, U.S. officials said Thursday.

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Tehran Condemns UAE's Stupid Move to Establish Ties With Israel



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran has strongly condemned the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel, describing it as a stab in the back of Muslim world.

In a statement released on Friday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry strongly denounced the establishment of diplomatic relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime, describing it as a strategic stupid move made by Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv which would undoubtedly strengthen the axis of resistance in the region.

The statement underlined that the oppressed people of Palestine and all free nations in the world will never forgive the normalization of ties with the usurping and criminal regime of Israel and aiding and abetting the regime's crimes.

"Undoubtedly, the blood shed unjustly during seven decades of resistance for the liberation of the holy Palestinian territory and the first qibla of Muslims will haunt those betraying the cause of Palestine sooner or later," it added.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran considers Abu Dhabi's shameful move to normalize relations with the fake, illegitimate and anti-humane Zionist regime as a dangerous measure, warns against any interference by the Zionist regime in the Persian Gulf region's equations, and declares that the Emirati government and the other governments siding with it must accept responsibility for all the consequences of this move," the statement noted.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has also expressed confidence that history will show how the strategic mistake made by the Zionist regime and the move by the UAE to unfairly stab the Palestinian people and the whole Muslims in the back would backfire, strengthen the axis of resistance, and maximize unity and solidarity against the Zionist regime and the regional reactionaries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has finally advised the rulers, who are inside glass palaces and claw at the faces of Palestinians and other oppressed people of the region like Yemenis, to wake up and not go the wrong way in realizing their friends and foes.

The United Arab Emirates and Israel have reached a deal that will lead to a full normalization of diplomatic relations.

The agreement came after a phone call between U.S. President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and the de-facto ruler of the UAE.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement supporting the Palestinian administration, saying that the "history and the conscience" of the region's people will not forget and never forgive the "hypocritical behavior" of the United Arab Emirates in agreeing to a deal with Israel.

"While betraying the Palestinian cause to serve its narrow interests, the UAE is trying to present this as a kind of act of self-sacrifice for Palestine," the foreign ministry said.

Lebanon Alone Must Decide Its Own Future

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Only the Lebanese people and their representatives can decide the country's future, Iran's foreign minister said on a visit to Beirut on Friday, following the massive blast at the city's port that killed 172 people and prompted the government to resign.

Mohammed Javad Zarif was speaking after senior U.S. and French officials met President Michel Aoun in a flurry of Western diplomacy that has focused on urging Lebanon to fight entrenched corruption and enact long-delayed reforms in order to unlock international financial aid to tackle an economic crisis.

"In our view it is not humane to exploit the pain and suffering of the people for political goals," Iran's Zarif told a joint televised news conference with Lebanon's caretaker foreign minister.

"We believe that the government and the people of Lebanon should decide on the future of Lebanon."

Zarif said Tehran and private Iranian companies were ready to help Lebanon with reconstruction and rehabilitating the country's electricity sector.

Zarif, who has travelled to Lebanon to express solidarity and sympathy with the people and government of Lebanon, held a meeting on Friday with Charbel Wehbe, minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lebanese government with a caretaker capacity.

In the meeting, held at the Foreign Ministry of Lebanon, Zarif offered condolences and sympathy with the families of victims of the tragic blast in Beirut's port, wished recovery for the injured, and expressed Iran's readiness to help reconstruct the damages caused by the explosion at Beirut's port in various fields, particularly in the sphere of supplying power, construction, and providing medicine and treatment considering the capabilities of Iran.

Highlighting Lebanon's political position, the Iranian Foreign Minister emphasized the necessity of helping reconstruction of Lebanon without preconditions.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



The UAE, One Step Beyond Insecurity

In recent days, the region has been witnessing some tumultuous news that U.S. President Donald Trump has stirred regarding the normalization of the ties between the UAE and Zionist regime and it has paved the ground for flood of opinions pros and cons on the normalization of ties between the both states.

The Zionist regime by this agreement which will lead to contracts in different trade, economic, political, cultural and, in a future not too far, in the military and intelligence fields in a region that the UAE will not only expand the process of insecurity for itself but also for its allies backing this idea.

According to Palestinian news agency Shahab, Zionist media outlets have reported that some Arab countries in the Persian littoral states have openly revealed their secret intelligence, commercial and political ties with Israel. These media outlets have announced that they can refer to the recent interview of Israeli Minister of Intelligence Eli Cohen and an article by the UAE Ambassador to Washington Yousef Al-Otaiba published in the Saudi Arabian online newspaper "Elaph" as the proofs for their claims.

Regarding this issue and Al-Otaiba's interview with Elaph, Israeli Channel 13's reporter on Arab states affairs Hezi Simantov said that the interview actually showed that some Arab countries especially the Arab Persian Gulf littoral states continue their efforts to normalize ties with Israel.

The UAE's officials through tweeting have asked for getting some concessions for Palestine as the base for developing their ties with Zionist regime because they believe as a result of this diplomatic breakthrough and at the request of President Trump with the support of the United Arab Emirates, Israel will suspend declaring sovereignty over areas outlined in the President's Vision for Peace and focus its efforts now on expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world.

The joint statement between the UAE and Israel which has made official their ties says, "Delegations from Israel and the United Arab Emirates will meet in the coming weeks to sign bilateral agreements regarding investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, technology, energy, healthcare, culture, the environment, the establishment of reciprocal embassies, and other areas of mutual benefit. The United Arab Emirates and Israel will immediately expand and accelerate cooperation regarding the treatment of and the development of a vaccine for the coronavirus. Working together, these efforts will help save Muslim, Jewish, and Christian lives throughout the region."

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Pakistan Says Border Fencing With Iran to Be Completed by End of 2021

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) -Spokesperson of Pakistan Army says Iran-Pakistan border fencing project has the support of both the neighboring states and would be completed by the end of year 2021.

Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar responding to a question of IRNA at a press conference at army headquarters on Thursday said the project is being carried out to enhance the security arrangements along the borders.

'It is supported by both the governments and I am sure it is going to help out in curbing lots of problems that keep surfacing because of these borders being porous,' said the military spokesperson.

'We are doing it for the good of both the countries,' noted Major General Babar Iftikhar.

Earlier in his opening remarks he said measures are being taken at the Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders as part of the border management, which includes border terminals, scanner biometric system, border posts, forts and fencing.

He said that more than 1000 border posts are being built at the border with Iran, out of which 400 posts and forts have already been completed and the rest are being set up.

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Councils to Counteract Rent-Seeking, Corruption

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of Iran's judiciary said that the councils must deal with any influence, rent-seeking and corruption, and anything that seeks to violate the public rights of the people of towns and villages.

Seyed Ibrahim Raisi in the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Provinces on Thursday, said: "The philosophy of establishing judicial provincial council is to develop the economic affairs of cities and villages and to promote culture and services to the people, and this philosophy should not be forgotten or lost."

Rouhani Warns Europeans Against Siding With U.S.

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani has warned the Europeans against falling into the trap of siding with the U.S. in supporting a resolution that aims to extend an arms embargo against Iran indefinitely.

Speaking during a telephone conversation with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday, Rouhani stressed that Europe should not be swayed by the US, reiterating Tehran's opposition to Washington's attempts to act against UN Security Council resolutions.

"According to UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the arms embargo on Iran must be lifted as of October 18, and if the United States seeks to act against it, it is a violation of the resolution," the Iranian chief executive said.

Rouhani said that maintaining the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and sticking to UNSCR 2231, which endorses the JCPOA, constitute obvious commitments of all countries that remain in the Iran agreement.

He added that Tehran expects close consultations and cooperation between Iran and the three European parties to the JCPOA as well as Russia and China, the other two signatories to the accord, in different forums, including in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the IAEA Board of Governors, as well as the UN Security Council, to prevent the opponents of the JCPOA from achieving their goals.

Commenting on U.S. bids to invoke a sanctions snapback mechanism enshrined in the JCPOA, Rouhani said the United States has no right to use the mechanism, given that it left the agreement more than two years ago.

He said the U.S. policy to impose illegal and inhumane sanctions against Iran amid the coronavirus pandemic is "abhorrent" and in contradiction with international



regulations and the 2005 enactments by the World Health Organization, and stressed the need for European action in activating economic relations with Iran and cooperating in the fight against COVID-19.

The U.S. has stepped up attempts aimed at extending the UN arms ban on Iran that is set to expire on October 18 as part of the JCPOA.

Also in his remarks, Rouhani pointed to the current situation in Lebanon following last week's massive explosion in Beirut and underlined the need for unity in the Arab country.

