

Some 165 More Iranians Have Died From Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours While Some 2,247 New Cases of Infection Were Found, Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said Yesterday

IRAN NEWS

The Islamic Republic of Iran for The Third Time in Recent Weeks Reportedly Deported 400 Illegal Pakistani Immigrants on Monday As the Number of the Deported Pakistanis Reached 600

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Iran Slams Western Countries Excuses Over Fight Against Narcotics

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman for Iran's Anti-Narcotics Headquarters said that Western countries have fulfilled only 30 percent of their international counter-narcotics commitments under the pretext of US unilateral sanctions against Iran.

Amir Abbas Lotfi, director-general of the International Relations Office and spokesman for Iran's Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, said on Monday that hundreds of millions of dollars would be spent annually to block the country's eastern borders. He stated that under the pretext of sanctions, Western countries do not provide the Islamic Republic with any equipment and technical facilities that can deprive Iran of the need for physical care to protect its borders.

Noting that Iran has discovered about 80 percent of Afghanistan's opium for many years, Lotfi added: "Iran has discovered about 90% of opium, 26% of the heroin, and 48% of morphine found in the world."

The spokesman for Iran's Anti-Narcotics Headquarters stressed that the Islamic Republic's efforts have always been endorsed by the United Nations. **See Page 7**

U.S. Cannot Trigger Snapback Sanctions on Iran

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The United States is not entitled to force the reinstatement of sanctions on Iran via the so-called 'snapback' mechanism linked to an international nuclear deal, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell said.

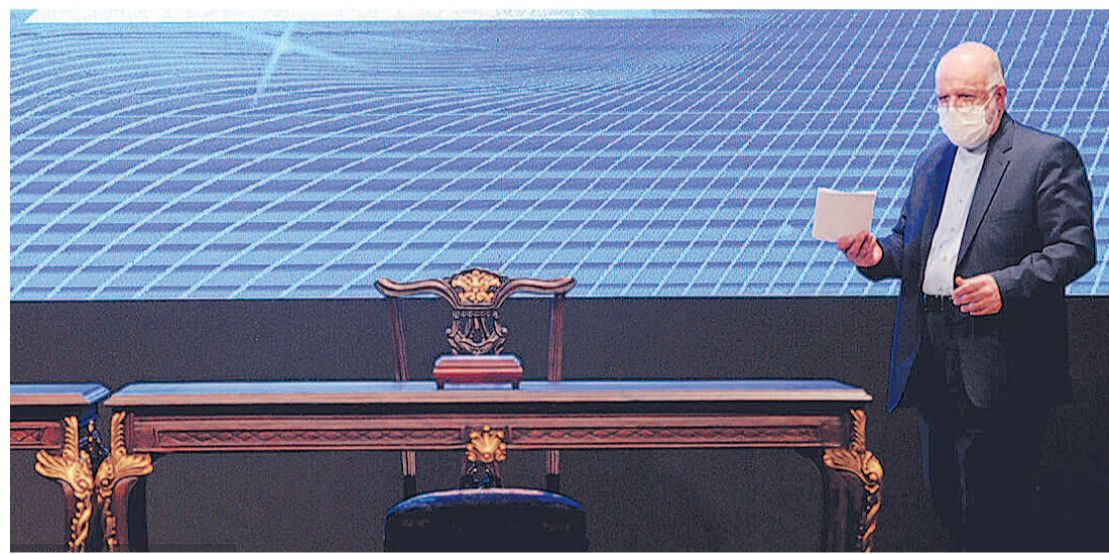
Since the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it cannot be considered a part of it, Josep Borrell spokesman said on Sunday. "Given that the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and has not participated in any JCPOA structures or activities subsequently, the U.S. cannot be considered as a JCPOA participant," a spokesperson for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said, according to DPA news agency.

"We, therefore, consider that the U.S. is not in a position to resort to mechanisms reserved for JCPOA participants such as the so-called snapback," Mr. Borrell's spokesman added.

The United States stepped up calls for the extension of UN arms embargo on Iran since April, with US President Donald Trump's administration threatening that it may seek to trigger a snapback of all sanctions on Iran if attempts to extend the arms embargo fail. However, the resolution calling for the extension of the embargo failed to attract enough votes at the UN Security Council on Friday, in what President Hassan Rouhani described as a humiliating defeat for the United States.

Following the UN Security Council defeat, Trump vowed to trigger the snapback mechanism to unilaterally reinstate UN sanctions on Tehran.

Oil Ministry Dishes Out 1.5b Euros In Oil Contracts to Domestic Firms



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Oil ministry has signed 13 contracts worth roughly €1.5 billion with 14 local firms to enhance and maintain oil production.

The deals were signed on Monday morning in a ceremony held in Tehran between the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) and the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), as employers, and 14 Iranian companies as contractors.

The total value of these contracts is more than €1.527 billion, and with the implementation of these contracts, 185,000 barrels will be added to the country's crude oil production capacity, SHANA reported.

These 13 contracts, which will be implemented in the five provinces of Khuzestan, Fars, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Bushehr and Hormozgan, entail 11 contracts by NISOC and two others by IOOC.

Accordingly, the contracts of Zilaei project and Chalingar and Garangan project were both signed with Global Petrotech Kish Company; Ramin project with Persia Oil and Gas Industry Development Company, Mansourabad project with Petro Iran Development Company, Siahmakan project with Pasargad Energy Development Company, Maroon 2, 5 and 6 projects with Petrotenco, Maroon 1 and 4 projects with North Drilling Company (Sina Energy Gostar Holding), Maroon 3 project with the Iran Offshore Engineering and Construction Company, Balaroud project jointly with the National Iranian Drilling Company and Jahanpars Engineering and Construction Company, Ahvaz 1 and 4 projects jointly with Qeshm Oil and Energy Industries and Maroon Karan.

The contract for Resalat Project of IOOC was signed jointly with the Iran offshore engineering and construction Company and the Intelligent Solutions Inc., and the Forouzan project was also signed jointly with Petropars and Mobin Sazeh Gostar. Addressing the ceremony, Zangeneh said that Iran is ahead of its neighbors in producing crude from joint oil and gas fields. Zangeneh said that Iran cannot wait for foreigners (foreign contractors) to develop its oilfields.

He said that one needs to compete in order to survive and more enhanced technology is needed in order to be able to compete.

"As the first step to this end, we interacted with universities so that we will be signing new contracts with universities over the next weeks to give a boost to production," the minister said.

He also said that the country can use the potential of the capital market to provide finance for the oil projects. Sanctions and its sponsors will go and Iran will continue to remain, Zangeneh further said.

"We have to create capacity as the power of a country does not rely on its reservoirs but on its production capacity," he added.

Zangeneh pointed out that if Iran cannot create capacity, it will not be able to retake its market with the lifting of sanctions. "We have to restore our capacity in less than three months once the sanctions are lifted," the minister said.

Meanwhile on the sidelines of the ceremony, Zangeneh said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had performed well in the oil market given the increase and stabilization of oil price in the market.

He told reporters: "The price of Brent crude oil has risen from about \$16 per barrel in May to \$45 and it is almost stabilized; this shows that OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) has performed well in this regard."

He added: "What will come next depends on market reactions. The outbreak of the coronavirus has affected the market. If the world economy recovers and production restarts, the imbalance between supply and demand will decrease and this will have a positive impact on prices."

British Spy's Account Sheds Light on Role in 1953 Iranian Coup

LONDON (The Guardian) - A first-hand account of Britain's role in the 1953 coup that overthrew the elected prime minister of Iran and restored the shah to power has been published for the first time.

The account by the MI6 officer who ran the operation describes how it took British intelligence years to persuade the U.S. to take part in the coup. Meanwhile, MI6 recruited agents and bribed members of Iran's parliament with banknotes transported in biscuit tins.

Together the MI6 and CIA even recruited Shah Reza Pahlavi's sister in an effort to persuade the reluctant monarch to back the coup to overthrow Mohammad Mossadegh.

"The plan would have involved seizure of key points in the city by what units we thought were loyal to the shah ... seizure of the radio station etc ... the classical plan," recalled Norman Darbyshire, the head of MI6's Persia station in Cyprus at the time of the coup. Britain's role in a pivotal moment in Iran's history left an enduring mark on Iranian perceptions of Britain, but details of the role of its spies have remained obscure.

Darbyshire gave his version of events in an off-record interview with the makers of Granada TV's 1985 film End of Empire: Iran. He refused to appear on camera, so the interview was not used directly in the program. **See Page 7**

Trump Has Committed Worst Crimes Against Iranian Nation

TEHRAN (MNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said that U.S. President Donald Trump has committed the 'worst crimes and hostilities' against the noble Iranian nation.

Speaking in a cabinet meeting on Sunday evening, Rouhani thanked efforts made by the Iranian Foreign Ministry in neutralizing U.S.' anti-Iranian efforts and reiterated that the US government is a bully and violator of international laws and regulations.

