

**Iranian Health Ministry  
Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari  
Said on Sunday That Some  
147 People in Iran Have Died as a  
Result of the Coronavirus Disease  
Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**New Iranian Ambassador to  
Azerbaijan Abbas Mousavi Said  
On Sunday That the 10th Group  
Of Iranian Expatriates Living  
In Baku Came Back Home Amid  
COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## Iran to Shift Stance on UAE

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's highest-ranking military commander unveiled a change in the approach adopted by the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces on the United Arab Emirates after its ruling regime struck a deal with the Zionist regime on normalization of ties.

In remarks at a conference held in Tehran on Sunday, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri denounced the UAE's decision to start a friendship with the Israeli regime and warned Abu Dhabi of the consequences it will have to face if Iran's interests in the Persian Gulf are threatened.

"Definitely, the Iranian nation's attitude towards this neighboring state (UAE) will change fundamentally, and the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces will also deal with that country with different calculations," he said.

The top commander made it clear that Iran will not tolerate any incident in the Persian Gulf or any threat to its security, whatsoever, and will hold the UAE culpable for the trouble.

Deploing the Abu Dhabi regime for brazen declaration of diplomatic relations with a regime detested by the entire free world, the Iranian general said the Zionist regime is committing atrocities in disregard to the teachings of Judaism.

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## Trump Must Await Back-to-Back Failures

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says the UN Security Council's refusal to adopt a US-drafted proposal to extend a UN arms embargo on Iran was another sign of international opposition to Washington's unilateralism.

Chief of Staff of the Presidential Office Mahmoud Vaezi said in a tweet that the UNSC vote amounted to global consensus that the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), should be preserved.

"In the UN Security Council voting, the international community once again opposed the United States' unilateral policies by supporting the maintenance of the JCPOA," he tweeted.

"In the last months of the tenure of his administration, [Donald] Trump must have learned that equations in the political arena are markedly different from those in the world of trade, and if he does not change his past policies, he should be awaiting back-to-back failures," he added.

## Iran to Export Weapons After Sanctions Lift



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said that Islamic Republic of Iran will export weapons and arms after sanctions imposed against the country are lifted.

Speaking on Sunday in a ceremony held on the occasion of National Defense Industry Day, Hatami added, "Iran will use all capacities in the world to meet its arms requirements, selling and exporting weapons after sanctions removal."

He congratulated the National Defense Industry Day and stated, "In fact, the defense industry is the strategic depth of the country and science and technology field is the support for the defense industry of the country."

The Islamic Republic of Iran owes its success in the defense industry to the guidance and wise leadership of Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Hatami added.

He pointed to the key role of media and added, "We are facing many developments in the region and in the current situation, media play a leading and key role in this field."

Iranian media outlets and Armed Forces played their key role with regard to the dissemination of accurate information in regional events, he emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hatami pointed to the salient characteristics of the defense industry and added, "We are able to meet more than 90 percent of our defense requirements so that we could materialize our predefined objectives in the defense field that Iran should be the first power in the region in the field of science and technology in 2025 Defense Outlook."

Any sanctions cannot dissuade Iran to strengthen its defense power and capability, he underlined.

Turning to the latest achievements of the defense industry of the country, Hatami added, "Some parts of country's defense achievements would be unveiled on August 22 in the presence of Iranian President which are in the fields of aviation, missile, drone and maritime."

Iranian Ministry of Defense has established very close relationships and interaction with knowledge-based companies, academic centers, universities and private sector firms, he said, adding, "Knowledge-based companies and academic centers have a great share in defense industry achievements greatly."

He once again stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran will export its arms and weapons after sanctions lift, adding, "Sanctions did not create any restrictions, rather, the country attained all progresses and achievements in the defense industry in sanctions condition."

In response to a question on the space activity of the Ministry of Defense, Hatami stated, "The space program of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a permanent program and has gone through several stages."

He further pointed to a military exercise launched between Iran, Russia and China last year (ended March 20, 2020) and added, "Due to the spread of coronavirus, the military exercise between Iran, China and Russia was halted in the current year."

Organizing military exercise is the common and regular practice of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said, adding, "After the termination of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, the cooperations for joint tripartite military exercise between Iran, China and Russia will be resumed with utmost power."

## Outrage Grows Over UAE-Israel Normalization of Ties

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Anger is boiling in the Middle East and elsewhere over a recent agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to normalize diplomatic relations, with Palestinian leaders describing it as a "stab in the back" by an Arab country.

Dozens of people raided the UAE embassy in the Libyan capital city of Tripoli on Saturday to express their outrage over the normalization pact between the Persian Gulf country and Tel Aviv.

A number of protesters threw petrol bombs at the diplomatic mission, denouncing Abu Dhabi's deal as "shameful." Meanwhile, Palestinian ambassador to the UAE is returning home, Secretary General of the Central Committee of Fatah movement Jibril Rajoub said.

Essam Masalha has departed Abu Dhabi and will never go back to the Persian Gulf Arab country, he said.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said on Thursday it had recalled its ambassador to the UAE. Rajoub said former member of Fatah central committee Mohammed Dahlan had helped broker the normalization pact, without providing any details.

Various Palestinian factions in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip have roundly condemned the normalization deal between the UAE and the Tel Aviv regime.

Across the world, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn criticized the deal, suggesting Abu Dhabi was selling out the Palestinian cause and abandoning its Palestinian brethren.

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## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

### Negotiation With Coup-Organizer Not Allowed

During the past month that U.S. President Donald Trump has trailed his Democrat rival in the presidential election Joe Biden in the polls, he has sent some meaningful signals to Iran and leaders of some European countries and Russia that everybody who mediates between the U.S. and the Islamic Republic of Iran would get good reward, and for this reason Germans and Russians are thinking of getting the reward.

Of course this was in a condition that the U.S. resolution on renewing Iran arms embargo was grounded at the UNSC and only the pint-sized country Dominican Republic did what President Trump and his diplomatic system liked it, and the resolution with the silence and abstention votes from the European countries failed and the U.S. experienced a heavy defeat.

Nowadays everybody is asking this question whether this world is the same as the world in 1953 that Americans through performing a puppet show of the Operations Boot and T.P. Ajax toppled Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq's government and brought back Muhammad Reza Shah, the son of Reza Khan, to the power and distributed Iran oil interests through the parliament between them and the British despite the oil had been nationalized. And today the U.S. resolution at the UNSC faces such a condition. They ask what a current has caused the U.S. humiliation. Perhaps at that time if the people had stayed in the scene, such a coup would not have happened. The key factor for the collapse of Mossadeq and his government was that he was not a Muslim. During the public's support of him, the clerics noticed his treason against the religion and stopped supporting him and as the result, people followed the clerics and stopped supporting him.

According to the statistics, it is right that through the parliament's action and nationalization of oil industry Iran's revenues from oil exports jumped from \$400,000 in 1950 to some \$2m in 1953. This trend of rise in revenues became a ground that the British got closer to the Americans and with resorting to this message that oil interests in Iran were in the control of Tudeh Party (communist party), they decided not to let the country slip out of the hands of Muhammad Reza Shah. So the Operation Boot led by the British and later the Operation T.P. Ajax managed by the U.S. petro-dollars paved the ground for bringing the thugs, led by Shaaban Jafari (known as Brainless Shaban), into the streets and Fazlollah Zahedi used the Army for frightening the people and helped the August 19, 1953 Coup to happen in Iran. See Page 7

## China Welcomes Putin's Proposal of Holding Online Summit Over JCPOA

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China welcomes Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposal of holding an online summit over Iranian nuclear issue, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

Spokesperson Zhao Lijian made the remarks when asked to comment on Putin's proposal.

Putin proposed on Friday holding an urgent online meeting of the heads of the five states that are permanent members of the UN Security Council with the participation of the leaders of Germany and Iran to discuss Iran and the Persian Gulf situation.

China appreciates Russia's efforts to ease tensions on the Iranian nuclear issue and to strengthen regional security, Zhao said.

China has always firmly supported the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and is devoted to safeguarding peace and stability in the Middle East, said Zhao. "China is willing to work with parties concerned to keep close communication and coordination, and jointly promote the process of political resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue."



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# Iran's Representative to PUIC Appointed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf appointed Ebrahim Rezaei, Dashtestan MP, as Iran's representative in the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC).

Secretary general of the PUIC in a message expressed pleasure over Iranian Majlis' decision, voicing its readiness for cooperation with the Iranian representative.

Rezaei is currently a member of Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Commission and the Parliamentary Commission Article 90.

## Beirut Blast "100 Percent Israeli Job"

**TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's former defense minister and current military advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says the recent deadly explosion in Beirut was "100 percent Israeli job" meant to pit the Lebanese nation against Hezbollah and disarm the resistance movement.**

In an interview with China's Phoenix Television broadcast on Sunday, Hossein Dehqan stressed that nothing is expected from the Tel Aviv regime other than crime. Asked about the August 4 blast in Beirut, Dehqan replied, "I think what happened is 100 percent Israeli job" as it targeted food stocks.

"What is the message when you destroy the lifeline of a crisis-hit country that already has problems in this regard, except to put pressure on the people to create room for another purpose? In my opinion, this is 100 percent an Israeli job," he added.