"It is very important that we all help the Lebanese judiciary to find those mainly responsible for this incident," he added.

"Lebanon needs further unity among political groups and we must all help create such unity. Lebanon needs a strong government, and the Lebanese parliament and all parties must work together to that end," he stressed.

Rouhani also welcomed the French president's invitation for Iran to join the international group to help resolve Lebanon's problems.

Macron, for his part, underlined the need for keeping the JCPOA in place and said, "Our views with the United States on the extension of the arms embargo on Iran are quite different, and we have made this clear to them."

On Iran-Europe economic ties, the French president said, "We are taking steps to make the European financial system with Iran more active."

He also called on Iran to help resolve the Lebanese political crisis and invited Iran to join an international action group on Lebanon.

UAE to Be Engulfed In Zionism's Fire

TEHRAN (MNA) - An advisor to the Iranian Parliament Speakers slammed the establishment of ties between the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime.

"UAE's new approach for normalizing ties w/fake, criminal #Israel doesn't maintain peace & security, but serves ongoing Zionists' crimes. Abu Dhabi behavior has no justification, [and is a] turning back on the Palestine cause. W/ that strategic mistake, #UAE will be engulfed in Zionism fire," tweeted Parliament Speaker's Special Aide for International Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who had earlier offered the so-called 'Deal of the Century' in favor of the Zionist regime, announced that he has brokered an agreement between the Israeli regime and the United Arab Emirates for normalization of ties.

Palestinian groups and officials have unanimously condemned the measure.

Pompeo Bypasses the U.S. Congress Over Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN (IP) - Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted on Thursday that the U.S. Secretary of State has bypassed the U.S. Congress to sell arms to the West Asian region's top weapon importer.

The tweet added that "It is now revealed that the #LyingCheatingStealing Secy Pompeo, has bypassed the U.S. Congress to sell arms to our region's top weapon importer, which continues to bomb #Yemen & hypocritically calls for continued restrictions against #Iran. Pathetic!"

It is now revealed that the #LyingCheatingStealing Secy Pompeo, has bypassed the US Congress to sell arms to our region's top weapon importer, which continues to bomb #Yemen & hypocritically calls for continued restrictions against #Iran. Pathetic!

The U.S. State Department recently announced that Trump had lifted a ban on the sale of weapons to foreign armies by signing a decree.

Iran Hails Russia's Success in Making COVID19 Vaccine

MOSCOW (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali said Tehran welcomes Moscow's success in making coronavirus vaccine and believes that the international community should take the same approach.

According to Russian media, Jalali said Iran has done research for producing vaccine in line with fighting COVID19 since the beginning of the outbreak of the deadly virus.

Referring to cooperation between Iran and Russia in fighting the coronavirus, he said Iran not only welcomes Russia's success but also believes that the international community should welcome it too.

He noted that Iran hails any achievement by any country which would result in finding vaccine or drug for removing the deadly virus.

Pakistan Independence Day Celebrated in Tehran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Official ceremony to mark 74th Independence Day of Pakistan was held at Pakistan House, Tehran today. Members of Pakistani community in Iran and the officials of the Embassy attended the ceremony. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and to ensure safety requirements for those in audience, the ceremony was kept simple.

The ceremony commenced with playing of national anthem & hoisting of the national flag by Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi. It was followed by reading out of Messages of President and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Recalling the historical importance of the day, Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi paid rich tributes to the founding father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other leaders who led the Pakistan movement and offered sacrifices for the creation of an independent Muslim state.

While congratulating the Pakistani diaspora on Pakistan's Independence Day, Ambassador urged them to serve the country with dedication. Since independence, Pakistan has faced multiple challenges, but with the grace of Almighty Allah and with the dedication and hard work of our citizens, our country has succeeded in overcoming all the challenges to continue our march towards becoming a modern and progressive state, he said.



On this joyous occasion, the participants also remembered their Kashmiri brethren in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK), who despite Covid-19 and persistent global condemnation by the UN, OIC and other human rights bodies, continue to suffer systematic persecution by the Indian occupying forces. The audience also offered prayers for peaceful resolution of the IIOK as enshrined in the relevant resolutions UN Security Council.

Qalibaf Underlines Iran's Support for Syrian Gov't, Nation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in a message congratulated his Syrian counterpart Hammouda Sabbagh over his reelection, saying Iran will continue its support for the Syrian government and people.

Qalibaf assured that Iranian and Syrian parliaments will continue strategic interactions in bilateral, regional and international fields.

He also stressed the importance of supporting economic cooperation by the two countries' parliaments.

Qalibaf conveyed his greeting to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

He wished health and success for Sabbagh, Syrian lawmakers and success for Syrian government and nation.

Tehran Is a Reliable Partner for New Delhi

TEHRAN (IP)- The Indian ambassador to Iran called Tehran a reliable partner for New Delhi and said India wants to maintain relations with Iran and resume oil purchases from Tehran.

Gaddam Dharmendra, the Ambassador of India in Iran, noting that the cooperation between the two countries in the field of transportation is underway in the form of development of Chabahar port, said: "India has a partnership with the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization and is committed to its development."

Dharmendra referring to the fact that the central banks of Iran and India are in contact with each other and are developing their relations, said: The Rupee-Rial financial mechanism started before any other financial mechanism and this financial mechanism is still in place."

Regarding the U.S. sanctions against Iran and its impact on Tehran-New Delhi relations, the Indian ambassador to Tehran said: "Despite U.S. sanctions, Iran and India have maintained relations in various fields, and New Delhi stands by Tehran in facing the sanctions."

Dharmendra called India's long-term strategy to buy oil from Iran and added: "There are big refineries in India that are built in accordance with the quality of Iranian oil, and not buying Iranian oil has caused losses to these refineries."

Reports About Handing Over Islands to China 'Sheer Lie'

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Reports claiming that the Islamic Republic plans to hand over some Iranian islands to China as part of a 25-year agreement between the two nations are "sheer lie", a lawmaker said.

"Iran will not make any special concession (in its 25-year roadmap with China), and reports about handing over Iranian islands to China are sheer lie," Member of National Security Commission in the Parliament Mahmood Abbaszadeh said on Thursday.

The Iranian lawmaker added that Iran is determined to enhance its mutual ties with China in various sectors, including energy, economy and technology.

The Tehran-Beijing agreement was first announced in a joint statement during a visit to Tehran by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2016.

The cooperation roadmap consists of 20 articles, covering Tehran-Beijing ties in "Political," "Executive Cooperation," "Human and Cultural," "Judiciary, Security and Defense," and "Regional and International" domains, according to the statement released back then.

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

INSTEX Should Focus on Fight Against U.S. Illegal Acts

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Paris Bahram Qasemi believes that INSTEX- Instrument In Support of Trade Exchanges- should concentrate on countering the US unilateralism and its illegal acts.

Europe which is interested in the world of multilateralism should make more efforts to be faithful to its commitments and do its duties, Qasemi tweeted.

On the Wednesday telephone conversation between Iranian and French presidents, Qasemi said such phone call was a starting point for entering new periods of cooperation in line with reaching better mutual understanding, taking more effective efforts to ensure global peace and security and solving some regional problems.

The ambassador said conversations will be a good way to strengthen common viewpoints about different international questions.

"Experiences have well taught us" that the ideal way to serve common interests and develop cooperation in any area is "dialogue" and exchange of views, the ambassador wrote.

Touching upon the U.S. destructive move to annihilate the 2015 landmark nuclear agreement, which as he said has been the most successful agreement of the 21st century, Qasemi said such move is an important question to which the European sides should pay attention.

Tehran, Ankara Considering New Rail Border Crossing

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Transport ministers of Iran and Turkey on Wednesday discussed cooperation between the two neighbors during a video conference session in which they stressed the need for establishing a new rail border crossing for expansion of trade.

According to ILNA, Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami and Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Adil Karaismailoglu discussed cooperation in various areas of the transportation sector in their talks.

In the meeting, Eslami emphasized the need for the development of rail transport between Iran and Turkey and noted that currently the only railway border between the two neighbors is through the Razi border to Van in Turkey.

Noting that operating through only one station increases the cargo traffic load at the border, the official stated that Iran, based on negotiations between the leaders of the two countries, has conducted the necessary research and proposed the Cheshmeh Soraya station in the Iranian side as the new railway crossing point and is expecting Turkey to assess the proposal and introduce the crossing point as soon as possible.