In this meeting, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expounded a comprehensive report on the humiliating failure of the United States in approving the resolution on extending Iran's arms embargo at the UN Security Council.

The current U.S President has committed the worst crimes against the noble nation of Iran, President Rouhani highlighted.

By withdrawing from Iran nuclear deal, JCPOA, and reimposing sanctions illegally, Trump administration has not only violated the rights of Iranian people but also violated the dignity of a collective agreement inked with several countries, he continued. **See Page 7**

Pakistan to Establish Markets at Joint Borders With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Pakistan's PM Advisor for Textile and Industry and Production Abdul Razak Dawood announced that his country is to establish markets at its joint borders with Iran.

As Pakistani media reported on Sunday, the official added that "The development of similar markets on the border with Iran is also on the agenda of the Islamabad government."

His remarks have been made on the verge of the ninth round of Iran-Pakistan joint trade committee meeting, which is to be held in the near future.

Lamenting about the U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran, Dawood said that the sanctions have slowed that mutual free trade between the two sides.

"... sanctions on Iran are an obstacle to the promotion of trade relations," he said and added no headway is being made on the independent trade agreement with Iran due to sanctions, Pakistani DunyaNews reported.

In a bid to strengthen bilateral relations and expand cooperation in the fields of trade and commerce, Iran and Pakistan have recently decided to hold new round of meetings of the Joint Trade Committee and the Joint Economic Commission. **See Page 7**

Tehran Calls for Boosting Trade Wit Colombo

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The Iranian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Hashem Ashjazadeh while congratulating President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on winning Sri Lanka's General Election, has called for strengthening of bilateral relations.

"Relying on the existing capacities and trade opportunities, I express the determination and readiness of Iran to strengthen cooperation with Sri Lanka in different aspects", he stressed in congratulatory messages.

Ambassador Ashjazadeh said that he was impressed by the election being held in a peaceful and orderly manner with a big voter turnout, manifesting democracy and political maturity of the country.

"I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your landslide victory and trust the ties between our two countries will be further promoted", he added.

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Khaji in Damascus to Meet With Syrian President, FM

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister's Senior Assistant for Special Political Affairs Ali Asghar Khaji arrived in the Syrian capital on Monday morning to meet President Bashar Assad and FM Walid Muallem.

As al-Manar reported, the Iranian official arrived in Damascus on Monday morning to meet and hold talks with the Syrian FM Walid Muallem and President Bashar Assad.

No further detail has been released about the purpose or the subjects of mutual talks.

UAE's Relationships With Zionists Not Legitimize Occupying Regime

TEHRAN (IP) - The Secretary of High Council for Human Rights, Ali Bagheri Kani said that establishing relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime will not lead to the legitimacy of the regime.

Ali Bagheri Kani on Monday about the UAE-Israel agreement, said: "The act of the UAE in Yemen was akin to the Zionist occupier's acts in Palestine."

Stating that Iran supports the Palestinian people because of its human rights-oriented policies, he added: "Palestine has the right to defend itself and preserve its territorial integrity and to have the rights of an independent state, and no one has the right to occupy its country."

"Every year, Iran honors those who are active in the field of human rights," he said. "Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi from Yemen, Martyred Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis



from Iraq, and Ramadan Abdullah from Palestine were the winners of this year's Lt. Gen. Soleimani's Award," Bagheri added.

Israel and the UAE agreed to normalize relations, US President Donald Trump said Thursday, in a move forestalling Israel's controversial plans to annex large swathes of the occupied West Bank.

The development marks only the third time an Arab nation has opened full diplomatic ties with Israel, and the Emirates is now the first Persian Gulf Arab state to do so. Egypt and Jordan also have diplomatic ties with Israel.

U.S. Unable to Build Consensus for Snapback

TEHRAN (MNA) – A former vice-president and lawmaker believes that the Trump administration is not able to build consensus to trigger the snapback mechanism against Iran.

Elham Amin Zadeh referred the recent failure of the US in extending arms embargo on Iran at Security Council, asserting, "According to Resolution 2231, all UN resolutions against Iran have now been suspended, and all current existing sanctions are unilateral sanctions of the US."

Seizing Iran's development and economic rights, United States is trying to follow its common scenario of using the United Nations as a tool to legitimize its illegal actions and to make some important countries accompany with it, she said and added that this is because its unilateral sanctions are generally illegal under international law.

"The United States is trying to use the trigger mechanism while due to its illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA, the case has nothing to do with Washington."

Elsewhere in her remarks, she answered to a question that if the United States would be successful in using the trigger mechanism, the former vice president for legal affairs said, "In light of what has happened in the United States such as illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA and violating the right of Black people, the country is politically and socially weakened, therefore the United States can no longer reach a consensus on the trigger mechanism in the Security Council."

Tehran Dismisses Claims of Arming Taliban

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has dismissed "baseless" claims by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Tehran arms the Taliban, saying the allegation seeks to deflect attention from the American assistance to Daesh in Afghanistan.

"The accusations leveled by the U.S. secretary of state amount to a type of blame game and an attempt at diverting the public opinion from Washington's instances of assistance to Daesh," Iran's new Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said Monday.

Khatibzadeh, a career diplomat, on Sunday took over from Abbas Mousavi who was appointed as Iran's ambassador to neighboring Azerbaijan.

In an interview with Radio Free Europe, Pompeo had accused Iran and Russia of arming the Taliban. "We know that the Russians have armed the Taliban in the past, right. We know that the Iranians continue to arm them today," he said.

Khatibzadeh said the U.S. has so far failed to provide any explanation for the nature of the helicopters that fly by NATO forces in Afghanistan to help out the Daesh terrorist group.

The United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 under the banner of following the September 11 attacks in order to wage a "war on terror" thousands of miles away from America's own borders. Khatibzadeh said, "What is going on in Afghanistan today is the result of U.S. warmongering and intervention in the country's affairs."

Iran Armed Forces Issue Cyber Defense Manifesto

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran has devised a manifesto outlining the "grand strategies" and frameworks defining its defensive performance in the face of menacing activity across the cyberspace.

The document was released under the title "The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Manifesto Concerning the International Laws Governing the Cyberspace," ISNA reported on Monday.

The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran is comprised of the Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and the Law Enforcement Force.

The document, the General Staff said, has been released in the light of the Armed Forces' duty towards the country's defense as well as the fact that the cyberworld has emerged as an entirely "new realm" across the field of defense and security. The document reminded that a great extent of the international legal principles applied to the cyber world too, such as equal entitlement to sovereignty and prohibition of resort to force and intrusive action.

The Armed Forces said it has honed its cyber defense prowess in line with the imperative of guarding the country's strategic military, economic, social, cultural, and political power.

The Islamic Republic's sovereignty over the country extends to "all components of the cyberspace too," and, therefore, any deliberate intrusion targeting the latter constitutes a violation of this sovereignty, the document read.

It cited any sanction as one such intrusive measure as it tramples upon the sovereignty of an independent country.

UAE to Suffer Severely For Normalizing Ties With Zionists



TEHRAN (MNA) – Secretary-General of the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada said that the United Arab Emirates will sustain severe damage for its normalizing ties and compromise with the Israeli regime.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in Tehran on Saturday in separate meetings with Naser Abu Sharif representative of the Islamic Jihad Movement and Khaled al-Qaddumi Head of Hamas's Office in Tehran.

In the meetings, Amir-Abdollahian pointed to the dire consequences of compromise with the Zionist regime and added, "Normalization of UAE's ties with the fictitious and usurping Zionist regime will not lead to peace and stability in the region, rather, it will increase the brutality and criminality of Zionists."

This strategic mistake is tantamount to turn back on the Palestinian cause and move away from unity and amity of the Islamic world in the face of the oppressed Palestinian people, he emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iranian Parliament Speaker's Special Aide for International Affairs reiterated, "Abu Dhabi's destructive and nonconstructive behavior in its friendship with occupiers of Holy Al-Quds has no justification and this country will suffer badly from its friendship with the Zionist regime."

Khaled al-Qaddumi Head of Hamas's Office in Tehran, for his part, pointed to UAE's secret relations with Zionists which had already begun and added, "The agreement made between UAE and the Zionist regime was not surprising and its expression by US President Trump is a media and propaganda move for the upcoming US Presidential Election."

Naser Abu Sharif representative of Islamic Jihad Movement in Tehran also termed the normalization of ties between UAE and Israel as an American-Zionist plan and added, "The aftermath of US president's blatant defeat in the West Asia as well as service of Arab rulers in line with safeguarding interests of the U.S. and the Zionist regime is a way to move out of the current situation for giving prestige to the Global Arrogance."

In this meeting, representatives of Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas movements expressed their thanks to the unsparing support of Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian people and government in supporting Palestinian cause and highlighted that the Palestinian nation will not be affected by the treacherous acts and will continue the path of Resistance Front with full power.

UAE Summons Iran's Chargé d'Affaires

TEHRAN (MNA) – The UAE summoned Iran's chargé d'affaires to Abu Dhabi on Sunday and criticized President Rouhani's remarks on Israeli-UAE relations.