Dehqan also said that when the Israelis do something, they quickly make up a story to divert attention from it.



"For example, it is said that Hezbollah and the resistance are the cause of all problems of the Lebanese nation and that these explosives belonged to them. This is while the Lebanese nation considers Hezbollah as part of themselves and Hezbollah serves their security interests. Hezbollah has never acted against the Lebanese people," he noted.

He further said Israel's goal is "to rally the Lebanese nation against Hezbollah and eventually disarm it."

Almost 180 people are so far confirmed to have lost their lives, while more than 6,000 others were wounded in the powerful explosion that ripped through the Beirut port.

## Iran's Support for Struggles of Palestinian People Continues

*IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK*

TEHRAN - In a telephone conversation with Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, Iran's Foreign Minister said Iran's support for the struggles of Palestinian people and rightful cause continues.

Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif in this telephone conversation with his Palestinian counterpart Riyad al-Maliki emphasized the continuous support of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the struggles of the great Palestinian people in order to achieve their rights.

He also stated that the solidarity of the Palestinian people and groups in this direction is necessary.

In this telephone conversation, Riyad al-Maliki, while appreciating Iran's position in support of the Palestinian people, emphasized the firm determination of the Palestinian people and leaders in achieving their rights.

Riyad al-Maliki also said: "The Palestinians are united in their commitment to the liberation of the Palestinian territories from the occupation of the Zionist regime."

## UAE-Israel Shameful Deal to Expedite Zionist Regime's Termination

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Ali Akbar Velayati, an international adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, denounced the agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel on the normalization of ties, saying it would only hasten the termination of the Zionist regime.

In a statement released on Saturday in his capacity as secretary general of the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening, Velayati slammed the agreement between the UAE and Israel as "ignominious and reprehensible."

The deal would only result in Abu Dhabi's isolation, alienation from the rest of the international Muslim nation, and engender such level of Islamic awakening among the regional peoples that "will precipitate the Zionist regime's disintegration," he added, press TV reported.

Following Israel's occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, the regime scored successive victories against the Arab front due to lack of alignment and necessary cooperation within the Arab world, the statement said, adding that Tel Aviv's victories were owed to some Arab states' clandestine collaboration with the global arrogant powers and the Zionist lobby.

However, victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 and

removal of the country's US-backed and Israel-allied former regime "invited a new phase in the developments that concerned Palestine, and the course of the (regional) resistance tipped the balance of power in favor of the oppressed people of Palestine," Velayati said in the statement.

The advisor also cited Israel's failure to impose its conditions on Lebanon and the Gaza Strip during the wars that the occupying regime waged against the territories in the 2000s as cases in point.

The official went on to elaborate on some more recent victories that have been scored by the regional resistance front in the face of Israel and the countries that support it.

The United States, Israel's biggest ally, suffered a "terrible defeat" in its effort to impose its hugely pro-Tel Aviv "deal of the century" scheme earlier this year, while Washington and its allies failed to break down the axis of resistance in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, the statement said.

The Assembly finally urged all Muslim states and nations to openly condemn the normalization push, and "spare no effort until the final victory of the Palestinian cause, i.e. disintegration and fall of the usurping Zionist government."

## Vicious Normalization Reveals True Face of UAE Rulers

TEHRAN (MNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said that the vicious project of the normalizing ties with the Israeli regime has revealed the true face of UAE rulers.

The humiliating compromise of the UAE rulers with the criminal Zionist regime is a clear betrayal to the human values, Islamic teachings, Islamic Ummah, and the Palestinian cause, Qalibaf said while addressing the Parliament's open session on Sunday.

The remark comes as the Israeli regime and the UAE have reached a deal that will lead to full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two sides, in an agreement that U.S. President Donald Trump apparently helped broker. Defending Palestine and fight against the Zionist regime is a clear criterion for determining hypocrites from those who pursue justice, Qalibaf added.

"Those who seek to establish friendly ties with the Zionist regime are considered traitors by all the Islamic Ummah and are complicit in all of the regime's crimes in the past and future," he added. "We warn the current traitors and those who want to probably join this vicious project that the fight against the Zionist regime will never be stopped and it will continue with increasing power and knowledge of the Islamic Ummah and the Palestinian nation."

## Rejection of U.S. Resolution by UNSC Failure of U.S. Unilateralism

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said on Saturday that rejection of the US anti-Iran resolution by the UN Security Council indicates failure of its unilateralism, and continuation of the situation could lead to falling apart of its economic terrorism against Iran.

Addressing a meeting on family-related issues late on Saturday, he referred to problems arising from sanctions, saying that what is most important in this situation is to promote social tolerance in the face of pressures and that the family is the institution that can be most

effective and decisive to increase resistance of society.

Elsewhere in his speech, Jahangiri said that though the U.S. officials knew that it would not be able to make the representatives of the UN Security Council member states acquiesce their anti-Iran provocative resolution, but, they presented their proposed resolution to the Security Council to the extend Iran arms embargo.

Since Trump came to power, the US has always tried to make the Iranian business environment unsafe for foreign investors, he said.

## Foreign Ministry Names New Spokesperson



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran appointed Saeed Khatibzadeh as its new spokesperson.

In a ceremony held at the Foreign Ministry on Sunday morning, attended by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, the new spokesperson officially took up the post.

Khatibzadeh has replaced Seyed Abbas Mousavi, who is leaving for Baku as Iran's new ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Known as the 12th and the youngest Foreign Ministry spokesperson after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Khatibzadeh has the experience of diplomatic activities for 21 years.

The new spokesman was deputy director for research and studies at the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), has the experience of working in many positions at the Foreign Ministry, and has worked as a diplomat in Canada and Germany.

Khatibzadeh has had great achievements in think tanks and public diplomacy studies, has been a keynote speaker in many international events, and is the author of several best-selling books about diplomacy and foreign relations.

## U.S. Known It Can't Trigger Snapback Mechanism

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian foreign minister has dismissed as "illegal" the United States' bid to trigger the so-called snapback mechanism, stipulated in the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, in order to restore the UN sanctions on Iran.

"The U.S. [plan to use the] snapback mechanism is so illegal that it is not acceptable and the Americans know that. If they say something out loud and keep repeating it, that does not mean that they are right," said Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday. "The U.S. knows that it cannot trigger the snapback mechanism," he added.

"On May 8, 2018, Mr. [John] Bolton, who was ecstatic that he had wrecked the JCPOA hoping to destroy Tehran in three months as well, announced in his press conference at the White House that the US was no longer a signatory to the JCPOA, so it wouldn't be able to use the snapback mechanism," said Zarif.

"The transcript of his remarks is still available on the website of the White House, but they might go remove that sentence now," the foreign minister added.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has recently announced its plan to trigger the so-called snapback provisions of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal after it failed to secure the extension of an arms embargo against Iran.

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## Majlis to Back Formation of Foreign, Int'l Trade Ministry

TEHRAN (MNA) - In his meeting with the Iranian FM, the speaker of the Iranian Parliament announced the body's support for the probable formation of 'foreign and international trade ministry'.

Babak Negahdari, who is the advisor to Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, informed of a meeting between Qalibaf and Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif and his deputies on Saturday.

As he said, in this meeting, the two senior officials discussed major political issues such the rejection of the U.S. plan on the extension of an arms embargo against Iran at UNSC, the recent affairs in Lebanon as well as the significance of increasing national unity and resistance against the U.S. sanctions and maximum pressure campaign.

Qalibaf, for his part, voiced the Parliament's readiness for supporting the formation of foreign and international trade ministry in a bid to reinforce Iran's foreign trade.

He also underscored the available capacities of foreign diplomacy with eastern Asia and voiced Parliament's readiness to use its diplomatic capabilities for boosting the country's international trade.

## Lawmakers Underline Support for Reinvigoration of Defense Industry

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian legislators in a statement on Sunday stressed support for strengthening the country's defense industry and missile and arms power.

The statement issued on the occasion of the Defense Industry Day in Iran underscored the need for using elites and specialists active in the defense industry and knowledge-based companies to further develop the country's defense industry.

"Enhancement of self-sufficiency in production of weapons and defense equipment prevents the cruel sanctions from leaving any impact (on the country) and it has and will defeat the US and the Zionist regime repeatedly and in a disgraceful way," it added.

The statement also condemned cooperation with the US and Israel in putting restrictions on Iran's defense and missile power by any government and official and unofficial entities, describing it as "unforgivable".

## Students Hold Gathering to Condemn UAE-Israel Compromise

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iranian students held a demonstration in front of the UAE embassy in Tehran, condemning Abu Dhabi for its compromise deal with Israel.

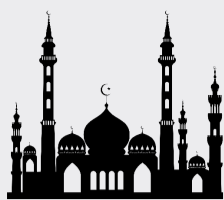
Tehran University students gathered in front of the UAE embassy to object to this act on Saturday evening.

Students chanted slogans in this regard, saying that it is better for the UAE to end this agreement, express regret to the world and stay loyal to Palestinians' cause.

Protestors said that this agreement is not beneficial for the region and endangers peace and stability.