Eslami also suggested holding the two countries' joint transport committee meeting at the deputy level in the shortest possible time, which was welcomed by the other side.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:12
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:53
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:24

86. We admitted them to Our mercy: for they were of the righteous ones.
87. And remember Zun-nun, when he departed in wrath: He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!"
Surah 21. The Prophets (86 - 87)

200 More Projects To Open Within Next Six Months

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian announced on Thursday that his Ministry will inaugurate 196 projects worth 34,000 billion tomans by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (will end on March 20, 2021).

Ardakanian made the remarks at the opening ceremony of two big development projects in two border provinces in west of the country.

About the projects, Ardakanian said they will lead to four times rise in agricultural products.

President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated two big projects on soil and water, as well as modern irrigation systems, in Ilam and Kermanshah Provinces in west of the country on Thursday.

To reduce the impacts of drought and to develop agriculture in those border provinces are among the aims behind implementation of the projects.

In recent months, the Iranian president has opened several important and big projects across the country.

One of those important projects which opened on June 25 was the Shazand normal hexane unit which makes the country needless to import the item.



The president said sanctions had failed to keep Iran from moving ahead on the path to development and progress.

Speaking at the ceremony held via videoconferencing to inaugurate a major water project, President Rouhani said the project coming on line today is a great sign of triumph for the Iranian nation.

"Under these tough conditions caused by sanctions which the enemies thought would bring us to our knees, they should now see that we are inaugurating projects every week, including this week when a major water and soil development project is inaugurated in the west of the country," he said.

"This is a big sign to the U.S., Zionism and reactionary countries showing that our great nation is always victorious and stands up to all problems, and that our land will, God willing, become more and more prosperous every day," he noted.

Anti-Iran Sanctions Imposed By U.S. "Mere Failure"

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice President and Head of the Budget and Planning Organization Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said on Thursday that the implementation of economic and civil programs in the country demonstrates that the sanctions imposed by the US have failed so far.



The official made the remarks in a meeting in the Mazandaran Province of Iran, adding that the US was after stopping economic and infrastructure programs in the country, but to no avail.

Despite severe sanctions and the closure of all means of banking exchange and currency transfer, the country's development and economic programs have continued, he further noted.

He hailed the Iranian nation for being resistant in hard times, noting that the Iranian could counteract the imposed sanctions through relying on resistance.

Tehran, Baku Call for Boosting Cooperation on Electricity

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian and his Azeri counterpart Parviz Shahbazov examined the ways for bolstering cooperation on electricity.

In an online meeting, both sides also urged enhancing bilateral ties and implementing the joint projects in construction of dams.

During the meeting, the officials reviewed the ways for developing cooperation of Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan in the field of electricity in the future.

Iran to Set Up Pavilion at Chinese High-Tech Fair

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian knowledge-based companies are planning to set up a pavilion at 22nd edition of China Hi-Tech Fair (CHTF), which is going to be held on November 11 to 15 at Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition Center, Shenzhen, China.

The Center for International Interactions of Iran's Vice-Presidency for science and technology supports the participation of Iranian knowledge-based firms in the event, for the sixth consecutive year.

China Hi-Tech Fair (CHTF), which was first held in 1999, is the largest and most influential scientific and technological fair in China.

The fair integrates transaction of achievements, the exhibition of products, high-level forum, merchant attraction of projects and cooperation.

It also focuses on the advanced technologies and products in such fields as energy conservation, environment protection, the new generation of information technologies, biology, manufacture of high-end equipment, new energies, new materials, and new energy vehicles, etc.

In November 2019, leading a delegation, Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari left Tehran for Shenzhen at the invitation of the Chinese Minister of Science and Technology Wang Zhigang to visit the 21st CHTF and to hold talks with Chinese science and technology officials on the expansion of the cooperation of the two countries' knowledge-based companies.

Earning Over \$53m From Date Exports

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has earned more than \$53 million from exports of various varieties of dates in the first four months of the current calendar year ending July 21.

A spokesman of the Iranian customs office (IRICA) said that date shipments sent to 52 countries over the four-month period had amounted to nearly 61,000 metric tons in volume terms.

Rouhollah Latifi said that Iranian premium quality dates are becoming increasingly popular in markets from Scandinavia to South America.

"From a quality perspective, Iranian date varieties are unique in the world," said Latifi, adding that the Mazafati variety, generally cultivated in southeastern Iran, was responsible for a bulk of revenue earned from date exports over the four months to late July with around \$29 million.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations Grants Award to Iranian Artist



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian artist Zahra Takhan received her award from Indian Council for Cultural Relations for her work 'Closed Door' which was selected as the best work in amateur category.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations had held a competition named 'United Against Corona' to show its reaction to the outbreak of the virus and to offer its international solidarity.

According to the official website of the event artworks shortlisted after the first round of selection were displayed as an online exhibition.

After the evaluation by the final jury, winners were chosen in professional, amateur and children categories.

The Indian embassy in Tehran in its official Twitter account said that Zahra Takhan received her award from Indian Ambassador to Iran Dhamu Gaddam.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India's first Education Minister.

Its objectives are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to India's external cultural relations; to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries; to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people, and to develop relations with nations.

Tehran, Baghdad Vow to Boost Trade Exchanges to \$20b Level

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Senior Iranian and Iraqi officials held a meeting in the Iraqi capital and stressed the need to reach the level of 20 billion dollars in their trade exchanges.

The meeting was held between Iran's Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi and Iraqi minister of commerce in Baghdad late Wednesday.

The two sides reviewed issues related to Iran's exports of gas and electricity to Iraq.

Also, the two officials underlined the importance of following up mutual agreements reached between the two countries previously, making investment in joint borders, facilitating trade exchanges and holding business exhibitions.

Iran and Iraq stressed enhancement of trade exchanges to the level of 20 billion dollars during the July visit of Iraqi Prime Minister al-Kadhimi to Tehran.

Off-Road Radial Tire Factory To Save \$10m Per Year

DOROUD (IP) - Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said in the inauguration ceremony of the off-road radial tire factory in the Bani Hashem Armored Complex in Doroud, Lorestan Province, Western Iran that the move will save the country some 10 million dollars annually in terms of foreign currency.

Brigadier General Hatami, at the opening ceremony for off-road tire factory, referring to the need to expand the wheels of industry in all domestic industries to achieve economic prosperity, said: The Ministry of Defense, with the efforts of defense experts and the use of its capacities, has been able to advance its industrial progress with seriousness during the sanctions period.

Iran's senior official noted to the naming of the year as a "surge in production" by the Leader of the



Islamic Revolution and said the products of the off road radial tire factory will save the Islamic country 10 millions of dollars per year.

The Minister of Defense, stating that the boom in production can provide the main component of economic prosperity, market control, inflation control, growth, and economic development, and said:

the importance of the tire and rubber industry in the country, especially in the face of oppressive sanctions by the arrogant regime.

The supply of rubber-related products for any country is necessary and inevitable, which, thank God, the Islamic Republic, relying on domestic capacity and due to the existence of infrastructure and extensive oil resources, in this area has the appropriate capabilities in this area.

Iranian Banks to Help Boost Crisis-Hit Tourism Industry

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ministry of Tourism, Cultural Heritage, and Handicrafts has discussed closer cooperation with banks to further promote the tourism industry in the country.

Tourism Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan sat down with the managing directors of Iranian banks and their deputies for credit affairs in order to boost synergy between the ministry and banks of different countries.

"At the moment, people from different walks of life, including the youth, are active in the tourism domain," said Mounesan.

"Fortunately, we have seen very good growth and profits in this industry over the past few years," the top official added.

"Before the coronavirus outbreak, tourism was growing well in the country. In the ten months to December 2020, more than eight million tourists entered the country, and if it weren't for coronavirus, the figure would have touched 10 million," he said.

"This is while the number of our tourist facilities have increased in recent years as well, so much so that the number of ecotourism units has risen to 2,000, which not only creates jobs and generates income for a village, but also creates jobs in nearby villages. The move has been welcome by foreign tourists," he added.

He underlined that the global tourism trend is growing, and the industry will see good growth in our country, too.

In the meeting, managing directors of banks also presented reports on the most important measures adopted by their respective banks with regards to support for the tourism industry and handicrafts.



Iran on Right Track to Reach Knowledge-Based Economy

TEHRAN A (MNA) - The Vice President for Science and Technology, Sorena Sattari said Iran is on a right track to reach a knowledge-based and oil-free economy.

He made the remarks on the opening ceremony of the 9th edition of the International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX 2020).

"The presence of more than 5,000 knowledge-based companies and a bigger number of start-ups in Iran is a proof for the fact that equipped with an active technology ecosystem, the country is on the right track to reach a knowledge-based economy and reducing reliance on oil revenues," he said.