The UAE Foreign Ministry criticized Rouhani's remarks regarding the normalization of Abu Dhabi's relations with the Zionist regime and summoned the Chargé d'Affaires of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Sunday, Al Mayadeen reported.

The report added that the UAE Foreign Ministry has voiced its protest to the Iranian charge d'affaires.

The UAE Foreign Ministry issued a statement in this regard and claimed that the remarks of the Iranian President are provocative and have dangerous consequences for the security and stability of the region.

UAE claimed that the peace agreement between the UAE and Israel is considered an internal issue and that Iran's position is not in the interest of regional stability.

Diplomats Discuss Promotion of Iran-Afghanistan Ties

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's ambassador to Kabul and Afghanistan's top diplomat weighed plans for the expansion of political, economic and cultural relations between the two neighbors.

In a meeting in Kabul, the Iranian envoy, Bahador Aminian, and caretaker of the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan Hanif Atmar discussed a broad range of issues, including ways to enhance the economic, political and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

They also talked about the regional consensus on the peace process in Afghanistan, release of inmates held

by the Kabul government and the Taliban, reduction of tensions and establishment of an immediate ceasefire, start of talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, and constant support for the Islamic Republic system in Afghanistan.

In the meeting, the Iranian ambassador reaffirmed Tehran's support for the Afghan peace process.

Aminian also highlighted the importance of a railroad route connecting Iran's Khaf to Afghanistan's Herat, and pointed to the opportunities available for closer cooperation between the two states.

Islamic Revolution Front on Victory Path

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Despite the growing concord among the arrogant powers, the Islamic Revolution front is gaining victories while the Greta Satan is in the position of weakness, the deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said.

Addressing a military ceremony in Iran's southern city of Shiraz on Monday, Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said the "evils and arrogant powers" in the world have joined hands and their growing unity is becoming more blatant every day.

However, he added, it is obvious that the righteous front of the Islamic Revolution is in the position of power and victory, while the wrong front of the Great Satan is in the position of failure and weakness.

In a speech in November 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei branded the U.S. government as the loser of confrontation with the Islamic Republic over the past 40 years, saying the fact in confrontation between the US and Iran is that "the victorious side in this challenge has been the Islamic Republic of Iran and the loser has been the US."

Trump Needs Negotiation With Iran

TEHRAN (IP) – U.S. President Donald Trump needs to negotiate with Iran to win the upcoming presidential election, a member of the Iranian parliament's presiding board said.

Speaking on the sidelines of an open session of the parliament on Sunday, Ahmad Amirabadi-Farahani, elaborated on the U.S.' aim to activate trigger mechanism.

The U.S. President tries to establish a relationship with Iran in the coming months to influence Americans' minds and wins the upcoming election, he said.

The U.S. is not able to activate the trigger mechanism, and they have failed in creating international consensus

in this regard, added Amirabadi-Farahani.

"What we see today is the result of Iran's resistance, and it proves Iran's proper situation and the presence of the resistance groups in the region," he said.

The MP went on to say that although the U.S. sanctions exerted pressure on Iran, the Americans have not achieved their goal, adding: "It shows that Iran's economic foundation is so robust and the financial situation is getting better soon."

"I do not believe that they even think about activating trigger mechanism since their attitude toward Iran affects voters' opinion," he noted.

U.S. Sanctions Not Affect Iran's Import of Coronavirus Vaccine

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

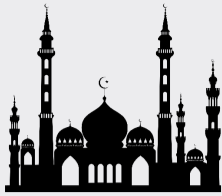
TEHRAN - There are financial facilities in Iran to import vaccine and sanctions will not affect the import; however, the Russian coronavirus vaccine has not proved to be credible to be imported to Iran, said head of Health Economy Commission of Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

"Producing biological products is very sensitive issue since they could have unpredictable effects, and based on Iran's regulations, imported medicines should be approved by international authorities such as EMEA or FDA," said Nasser Riahi said.

"Many international organizations have doubt about Russian vaccine, so it will not be imported to the country unless it is approved by from WHO, FDA or EMEA," Riahi said.

"Rich countries have already invested in pre-sales of the vaccine; meanwhile, domestic Iranian knowledge based companies are working on developing coronavirus vaccine," he added.

The U.S. has denied that its sanctions are restricting Iran from import of medical supplies, pointing to an exemption for humanitarian goods. In turn, Iran said local companies find it difficult to process payments with banks that tend to avoid risks by breaking U.S. rules within the sanctions.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:07
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:57
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:27

94. Whoever works any act of righteousness and has faith, - His endeavour will not be rejected: We shall record it in his favour.
95. But there is a ban on any population which We have destroyed: that they shall not return, Surah 21. The Prophets (94 - 95)

Iran's Exports to UAE Up 16% Growth

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The chairman of Iran-UAE Joint Chamber of Commerce Farshid Farzanegan says "Iran's exports to the United Arab Emirates increased by 16% in the first four months of the year.

Speaking to ILNA news agency, the Iranian official added that despite economic problems and the spread of the coronavirus, the UAE was the only country to which Iran's exports increased.

"Iran's exports to the UAE were \$ 4.5 billion and our imports from this country were \$ 8.9 billion, in other words, the volume of trade between the two countries is \$ 13.4 billion."

Referring to the recent agreement between Israel and UAE, he confirmed "Economic relations must be separate from political issues; due to sanctions, we do not have many options for trade exchanges, and Turkey and the UAE are two countries where Iranian traders have maintained their activities."

Statistics indicated that export of products from Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Arab Emirates from March 21 to June 22, 2020 increased about 40% in terms of volume as compared to the same period of last year and hit from about 2.4 million tons to 3.4 million tons.

Farzanegan noted that exports of Iran's agro products to the UAE is very important and many powerful traders are active in this field whose trade relations with the



UAE dates back to over 40 years and they have kept their businesses alive despite ups and downs in political relations of both states.

He then pointed to the major imported or exported goods between both countries, saying that till last year, petrochemical materials, mineral materials, industrial products, industrial machineries and agro products have been the major export items of Iran to the UAE and graphite electrodes have been the major UAE's exports to Iran as import of this commodity from other countries except the UAE is impossible for Iran.

Farzanegan also pointed to the performance of the forex shops in the UAE, reiterating that there is currently no problem regarding the forex shops in the UAE and the money transactions in this country is done much faster than other countries in the Persian Gulf and even in Oman.

He noted that the UAE is not the vital vein for arrival of money into the country but the country is definitely a gateway for it, reiterating that all re-exports and re-imports are done through the UAE because the UAE has been turned into a hub in the region in terms of imports and exports.

Virtual Exhibition on Auto-Part Industry to Be Unveiled Soon



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Industry Minister and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mr. Amir Bayat announced organizing and unveiling a virtual exhibition for displaying 250 items of auto-parts which are needed for automakers.

Addressing the ceremony for signing MoU for granting facilities between IRAN KHODRO Industrial Group and Bank Mellat, Mr. Bayat said that the virtual exhibition is to display the parts which are needed by the auto industry with their full details in order that the knowledge-based companies and auto-part makers with necessary convergence can take action for producing those parts. He added that the exhibition can also pave the ground for expanding relation between auto-parts makers and other industrial and knowledge-based companies more than ever.

Bayat also expressed hope that signing the MoU can be the base for surge in production in the auto-part industry, and asked the CEO of Bank Mellat to cooperate with auto-part makers on granting facilities.

According to the signed MoU between IRAN KHODRO Industrial Group and Bank Mellat, some 1,000b tomans are to be granted to the auto-part makers for indigenizing and manufacturing auto-parts.

Our Goal, to Create Job Opportunities for Iranian Contractors



TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for Development and Engineering Affairs Reza Dehqan said that the country's oil industry goal lies in creating job opportunities for Iranian contractors.

Speaking at a ceremony for signing 13 contracts worth € 1.5 billion with Iranian contractors within to enhance and maintain oil production project, Dehqan stated: "The initial idea of the plan is to restore and increase oil production".

This plan was approved by the board of directors of the NIOC in 2016. It is sometimes said that this plan was put on the agenda when the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Since agreements for the other Iranian Petroleum Contract (IPC) were no longer valid, the plan came into practice.

Dehqan stressed that 33 projects to maintain and increase oil production are in three stages, adding today, the total value of 13 contracts is around € 1527 million, and the estimated time for most of these contracts is 2 years.

He went on to say: "We have predicted that with the implementation of these 13 contracts, 185 thousand barrels will be added to the country's oil production capacity."

Deputy Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for Development and Engineering Affairs concluded: "Our forecast is to reach 80% of the share of domestic production as we approach the first phase contracts. 4% of each contract is allocated to charitable activities."

Crude Steel Production Up 9% in Four Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production volume of crude steel in the country increased nine percent in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to July 22).

According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, the production volume of crude steel registered over nine percent hike in the first four months of the current year.

In this period, steel productions' volume also recorded a five percent growth, the industry ministry added.