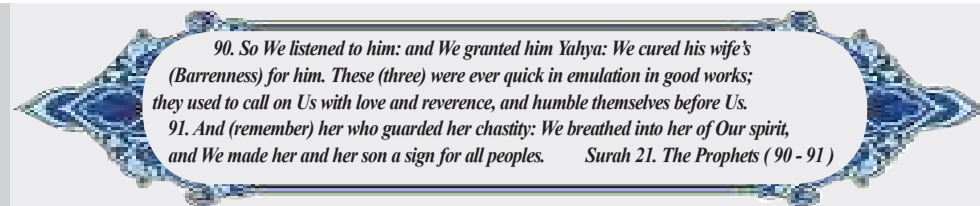
At the end of this gathering, the statement was read by one of the students.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday announced a deal brokered by his government between Israel and the UAE which he said would lead to full normalization of ties between the two.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:55
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:26



# Tehran-Tashkent Direct Flight To Be Launched

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Uzbekistan's Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade Sardar Omar Zagov welcomes Iran's proposal for resumption of direct flights between capitals of both countries.**

According to reports, Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Head Hamid Zadboum in a webinar with Zagov reviewed ways for bilateral cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan in different fields with an eye on using barter system in their trade.

Zadboum said that Iran and Uzbekistan are ready to hold the next meeting of their joint economic committee next week. TPO website published on Saturday after an online meeting between Zadboum and an Uzbek official.

As reported, Zadboum and Uzbekistan's deputy minister of investment and foreign trade explored the ways for bolstering trade relations between the two countries during the online meeting and agreed to set up a committee to start negotiations on finalizing preferential trade agreement between Iran and Uzbekistan.

They also agreed to hold a meeting with the transport ministers of the two countries on strengthening bilateral transport ties.

Zadboum pointed to the decline in bilateral trade in the first four months of the current year due to the virus pandemic and closure of borders and called for boosting trade ties by removing the hurdles and using different routes for having access to Uzbekistan.

He also invited his Uzbek counterpart to hold an exhibition on Uzbek products in Tehran which was welcomed by Zagov.



During the webinar, it was decided the four-way meeting of road ministers to convene for boosting multilateral cooperation on transportation.

Both sides also called for forming a joint committee for final talks to finalize the preferential trade agreement between both countries.

Meanwhile Zagov, for his part, welcomed his Iranian counterpart's proposal for resumption of Tehran-Tashkent direct flight by Iranian airlines in order to boost tourism industry as well as developing bilateral trade.

He added that coronavirus condition in Uzbekistan is getting better and the period of quarantine and lockdown in Uzbekistan has been shortened from 14 to 7 days.

At the end of the webinar, both sides decided to pursue the transportation issues with Turkmenistan and India and bilateral cooperation in the free zones.

As announced last month by Iranian Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohammad Nahavandian, the volume of trade between Iran and Uzbekistan increased 40 percent in 2019.

The official made the remarks in a meeting via video conference with Uzbekistan's Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade Zagov.

## Tehran to Lodge Complaint Against Seoul Over Blocking Its Resources

TEHRAN (ILNA)- Iran preparing to file an official complaint against two South Korean banks, the head of Iran-South Korea Chamber of Commerce told ILNA.

Hossein Tanhaei confirmed "There had been a variety of talks about the amount of Iranian money blocked in South Korea, indicating that between \$ 6 billion and \$ 9 billion of Iranian money had not been released in Korea, but that figure we emphasize is \$ 8.5 billion."

Regarding economic relations between the two countries, Hossein Tanhaei said "Currently, there is no significant economic relationship between the two countries and it can be said that the economic, trade relations between Iran and Korea have come to a halt."

"We have practically no contact with the Koreans and only a few small Korean private sector companies remain in the pharmaceutical sector."

"Previously we only had economic relations with 160 Korean companies in the Chamber of Commerce but today all the major companies have left Iran," the economic expert stressed.

Hossein Tanhaei added that under these conditions, it's natural and logical that we pursue the case of a complaint against two South Korean banks that have frozen nearly \$8.5 billion of Iranian funds under pressure from the United States.

He pointed to sending medicine and food shipments to Iran and added that Seoul had promised to send at least \$ 50 million in pharmaceutical items to Iran, but that figure did not reach \$ 2 million.

Back in June, CBI Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said that Iran will take back its dollars from South Korea through legal and international methods.

Also in May, Iranian Foreign Ministry had said that preliminary steps were taken to set up a channel to allow Iran to use its funds in South Korea to buy humanitarian goods. Weeks later South Korea's Foreign Ministry said Seoul was sending \$500,000 worth of medicine to Iran.

## All People Can Buy Oil With Gov't's New Plan in Stock Market

TEHRAN (IP)- Vice President for Economic Affairs, Mohammad Nahavandian said that what is referred to as 'economic opening' is, in fact, a set of economic policies that the government has considered for the last year of its term."

Nahavandian said that these policies include

stabilizing financial markets, investing, employment, addressing the livelihoods of families affected by sanctions amid Coronavirus, and in 6 sections which is a set of diverse actions and activities,

He added that the "economic opening" coincided with the introduction of the domestic oil sales plan, which is only a small part of the government's economic plans.

Nahavandian further said: "The domestic sale of oil was already on the agenda of the Ministry of Oil and the supply in the energy exchange started a year and a half ago, but its buyers were large companies."

He added that with the massive influx of people into the stock market, it is now possible for all people to buy oil with the government's new plan. This serves several purposes like part of the money in the market that will go to the oil industry, and also help the government complete its projects and reduce the budget deficit.

## 2nd Gas Condensate Export Pipeline of South Pars Site 2 Complete



TEHRAN (Shana) -- The deputy director of South Pars Phase 19 Development Project announced the completion of the first part of the second gas condensate export pipeline of phases of South Pars Site 2.

According to Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), Seyed Hossein Azimi, referring to the gas condensate export plant of South Pars Site 2 by using two sing point mooring (SPM) systems, said, currently, SPM 1 has been commissioned and due to the arrival the second SPM to Iran in May, construction of the pipeline and installation of this system is under way.

He stated that the capacity of loading gas condensate with the SPM 2 system is 7,000 cubic meters per hour, and added this system will be installed in the south of the Asia Aram jetty.

Azimi stated that in this project, a new method (shore pulling) will be used to pull the sea pipeline from the shore.

## Sweet Gas output in SPGC at 155% Hike

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief Executive of South Pars Gas Company (SPGC) said that production volume of treated sweet gas at the company increased about 155 percent last year (ended March 20, 2020) as compared to 2013.

Hadi Hashemzadeh Farhang made the remarks in an interview with IRNA on Sunday and added that production volume of sweet gas will also register a hike in the current year (started March 21, 2020).

He put the number of refineries that were put into operation at South Pars Gas Company in 2013 at five, adding, "With the commissioning of new refineries, the number of refineries has increased by 12 before the termination of the last Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021)."

Presently, South Pars Gas Company accounts for more than 74 percent of domestic gas output share, he said, adding, "when the new phases of the company are put into operation, about two-thirds of the nationwide gas output is provided through South Pars Gas Company."

According to the senior officials of the Ministry of Oil and National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), gas output

production volume in South Pars Gas Company will hit from 280 million cubic meters in 2012 to 750 million cubic meters by the end of the current year."

By increasing gas production volume at South Pars Gas Company, export of gas in this company has increased by 90 percent, he said, adding, "currently, about 80 million cubic meters of gas is exported by the company on average daily."

## Iran-Thailand Joint Commerce Committee to Be Launched

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has it on the agenda to set up an Iran-Thailand joint commerce committee in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), ICCIMA portal announced on Sunday.

As reported, the ICCIMA deputy for international affairs is in charge of the establishment of the mentioned committee.

The Iranian government has it on the agenda for the current Iranian calendar year to expand its trade with new partners and in this regard, it has been encouraging the private sector to take the necessary measures.

In late July, Iran exported aquatic products to Thailand from its southeastern Chabahar port for the first time.

## Khouzestan Steel Co. Eyes Eliminating Middlemen From the Market

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Khozestan Steel Company says the priority of the whole company is to fully support the domestic producers and this will cut the hands of middlemen from the steel market.



Mr. Ali Mohammadi said that the general policy of KSC since its establishment has been to provide its needed raw materials from the domestic companies and this will lead to the surge in production in the plants in the downstream chain of steel industry, and as the result, it will to the support of sustainable job for the youths.

He added that Khouzestan Steel Company has this honor to say that in recent years and despite maximum sanctions pressure has played a major role in the national economy and the province by employing 11,000 workforces directly and 50,000 indirectly.

He stated that this giant industrial complex, by employing experts and skillful forces and by reliance on the domestic capabilities and with prioritizing provision of ingots needed by the domestic market, exports its surplus products to any part of the world and inject the repatriated forex into the national economy.

Mohammadi further said that the company is after completing the chain of value from mine to the rolling, and through good interaction with the upstream industries and having all-out support of the downstream industries, the company tries to keep sustainability and development of the steel industry chain.