"INOTEX 2020 has been held online and two months



later that the pre-planned time due to the coronavirus outbreak in Iran," he added.

The exhibition is the premier regional event for professionals engaged in technology and innovation.

Leading governmental organizations of Iran are the partners behind INOTEX, including Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, Presidential Center for Innovation and Technology Cooperation and Innovation Fund.

More than 400 startups, knowledge-based technology, accelerators, technology parks, inventors, growth centers, venture capitalists, and advisers participated in the previous version of the event in early June 2019.

Trump Plans Campaign Swing Next Week

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Donald Trump is planning to visit four election battleground states next week as the Republican competes for attention with Democrats who will formally nominate Joe Biden as their presidential candidate.

A source familiar with the planning said Trump plans stops in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Arizona and Pennsylvania, all of them states that may prove crucial to determining the winner of the Nov. 3 election.

Democrats are holding their mostly virtual convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, next week. The Milwaukee Sentinel Journal said the Trump campaign was considering holding an event in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.



Pakistan Army Chief To Visit Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan's army chief will visit Saudi Arabia this weekend, officials said, seeking to calm diplomatic strains over Kashmir as financial support for Islamabad hangs in the balance.

The two countries are traditionally close and Saudi Arabia in 2018 gave Pakistan a \$3 billion loan and \$3.2 billion oil credit facility to help its balance of payments crisis.

But Riyadh is irked by criticism from Pakistan that Saudi Arabia has been lukewarm on the Kashmir territorial dispute, two senior military officials told Reuters, motivating General Qamar Javed Bajwa's planned fence-building visit on Sunday.



Lebanon Parliament Approves Sweeping Powers for the Army



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's parliament has approved a state of emergency that grants sweeping powers to the army, citing the exceptional circumstances in the country following a massive explosion in Beirut last week.

The cabinet had declared a two-week state of emergency on August 5, the day after the Beirut blast that left at least 200 dead and some 6,000 injured. Parliament on Thursday voted for the emergency declaration eight days in, as is legally required, though it could have also voted it down.

The state of emergency allows the army to curb free speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, as well as to enter homes and arrest anyone deemed a security threat.

Judicial proceedings are to take place in the country's military courts, which Human Rights Watch and other rights groups have shown do not conform to standards on due process.

Rights groups have raised serious concerns about the state of emergency, saying it would enable security forces to crack down on a public raging with anger against the ruling class following the blast. Beirut explosion: 70,000 houses among buildings damaged (2:31)

The huge explosion - one of the biggest non-nuclear blasts in history - was fueled by some 2,750 tonnes of dangerous chemicals left in storage at Beirut's port for nearly seven years, with the knowledge of top security and political officials.

Citing the "militarization of the state", parliamentarian Osama Saad was the only one out of the 119-member chamber, a reduced number after the resignation of nine MPs since the explosion, to oppose the state of emergency.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri responded the army had "not taken steps that people fear, nor suppress television [channels] and despite the chaos in the media it did not intervene and left room for protest", according to local media. Sessions are not televised and, therefore, statements by lawmakers are carried by local media.

But the Lebanese army, Internal Security Forces, and armed plainclothes officers were observed using excessive force against anti-establishment protesters on Saturday.

Some 728 people were injured, many left with serious wounds that required emergency surgery. About 12 journalists were also assaulted, including at least four who were assaulted by soldiers, one of whom was an Al Jazeera reporter.

The state of emergency is set to run until August 21 but it can be renewed.

Karim Nammour, a member of legal NGO Legal Agenda, told Al Jazeera the state of emergency was entirely unnecessary to address the aftermath of the Beirut blast, given that the country had already been in a state of "general mobilization" because of the coronavirus pandemic.

France to Boost Military Presence in Eastern Mediterranean

PARIS (Dispatches) - France will boost its military presence in the eastern Mediterranean amid an escalating standoff between Greece and Turkey over oil and gas exploration in disputed waters.

France will send two Rafale fighter jets and the naval frigate 'Lafayette' to the region as part of plans to increase its military presence, the armed forces ministry said on Thursday.

French President Emmanuel Macron called the situation in the eastern Mediterranean "worrying", and urged Turkey to stop its "unilateral" prospecting and "allow a peaceful dialogue" between the neighbouring NATO members.

"I have decided to temporarily reinforce the French military presence in the eastern Mediterranean in the coming days, in cooperation with European partners, including Greece," Macron said on Twitter on Wednesday.



Taiwan to Raise Defense Spending

TAIPEI (Reuters) - Taiwan unveiled a T\$42.1 billion (\$1.4 billion) increase for next year's planned defence spending on Thursday, as China announced details of its latest combat drills near the democratic island.

China has stepped up its military activity near Taiwan, which it regards as a breakaway province.

On Monday, Taiwan said Chinese fighters briefly crossed the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait, the same day U.S. health chief Alex Azar met President Tsai Ing-wen in Taipei. China had denounced Azar's trip.

Tsai's Cabinet is proposing T\$453.4 billion in military spending for the year starting in January, versus T\$411.3 billion budgeted for this year, up 10.2% according to Reuters calculations.

"The steady increase in the defense budget will facilitate the implementation of various military-building and war-preparation tasks ... and ensure national security and regional peace and stability," Taiwan's Defense Ministry said.

About three hours after the budget announcement, China's People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theatre Command said its forces had in recent days carried out combat drills in the Taiwan Strait and to the north and south of the island, implying they were aimed at Azar's trip.

"Recently, a certain large country has continued to make negative moves on Taiwan-related issues, sending serious wrong signals to 'Taiwan independence' forces, and seriously threatening the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait," it said.

"The theatre command's organising of patrols and exercises are necessary actions taken in response to the current security situation across the Taiwan Strait and to safeguard national sovereignty," the statement added.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said the situation was normal and people should not worry. Tsai has made modernizing Taiwan's armed forces and increasing defense spending a priority.

Thousands Form Human Chains in Belarus

MINSK (AFP) - Thousands of protesters formed human chains and marched in Belarus on Thursday in a growing wave of peaceful demonstrations over President Alexander Lukashenko's disputed re-election and an ensuing brutal police crackdown.

Men and women, many wearing white and holding flowers, took to the streets of the capital Minsk to protest against police brutality during four nights of unrest since Sunday's vote.

Lukashenko's opponents accuse him of rigging the election to defeat his main rival, popular opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who has left the ex-Soviet country for neighbouring Lithuania.

Protesters took to the streets across the country to contest the vote results but police used stun grenades, rubber bullets, tear gas, water cannon and, in at least one case, live fire to disperse protesters. At least two people have died and hundreds have been wounded in the violence while nearly 7,000 have been arrested.

On Thursday, some demonstrators held placards reading "Change!" and "No violence" and sported white bracelets that have become a symbol of the opposition movement.

"We are against violence, against explosions on our streets, we are in favour of freeing all the detained," Nastya, a 26-year-old protester, told AFP.

"We support honest elections, and an honest recount, it's necessary for votes to be recounted honestly."

Maria, a 35-year-old sales assistant, said she came out in her lunch break.

"We want people to be able to protest peacefully, after all they didn't want anything bad, just a fair count of the votes."

A religious procession of various Christian denominations also took place in Minsk while workers at a number of factories across the country reportedly downed tools.

Several dozen performers from the Belarusian State Philharmonic staged a rally in Minsk, singing and holding up letters of the alphabet reading: "They stole our voices."

Similar spontaneous rallies were reported in other cities.

Western governments have criticized the violence, and EU foreign ministers are set to discuss Belarus at an extraordinary meeting.



Democracy Movement Unacceptable to Thais



BANGKOK (AFP) - Thailand's prime minister said Thursday the majority of the kingdom find its ongoing pro-democracy protests "unacceptable", as the youth-led movement grows bolder in targeting Thai power.

The country has seen near-daily anti-government demonstrations for weeks by student-led groups demanding an overhaul of Prayut Chan-O-cha's administration and a rewrite of a 2017 military-scripted constitution.

A massive protest on Monday also saw organisers read out demands for the unassailable monarchy, and activists called for frank discussion about its role in Thailand.

Despite thousands attending the rally, Prayut on Thursday told reporters that much of the country does not believe in their pro-democracy cause.

"The government hopes that they don't take a chance to create chaos," he said after a cabinet meeting.

"It's a very risky issue and it is unacceptable to the majority of Thais."

Thailand's super-rich royal family, which commands a fortune of up to \$60 billion, sits at the apex of Thai power, supported by a powerful military and the elite billionaire class.