Accordingly, 9,483,000 tons of crude steel [including billet, bloom and slab] were produced in the first four months of the current year, the rate of which stood at 8,683,000 tons in the first four months of the last Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to July 22, 2019).

Also, leading domestic steelmakers produced 7,257,000 tons of various types of steel products [including beam, rebar, types of steel sheets, etc.] in the first four months of the current year.

Based on the statistics of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), production volume of sponge iron hit from 9,468,000 tons in the first four months of the last year to 10,581,000 tons in the first four months of the current year, showing a 12 percent hike.

Foreigners Interested in Co-Sponsoring Exhibits on Antiquities With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Minister for Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Mohammad Hossein Talebian said on Monday that foreigners are interested in co-sponsoring exhibits on antiquities with Iran.

Talebian made the remarks in an interview with IRNA. He said that Iran has a record of organizing joint exhibitions with other countries and that there are some historical works of Iran in other countries and vice versa, so that Iran is willing to continue with such a tradition, but, the period of coronavirus outbreak has disrupted Iranian routine work of co-sponsoring exhibits worldwide.

Giving example, he said that Germany is interested in holding joint exhibitions related to salt works with Iran, adding that Germany has artifacts in salt works and Iran

has salt men in Zanjan province.

The time for holding such joint exhibitions is not suitable amid coronavirus pandemic, he said.

Efforts have been made in this regard, and we hope to co-sponsor exhibitions after coronavirus outbreak ends, Talebian added.

In the Iranian salt mine of Chehrabad, in the province of Zanjan, a window has opened on prehistoric mining: in 1994, 2004 and 2005, workers and archaeologists discovered the mummified remains of five miners who had been killed in a mining accident; a disaster for the victims, but a sensation for modern archaeology.

Since 2010 an international team has been studying this mine, whose operation dated back to the Achaemenids dynasty (6th to 4th century BC) and Sassanids Empire (4th to 6th century AD).

Necessary Bases Available for Afghan Investors in Chabahar

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of Iran's Chabahar Free Zone Organization (CFZO) said necessary bases are provided for the successful Afghan businessmen for investment in Chabahar port.

Speaking in a meeting with an Afghan economic and political delegation held in the southeastern port city of Chabahar on Sunday, Abdolrahim Kordi underlined Chabahar port's potentials and capacities for Afghanistan and noted that joining of Chabahar port to Iran's free trade zones has made it even more competitive among the country's ports.

"The infrastructure of the port and the free zone in Chabahar has been prepared and large and small projects have been implemented, and this promises the development and prosperity and expansion of relations with the neighbors," Kordi said.

According to the official, Chabahar Free Zone and the optimal use of the transit opportunities in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, where the port lies, could play a special role in Afghanistan's economic development.

Welcoming the presence of the Afghan delegation, Kordi expressed his company's readiness for cooperation with the Afghan companies willing to invest in Chabahar.

Kordi pointed out that the development of Afghanistan is considered the development of Iran and Sistan-Baluchestan Province and there is always a desire and interest from both sides to collaborate in Chabahar port.

"With the approval of the Sistan Free Zone, we will see the realization of the development and economic goals of both Iran and Afghanistan," he stressed.

He further emphasized that all legal facilities and capacities are available for Afghan investors, as there are currently about 200 registered Afghan companies operating in Chabahar, and this opportunity can be used for the development of the two countries.

Iran Earns over \$152m for Exporting Sweet, Bread

TEHRAN (MNA) - The spokesman of Iran's Customs Administration said that more than \$152 million worth of sweets and bread has been exported to more than 56 countries in the first 4 months of the current year (March 20-July 21).

Stating that Iran is one of the powerful rivals in the world in the field of the Confectionery and chocolate industry, Seyyed Ruhollah Latifi announced that in the first 4 months of the current year, Iran has exported more than \$58,009,142 million of Iranian sweets and chocolates to more than 38 countries.

Also, at the same time 106,336 tons of dry bread, crumbs, biscuits, wafers, and other cereal products worth \$94,883,421 million have been exported to more than 53 countries, he added. He also reported that Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are Iran's main sweet and bread export destinations.

According to Latifi, Iranian bread, sweets, and chocolates are being exported to Norway, Netherlands, Australia, Germany, Austria, Canada, Malaysia, Japan, Poland, Djibouti, Armenia, Russia, Pakistan, Kuwait, Ivory Coast, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, Switzerland, China, Bahrain, Iraq, Tajikistan, Somalia, Yemen, UAE, Afghanistan, Belarus, Niger, Oman and etc.

Being in accordance with international standards and technical knowledge, the machines in Iranian firms are producing desirable products from high-quality raw materials, he added.

Iran After Local Oil Supplying For Economic Opening

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman for the Iranian parliament's presiding board said with the economic opening plan, it seeks to supply oil locally.

Speaking on the sidelines of the open session of the parliament, Mohammad-Hossein Farhangi stated that one of the government's plans for economic opening, along with other solutions, is to supply oil locally.

Farhangi also noted that the necessary permissions for offering oil to people have been received. He concluded that in the recent budget law, the government has been proposed to supply oil domestically, which means the private sector can take advantage of using crude oil.

Earlier, Iran's Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohammad Nahavandian told Iran Press that the economic opening plan coincided with the introduction of the domestic oil sales plan, which is only a small part of the government's economic plans.

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."

Japanese Ship Involved in Mauritius Oil Spill Breaks Apart

TOKYO (Reuters) - A Japanese bulk carrier that ran aground on a reef in Mauritius last month threatening a marine ecological disaster around the Indian Ocean island has broken apart, authorities said.

The condition of the MV Wakashio was worsening early on Saturday and it split by the afternoon, the Mauritius National Crisis Committee said. "At around 4.30pm, a major detachment of the vessel's forward section was observed," it said in a statement. "On the basis of the experts' advice, the towing plan is being implemented."

The vessel struck a coral reef on July 25, spilling about 1,000 tonnes of fuel oil and endangering corals, fish and other marine life in what some scientists have called the country's worst ecological disaster.



New Zealand Coalition Partner Calls for Vote Delay

WELLINGTON (Reuters) - New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters called on Sunday for a delay to the planned September general election, given an abrupt reappearance of COVID-19 in the country, increasing pressure on Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to postpone the vote.

Last week's resurgence of the infections in Auckland - after the country had been free of infections of the new coronavirus for 102 days - was compromising the ability to hold a "free and fair election" on Sept. 19, Peters, the leader of the New Zealand First party, wrote in a letter to Ardern. Peters, who delivered government to Ardern's Labour party through a coalition deal after a 2017 election failed to result in a majority for the National or Labor parties, suggested Oct. 17 and Nov. 21 as alternative dates.



Deadly Gun and Bomb Attack in Mogadishu



MOGADISHU (Dispatches) - At least five people were killed in a gun and bomb attack by suspected Al-Shabaab fighters on an upscale beachfront hotel in Somalia's capital on Sunday, officials and witnesses said.

Security forces were struggling to regain control of the Elite Hotel in the Lido beach area more than an hour after the assault began, and the assailants appeared to have taken hostages, government security official Ahmed Omar told AFP. "There is still sporadic gunfire and the initial information we have received indicates five people died and more than 10 others were wounded," he said.

"The death toll can increase because the blast was massive and there is a hostage situation involved." Aamin Ambulance, a Mogadishu-based private service, reported that at least 28 people were wounded.

Witnesses confirmed that the attack began with a heavy explosion and reported that people were running from the area as gunfire could be heard from the hotel, which is frequented by government officials. "The blast was very heavy and I could see smoke in the area. There is chaos and people are fleeing from nearby buildings," said witness Ali Sayid Adan.

The dead included at least one government official: Abdirasak Abdi, who worked at the information ministry, said his colleague Hussein Ali. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but it was similar to others carried out by the Al-Shabaab jihadist group, which is affiliated to Al-Qaeda.

Somalia plunged into chaos after the 1991 overthrow of then-President Siad Barre's military regime, leading to years of clan warfare followed by the rise of Al-Shabaab which once controlled large parts of the country and Mogadishu.

Al-Shabaab was driven out of the capital in 2011, but its militants continue to wage war against the government, carrying out regular attacks.

Last week four Shabaab fighters held in Mogadishu's central prison were killed in an intense shootout with security forces after they somehow managed to get their hands on weapons within the facility.

Right-Wing Groups Clash With Counter Protesters in Several U.S. States

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Right wing demonstrators fought with leftist counterprotesters in Georgia, Michigan and Oregon on Saturday drawing in riot police and SWAT teams.

Groups ranging from an anti-government patriot group in Portland, Oregon to alt-right Proud Boys in Kalamazoo, Michigan battled anti-fascists and Black Lives Matter activists as months of anti-racism protests increasingly pitted Americans against one another.

Several dozen demonstrators, many armed and carrying Confederate battle flags, staged a rally in the Atlanta suburb of Stone Mountain next to a park famed for its giant monument to leaders of the breakaway slave-holding states.