He admitted that unfortunately in recent weeks some middlemen who are after the special rent of roll-makers have tried to accuse the company of some false charges, reiterating that the company and its staff are moving ahead strongly without paying to attention to such baseless charges which are aimed at tarnishing the brilliant record of the company.

## KSC, Leading Steel-Making Company in Profitability

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Khorasan Steel Complex hailed the growth of profit of the company in the first quarter of the year comparing to the same period last year, adding the company ranked first in terms of profitability among the national steel-making companies in the same period.



Addressing a ceremony last week, Dr. Kasra Ghafoori said that the company enjoyed positive growth in the first quarter comparing to the same period last year and the statistics show 151 percent growth which distinguishes the performance of the company from other steel-making companies.

He added that KSC ranked first in terms of profitability and that full and final data in the official bodies like the Stock Exchange Organization showed that KSC is the only steel-making company which has registered such a growth in the first quarter.

Ghafoori added that today both major share-holders of the company and some 7,000 tireless colleagues and staff in the company who have played a great role in this success can enjoy the results of this success.

He noted that the name of company has been directly sanctioned by the U.S. for the third time, adding that continuation of the growth in the company in the past fiscal year and earning profits equal to the profits in seven years before it is a response to U.S. President Donald Trump and the U.S. statesmen.

Ghafoori reiterated that the company posted 79 percent net profit last year and it makes the company rank first among the steel-making companies in the country in terms of profitability.

He pointed to process of the results of the company's performance, adding that according to it, the complex has enjoyed 151 percent growth in profitability in the first quarter of the year.

He also hailed the endeavors of the staff of the complex, reiterating that 11 new records in production have been set in the past 9 months.

## Gunmen Shoot Afghan Negotiator

KABUL (Dispatches) - A prominent women's rights campaigner and member of the Afghan negotiating team that will hold talks with the Taliban, Fawzia Koofi, has been wounded in a gun attack near Kabul, officials said Saturday.

Gunmen opened fire on Koofi and her sister on Friday when they were returning from a meeting to offer condolences in the province of Parwan, interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian told AFP.

The attack took place when the two women had got out of their car to purchase something, Arian said.

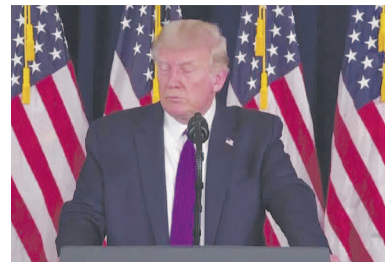


## Trump Probably Would Not Participate in Putin Iran Summit

BEDMINSTER, N.J. (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday all but dismissed Russian President Vladimir Putin's call for a summit of world leaders to discuss Iran, saying he probably would not participate.

During a news conference at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club, Trump also said he intended to move next week to trigger a "snapback" of sanctions on Iran at the United Nations.

"We'll be doing a snapback," Trump told reporters one day after the U.N. Security Council rejected a U.S. bid to extend a U.N. arms embargo on Iran. "You'll be watching it next week."



## Modi Warns China Over Border Tensions



NEW DELHI (AFP) - India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a new warning to China over deadly border tensions on Saturday, using his most important speech of the year to promise to build a stronger military.

With talks on easing a military build-up in their Himalayan border region at a stalemate, Modi told an Independence Day ceremony that India's sovereignty was "supreme" and that relations with neighbours depended on security and trust.

Attendance at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi for the speech was cut by more than half to 4,000 people, all of whom sat two metres (six feet) apart because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Hindu nationalist prime minister mentioned confrontations with Pakistan and China on their disputed borders, but without naming either country. "Anyone who has cast an eye on the country's sovereignty, the country's army has answered them in their own language," he said.

"India's integrity is supreme for us. What we can do, what our soldiers can do -- everyone saw that in Ladakh," referring to a border clash with Chinese troops in the Ladakh region of the Himalayas on June 15. Twenty Indian soldiers were killed in the clash, which saw the two sides fighting with batons, stones and bare fists.

China has also acknowledged that it suffered casualties but without giving numbers. The two sides have blamed each other for the fighting and tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese troops, who also fought a border war in 1962, have since been sent to the region.

Modi has insisted that no land was lost in the battle but military experts have used satellite images to counter that Chinese troops occupy frontier territory that India had claimed for decades.

India has in turn used economic weapons against China. It has banned at least 59 apps, including the major video-sharing platform TikTok, and taken other measures to freeze Chinese firms out of contracts and block its imports.

Modi said that relations with neighbours are now linked to "security, progress and trust".

"A neighbour isn't just someone who shares our geography but those who share our hearts. Where the relationship is respected, it becomes warmer," he said.

The 1.4-million-strong military would be built up, he added.

"India is just as committed to its security and strengthening its army as the attempts it has made for peace and harmony," he said, stressing efforts to make India "self-reliant" in defence production. Modi also said that his priority was getting India out of the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

India is expected to pass 50,000 deaths in the coming days and three million cases within a week. It has the fastest-growing caseload in the world and is now only behind Brazil and the United States in terms of total case numbers.

With the economy expected to shrink this year, Modi reaffirmed an election promise to spend 1.3 trillion dollars on 7,000 infrastructure projects "to get us out of the pandemic situation".

## Lukashenko Says Putin Agreed To Help Security of Belarus

MINSK (Reuters) - Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said he had secured a pledge from Russia to provide comprehensive assistance if needed to ensure the security of his country in a phone call with President Vladimir Putin on Saturday.

The two presidents spoke as tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Minsk once again urging Lukashenko to quit and staff at the Belarusian state broadcaster BT considered joining a wave of strikes and mass protests.

Accused of rigging last Sunday's election, Lukashenko had earlier appealed to Putin for help as he grapples with the biggest challenge to his 26-year rule and the threat of new Western sanctions.

Ties between the two traditional allies had been under strain before the election, as Russia scaled back the subsidies that propped up Lukashenko's government. Russia sees Belarus as a strategic buffer against NATO and the EU.

The state news agency Belta cited remarks by Lukashenko that "at the first request, Russia will provide comprehensive assistance to ensure the security of Belarus in the event of external military threats".

A Kremlin statement made no mention of such assistance but said both sides expressed confidence that all problems in Belarus would be resolved soon.

Statements by both sides contained a pointed reference to a "union state" between the two countries.

The neighbors had signed an agreement in 1999 which was supposed to create a unified state. The unification project was never properly implemented and more recently Lukashenko had rejected calls by Moscow for closer economic and political ties as an assault on his country's sovereignty.

Russia has been wary of unrest on its borders since Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution, Ukraine's 2003-04 Orange Revolution and 2014 Maidan protests — events in which it says the West backed the protesters.

The European Union is gearing up to impose new sanctions on Belarus in response to a violent crackdown in which at least two protesters have been killed and thousands detained.



## Thousands Rally Against South Korea's Moon Jae-in

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Thousands of anti-government protesters, armed with umbrellas and raincoats, marched through the soggy streets of Seoul on Saturday, ignoring official pleas to stay home amid a surge in coronavirus infections.

Municipal officials in Seoul had sought to forbid the slew of rallies planned by conservative activist and Christian groups for a holiday celebrating the 75th anniversary of the nation's liberation from Japanese colonial rule at the end of World War II.

But a court allowed some of them to go on, citing civil liberties after protesters challenged the city's administrative order banning the gatherings.

The demonstrators, many of them wearing masks and carrying the South Korean flag, paraded through rain near Seoul's presidential palace, calling for liberal President Moon Jae-in to step down over what they see as policy failures, kowtowing to nuclear-armed North Korea and election corruption.

Some South Korean conservatives insist that the April parliamentary elections convincingly won by Moon's party were rigged, although most experts see such claims as false conspiracy theories.

Some protesters scuffled with police officers who closely followed the marchers, but there were no immediate reports of major clashes or injuries.

Some of the marchers reportedly came from a church in northern Seoul that was shut down after it was linked to dozens of infections. Health officials are planning to isolate and test some 4,000 members of the church, led by ultra-conservative pastor Jun Kwang-hun, a vocal critic of Moon who frequently led anti-government rallies over the past year. The demonstrations took place as the government announced stronger social distancing restrictions for the greater capital area following a spike in COVID-19 infections.

The two-week measures starting Sunday will allow authorities in Seoul and towns in neighboring Gyeonggi Province to shut down high-risk facilities such as nightclubs,

karaoke rooms, movie theaters and buffet restaurants if they fail to properly enforce preventive measures, including distancing, temperatures checks, keeping customer lists and requiring masks.

## Japan Marks 75th Anniversary of War End With No Abe Apology

TOKYO (AP) — Japan on Saturday marked the 75th anniversary of its surrender in World War II, with Emperor Naruhito expressing "deep remorse" over his country's wartime actions at a somber annual ceremony curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Naruhito pledged to reflect on the war's events and expressed hope that the tragedy would never be repeated. There was no word of apology from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who gave thanks for the sacrifices of the Japanese war dead but had nothing to say about the suffering of Japan's neighbors.

"Reflecting on our past and bearing in mind the feelings of deep remorse, I earnestly hope that the ravages of war will never be repeated," Naruhito said in a short speech at the event in Tokyo marking the 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender on Aug. 15, 1945.