The kingdom's controversial royal defamation law shields King Maha Vajiralongkorn from criticism and open scrutiny.

It carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison per charge for anyone perceived as violating it.

The pro-democracy protesters have called for the law to be abolished.

Since Monday's demonstration at Thammasat University, more than 140 lecturers from all over the country have signed a petition supporting the organisers.

They "agree that this expression of opinions was lawful based on the basic principles of democracy", the petition reads.

On Thursday, about a dozen royalist demonstrators gathered near the Thammasat campus carrying signs calling for authorities to "prosecute those who insult the monarchy".



Farmanieh Apt (\$2800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Fereshteh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Gheitarieh (\$2400) 250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
Zaferanieh (\$2000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
Aghdasieh (\$2900) 300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
Fereshteh (\$1700) 160sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

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French Unemployment Rate Hits 37-Year Low

PARIS (Reuters) - French unemployment fell to a 37-year low in the second quarter, as the continuation of a multi-year downtrend was exaggerated by a strict coronavirus lockdown that meant people were unable to look for work, INSEE statistics agency data showed on Thursday.

The jobless rate fell to 7.1%, from 7.8% in the first

quarter, hitting its lowest level since the second quarter of 1983, when it stood at 7.0%. INSEE warned that unemployment data for the first two quarters of 2020 was skewed because of the mid-March to mid-May lockdown, which reduced the number of those classified as unemployed by making it impossible for them to look for jobs.



U.S. Holds Off on Extra Tariffs In EU Airbus Dispute

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Washington said Wednesday it would hold off on its threat to impose higher tariffs on \$7.5 billion worth of EU goods in its long-running dispute over subsidies to European aircraft maker Airbus.

Last year the World Trade Organization authorized the U.S. to impose tariffs of up to 100 percent on \$7.5 billion in European goods. Washington then slapped 25 percent taxes on a number of EU products including wine, cheese and olives. A 10 percent tariff on Airbus planes was increased to 15 percent in March.

The European Union last month said it had brought itself into compliance with WTO rulings and called for the tariffs to be lifted.

Washington said Wednesday the bloc had not done enough but signaled it was willing to seek a solution.

"The EU and member states have not taken the actions necessary to come into compliance with WTO decisions," U.S. trade representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement.

"The United States, however, is committed to obtaining a long-term resolution to this dispute.

"Accordingly, the United States will begin a new process with the EU in an effort to reach an agreement that will remedy the conduct that harmed the US aviation industry and workers and will ensure a level playing field for U.S. companies."

In June it had threatened to levy tariffs on another \$3.1 billion in EU goods as it has been authorized to do under a WTO ruling.

Washington made minor modifications to its list of goods on Wednesday but left the amount of products subject to tariffs at \$7.5 billion, and rates were unchanged at 15 percent for aircraft and 25 percent for other products.

The European Commission gave a cautious welcome to "the U.S. decision not to exacerbate the ongoing aircraft dispute."

It said EU Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan would continue to work with Lighthizer to find "a solution based on constructive dialogue and mutual benefits rather than on conflict."

"The current economic slowdown, specifically its impact on the air travel and aircraft sectors, provide a particular urgency to resolving this dispute," it tweeted.

But Airbus said it "profoundly regrets" the U.S. decision to maintain tariffs on its planes "despite Europe's recent actions to achieve full compliance."

"Airbus trusts that Europe will respond appropriately to defend its interests and the interests of all the European companies and sectors, including Airbus, targeted by these tariffs."

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

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

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

Malaysia's 2Q GDP Seen Contracting Sharply

UALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's economy is expected to have contracted for the first time in over a decade in the second quarter, as the coronavirus pandemic and strict containment measures dragged on private spending and exports.

Gross domestic product (GDP) likely fell 10% in April-June from the same period a year earlier, according to the median forecast from a poll of 11 economists. That would mark the first contraction since the third quarter of 2009 during the global financial crisis.

Individual forecasts ranged from -5.6% to -13.6%.

Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) is scheduled to release the data today.

Economic activity likely took a heavy hit from strict curbs on movement and businesses imposed by the government for most of the second quarter in a bid to contain the spread of the virus, according to HSBC.

"Both private consumption and fixed investment contracted during the quarter, as pointed out by high frequency indicators like motor vehicle sales, retail sales, consumer sentiment and industrial production," the bank said in a research note.



Central Asia to Cooperate With Japan to Modernize Economy

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - The heads of the foreign affairs agencies of Central Asia and Japan discussed prospects for cooperation to address the adverse effects of the pandemic on the Central Asian region during the August 11 virtual extraordinary meeting of the Central Asia + Japan Dialogue.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi with other Kazakh delegates during the Aug. 11 video conference meeting of Central Asia+Japan Dialogue. Photo credit: the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Japanese authorities were the first to initiate the Central Asia + Japan Dialogue. This is the seventh gathering since the first meeting in Nur-Sultan in 2004. The Central Asia + Japan Dialogue has been serving as a platform for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Japan to establish political dialogue, develop intra-regional cooperation, as well as to promote businesses and intellectual and cultural exchange.

"The economic and technological assets of Japan are of great interest – they can be applied in the modernization of the economy of Central Asia as a whole, and through the implementation of joint projects," the statement reads.

The parties decided to "unite practical efforts in restoring trade and economic interaction within this format." The ministers agreed to prepare recommendations for projects in trade, investment and the agro-industrial complex involving the Japanese business to the next Central Asia + Japan Dialogue.

The Kazakh authorities thanked the Japanese government for their comprehensive support amid the pandemic. The Kazakh side also expressed appreciation for the eagerness of the Japanese government to strengthen the ties between the sanitary and epidemiological services of the countries – to introduce advanced practices, and provide practical assistance in developing vaccines and new medicines.

The parties also focused on the issues of ineffective interaction in stopping the spread of COVID-19, as well as ways to overcome its damaging effect for the Central Asian economy, and on strengthening their foreign economic activity. The countries also discussed the epidemiological situation, intraregional cooperation to provide each other with humanitarian aid, the strategies to return citizens from foreign countries, as well as the prospects of resuming economic mobility and business activity.

The parties scheduled the eighth dialogue in Tokyo in 2021.



Lebanon Blast May Deepen This Year's Economic Contraction to 24%

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's economy may shrink by a quarter this year after last week's blast added to a collapse in output spurred by the pandemic, soaring inflation and a weakening currency, the Institute of International Finance said.

The nation's \$52 billion gross domestic product may plunge by 24%, more than the previous 15% projection, the Washington-based trade group for financial institutions said in a report. Damage from the explosion in Beirut, which left more than 150 people dead and 6,000 injured, is likely to exceed \$7 billion, or 14% of 2019 GDP, wrote Garbis Iradian, the IIF's chief economist for Middle East and North Africa.

The blast "is calling additional attention to a pervasive culture of negligence, corruption, and complacency of the ruling class, which sunk the country into its worst economic and financial crisis," Iradian wrote.

The International Monetary Fund, World Bank and others have been holding back financial support mainly due to the continual failure of leaders in parliament and the government to make important changes, Iradian said. Those include judicial independence, appointing an electricity regulator and issues with public procurement law.

Lebanon's government resigned on Monday as an outraged public demanded accountability for the catastrophe. Lebanon is seeking \$10 billion from the IMF.

"The impasse in discussions between the Lebanese authorities and the IMF could be overcome by a new competent Lebanese economic team and majority support in the parliament to implement critical reforms," Iradian said.

OPEC Trims 2020 Oil Demand by 9 mbpd

VIENNA (Dispatches) - World oil demand will fall more steeply in 2020 than previously forecast due to the coronavirus



and there are doubts about next year's recovery, OPEC forecast on Wednesday, potentially making it harder for the group and its allies to support the market.

World oil demand will tumble by 9.06 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a monthly report, more than the 8.95 million bpd decline expected a month ago. Oil prices have collapsed as the coronavirus curtailed travel and economic activity. While some countries have eased lockdowns, allowing demand to recover, fear of new outbreaks has kept a lid on prices and OPEC expects this to persist.

"Crude and product price developments in the second half of 2020 will continue to be impacted by concerns over a second wave of infections and higher global stocks," OPEC said in the report.

OPEC stuck to its forecast that in 2021 oil demand would rebound by 7 million bpd but said the outlook was subject to large uncertainties that might result in "a negative impact on petroleum consumption", such as demand for air travel, more fuel-efficient cars and more competition from other fuels. "Almost all forecasters expect jet fuel in 2021 to struggle making up for lost demand," OPEC said. "Gasoline demand will face pressure to return to 2019 levels."