A mix of militia members, Confederate followers and supporters of President Donald Trump faced off against more than a hundred left-wing protesters, some armed, many carrying signs or wearing T-shirts supporting Black Lives Matter.

After hours of shouting, and the burning of a Confederate flag, the protest devolved into scuffles and fist fights, drawing in police backed by a SWAT team.

Democrats Step Up Pressure Against U.S. Postal Cuts

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Democrats stepped up pressure on Sunday against a cost-cutting campaign by President Donald Trump's appointed Postal Service chief that they fear will hold up mail-in ballots in November's election, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling lawmakers back and several states considering legal action.

Top Democrats in Congress called on Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and another top postal official to testify this month at a hearing on a wave of cuts that has slowed mail delivery across the country, alarming lawmakers ahead of the Nov. 3 election when up to half of U.S. voters could cast ballots by mail.

Democrats have accused Trump, who is trailing presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden in opinion polls, of trying to hamstring the cash-strapped Postal Service to suppress mail-in voting.

Trump has repeatedly and without evidence said that a surge in mail-in voting would lead to fraud. Voting by mail is nothing new in the United States, as one in four voters cast ballots that way in 2016.

Several Democratic state attorneys general told Reuters they were in discussions about potential legal action to stop the Postal Service changes that could affect the election outcome.

"It is outrageous that Donald Trump would attempt to undermine the U.S. Postal Service for electoral gain," Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy told Reuters in a telephone interview, adding that the Republican president's actions raised constitutional, regulatory and procedural questions.

Healy added that counterparts in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, North Carolina, Washington and other states were conferring. North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein declined to say how many states were participating in the legal discussions, adding that North Carolina residents could request ballots now and general ballots would be sent to voters starting on Sept. 4.

"There are many states that share this concern about what the president and the postmaster general are doing to the Postal Service, and are reviewing all legal options available to us to protect the integrity of these elections," Stein told Reuters.

Pelosi, the country's top elected Democrat, said on Sunday she was calling the Democratic-controlled House back to Washington later this week to vote on legislation to protect the Postal Service from what she called Trump's "campaign to sabotage the election by manipulating the Postal Service to disenfranchise voters."



Protesters Pack Belarus Capital After Russia Says Military Help Available

MINSK (Reuters) - Belarusians chanting "Step down!" filled the center of the capital Minsk on Sunday in the biggest protest so far against longtime president Alexander Lukashenko's re-election a week ago after Russia said it would offer him military help if necessary.

There was no visible police presence at the protest, which attracted around 200,000 people, a Reuters reporter estimated. At least two protesters have died and thousands have been detained in a crackdown since last Sunday's vote.

The atmosphere was celebratory, with people carrying the red and white flags used in Belarus after the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union before Lukashenko restored the Soviet version four years later.

They called out, "Long live Belarus" and "We won't forget or forgive".

Opponents of Lukashenko, in power for 26 years, say the vote was rigged to disguise the fact that he has lost public support. He denies losing, citing official results that gave him just over 80% of the vote.

The Kremlin said Russian President Vladimir Putin had told Lukashenko Moscow was ready to assist Belarus in accordance with a collective military pact if necessary and that external pressure was being applied to the country.

It did not say where from. Shortly before the opposition protest, there was tight security as Lukashenko's supporters gathered in central Minsk for the first time since the election to watch him give a fiery speech.

Lukashenko said NATO tanks and planes had been deployed 15 minutes from the Belarusian border. NATO said it was closely monitoring the situation in Belarus, but that there was no military build-up at the country's western border.

Lukashenko, who has alleged a foreign-backed plot to topple him, said Belarus was under pressure.

"NATO troops are at our gates. Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and our native Ukraine are ordering us to hold new elections," he said, adding that Belarus would "die as a state" if new polls were held.

"I have never betrayed you and will never do so," he said.



Biggest Thai Protest in Years Puts Pressure on Gov't

BANGKOK (Reuters) - More than 10,000 Thai protesters chanting "down with dictatorship" and "the country belongs to the people" rallied in Bangkok on Sunday in by far the biggest anti-government demonstration since a 2014 coup.

There were cheers for student calls to curb the monarchy's powers - once a taboo subject - as well as demands for the departure of former junta leader Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a new constitution and an end to the harassment of opposition activists.

Students have led protests almost daily for the past month, but Sunday's demonstration drew a broader crowd in the Southeast Asian country, which has experienced decades of protests punctuated by military coups.

"We want a new election and a new parliament from the people," student activist Patsalawalee Tanakitwiboonpon, 24, told the crowd. "Lastly, our dream is to have a monarchy which is truly under the constitution." Organisers of the Free People movement and police said there were over 10,000 people at the protest.

"The prime minister sends his concern to officials and protesters to avoid violence," Traisulee Traisoranakul, a government spokeswoman, told reporters. She said Prayuth had also ordered the cabinet to take steps to build understanding between generations.

There was no immediate comment from the Royal Palace.

Prayuth won elections last year that the opposition says were held under rules to ensure that he kept power. The most vocal opposition party was subsequently banned.

Anger has further been fuelled by accusations of corruption, the arrest of some student leaders over earlier protests and the economic fallout from the coronavirus epidemic.

"We are seeing a shift in strategy of the youth-led movement becoming more inclusive," said Titipol Phakdeewanich, dean of political science at Ubon Ratchathani University, citing their emphasis on the economy as well as politics.

Turkey Slams French-Greek Cypriot Defense Deal

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's vice president on Sunday criticized newly announced defense cooperation between France and the Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus.

"It is unacceptable under any circumstances that France organizes joint exercises with the Greek Cypriot administration and deploys its military aircraft to the island contrary to the 1959-60 agreements," Fuat Oktay said on Twitter.

"It is essential for France not to seek adventure in Cyprus-related matters, and act much more responsibly."

On Saturday, it was announced that a 2017 defense cooperation agreement between Southern Cyprus and France had entered into force this Aug. 1.

Oktay stressed that it is essential that international circles, especially the EU, take a stand against the "spoiled, aggressive and unlawful attitudes" of France in the region.

"No attempt contrary of Turkey and the TRNC [Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus] has a chance of succeeding in the Eastern Mediterranean," he said.

He underlined that Turkey will continue standing with the Turkish Cypriots to provide unconditional support to their just and legitimate struggle as well as "resolutely" continue the exploration within its jurisdiction area with the drill ship Yavuz.

Turkey on Saturday issued a new alert announcing that its drill ship Yavuz will continue its work exploring for energy resources off the island of Cyprus. The international maritime alert or Navtex said that the drill ship will operate between Aug. 18 and Sept. 15 along with three other vessels in the Eastern Mediterranean, southwest of Cyprus.

On Saturday, referring to the defense pact, the Turkish Foreign Ministry in a statement said that the Greek Cypriot administration does not represent the Turkish Cypriots or the island as a whole and so is not authorized to sign the agreement.

The pact also poses a risk of disturbing efforts towards stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean, it added.



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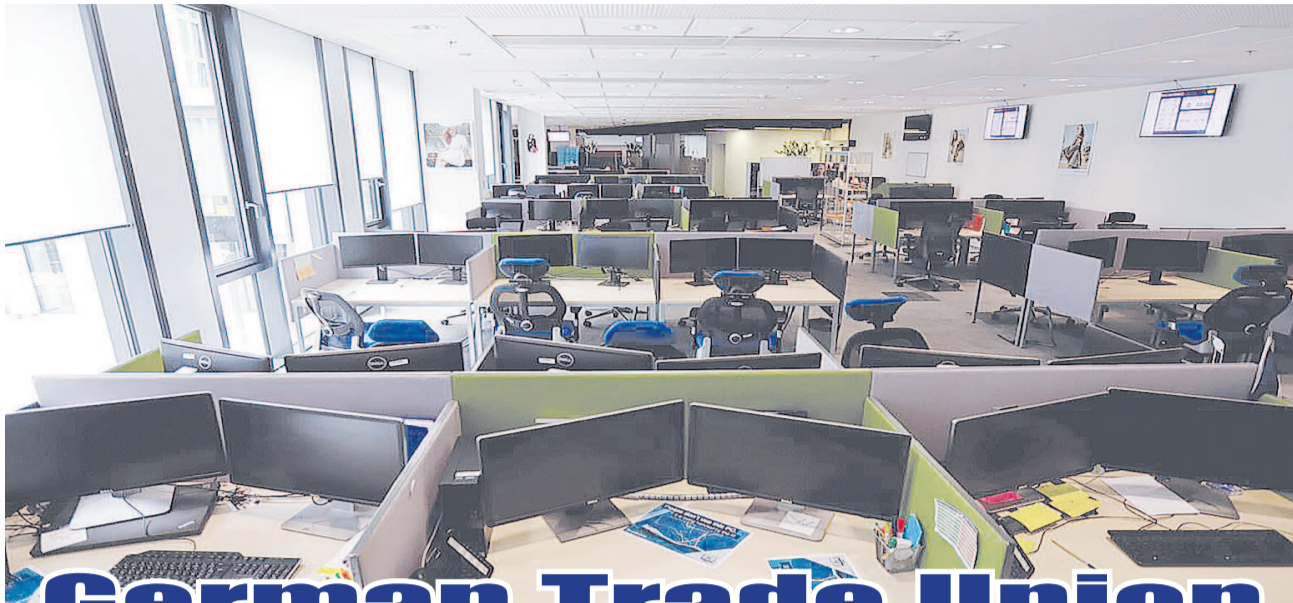
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Saudi Inflation Jumps to 6.1% After VAT Increase

DUBAI (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia's consumer price index jumped 6.1% in July compared with a year earlier, boosted by a tripling of value-added tax, official data showed on Sunday. The inflation rate in June was 0.5%, the smallest annual increase since January, before the VAT increase to 15% from 5% came into effect on July 1. The jump in annual inflation reflected price increases in most categories, the General Authority for Statistics said. Food and transport were major contributors, rising by 14.6% and 7.3% respectively.