Amid virus fears and worries about the fading memories of the fast-aging war generation, about 500 participants, reduced from 6,200 last year, mourned the dead with a minute of silence. Masks were

required, and there was no singing of the "Kimigayo" national anthem.

Naruhito has promised to follow in the footsteps of his father, who devoted his 30-year career to making amends for a war fought in the name of Hirohito, the current emperor's grandfather.

Abe has increasingly sought to whitewash Japan's brutal past since taking office in December 2012. He hasn't acknowledged Japan's wartime hostilities during Aug. 15 speeches, which had previously been a nearly 20-year tradition that began with the 1995 apology of Socialist leader Tomiichi Murayama.

Abe, in a largely domestic-focused speech, said the peace that Japan enjoys today is built on the sacrifices of those who died in the war. He pledged that Japan will reflect on lessons from history and will not repeat the war devastation. He listed damage inflicted on Japan and its people, including the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, massive firebombings of Tokyo and the fierce battle of Okinawa.



## Beirut Aid Should Go Where Needed

BEIRUT (Reuters) - Lebanese President Michel Aoun said on Saturday that international aid pledged following a massive explosion in Beirut last week that killed 178 people and made 300,000 homeless should go where it is needed.

In an interview with French news channel BFM TV, Aoun said all hypotheses remained open in the investigation into the blast at the port of Beirut that wrecked huge swathes of the capital.

"I have asked that aid sent by foreign countries be given exactly where it is needed," he said, adding that he had not considered resigning, after the government quit earlier in the week.

The United Nations has launched a \$565 million aid appeal, whose priorities include stabilising the grain supply after the explosion destroyed a huge grain silo at the port.

Six hospitals and more than 20 clinics were damaged and more than 120 schools destroyed, the UN says.

"We would like to be able to rebuild the three hospitals that were completely destroyed," U.N. humanitarian coordinator Najat Rochdi said earlier.

The United States called for a transparent and credible investigation into the disaster.

The Aug. 4 blast, which authorities say was caused by more than 2,000 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been unsafely stored at the port for years.

"We can never go back to an era in which anything goes at the port or the borders of Lebanon that had to contribute to this situation," said David Hale, U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, after visiting the port.

He said FBI agents would arrive this weekend, at the invitation of Lebanon, to help investigate what led to the explosion.

The blast has fuelled anger at Lebanon's ruling politicians who were already facing criticism over a financial meltdown that has sunk the currency, demolished the value of savings and left depositors unable to withdraw their money.



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## Spain Deplores Continued U.S. Tariffs on EU Goods

MADRID (Reuters) - Spain is pleased the United States decided not to increase tariffs on European Union goods, Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya said on Friday, but sharply criticised the fact any tariffs remained in force. "We deplore the fact that there are still tariffs on Spanish products," Gonzalez Laya told Reuters in an interview two days after Washington said it would keep 15% tariffs on Airbus

(AIR.PA) aircraft and 25% tariffs on other European goods despite moves to resolve a dispute over aircraft subsidies.

As the aviation sector faces crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic, "the useful thing would be to discuss a framework to regulate the support countries give to their aviation sectors, not to do ourselves more damage with retaliatory measures," she said.



## Pakistan's Economic Situation on the Mend

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - In televised address to mark 74th Independence Day, prime minister claims country's exports increased during pandemic. Pakistan's economic situation is improving, indicating that people's confidence in the country is on the rise, Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed. Addressing the nation in a televised address to mark the country's 74th Independence Day, Khan said he hoped to see an "industrial Pakistan" in the near future, adding that the worst was over.

"Today the economy is working as well as the coronavirus cases are declining," said Khan. He appreciated the people of Pakistan for adopting precautions against the coronavirus, but cautioned that the threat was not yet finished and preventative measures should not be abandoned.

Claiming that Pakistan had actually seen a growth in exports despite the pandemic, the prime minister said it was heartening to see the stock market performing better "due to people's confidence." He also, as a matter of routine, lamented that the previous government had left such a dire situation for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf to overcome.

"When the government was formed, there were no foreign exchange reserves. It was difficult to repay loans," he said, adding that he was aware of the difficulties facing the people right now and assured them these would be overcome.

He said the uplift of the construction sector would benefit 40 allied industries and generate employment and wealth. This would result in a boost to the government's tax collection, he added.

The prime minister claimed that the government had inked a new agreement with independent power producers to reduce the cost of electricity, thereby reducing the circular debt and leading to a boost for the economy. He said that this was one of two major problems his government had inherited.

"One [problem] was of the loans obtained by the past governments and the other related to the power sector," he said. In its first year of power, the PTI added Rs. 11.6 trillion in debt—the total debt added by the previous PMLN government in five years of power was less than Rs. 13 trillion.

Khan claimed during his speech that Pakistan's industrial sector was lagging behind the rest of the world due to expensive electricity as the country has been "buying electricity at an expensive rate and selling it for a cheap rate." He said the government was working to reduce line losses and power theft to further curb expensive rates for power generation.

Referring to Jammu and Kashmir, the prime minister said all of Pakistan was standing with the people of India-held Kashmir, adding that the nation would continue to support the disputed region's right of self-determination.

Khan also said that Pakistan would never abandon the Kashmiri people, and would continue to pray for them in their time of crisis.

## Germany Warned of Slow Progress in Recovery From Coronavirus

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Despite Germany's economy is likely to grown in the third quarter of the year, it has been warned to expect a lengthy recovery process from the coronavirus pandemic.

Germany's economy minister said in a monthly report: "The further economic upturn depends to a large extent on the course of the pandemic at home and abroad.

"For this reason alone, after the first stronger revival in May and June, the further recovery process in the German economy will only progress slowly and take a long time to complete."

Under Chancellor Angela Merkel's administration, the country launched a €130billion stimulus plan.

This includes tax incentives, aid for childcare and municipal governments as well as a budget for cleaner energy and digitalisation. The plan aims to bring Germany out of the worst recession since the end of World War 2.

According to reports, the measures will raised €218billion in new debt this year alone.

The economy minister confirmed the level of goods and services exports is around 83 percent compared to before the start of the pandemic in February.

Last month, the European Union announced a staggering €750billion recovery fund to help with the looming global recession. It is believed a large sum of money will be given to Eastern Europe while other states will receive funding to finance their own needs.

Unlike other European countries, Germany has managed to curb the virus.

But this week, the nation reported the highest number of new coronavirus cases in more than three months. The daily infections are still more than 1,000 for four consecutive days.

## Philippines to Get \$1.9b in New Loans From World Bank

MANILA (Dispatches) - The World Bank will approve financing for another \$1.9 billion in projects in the Philippines before yearend to help the economy recover from the COVID-19-induced recession, the Department of Finance (DOF) said.

Specifically, the World Bank said in a recent letter to Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III that the Washington-based multilateral lender remained supportive of the Duterte administration's ambitious "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure program.

Ndjamé Diop, the World Bank's country director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand, told Dominguez that the lender would "support and accompany the government's programs and reforms" while it "charts out a solid recovery from the pandemic."

Citing Diop's letter to Dominguez, the DOF said that the World Bank's pipeline of projects that it has redesigned to assist the Philippines' economic recovery along with efforts to address the COVID-19 emergency included programs on improving social protection initiatives for poor and vulnerable households, and supporting the government's capabilities to deliver basic education through distance or remote learning.

"The pipeline also covers policy loans and projects that aim to sharpen the country's competitiveness; bridge gaps in the food supply chains, and provide jobs and livelihood opportunities to communities badly hit by the pandemic's economic fallout," the DOF quoted Diop as saying.

The World Bank also urged the Philippine government to accelerate and streamline the processes required to get the pipeline of projects moving in their various approval stages, given the emergency situation we are in, the DOF said.

The World Bank already disbursed \$1.2 billion out of the recent loans it extended to the Philippines for COVID-19 response.

Meanwhile, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) also on Friday said that it disbursed to the Philippine government last Aug. 14 the 50-billion yen COVID-19 crisis response emergency support loan signed in July.

In a statement, Jica said it made the disbursement upon the Philippine government's request made this week in order to "immediately help the Philippines deal with the pandemic."

The Philippines was the first country that availed itself of this new highly concessional lending program being offered by the Japanese government, as well as the first borrower to disburse the fund.

## UNDP to Focus On Inclusive Recovery in Supporting Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The United Nations Development programme (UNDP) said it will prioritize the restoration of livelihoods and small businesses; debris management; and access to justice for impacted vulnerable groups in the aftermath of the devastating explosion in the port of Beirut.

It added that this assistance will complement urgent relief efforts of sister UN agencies in the first stage response. Over the recovery period, UNDP will advocate for and support the implementation of socio-economic protection measures aimed at protecting the people of Beirut affected by the impacts of the blast as well as all Lebanese.

Effects of the blast go far beyond the immediate vicinity of the destroyed port. More than 10,000 enterprises in the direct vicinity of the blast have been destroyed or put out of business, leaving more than 100,000 people unemployed and highly food insecure. Additionally, an estimated 300,000 people have lost their homes, the organization said.