Oil stocks have built up due to the demand collapse. OPEC said inventories in developed nations rose in June to stand 291.2 million barrels above the five-year average, a yardstick that OPEC before the pandemic saw as a desirable level. Crude rose above \$45 a barrel on Wednesday, but remains below levels that many OPEC members need to balance their budgets. To tackle the drop in demand, OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, agreed to a record supply cut of 9.7 million bpd that started on May 1, while the United States and other nations said they would pump less.

In the report, OPEC said its output rose by 980,000 bpd to 23.17 million bpd in July, largely because Saudi Arabia and other Gulf members ended extra voluntary cuts they had made in June.

That amounted to 97 percent compliance with the pledges, according to a Reuters calculation - lower than June's figure of well above 100 percent.

OPEC is set to boost output further this month as the 9.7 million bpd cut tapers to a reduction of 7.7 million bpd from August 1. A monitoring panel of OPEC+ ministers meets next Tuesday to discuss the market, and so far there is no suggestion of tweaking the agreement.

The report also forecast that demand for OPEC crude will be lower than expected this year and next, as supply increases from outside the group and because of the reduced demand outlook for 2020.

OPEC said demand for its crude this year will average 23.4 million bpd, down 400,000 bpd from the previous forecast. That suggests the market could move into surplus should OPEC's output rise in August, as called for by the OPEC+ agreement.

Indian Rupee May See a Pull Back Against Dollar Next Fortnight



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian rupee is expected to see a pull back against the U.S. dollar in the next fortnight, on the back of increased FII (foreign institutional investor) inflow into the Indian market and renewed hopes on another bumper agriculture production this year.

Foreign currency market experts said rupee is expected to strengthen by a percentage point to 74.10 - 74.20 level in the next few days, against the current level of 74.85 against the greenback.

While FII inflow into India has reached \$1.89 billion so far this month, rain deficits witnessed in July were wiped out after the on-going heavy downpours in several states since the beginning of this month.

"The market players seemed to be discounting concerns on the Corona pandemic front and also the heightened expectations of any major gains for dollar from a second round of US stimulus package," Ajay Kedia, managing director of Kedia Comtrade and Research, told Arabian Business.

"The dollar index is also expected to see a downward trend mostly for this month," he added.

Historically NRI (non-resident Indian) remittances see a surge when rupee value drops against the US dollar.

However, this time around, financial sector market consultants said the current appreciation expected in rupee may not impact remittances, especially from the Gulf countries because of the large-scale return of Indian expats from there.

"Expat Indians who are returning to India – whether from the Middle East because of job losses or from the U.S. and other countries because of work from home arrangements – will have no option but to keep making remittances to India," M R Rajaram, a leading financial market consultant, said.

Rupee opened higher at 74.83 per dollar in the morning trading hours on Tuesday, against previous day's close of 74.90, amid buying seen in the Indian equity market.

“Deal of Century” Now Reduced To Trivial Agreement

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi reacted to the official recognition of the Zionist regime of Israel by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government and said “Deal of Century” was reduced to the and humiliating agreement.

The Minister in a twitter post early Friday morning commented on the normalization of ties between the UAE and the Zionist regime and said “they were reduced from “Deal of Century” to give consent to a trivial agreement namely the recognition of Israel by the UAE!!! Like mountain giving Birth to a tiny mouse!”



IEA Lowers 2020 Oil Demand Forecast

LONDON (Reuters) - The International Energy Agency (IEA) cut its 2020 oil demand forecast on Thursday, warning that reduced air travel due to the coronavirus pandemic would lower global oil demand this year by 8.1 million barrels per day (bpd).

The Paris-based IEA slashed its 2020 outlook by 140,000 bpd to 91.9 million bpd, its first downgrade in several months.

“Jet fuel demand remains the major source of weakness,” the IEA said in its monthly report.

“In April the number of aviation kilometres travelled was nearly 80% down on last year and in July the deficit was still 67% ... The aviation and road transport sectors, both essential components of oil consumption, are continuing to struggle.”

Damage to demand wrought by less cross-border travel was mitigated somewhat by recovery in industry and e-commerce that was supporting trucking, but the IEA still predicted 2021 oil consumption would be slightly lower than in 2019.

Data cited by the IEA indicated that mobility in many regions had reached a plateau but was increasing in Europe, though a rise in COVID-19 cases caused the agency to cut demand estimates for gasoline.

The agency said that while supply exceeded demand in June, uncertainty over future demand along with increased output by top producers means re-balancing oil markets will be “delicate”.

Oil production was recovering in the United States, Canada and Brazil at the same time producers from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies such as Russia, a group dubbed OPEC+, were easing their output cuts, the IEA said.



“However, if countries that have not hitherto complied with their quotas cut back by enough to bring them into compliance, global oil supply would not necessarily increase significantly,” the IEA added, citing the United Arab Emirates and Iraq.

Wind and Solar Power At Record High In 2020, Coal Dips



PARIS (AFP) - Wind and solar produced a record 10 percent of global electricity in the first half of 2020 as the world's coal plant fleet ran at less than half its capacity, analysis published Thursday showed.

Despite a near-record drop in power demand due to the pandemic, renewables accounted for 1,129 terawatt-hours in January-June, compared with 992 in the first six months of 2019, according to a report by the Ember energy think tank.

Overall, the percentage of power drawn from wind and solar has more than doubled from 4.6 percent in 2015 -- the year of the landmark Paris deal on climate change.

On the other hand, generation from coal -- the most polluting fossil fuel -- fell 8.3 percent in the first half of 2020, the analysis showed. This was despite leading emitter China increasing its share of the global coal fleet slightly.

“From 2015 it's an incredible amount of growth (in solar and wind), but even at 10 percent it's not completely transformational,” Dave Jones, senior electricity analyst at Ember, told AFP.

“When we ask it is enough what we are really talking about is, how fast are emissions falling?”

“Thirty percent of fossil fuel emissions globally are just from coal power plants, so coal fired power generation needs to collapse quickly in order to limit climate change,” said Jones.

The analysis showed that many major economies -- including China, the United States, India, Japan, Brazil and Turkey -- now generate at least 10 percent of their electricity through wind and solar.

Britain and the European Union were singled out for particular praise, deriving 21 and 33 percent of their power from renewables, respectively.

Under the Paris Agreement, nations committed to limit temperature rises to “well below” two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, mainly through sweeping emissions cuts.

The accord also aims for a safer cap of 1.5C of warming.

To reach this, the United Nations says emissions must fall 7.6 percent annually this decade. Jones said that while 30 percent of coal's decline this year could be attributed to increased wind and solar generation, the rest was likely due to the economic slowdown caused by COVID-19.

“A large part of this is obviously due to the pandemic rather than long term trends and -- let's be honest -- it's not fast enough if your target is 1.5 C,” he said.

A study published last week in Nature Climate Change found that absent a rapid switch away from fossil fuels, the unprecedented fall in emissions due to COVID-19 would do virtually nothing to slow climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that coal use needs to fall 13 percent every year this decade to keep the 1.5-C goal in play. China, the world's leading polluter, reduced its coal production just two percent so far this year despite its economic slowdown caused by the pandemic.

“Where is China's plan to collapse that coal generation by 2030?” said Jones.

“At the moment it doesn't exist.”

In China, Fears of Financial Iron Curtain as U.S. Tensions Rise

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - A sharp escalation in tensions with the United States has stoked fears in China of a deepening financial war that could result in it being shut out of the global dollar system - a devastating prospect once considered far-fetched but now not impossible.

Chinese officials and economists have in recent months been unusually public in discussing worst-case scenarios under which China is blocked from dollar settlements, or Washington freezes or confiscates a portion of China's huge U.S. debt holdings.

Those concerns have galvanised some in Beijing to revive calls to bolster the yuan's global clout as it looks to decrease reliance on the greenback.

Some economists even float the idea of settling exports of China-made COVID-19 vaccines in yuan, and are looking to bypass dollar settlement with a digital version of the currency.

“Yuan internationalisation was a good-to-have. It's now becoming a must-have,” said Shuang Ding, head of Greater China economic research at Standard Chartered and a former economist at the People's Bank of China (PBOC).

The threat of Sino-U.S. financial “decoupling” is becoming “clear and present”, Ding said.

Although a complete separation of the world's two largest economies is unlikely, the Trump administration has been pushing for a partial decoupling in key areas related to trade, technology and financial activity.