German Trade Union Backs Four-Day Week

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's largest trade union, IG Metall, proposed negotiating for a move to a four-day week to help secure jobs against the economic fallout from the coronavirus crisis and structural shifts in the automobile industry.

IG Metall, which represents 2.3 million employees in the metal working and electrical sectors, often makes demands that set benchmarks for wage negotiations in those industries and beyond.

"The four-day week... could make it possible to keep industrial jobs instead of scrapping them," its leader Joerg Hofman told the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily.

The coronavirus crisis has put some 300,000 jobs at risk in Germany's metal and electrical industry, an IG Metall board member said last month.

The gradual switch to electric cars also threatens tens of thousands of engine and gearbox manufacturing jobs in Germany. Hofman said that, if companies agreed to cut working time, employees should not necessarily see their salary cut by the same amount or they would not be able to afford to work fewer hours.

He said companies had an interest in cutting hours rather than laying-off staff, as this would allow them to retain skilled workers and save redundancy costs.

Hofman also called on the government to extend short-time working benefits that have helped cushion the blow of the pandemic to 24 months from a current maximum of 21 months.

Short-time work is a form of state aid that allows employers to switch employees to shorter working hours during an economic downturn to keep them on the payroll.

About 5.6 million Germans currently benefit from the scheme, according to the Ifo research institute.

World Economy to See Worst Contraction in 2020

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Steel demand is expected to decline significantly in 2020-21 in line with a projected contraction in the global economy due to the impact of coronavirus pandemic, Tata Steel has said in its annual report.

Most of the steel producing regions are expected to witness a decline in crude steel output due to production cuts amidst ongoing lockdowns, Tata Steel said.

The global economic growth is expected to see a contraction of over 3 percent in 2020, Tata Steel Chairman N Chandrasekaran said terming the slump as the "worst contraction" since the 1930s.

A contraction in the global GDP is not at all a good sign for the global steel sector as steel demand is positively correlated with the economic growth.

"Global GDP growth eased to 2.9 percent in 2019, against an initial growth projection of 3.5 percent... As we look ahead, it is important to gauge COVID-19's unprecedented impact on the global economy. It is expected that global growth will contract by over 3 percent in 2020, the worst contraction since the 1930's," Chandrasekaran said in the Annual Report for 2019-20.

Chandrasekaran also said that this is for the first time since the Great Depression, that both advanced and developing economies are in recession together.

The impact of the slowing economy was also felt in the



Tata Steel's CEO and MD T V Narendran, and Executive Director and CFO Koushik Chatterjee said FY2020 was undoubtedly a challenging year not just for the company but for most businesses across the globe.

Almost all countries faced a slowdown in economic growth amidst rising trade tensions and policy uncertainties. This had its bearing on the steel industry as well, in terms of weak demand and falling steel prices.

Making matters worse, the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020 brought global economic activities to a near standstill as nationwide lockdowns and social distancing norms were imposed to contain the spread in the affected countries.

global steel sector. Global crude steel production reached 1,870 million ton (MT) in 2019, registering a more modest growth of 3.4 percent in 2019 against 4.6 percent in 2018, he said.

In India also, he said, the growth slowed to 4.2 percent in FY 2019-20 against an initial growth projection of 7.5 percent in the beginning of the year.

The domestic steel sector registered a stark easing of growth to 1.8 percent in 2019 compared to 7.7 percent growth in the previous year.

The country was just beginning to show signs of coming out of a protracted slowdown that began in early 2018 when COVID-19 arrived, Chandrasekaran added.

Mexico Central Bank Member Eyes U-Shaped Economic Recovery

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic is more likely to be U-shaped than V-shaped, a Mexican central bank board

member said on Friday, giving a contrasting view to the predictions of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

"It's difficult to expect a V-shaped recovery. ... Rather, it could be a U-shaped recovery. That's what I think could happen," board member Javier Guzman said in a Mexican radio interview.

Guzman said he also did not rule out a W-shaped recovery, in the event that further coronavirus outbreaks forced businesses to once again go into lockdown.

Lopez Obrador has predicted a V-shaped recovery in Latin America's second-largest economy, which is forecast to shrink as much as 10% or more this year.

Guzman said he expected inflation would reach the Bank of Mexico's 3% target rate in the second half of 2021, after an increase in prices this year.

The central bank on Thursday cut its key interest rate by 50 basis points to 4.5%, its lowest level in four years, but showed signs that the pace of cuts could slow.

In a separate interview, Bank of Mexico Governor Alejandro Diaz de Leon suggested the pace of reductions might in fact ease if inflationary pressures persist.

"If the factors that have pressured inflation ease more quickly that opens space (for monetary policy), if those factors increase and continue to pressure inflation upwards there will be less space," said Diaz de Leon.

"Clearly as you lower (rates) you naturally have less space," said Diaz de Leon.

Turkey Vows to Extend Hunt for Gas in East Mediterranean

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey said it plans to extend its search for gas in a disputed area of the eastern Mediterranean, despite EU calls to defuse a crisis that has seen tensions soar with other countries in the region.

The navy said in a statement issued late Saturday that the drill ship Yavuz, which has been based off Cyprus for the past few months, will explore off the southwestern coast of the island from August 18 to September 15.

Turkey's actions in the eastern Mediterranean have put it at loggerheads with its uneasy NATO ally Greece and the rest of the EU, with France announcing last week it would bolster its presence in the region in support of Athens.

The EU has repeatedly called on Ankara to halt its energy exploration off Cyprus, arguing that the drilling is illegal because it infringes on the island's exclusive economic zone.

But Turkey remains steadfast, saying it has a right to search for oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean, where regional nations are racing for riches after the discovery of large energy deposits.

"We strongly advise against going to the search area," the Turkish navy warned in its statement.

Last week, Ankara sent the seismic research vessel Oruc Reis, escorted by warships, to an area claimed by Greece, triggering the ire of Athens and the EU.

On Friday, EU foreign ministers voiced solidarity with Greece and called for a de-escalation of the crisis.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Saturday that Ankara was ready for dialogue but insisted: "We will not back down in the face of sanctions and threats."

The defense ministry meanwhile published photographs of naval maneuvers in the eastern Mediterranean, showing warships escorting another seismic research vessel, the Barbaros Hayrettin Pasa.

Algeria Turns to Islamic Finance to Fix Economy



ALGIERS (Dispatches) - Algeria has launched Islamic finance products in a bid to attract money from the informal market, but bankers warn it will take more than this to fix the country's struggling economy.

Falling oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic have battered the North African country, triggering alarm bells among officials and experts.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast that Algeria's economy would shrink 5.2% this year.

Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad has warned of an "unprecedented economic situation" and experts have estimated unemployment may near 15%.

In Algeria, Africa's largest nation and home to 43 million people, most transactions are done in cash circulating outside the formal banking sector, said professor Mohamed Boudjelal, an expert on Islamic finance.

Many Algerians "turn their nose up" at conventional banking, Boudjelal said. Some Muslims believe that the traditional banking system is incompatible with their faith. Islamic finance - the provision of financial services in accordance with religious laws - is a fast-growing sector that has been adopted in many Muslim countries.

The industry is based on shared profit and loss while earning interest is banned as "usury." Funds are also blocked from investing in companies associated with tobacco, alcohol, pork or gambling.

Algeria is hoping the new products could woo new investors into the market, following the success of Islamic finance products over the past decade in other countries, notably in the Gulf and Malaysia.

The country's neighbors have already rolled out similar schemes. In Tunisia, Islamic finance has operated in the private sector since the 1980s, although the sector remains modest, while in Morocco it began in 2017, though it has recorded net losses it says are due to initial start-up costs.

But Algeria hopes to tap into the significant revenues of the informal market, estimated to be as much as \$30 billion-\$35 billion, according to Abderahmane Benkhalfa, a former minister of finance and ex-head of the banking association.

"It is not only necessary to draw these resources but to inject them into banks in order to bolster the economy," Benkhalfa said. Earlier this month, the state-run National Bank of Algeria announced nine Islamic financial services, receiving a certificate with Muslim clerics ensuring they were compatible with Islamic law.