UNDP will work on reducing the immediate impact of the blast on food availability for the most vulnerable, through a mix of cash-for-work emergency employment schemes and the provision of family food security support.

"As we witness the people in Lebanon challenged again, it is now time to turn solidarity into action," said UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner. "While responding to the emergency, we will continue supporting the country as it reforms and rebuilds its longer-term priorities. Together we can ensure that Lebanon will come out of this crisis even stronger."

The impact of the blast is also compounded by multi-faceted crises that Lebanon has faced for years, including spill over effects of the crisis in Syria and downwardly spiralling economic crisis, further complicated by a persistent COVID-19 outbreak.

The explosion has exacerbated vulnerabilities among several disadvantaged groups, including impoverished Lebanese, refugees and migrant workers. UNDP will support legal aid efforts in affected areas to provide counselling service, to help vulnerable groups safeguard their labor and housing rights.

"We have been here for five decades supporting the people of Lebanon in their efforts to recover from recurring crises," said Country Resident Representative, Celine Moyroud. "With the current set of crises that the country is going through, we are fully committed to supporting Lebanon on an inclusive path to recovery and development that leaves no one behind and that is attentive to people's calls for change, greater accountability and transparency."

## Britain's Economy Now On Course for Rapid Recovery



LONDON (Dispatches) – Britain's economy is set for a "rapid recovery" from the pandemic helped by strong consumer spending, a top economist said.

The Bank of England's chief economist Andy Haldane said the public's willingness to shop and eat out has already helped the UK claw back up to half of the losses sparked by the coronavirus lockdown.

He says the country should "see the economic glass as half full rather than half empty" as official figures show a surge in the number of workers returning to the office.

And with the economy set to break records by growing more than a fifth in the second half of 2020, Mr Haldane says the recovery is already happening.

Writing in the Daily Mail, he said: "The foundations for an economic recovery – a rapid one – are already in place, hiding in plain sight. "Economic activity in the UK is not falling like stone, in fact it has now been rising for more than three months, sooner than anyone expected.

"It has also recovered far faster than anyone expected."

Following the release of the latest economic figures, Chancellor Rishi Sunak says the UK is "bouncing back" after the unprecedented shutdown.

He said: "Our economy has been hit hard by the virus, but the statistics out today show promise of Britain bouncing back. "The recovery won't be easy but if we all play our part, either by going back to work in our offices or enjoying a meal out, we can overcome this together and come out stronger than before."

On Wednesday, it was confirmed that Britain was suffering a recession with GDP plummeting 20.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2020 – a record fall.

Yet, the data shows that after collapsing in April, following the lockdown at the end of March, the economy grew by 2.4 per cent in May and 8.7 per cent in June.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak says Britain is 'bouncing back' after the latest figures showed the economy had grown in May and June

## Indonesia President Urges Economic Reboot, Boost to Healthcare

JAKARTA (Dispatches) – Indonesia must use the Covid-19 pandemic to reboot South-east Asia's biggest economy, President Joko Widodo said, as he proposed a \$187 billion 2021 budget that includes spending more on healthcare, including vaccines, and infrastructure.

He made the remarks in his annual state of the union and budget speeches to parliament. Due to Covid-19 precautions, fewer than half of the lawmakers were present for his address, with the rest watching online.

Likening the current economic situation to "a computer crash", he said Indonesia, along with other countries, must "shutdown, restart and reboot".

"We must capitalise on the crisis as a momentum to make a big leap," he said.

He proposed a 2,747.5 trillion rupiah or US\$186.65 billion (\$254 billion) 2021 budget, up 0.3 per cent from this year. He said the fiscal deficit should dip to 5.5 per cent of GDP, from 6.34 per cent in 2020, the highest in more than a decade as the government sought to shield the economy from the pandemic.

Indonesia has recorded the highest death toll due to the novel coronavirus in South-east Asia, though the authorities have been pushing to reopen the economy.

Economic growth should rebound to 4.5 per cent to 5.5 per cent next year, he said, compared with government projections of stalled growth this year and a 5 per cent rise in 2019.

The budget showed "the government is pretty optimistic about its expectation for economic recovery even as we see globally that the recovery in developed economies has been pretty slow," said Josua Pardede, an economist with Bank Permata.

The president, who allocated US\$1.7 billion for Covid-19 vaccines and research, said accelerating reform of the health sector was a top priority, along with strengthening food supply chains, including with a newly planned food estate on Borneo island.

He also highlighted plans to slash oil imports by using fuel made from palm oil, including by expanding the green diesel state oil firm Pertamina successfully made from 100 per cent palm oil. The so-called D100 would absorb a minimum of one million tons of farmer-produced palm for 20,000 barrels of production capacity per day, the president said, without giving a timeframe.

Cash and food assistance, tax breaks and programs to support small firms would continue next year, though those would fall to \$24 billion, compared with US\$47 billion this year.

To aid economic recovery, \$28 billion of infrastructure spending was proposed.



## Flights Through Iranian Airspace Up by 71% y/y in July

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran reports a significant increase in number of overflights six months after a plane downing incident. A study of recent figures from the Iranian aviation industry shows the number of flights that pass through the country's airspace has increased significantly months after a plane downing incident caused major global airlines to reroute their flights from Iran. A Saturday report by Fars news agency showed that the number of overflights through the Iranian airspace in the Persian calendar months ending July 21 had increased by 71 percent compared to the similar period last year.



# Russia Produces First Batch of Virus Vaccine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia said Saturday that it has produced the first batch of its coronavirus vaccine, after President Vladimir Putin announced it had been first in the world to approve a vaccine.

Putin's announcement on Tuesday about the vaccine was met with caution from scientists and the World Health Organization who said it still needed a rigorous safety review.

"The first batch of the novel coronavirus vaccine developed by the Gamaleya research institute has been produced," the health ministry said in a statement quoted by Russian news agencies.

Putin said the vaccine was safe and that one of his own daughters had been inoculated, though clinical trials were not yet complete and final stage testing involving more than 2,000 people only started this week.

Western scientists were sceptical, with some warning that moving too quickly on a vaccine could be dangerous, but Russia denounced criticism as an attempt to undermine Moscow's research.

The Russian vaccine is called "Sputnik V" after the Soviet-era satellite that was the first launched into space in 1957.

It was developed by the Gamaleya research institute for epidemiology and microbiology in Moscow in coordination with the Russian defence ministry.

The head of the institute, Alexander Gintsburg, told the TASS state news agency on Saturday that volunteers taking part in the final stage testing of the vaccine's safety and efficacy would have two inoculations.

Russia has said that industrial production is expected from September and that it plans to manufacture 5 million doses per month by December or January.



Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said this week that the vaccine would first be made available to medics and would later be available to all Russians on a voluntary basis.

With more than 917,000 confirmed infections, Russia's coronavirus caseload is currently fourth in the world after the United States, Brazil and India.

Currently Russia has 92,000 people hospitalized with the virus and 2,900 in intensive care, according to the health ministry.

## China Ramps Up U.S. Oil Purchases Ahead Of Trade Deal Review



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. crude oil shipments to China will rise sharply in coming weeks, U.S. traders and shipbrokers and Chinese importers said, as the world's top economies gear up to review a January deal after a prolonged trade war.

Chinese state-owned oil firms have tentatively booked tankers to carry at least 20 million barrels of U.S. crude for August and September, the people said, moves that may ease U.S. concerns that China's purchases are trending well short of purchase commitments under the Phase 1 of the trade deal. China had emerged as a top U.S. crude buyer, taking \$5.42 billion worth in 2018 before trade tensions brought flows to a near halt.

In January, China pledged to buy \$18.5 billion of energy products including crude oil and natural gas over its 2017 level, implying total value of about \$25 billion this year.

Its U.S. crude purchases through June 30 amounted to \$2.06 billion, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, reflecting the COVID-19 pandemic downturn and the limited impact of the Phase 1 deal.

However, there has been a recent spike in purchases by China's state-owned oil and gas firm PetroChina and its largest refiner Sinopec Corp, the people said.

A review of the U.S.-China trade deal initially slated for Saturday will be delayed due to scheduling issues, and no new date has been agreed yet, Reuters reported.

Already, a monthly record 32 million barrels of U.S. oil are set to reach China in August, according to Refinitiv Eikon data.

New tanker fixtures, or tentative bookings, to China have jumped even as current oil pricing in other parts of the world may be more favorable for its buyers, said the people, who could not be identified because they are not authorized to speak with the media.

The two Chinese companies each have booked five to six supertankers, that each can hold 2 million barrels of oil, for August and September loadings. U.S. crude exporters Occidental Petroleum, Equinor and Vitol, each chartered one or two vessels, shipping sources said.

PetroChina plans to buy 3 million tons (about 22 million barrels), or nearly \$1 billion worth, of U.S. crude by year-end, according to a person briefed on the matter.

"The demand in China has strengthened since COVID-19 restrictions started to be lifted," an Equinor spokesman said, declining to comment on volumes or bookings.

Sinopec, PetroChina and Occidental did not respond to requests for comment. Vitol declined to comment.

The new deals are intended to show China still aims to meet its purchase target, the people familiar with the matter said.