Washington has unleashed a barrage of actions penalising China, including proposals to bar U.S. listings of Chinese companies that fail to meet U.S. accounting standards and bans on the Chinese-owned TikTok and WeChat apps. Further tension is expected in the run-up to U.S. elections on Nov. 3.

“A broad financial war has already started ... the most lethal tactics have yet to be used,” Yu Yongding, an economist at the state-backed Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) who previously advised the PBOC, told Reuters.

Yu said the ultimate sanction would involve U.S. seizures of China's U.S. assets - Beijing holds over \$1 trillion yuan in U.S. government debt - which would be difficult to



implement and a self-inflicted wound for Washington.

But calling U.S. leaders “extremists”, Yu said a decoupling is not impossible, so China should make preparations. The stakes are high. Any move by Washington to cut China off from the dollar system or retaliation by Beijing to sell a big chunk of U.S. debt could roil financial

markets and hurt the global economy, analysts said.

Fang Xinghai, a senior securities regulator, said China is vulnerable to U.S. sanctions and should make “early” and “real” preparations. “Such things have already happened to many Russian businesses and financial institutions,” Fang told a June forum organised by Chinese media outlet Caixin.

Guan Tao, former director of the international payments department of China's State Administration of Foreign Exchange and now chief global economist at BOC International (China), also said Beijing should ready itself for decoupling.

“We have to mentally prepare that the United States could expel China from the dollar settlement system,” he told Reuters.

In a report he co-authored last month, Guan called for increased use of China's yuan settlement system, Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, in global trade. Most of China's cross-border transactions are settled in dollars via the SWIFT system, which some say leaves it vulnerable. After a five-year lull, Beijing is reviving its push to globalise the yuan.

The PBOC's Shanghai head office last month urged financial institutions to expand yuan trade and prioritise local currency use in direct investment.

Central bank chief Yi Gang said in remarks published on Sunday that yuan internationalization is proceeding well, with cross-border settlements growing 36.7% in the first half of 2020 from a year earlier.

Still, internationalization is hampered by China's own stringent capital controls. It could also face resistance from countries that have criticized China on matters ranging from the coronavirus to its clampdown on Hong Kong.

Pakistan Says Border...

FROM PAGE 1

He stressed that people on both sides of the frontier will benefit and terrorism can be stopped through managing the border.

“The capacity enhancement of Front Corps Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan is being done for effective border management,” added the official.

“On the Pak-Afghan border, fencing on more than 1,700km has been completed. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 730km and in Balochistan, 980km have been fenced.”

To another question of IRNA Major General Babar Iftikhar said that Afghans are our brothers and all the stakeholders involved in facilitation of peace process, may it be Pakistan, may it be Iran, all have played very positive role.

“While this peace process is progressing very positively there are chances of some vested interests trying to spoil this process and the international community is very well aware of those vested interests,” he noted.

Earlier Pakistan's Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Information Lieutenant General (retired) Asim Saleem Bajwa while briefing the Senate Standing Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had said that fencing of 900 km Pakistan-Iran border is in full swing and 100 km work on the project would be completed soon.

Iran-Pakistan share 959 km long border which separates Sistan and Baluchestan and Balochistan provinces of the two countries.

It begins at the Koh-i-Malik Salih mountains and ends at Gwadar Bay in the Gulf of Oman. It passes through a diverse landscape of mountain ridges, seasonal streams and rivers.

The UAE...

FROM PAGE 1

Advisor to the UAE government Anwar Gargash also enumerates reasons for overt compromise of his country with the Zionist occupier regime that none of the Palestinian groups do see these reason acceptable. On the other hand, some Zionist analysts believe that making public the relations between Israel and Arab states which had no relation with Tel Aviv shows that the trend for normalization with Tel Aviv is progressing with extreme pace. According to these experts, this issue indicates that most of Arab leaders will not feel any obstacle for presence in the Israeli media any longer. Of course regarding this point I should mention that there are still some countries in the Persian Gulf littoral states which believe that these relations will make the condition more complicated for managing the tension in the region.

According to these experts, Al-Otaib's article which was published in the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth has reflected only the extent of development of relations between Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi and other countries have not shown any desire towards this alliance.

Israel's Channel 13 has emphatically reiterated that the UAE ambassador has submitted his article to the White House before it being published in the daily and his article is of great significance due to different reasons like there is no overt relation between Israel and the UAE for now.

The other Zionist newspaper Haaretz also wrote, “Kuwait is the only Arab Persian Gulf country which is still opposing the normalization of ties.” The daily has termed the opposition to normalization of ties in the Persian Gulf as a very dangerous conspiracy act and has announced, “Opposition to normalization in the Persian Gulf states is gradually causing concerns among the governments in this region.”

What is fully clear is that the Islamic Republic of Iran considers allies with the Zionist regime as its enemies and will have the opposite reaction or action regarding this issue. With normalizing ties with Israel, Abu Dhabi government has registered in its name one step beyond the insecurity in the region and is putting its economic and tourist relations in danger of threats resulted from tensions in the Persian Gulf.

This move bears no spring of boom, not only for the UAE but also for other countries in the Persian Gulf, and Mr. Trump has showed that in the critical and tough condition will not meddle in the Persian Gulf states' affairs in the critical times and conditions.

Oil Tankers Seized...

FROM PAGE 1

A senior U.S. official told The Associated Press that no military force was used in the seizures and that the ships weren't physically confiscated. Rather, US officials threatened ship owners, insurers and captains with sanction to force them to hand over their cargo, which now becomes US property, the official said.

It is not clear where the vessels or their cargoes currently are. Prosecutors alleged the four ships were transporting to Venezuela 1.1 million barrels of gasoline. But the tankers — the Bella, Bering, Pandi and Luna — never arrived at the South American country and then went missing. Two of the ships later reappeared near Cape Verde, a second U.S. official said.

As commercial traders increasingly shun Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro's socialist government has been increasingly turning to Iran. In May, Maduro celebrated the arrival of five Iranian tankers delivering badly needed fuel to alleviate shortages that have led to days-long gas lines even in the capital, Caracas, which is normally spared such hardships.

Lebanon Alone...

FROM PAGE 1

Zarif further denounced the Thursday's agreement between Abu Dhabi and the Zionist regime as painful and a stab in the back of Lebanon and other regional countries.

For his part, Charbel Wehbe praised the Islamic Republic of Iran for expressing solidarity and sympathy with the Lebanese people and government immediately after the blast in Beirut, and talked about Lebanon's urgent needs in the current circumstances.

Zarif also sent separate message to and the secretary-general of the Hezbollah Sayyad Hassan Nasrallah movement to congratulate them on the anniversary of the country's victory in its 33-day war against Israeli aggressors in 2006.

About 1,200 Lebanese, most of them civilians, lost their lives during the 33-day war waged by Israel against Lebanon.

According to the 629-page Winograd Report by the Israeli regime, Hezbollah fighters involved in defending Lebanon against the Israeli war defeated the enemy and Tel Aviv was compelled to withdraw without having achieved any of its objectives.

Sancho Says Happy At Dortmund

BERLIN (Reuters) - In-demand winger Jadon Sancho says he is happy at Borussia Dortmund and is enjoying helping some of the younger players develop at the Bundesliga club.

Sancho has been linked with a move to a host of top clubs including Manchester United, but Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc says the England international is going nowhere.

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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Juventus Confirm Matuidi Exit

TURIN (Reuters) - French midfielder Blaise Matuidi will leave Juventus after three seasons following the mutual termination of his contract, the Serie A champions said on Wednesday.

Matuidi, linked with a move to Major League Soccer side Inter Miami in the Italian media, made 45 appearances for Juventus across all competitions last season as they claimed the league title for a ninth season in a row.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY AUGUST 15, 2020

Clippers Lock up No. 2 Seed With Win

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - SPaul George scored 27 points and Kawhi Leonard added 26, and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated the Denver Nuggets 124-111 near Orlando.

Lou Williams had 23 points and seven assists off the bench for the Clippers, who clinched the No. 2 seed in the Western Conference. They will meet the Dallas Mavericks in the first round of the NBA playoffs, starting next week.

The Nuggets will be the conference's No. 3 seed.

Ivica Zubac had 15 points on 7-of-9 shooting and grabbed 12 rebounds for the Clippers. Reserve forward Jerami Grant scored 25 points and pulled down six rebounds for Denver.

Nikola Jokic finished with 17 points, 13 assists and seven rebounds while Michael Porter Jr. chipped in 11 points. Jamal Murray was held to 10 points, and Torrey Craig also had 10.