Only two other private banks, subsidiaries of the Bahrain-based Baraka Bank and Al Salam Bank, offer Islamic finance services in Algeria.

IMF, Afghanistan Reach Preliminary Agreement Over Extended Credit Facility

KABUL (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Afghanistan authorities have reached a preliminary agreement on an economic reform program to be supported by a new three-and-a-half year US\$364 million Extended Credit Facility (ECF).

This announcement comes just three months before the United Nations' donor pledging conference for Afghanistan gets underway.

In a statement issued by the IMF on Friday, the fund said the ECF will help mitigate the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, maintain macroeconomic stability, and underpin reforms for economic resilience and good governance.

The fund also stated that continued financial assistance from international partners is critical to support objectives of Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework for 2021-25, including inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and self-reliance.

Leading the IMF's team was Azim Sadikov, and virtual discussions were held with Afghan officials through July and August on the country's economic reform program.

Sadikov said however that the agreement is subject to the approval of the IMF's Executive Board, which would possibly consider the agreement in October after preliminary conditions have been met by Afghan authorities, including the improvement of accountability and transparency in procurement processes.

"The new ECF arrangement will support authorities' reform program to maintain macroeconomic stability and lay the ground for a sustained post-pandemic economic recovery while continuing to advance structural reforms, Sadikov said.

The pledging conference is organized every four years and was last held in 2016 in Brussels.

This year, Finland will host the conference, which will be organized by both the UN and Afghanistan.

Previous international financial commitments largely end by December of this year.



Arab States Must Defend Their Identity

TEHRAN (IP)- First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Seyed Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, while condemning the UAE's move to normalize relations with the Zionist regime, said: "Arab countries must defend their Arab and Islamic identities."

Ghazizadeh Hashemi on Monday in a phone conversation with the representative of the Palestinian movement Hamas in Tehran, condemning the UAE's attempt to

normalize relations with the Zionist regime, said: "Some reactionary Arab regimes in the region have had secret relations with the Zionist regime for a long time and they finally have revealed it under the pressure of the U.S."

"While these countries claim to support Palestine, but unfortunately they deal with the issue of Palestine very hypocritically which there is no way out just to reveal their relationship, hidden until recently," Ghazizadeh added.



South Korea Reimposes Social Distancing

SEOUL (UPI) -- South Korea reimposed social distancing measures Saturday to curb COVID-19 after local cases spiked recently in the capital.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 166 new cases, including 155 new local cases and 11 new imported cases, a five-month high.

Most of the new cases were in Seoul and the surrounding Gyeonggi province. "The spread of coronavirus is very serious for Seoul and Gyeonggi province, the confirmed cases almost doubled in a day," South Korea's Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said in a televised address Saturday. "Our priority is to swiftly stop the virus from spreading further in the capital area."

Authorities imposed Level 2 social distancing in Seoul and Gyeonggi, which limits indoor public gatherings to 50 people and outdoor gatherings to 100 people. The restrictions also mean the public can no longer attend sporting events, and government-run public facilities will be closed, along with privately run facilities considered to be high risk.

Churches in Seoul and Gyeonggi have been linked to the outbreaks. Seoul issued an executive order Friday to 7,560 religious facilities to restrict group events except the main service. Gyeonggi Gov. Lee Jae-myung issued an order Friday to restrict religious gatherings.

The U.S. Forces Korea restricted non-essential travel for U.S. military personnel to hotspot areas. Park Yoo-mi, a health official for the city of Seoul, said attendees at an anti-government rally could face prosecution under a protest ban and if a COVID-19 case is confirmed from the protest, organizers could face a fine.

To date, South Korea has reported 15,039 cases of COVID-19 and 305 deaths from the disease, according to the Johns Hopkins University global tracker.

South Koreans are currently amid a long weekend that the government introduced in July to relieve stress from the pandemic.

On Saturday, in Britain, a policy for British tourists arriving home from France to quarantine for 14 days because of a rise in COVID-19 cases in France became effective at 4 a.m. Some Britons returning from France arrived minutes before the new quarantine policy was implemented.

Britain has reported 318,193 cases and 46,791 deaths, according to the global tracker of COVID-19 cases.



Meanwhile, the French High Council of Public Health said Friday that citizens should wear masks to limit spread of the disease.

The recommendation follows an open letter that 239 international scientists sent to the World Health Organization on July 4 proposing the reclassification of the virus that causes COVID-19 disease as an airborne virus.

Over the past week, data from France shows a 66% increase in newly reported cases.

On Friday, the French government declared Paris and Marseille high-risk zones for the virus, which grants authorities power to impose local restrictions to limit the spread of the spread of the disease.

France has reported 249,655 cases and 30,410 deaths from COVID-19, according to the global tracker.

Iran Slams Western...

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Emphasizing that Iran's actions were not limited to the field of counter-narcotics, but also had a significant performance in reducing demand and treatment, Lotfi said: "Iran is now a leading country in the field of combat and prevention, and many countries have benefited from Iran's experience in the various training courses held."

The United Nations has named Iran as the flagship of the fight against drugs. The Islamic Republic of Iran has so far sacrificed about 4,000 martyrs and thousands wounded in the fight against drug trafficking.

Trump Has...

FROM PAGE 1

Shamelessly, the U.S. government assassinated Iran's top commander Lt. Gen. Soleimani in Iraq and accepted the responsibility for committing this heinous act, Rouhani lamented. The Cabinet of Ministers also commemorated the anniversary of the proud arrival of Prisoners of War (POWs) to the Islamic homeland.

Pakistan to...

FROM PAGE 1

On July 6, 2019, heading a high-ranking delegation, the former Iranian Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade Reza Rahmani paid a visit to Pakistan to attend the 8th Iran-Pakistan Joint Trade Committee meeting and to explore avenues of economic cooperation with Pakistani officials.

At the time, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for strengthening bilateral trade and economic ties and vowed to remove potential barriers in the way of mutual trade. The MOU was signed by Reza Rahmani and Abdul Razak Dawood on the sidelines of the Joint Trade Committee meeting in Islamabad.

British Spy's...

FROM PAGE 1

The transcript was forgotten until it was rediscovered in the course of research for a new documentary, Coup 53, due to be released on Wednesday, the 67th anniversary of the coup. The role of Darbyshire, who died in 1993, will be dramatised by Ralph Fiennes.

Taghi Amirani, the director of Coup 53, said: "Even though it has been an open secret for decades, the UK government has not officially admitted its fundamental role in the coup. Finding the Darbyshire transcript is like finding the smoking gun. It is a historic discovery." The typewritten transcript was published on Monday morning by the National Security Archive at George Washington University in the U.S. The shah appointed Mossadegh as prime minister in April 1951 after he won overwhelming support from the Majlis, Iran's parliament. One of Mossadegh's first acts was to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (which later became BP), immediately creating a crisis in UK relations. According to Darbyshire, however, the main reason MI6 wanted to get rid of Mossadegh was that Britain's spies believed his government, although it contained only one member of the communist Tudeh party, would ultimately be overwhelmed by Soviet influence.

"I really do believe it because Mossadegh was a fairly weak character," the British intelligence officer said. "[O]nce you get highly trained members of the communist party in, it doesn't take long. We didn't share the American view that he was acting as a bulwark against communism ... we thought he would be pushed by the communists in the long run." In 1951 the UK's deputy prime minister, Anthony Eden, without consulting his senior officials, dispatched an academic and wartime spy, Robert Zaehner, to try to oust Mossadegh by bribing members of the Majlis and other prominent Iranians. "Vast sums of money were being spent," Darbyshire said. "He used to carry biscuit tins with damn great notes. I think he spent well over a million and a half pounds." Zaehner's attempt failed and he left the country, leaving Darbyshire to plot a more violent alternative, which he insisted ended up costing his government less. "The coup cost £700,000. I know because I spent it," he claimed.

Darbyshire was proud of providing good value for money. At another point in the buildup to the putsch, he boasted he had extracted vital intelligence from an Iranian army commander for two pounds of Lipton tea. "He couldn't get in Persia and I got it for him and that is precisely what I paid him," he said. Darbyshire recruited three brothers from a wealthy anglophile family, the Rashidians, whose task it was to find other conspirators, foment unrest and serve as a conduit to the shah in Tehran.

"They were ... intrigued by being in contact with the British and delighted to take our money for something which they believed in themselves. They felt Mossadegh was very much a threat," Darbyshire said. The British spy also claimed credit for recruiting a pro-shah general, Fazlollah Zahedi, to lead the coup and ultimately take Mossadegh's place as prime minister.

"A coup is necessarily predicated on the use of armed force," Darbyshire said. "Zahedi was suitable as a candidate because he had good standing. We knew the shah trusted him." Darbyshire's plotting was interrupted in October 1952 when Mossadegh severed relations with the UK and expelled its diplomats and spies. Darbyshire left with his coup plans in his pocket and presented them to the CIA in Beirut.