"It's politically driven for sure because there are a plethora of barrels being offered to Asia cheaper than what WTI lands," one trader said, referring to U.S. benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude.

## Zimbabwe Gov't Denies Crisis as Inflation Jumps to 840%

HARARE (AFP) - Zimbabwe's annual inflation rate soared to almost 840 percent in July, the statistics agency said Saturday, adding to the country's desperate economic woes even as the government refused to acknowledge a growing sense of crisis.

The southern African nation has been grappling with more than a decade of hyperinflation triggered by economic mismanagement under former president Robert Mugabe, who was ousted by a military coup in 2017.

Many Zimbabweans have seen their savings evaporate and still struggle to afford basic commodities such as sugar and the staple commmeal, with corruption and poverty rife.

The figures were published shortly after a government statement was issued saying that President Emmerson Mnangagwa had implemented policies "that result in a robust economy" and had kept the country "commendably stable", denying any crisis.

The July inflation rate of 837.53 percent, which was announced by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency on Twitter, compares with 737.3 percent in June.

Month-on-month, inflation stood at 35.53 percent in July, up from 31.66 percent in June.

The government statement -- published by the state-owned Herald newspaper -- was a response to a letter by Zimbabwe's Catholic Bishops on Friday that deplored a recent crackdown on dissent by Mnangagwa's administration and a deepening crisis in the country.

Last month, the authorities banned protests planned by an opposition politician and deployed the army and riot police in huge numbers to quell them.

Opposition figure Jacob Ngarivhume, who had called for



the July 31 protests against alleged state corruption and worsening economic troubles, was arrested 12 days ahead of the strike.

Journalist and documentary filmmaker Hopewell Chin'ono was also detained. They both remain in custody after being denied bail.

More than a dozen protesters, including award-winning author Tsitsi Dangaremba, were arrested on July 31 and later freed on bail. All have been charged with inciting public violence.

The bishops described the clampdown as "unprecedented" and weighed in on the ongoing crisis, which the government has repeatedly denied. They said the "struggle in Zimbabwe" resulted "in a multi-layered crisis of the convergence of economic collapse, deepening poverty, food insecurity, corruption and human rights abuses".

Government spokesman Nick Mangwana accused the bishops of joining the "bandwagon of individuals and entities" seeking to "invent crises for political gains."

"Government reiterates that Zimbabwe, like most countries in the world is currently grappling with challenges attendant to illegal sanctions, drought and the coronavirus pandemic," Mangwana said, quoted by The Herald. "There is no 'crisis', political or otherwise."

The United States slapped sanctions on Zimbabwean businessman and political operator Kudakwashe Tagwirei days after the July 31 crackdown, calling him "notoriously corrupt".

The sanctions were issued to commemorate the two-year anniversary of a violent army-led suppression of protests over alleged election fraud, in which at least six people were killed.

## COVID-19 Causes, Worsens Heart Issues in Hospitalized Patients

NEW YORK (UPI) -- COVID-19 causes heart problems that range from irregular heartbeats to angina and worsens pre-existing cardiovascular conditions, according to an analysis published Friday by PLOS ONE.

Just over 14% of people hospitalized due to infection with the new coronavirus developed heart complications due to the disease, the researchers said.

That's in addition to the nearly 13% of all people hospitalized who had pre-existing heart conditions at the time of their admission, they said. Roughly 10% of those with pre-existing heart problems or who developed heart complications after becoming infected died, the data showed.

"We found that both pre-existing cardiovascular [disease] ... and the development of cardiovascular complications are associated with fatality rate COVID-19 [in] patients," wrote the researchers, from Magna Graecia University in Catanzaro, Italy.

The findings -- based on an analysis of 21 studies that included more than 77,300 hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in the United States, Asia and Europe -- add to evidence that people with heart disease are at increased risk for serious illness from the virus, as well as damage to the heart, the researchers said.

Although the majority of COVID-19 patients develop mild symptoms, older adults and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, chronic lung disease or diabetes are at risk for serious illness from the virus, the researchers said. Data from the American Heart Association indicates that nearly one in four people with COVID-19 experience heart-related complications.

"Much remains to be learned about COVID-19 infection and the heart," Dr. Mitchell S. V. Elkind, the American Heart Association president, said in a statement released Friday.

"Although we think of the lungs being the primary target ... several devastating complications of COVID-19 are cardiac in nature and may result in lingering cardiac dysfunction beyond the course of the viral illness itself," said Elkind, who is an attending neurologist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

In the PLOS ONE study, just over 36% of the hospitalized patients had high blood pressure before admission, while slightly fewer than 20% had diabetes, according to the researchers.

Roughly 11% of them were smokers and approximately 34% met the criteria for obesity, or being severely overweight based on body mass index, the data showed.

Just under 12% of the patients had a history of coronary artery disease before hospital admission for COVID-19, while nearly 10% had been diagnosed with heart failure and slightly more than 5% had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, the researchers said.

## Negotiation With...

FROM PAGE 1

Mosaddeq's strategic mistake was his negligence towards disappointing the clerics from him in painting a dangerous picture of his government through the support of Tudeh Party and the then communist Soviet Union, with this trick that he needs to pretend in order to win the U.S. support against the British government. So he removed all hurdles for the success of the British in winning the approval of the U.S. and by coming to power of President Eisenhower after President Truman in the U.S., the climate for carrying out a military coup and bringing down the legal government of Mosaddeq in Iran was fully prepared.

So some of disputes between Iran and the U.S. root in August 19 coup d'etat, when the U.S. with its direct interference in Iran's internal affairs, brought back the despotic ruling Shah to power to dominate Iranian people's souls and properties and act as the U.S. lackey for a quarter of century. Perhaps one can say that the first chain of Iranian nations distrust to the U.S. was formed during the coup.

Now which wise man can in his mind believe this issue that a coup-monger country could be trustworthy and he can trust a country which is fully lackey of Zionists and start negotiations with it?

Even the Americans themselves admit of being dishonest. The remarks of the then U.S. Associate Justice of the Supreme Court William Douglas are still considered as the most audible proof for damaged 60 years of Americans' reputation and credit. Douglas has said, "When Mosaddeq in Iran re-organized, the alarm (Communism) was sounded to us ... We collaborated with the British to destroy him and succeeded in doing it but since then, our name has not been accompanied with dignity and pride in the Middle East."

With such a background full of historical records and behaviors of the U.S. regarding Iran after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran will never negotiate with the U.S.

## Iran to Shift...

FROM PAGE 1

It is totally unacceptable for an Arab and Muslim state like the UAE to launch overt political and economic relations with the criminal regime that is killing, imprisoning and displacing Palestinians, Major General Baqeri added.

Iranian officials have expressed full support for Palestine after the recent agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel on the establishment of diplomatic relations.

## Outrage Grows Over...

FROM PAGE 1

"I think you can't just let your own brothers down in order to pursue economic interests and perhaps also have more security for yourself," Asselborn told German-language Deutschlandfunk radio station.

"The Palestinians, the Palestinian people, who are Arabs, are really caught between the ropes," he added.

The veteran statesman said there had been indications for a long time that solidarity with Palestinians was no longer a priority in the Arab world, especially in the Persian Gulf region.

The diplomat also dismissed the UAE's initial declaration that Israel would suspend its annexation of Palestinian lands in the occupied West Bank as part of the deal.

Kuwait emphasized on Saturday that the Persian Gulf kingdom will continue to uphold its firm stance against normalizing relations with Israel.

The Arabic-language al-Qabas daily newspaper, citing informed government sources, reported that Kuwait would be the last to normalize relations with Israel, after a fair and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue was realized.

"Kuwait's position is consistent with its foreign policy approach established for decades in support of the Palestinian cause. It is the Arab world's issue, and accepts its resolution once the Palestinians do. This official stance is in line with the popular discourse rejecting normalization with the usurping Zionist regime, based on the decree of the late Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Salim al-Sabah," the sources noted.

According to the officials, the rejection of normalization with Israel is enshrined in Kuwait's constitution, which was signed into law in 1962.

Major political parties in Kuwait have strongly denounced the agreement, terming it as an "act of treason" and "a crime against the Palestinian cause, its nation as well as Arab and Muslim peoples."



## Vinales Takes Austrian MotoGP Pole

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Yamaha's Maverick Vinales clinched pole for this weekend's Austrian Grand Prix on Saturday. Vinales, who sits second in the overall standings ahead of the fourth race of the campaign, clocked one minute, 23.450 seconds to finish 0.068sec ahead of Ducati-Pramac's Jack Miller. Yamaha-SRT's championship leader Fabio Quartararo was also less than a second back in third. Vinales praised the factory outfit after unimpressive free practice earlier in the day where he managed a top-three finish just once.

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## Kruijswijk, Buchmann Crash Out of Dauphine

PARIS (AFP) - Dutch Jumbo-Visma rider Steven Kruijswijk and Bora-Hansgrohe's German Emanuel Buchmann were forced to pull out of the Criterium du Dauphine on Saturday after falling on the descent of a mountain. The pair follow Team Ineos' Tour champion Egan Bernal, who didn't start the penultimate stage due to a bad leg, out of the race just two weeks ahead of the Grand Boucle. Bernal won the 2019 Tour, with Kruijswijk third, and Buchmann coming in fourth.