Indiana Pacers 108 - Houston Rockets 104

Doug McDermott scored 10 of his 16 points in the fourth quarter and Indiana held off a late rampage by James Harden — and an injury to T.J. Warren — to beat Houston.

By virtue of a win in its second-to-last regular-season game, Indiana clinched at least the fifth seed in the Eastern Conference and a first-round playoff matchup with the fourth-seeded Miami Heat.

The Pacers rested Warren, whom Pacers head coach Nate McMillan said is dealing with plantar fasciitis. According to reports, the injury isn't expected to keep Warren from playing in the postseason.

Toronto Raptors 125 - Philadelphia 76ers 121

The 76ers welcomed back Joel Embiid for a first-half cameo, then blew a late seven-point lead and watched as the Raptor's Stanley Johnson hit a tie-breaking follow shot with 5.9 seconds remaining to clinch a four-point victory.

Embiid, who injured his left ankle Sunday against Portland and sat out Tuesday's game with Phoenix, played 14 first-half minutes and had five points and nine rebounds. Tobias Harris had a game-high



22 points and Furkan Korkmaz 21 for Philadelphia, which is locked into sixth place in the East and a first-round playoff matchup with Boston.

Chris Boucher and Kyle Lowry led the Raptors with 19 apiece. Norman Powell added 17 points and Pascal Siakam had 15 for Toronto, which has clinched second place in the East.

Miami Heat 116 - Oklahoma City Thunder 115

Darius Bazley scored 16 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, and Mike Muscala hit two 3-pointers in the final minute to lift Oklahoma City to a come-from-behind win over Miami that featured reserve players in the second half.

The Thunder trailed by as many as 22 points in the fourth period but outscored the Heat 34-15 in the quarter. The first tied it with 34.8 seconds to play. After Miami regained the lead on a Solomon Hill layup, Muscala hit another 3-pointer with 5.2 seconds remaining.

An attempted 3-pointer by Tyler Herro (career-high 30 points) hit off the front of the rim at the buzzer to seal Oklahoma City's win. Meanwhile reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo was suspended for one game after headbutting Washington Wizards center Moritz Wagner during a game, the league said.

The Milwaukee Bucks star was ejected from the contest after the incident in the second quarter of the Bucks 126-113 victory Tuesday over the Wizards.

Not the Right Time to Return As Barca Coach



BARCELONA (Reuters) - Former Barcelona great Xavi Hernandez has ruled out coaching the club in the near term, citing institutional problems as a reason to bide his time and remain in his role with Qatar's Al Sadd.

Xavi rejected the offer to coach his former club back in January when they sacked Ernesto Valverde, and even though current manager Quique Setien's role is far from secure the Catalan is still unwilling to return for the time being.

The former Spain player alluded to some of the problems president Josep Maria Bartomeu has faced, including a scandal involving the hiring of a social media monitoring firm and fallout from a pay-cut the club introduced in April.

"There's a lot of external noise around the club, a lot of issues off the pitch and I don't think now is the right time," Xavi told the magazine Icon. "In January I told them it wasn't the right time and they haven't contacted me since."

"I'm delighted to continue to gain experience and challenge myself and of course it'll be a privilege for me to one day coach Barca."

Xavi also urged Barca to hand a new contract to Lionel Messi, whose current deal expires next year, amid reports the Argentine is disillusioned with Bartomeu's leadership.

"He has earned it, he should have an automatic clause," Xavi said of the club's all-time top scorer.

"Messi needs Barca and Barca need Messi."

Last-Gasp PSG Beat

Atalanta to Reach Semis

LISBON (Reuters) - Paris St Germain scored two late goals, including a stoppage-time winner from substitute Eric Choupo-Moting, to beat outsiders Atalanta 2-1 and end the Serie A side's Champions League dream in their quarter-final on Wednesday.

Atalanta, in their first Champions League campaign, went ahead with a curling effort from Mario Pasalic in the 27th minute and held out until the 90th when Brazilian defender Marquinhos equalised for the French champions.

With Atalanta wilting, Choupo-Moting turned the ball home in the third minute of added time to end Qatari-backed PSG's embarrassing run of recent quarter-final and round of 16 exits and send them into the last four for the first time since 1995.

The Ligue 1 side will face either Atletico Madrid or RB Leipzig, who meet on Thursday, in their semi-final.

"When I came on, I thought to myself, 'We can't lose, we can't go home like that.' I was confident in myself, confident in the team and then the rest is the history of Paris," said Cameroon international Choupo-Moting.

"It was a crazy game, a tough game and opponents." The first half was all about Neymar who had four good chances but squandered them all. The Brazilian burst clear of the Atalanta defence in the third minute but sidefooted wide with only goalkeeper Marco Sportiello to beat.

He also got caught in two minds between shooting and passing to Mauro Icardi, shot wide after another mazy run which included a nutmeg and made a complete hash of another chance gifted to him by Hans Hateboer's wayward back-pass.

Despite boasting only a fraction of PSG's spending power, Atalanta were more than equal on the pitch and went ahead when an exchange of passes ended with the ball falling to Pasalic who met it first time to curl his shot past Keylor Navas.

Berat Djimsiti should have increased Atalanta's lead after the break but sliced the ball wide and the game turned when PSG introduced their France striker Kylian Mbappe, who had not started because of an ankle injury. Mbappe and Neymar were both denied by Sportiello but, as PSG ramped up the pressure, Atalanta finally cracked.



Liverpool were knocked out by Atletico Madrid.

City are firm favourites heading into Saturday's quarter-final against Olympique Lyonnais but Silva said they would not get complacent.

Real, Liverpool Exits Don't Help Man City

LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester City's task in the Champions League has not been made any easier by the exits of Real Madrid and Liverpool as every team playing in the mini-tournament in Lisbon is capable of winning, midfielder Bernardo Silva has said.

Pep Guardiola's City eliminated Real in the last 16 while defending champions

"Anything can happen, Juventus were knocked out by Lyon, we lost against Tottenham Hotspur last year in the quarter-finals," Silva told the City website.

"We have seen lots of surprises. It's very difficult to predict the results in this competition."

"The fact that Liverpool are out, Real Madrid are out: it's not going to make our path easier ... All the teams in Lisbon are here because they deserve it. We need to be at our best level to win the games and try to reach the final."

Silva, who was born in Lisbon and began his career at Benfica, said the prospect of lifting the trophy on home soil gave him extra motivation.

"Winning this competition has always been a target for the players and the club. It will be very special to win it. For me, even more so because it's my city," he added.

Leipzig Stun Atletico to Reach Champions League Semis

LISBON (Reuters) - RB Leipzig stunned Atletico Madrid, with a 2-1 victory in their Champions League quarter-final on Thursday, to reach the competition's last four for the first time in their club's short history.

With two minutes of normal time remaining, United States midfielder Tyler Adams snatched victory with a deflected shot from outside the box to set up a semi-final clash with Paris St Germain.

The German side had taken the lead in the 51st minute with a header from Spanish forward Dani Olmo but a disjointed Atletico were shaken into life when record signing Joao Felix came off the bench, earning and scoring a penalty to level in the 71st.

Atletico, runners-up in 2014 and 2016, looked more likely to score the next goal but it was the club founded only eleven years ago who were left celebrating in front of the empty seats of the Estadio Jose Alvalade.

Now the team, built up from the lower leagues and owned by energy drinks company Red Bull, will come up against Neymar and company with a chance at a place in the Aug. 23 final.

Julian Nagelsmann's side quickly settled though into the brand of attractive passing and movement that has earned them many admirers.



Verstappen Wants Repeat of Spanish Magic

BARCELONA (AFP) - Fresh from winning last Sunday's 70th Anniversary race at Silverstone, Max Verstappen returns to the scene of his maiden F1 triumph seeking to intensify his title challenge with the 10th win of his career at this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix.

The 22-year-old Dutchman was only 18 when, on his debut with Red Bull, he took full advantage of a first lap collision involving both Mercedes drivers, to surge to victory in the 2016 Spanish Grand Prix. Four years on, with Mercedes running Valtteri Bottas alongside Lewis Hamilton, the champion team will be keen to avoid a similar scenario to that torrid afternoon when Nico Rosberg was his combative team-mate.

This time around, they will also hope that they do not have the same tyre-wear and blistering problems that afflicted both Hamilton and Bottas at Silverstone in the recent British and 70th Anniversary races, won by the six-time champion and Verstappen on successive weekends.

Tyres are expected, once again, to be a key factor in deciding the outcome at the Circuit de Catalunya where high temperatures may also influence the result, notably because the race, scheduled originally to take place in May, has been delayed until August due to the coronavirus pandemic.