# Pacers Top Heat to Claim No. 4 in East

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Indiana Pacers earned the right to be the "home" team to begin their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series against the Heat by beating Miami 109-92 in the both teams' regular-season finale near Orlando. The Pacers and Heat will next play in a best-of-seven playoff series, beginning Tuesday. Indiana will enter the postseason as the fourth seed in the East, while Miami will be No. 5. With a majority of the teams' best players sitting the game out -- including the Pacers' T.J. Warren and Domantas Sabonis, and the Heat's Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo -- the loosely played game saw Indiana's Doug McDermott and Miami's Kendrick Nunn share game-high honors with 23 points. The scary moment occurred when Heat swingman Derrick Jones Jr. took a hard fall in the third quarter and had to be tended to on the court for several minutes. Fearing a neck injury, he was taken off the floor on a stretcher. Jones was diagnosed with a strained neck.



### Philadelphia 76ers 134 - Houston Rockets 96

Tobias Harris paired 18 points with seven rebounds in 24 minutes while Joel Embiid added 14 points and six rebounds in limited action as Philadelphia turned a blistering first-half shooting display into a runaway victory over Houston. The 76ers shot 60 percent prior to the intermission, including a robust 10 of 16 on 3-pointers, in cruising to a 24-point halftime lead. James Harden recorded his 22nd double-double for the Rockets, posting game-highs in points (27) and assists (10). With a pair of free throws at the 5:39 mark of the first quarter, Harden passed Hall of Famer center Walt Bellamy (20,941 points) for 36th in NBA career scoring.

### Toronto Raptors 117 - Denver Nuggets 109

Stanley Johnson scored a season-best 23 points to lift Toronto past Denver in the final regular-season game for both teams. Several regulars either did no play or had limited minutes for the Raptors, who went 7-1 since the restart, have the second-best

overall record in the NBA and begin the postseason next week as the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference. Paul Watson added 22 points for Toronto, which rested Kyle Lowry, Pascal Siakam and Fred VanVleet. OG Anunoby and Serge Ibaka were out with knee injuries. P.J. Dozier scored 20 points and Monte Morris added 16 for Denver, which is slotted as the fourth seed in the West. Top players Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray both played less than 11 minutes.

### Los Angeles Clippers 107 - Oklahoma City Thunder 103 (OT)

Terance Mann recorded career bests of 25 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists, and Los Angeles defeated Oklahoma City in overtime in the regular-season finale for both teams. Amir Coffey scored a career-high 21 points before fouling out with 6.7 seconds left for the Clippers. Patrick Patterson had 17 points and a career-best 14 rebounds, while JaMychal Green added 13 points and eight rebounds for Los Angeles. Hamidou Diallo led the Thunder with a career-high 27 points, while Dennis Schroder contributed 17. Schroder, who recently returned to the bubble after the birth of his second child, played in his first game since Aug. 1.

## Klopp Wins Premier League Manager of The Season



LONDON (AFP) - Jurgen Klopp has been named Premier League manager of the season after guiding the club to their first league title in three decades. The 53-year-old German beat Chelsea's Frank Lampard, Leicester City's Brendan Rodgers, who Klopp replaced at Liverpool in 2015, and Sheffield United's Chris Wilder. Liverpool coasted to the title, they narrowly lost out on to Manchester City in the previous campaign. They garnered 99 points, winning 32 of their 38 league games, to finish 18 points clear of Manchester City. Klopp -- who coached Liverpool to the Champions League trophy in the 2018/19 season -- picked up in July the League Manager's Association manager of the year award. The Premier League award -- Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold won the young player gong on Friday -- is a cumulation of votes from the public combined with those of a panel of football experts.

## Halep Sets Up Final Date With Mertens

PRAGUE (Reuters) - Romanian top seed Simona Halep beat compatriot Irina-Camelia Begu in straight sets in the semi-finals of the Prague Open to set up a final with third seed Elise Mertens of Belgium. Halep was broken three times in the first set but managed to win the tiebreak before Begu, who finished her quarter-final match earlier in the day, ran out of steam as the reigning Wimbledon champion won 7-6(2) 6-3. Begu's quarter-final was suspended on Friday when she was leading Spaniard Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-2 0-1 and the match went the distance on Saturday with the Romanian winning 6-2 4-6 6-2 after a total of two hours and 40 minutes. Begu had spent more than seven hours on court at the tournament and the fatigue was starting to show with the 29-year-old taking a medical time out in the opening set which allowed Halep to refocus.

"I didn't play my best tennis but she was also tired... it was a good match," Halep said. "I'm really happy that I could win it. It's always tough to play against her, she's a great player. "She was playing really well at that point and she was kind of dominating the match. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad to play long matches because sometimes you get the rhythm, and sometimes you get tired." Earlier in the day, Mertens got the better of Kristyna Pliskova to win 7-5 7-6(4), saving seven of eight break points to advance. "It was a really close match, just a couple of points of difference," Mertens said. "We both served well, so it was difficult to break each other. "In the end, it was just one break difference in the first set and I think I managed it well at the end. In the second set, we were both winning our serve and although I made a couple of errors in the tiebreak, I stayed mentally tough."



# Dhoni Quits International Cricket

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni quit international cricket on Saturday, drawing curtains on an illustrious, trophy-laden career with a cryptic Instagram message. "Thanks a lot for your love and support throughout. From 1929 hrs consider me as Retired," he wrote on Instagram here with a video montage which had images from his 15-year international career. The message ended speculation around the international future of the enigmatic 39-year-old, who quit test cricket in 2014 and has not played for India since the team's semi-final exit at the 50-overs World Cup in July last year.

"It is the end of an era," Indian cricket board (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly said in a statement. "His leadership qualities have been something which will be hard to match, especially in the shorter format of the game. "Every good thing comes to an end and this has been an absolutely brilliant one," added Ganguly, himself a former India captain. BCCI secretary Jay Shah called Dhoni "one of the greats of the modern era". "I wish him all the very best for IPL and his future endeavours," Shah said, suggesting Dhoni would play in this year's Indian Premier League in the United Arab Emirates from Sept. 19. Dhoni burst onto the international scene in a one-dayer against Bangladesh in late 2004 as a long-haired wicketkeeper with spectacular power-hitting prowess.

## Lyon Stun Man City To Reach Champions League Semis

LISBON (AFP) - Moussa Dembele came off the bench to score two late goals as Lyon caused another Champions League sensation on Saturday, dumping out Pep Guardiola's Manchester City with a 3-1 quarter-final win in Lisbon. City had looked on course to come back and win the tie behind closed doors at the Estadio Jose Alvalade after Kevin De Bruyne's goal midway through the second half had cancelled out Maxwel Cornet's first-half opener. However, Dembele put Lyon back ahead in the 79th minute and then capitalized on a shocking miss by Raheem Sterling to clinch the victory three minutes from the end. Against all expectations, a team who finished seventh in the curtailed French season, and had played just two competitive games since early March, now find themselves through to a Champions League semi-final on Wednesday against Bayern Munich. That, surely, will be a step too far for Rudi Garcia's team but then again nobody expected them to eliminate Juventus in the last round, never mind knock out City here. "We are still in it, which means we have a great team," former Celtic striker Dembele told French television channel RMC Sport. "We are taking it game by game, not getting carried away. We will try to be ready for Bayern." Guardiola's team had been warned about Lyon, losing at home and then drawing away against the French club in last season's Champions League. But that was almost two years ago now and Lyon had lost several key players since then. This, a day after Bayern's 8-2 demolition of Barcelona, is a seismic shock and a hammer blow to the ambitions of City under Guardiola.



## Hamilton Takes Pole for Spanish GP

BARCELONA (AFP) - Lewis Hamilton claimed pole position for the Formula One Spanish Grand Prix on Saturday after pipping teammate and title rival Valtteri Bottas in a Mercedes qualifying one-two. Championship leader Hamilton took his fifth pole at the Barcelona track and the 92nd of his career in total after finishing 0.059sec ahead of Bottas, who is third in the drivers' standings. "I couldn't go quicker on my second lap, which I thought I could, but the first lap was a good job thankfully," said Hamilton. "I was here with my guys until 10 O'clock (2000 GMT) last night just looking all the details and how to improve because the Red Bull guys are super fast." Bottas said: "I knew it was going to be close with Lewis -- as always. The start will be my best chance." Spanish Grand Prix will be Hamilton's 150th front row start from a session that may have seen Mercedes enjoying their 'party' qualifying engine mode for the final time. It was the 'Black Arrows' record 68th front row lockout. Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who is second in the driver standings, 30 points behind six-time world champion Hamilton, qualified in third after finishing 0.708sec back. "We can be a bit closer in the race... it is hard to overtake around here but we're going to do everything we can to be close and make it difficult," Dutchman Verstappen said. Verstappen was ahead of the two Racing Points of Sergio Perez, back in action after missing two races with coronavirus, and Lance Stroll with Alex Albon taking sixth place in the second Red Bull. Carlos Sainz was seventh ahead of his McLaren team-mate Lando Norris, Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri.