But the CIA was not yet interested, and the MI6 leadership was not prepared to move without the Americans, rather to Darbyshire's disdain.

"In the early months of 53 we were building up with the Rashidians and we thought we had enough military units to mount something, but London started getting cold feet," he told his interviewer, adding acerbically: "Unfortunately, the head of SIS at the time, General [John] Sinclair knew about as much of the Middle East as a 10-year-old (far more interested in cricket anyway)."

Humans Have Been Sleeping on Beds For 200,000 Years



CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - For nearly as long as modern humans have been roaming the earth, they've been sleeping in beds, according to research published Friday in the journal Science.

Archaeologists have uncovered 200,000-year-old evidence of grass bedding inside South Africa's Border Cave.

At the back of the cave, located in the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa, researchers found layers of leaves belonging to Panicoidae, a large subfamily of grasses, stacked atop a layer of ash, which humans used to protect themselves from crawling insects.

"We speculate that laying grass bedding on ash was a deliberate strategy, not only to create a dirt-free, insulated base for the bedding, but also to repel crawling insects," lead study author Lyn Wadley, professor of archaeology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, said in a news release.

"Sometimes the ashy foundation of the bedding was a remnant of older grass bedding that had been burned to clean the cave and destroy pests," Wadley said. "On other occasions, wood ash from fireplaces was also used as the clean surface for a new bedding layer."

Because insects have trouble moving through fine powder, ash helped protect slumbering humans from the bites of insects. Atop the ash and grass bedding, researchers also found remnants of camphor bush, a plant that's still used as an insect repellent.

"We know that people worked as well as slept on the grass surface because the debris from stone tool manufacture is mixed with the grass remains," Wadley said. "Also, many tiny, rounded grains of red and orange ochre were found in the bedding where they may have rubbed off human skin or colored objects."

Previous studies have revealed dozens of stack fireplaces throughout the Border Cave complex, dating from 200,000 and 38,000 years ago. In addition to rituals, early humans slept and performed daily work near fires.

Modern humans, Homo sapiens, first emerged in Africa around 300,000 years ago. It didn't take long for them to adapt strategies for staying safe and comfortable in dangerous environs.

"Our research shows that before 200,000 years ago, close to the origin of our species, people could produce fire at will, and they used fire, ash, and medicinal plants to maintain clean, pest-free camps," Wadley said. "Such strategies would have had health benefits that advantaged these early communities."

Mozambique Insurgency Tests Region's Anti-Conflict Resolve

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - The audacious attack and occupation of a strategic port in Mozambique's gas-rich province days before a summit of regional leaders will test southern Africa's counter-insurgency skills, analysts say.

Extremist fighters attacked the small but key town of Mocimboa da Praia -- the third such

attack this year alone -- culminating in the capture of its port on Wednesday.

Mozambique's northernmost province of Cabo Delgado, which borders Tanzania, has been ravaged by a jihadist insurgency since October 2017.

But the government waited until April this year to admit the presence of so-called Islamic State militants in the country.

The jihadists have grown bolder in recent months, escalating attacks as part of a campaign to establish an Islamist caliphate.

Analysts hope the violence will be top of the agenda when leaders from 16 southern African countries meet for a routine annual summit on Monday.

During the summit -- to be held virtually due to coronavirus travel restrictions -- Mozambique takes over the rotating chairmanship of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) from Tanzania.

SADC should "urgently assist Mozambique to stem the violent insurgency" which has killed more than 1,500 people and displaced at least 250,000, said the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS) on Thursday.

It said the upcoming summit presents a "crucial opportunity to take decisive action to help end the crisis".

In May, SADC's security unit pledged to help Mozambique tackle the insurgency -- one of the toughest challenges southern Africa has faced in recent years.

But concrete action has yet to be seen.

"It is really time for SADC to intervene," said Maputo-based activist Adriano Nuvunga, director of Mozambique's Centre for Democracy and Development.

Struggling to regain control of the strife-torn region, the Mozambican army has hired private military contractors to help, including Russia's Wagner and the South Africa-based Dyck Advisory Group, according to various researchers.

But analysts say those efforts have been ineffective so far.

"Military action by the Mozambique government, including the continued use of mercenaries, has not stopped the attacks," the ISS said.



In a pre-summit meeting on Thursday, Mozambique's Foreign Minister Veronica Macamo spoke of the "need for consultation and coordination of our actions in combating terrorism which poses a major threat to our region".

"Our region faces a threat... in the form of terrorism and violent extremism, which if not contained, has the

possibility of spreading" throughout southern Africa, said the minister.

SADC set up a standby brigade in 2008 to respond to conflict situations.

The force was last deployed to restore security in Lesotho in 2017 following the killing of the kingdom's top army commander.

If sent to Mozambique, it will be the first time it faces terrorism.

Independent analyst Jasmine Opperman said the Mozambique insurgency had created a "regional threat" that cannot be ignored.

"But it does not seem that SADC at this point in time is going to go beyond window dressing," she told AFP, noting that SADC lacked the military and financial might to put boots in Cabo Delgado.

Regional superpowers that could contribute troops such as South Africa are focused on militarily enforcing anti-coronavirus lockdowns.

South Africa also has around 1,000 soldiers serving in a United Nations mission in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Even if regional soldiers were deployed, analysts suggest that would be redundant without tackling local frustrations that fuel the insurgency.

"If those issues are not addressed in the medium to short-term, deployment of soldiers will be nothing more than a plaster over an ulcer that is about to explode," Opperman warned.

Mozambican security forces have meanwhile been battling to regain control of the port.

Every attack on Mocimboa da Praia is a hindrance for the development of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility on the Afungi peninsula.

The project, situated 60 kilometres (40 miles) north of the town, relies on its port for supplies.

Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi insists the multi-million dollar gas project -- one of the biggest single investments in Africa -- is safe.

But the latest attack, according to Nuvunga at Mozambique's Centre for Democracy and Development, shows an insurgency that is "gaining more ground and momentum" and is a "setback" in development of the gas project.

Experts had hoped the project would turn impoverished Mozambique into one of the world's leading LNG exporters, creating an African version of Qatar.

Malaysian Syahrin Injured In Austrian Moto2 Crash

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Spain's Jorge Martin won Sunday's Austrian Moto2 Grand Prix marred by a crash injuring Malaysia's Hafizh Syahrin. After Enea Bastianini fell off coming out of a bend Syahrin hit the Italian's bike at full speed, sending him through the air, smashing his bike into pieces. The stricken Syahrin was treated on the track and rushed away in an ambulance with his team saying the rider was conscious but had an injured hip.

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Dovizioso Wins Austrian GP

SPIELBERGA (Reuters) - Ducati's Andrea Dovizioso won an action-packed Austrian Grand Prix which was halted for 20 minutes after Franco Morbidelli's Yamaha collided with the Avintia Ducati of Johann Zarco in Spielberg on Sunday. The red flag came out immediately when Morbidelli and Zarco came together at turn three, with their cartwheeling bikes missing Valentino Rossi and Maverick Vinales by inches as the two Yamahas navigated the turn.

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SPORTS

TUESDAY AUGUST 18, 2020

Hamilton Sweeps To Record-Breaking Win in Spain

BARCELONA (AFP) - Lewis Hamilton claimed his 88th Formula One career victory and, with it, an outright record 156th podium finish on Sunday when he drove his Mercedes to a masterful victory in the Spanish Grand Prix.

It was the world championship leader and six-time champion's fifth win in Spain and his fourth in consecutive years, extending his record run of finishes in the points to 39.

Hamilton came home 24 seconds ahead of nearest title race rival Max Verstappen of Red Bull who finished 20 seconds ahead of Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes.

Hamilton had shared a record 155 podium finishes with Michael Schumacher whose other records for championships and wins are in the Briton's sights this year.

His victory increased his lead in the drivers title race to 37 points ahead of Verstappen. Sergio Perez, back in his Racing Point after missing two races with coronavirus, was fourth ahead of his team-mate Lance Stroll and Carlos Sainz of McLaren.

"Wow, I was in another zone then," said Hamilton. "I didn't even know it was the fastest lap. Thank you everyone. I was just in a daze out there - it was good."

Verstappen was satisfied with his result. "To split them was the best we could do today," said the Dutchman who won the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone last week.

Four-time champion Sebastian Vettel, in his final season with Ferrari and linked with a move to Aston Martin next year, finished seventh ahead of Alex Albon in the second Red Bull, Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri and Lando Norris who was 10th in the second McLaren.

On another hot afternoon at the



Circuit de Catalunya, with a track temperature of 50 degrees Celsius and the air at 31, Hamilton made a clean start from his 92nd pole position, but behind him Bottas made sluggish progress from second.

Both Verstappen and Stroll took advantage on the 'drag race' down to the first corner, pushing the Finn down to fourth.

All of them were aware of the threat of serious tyre degradation in the conditions, a hazard that persuaded Hamilton to control the lead pace with caution.

Bottas was soon back on pace, passing Stroll into Turn One and then launching his chase after Hamilton and Verstappen.

The champion was soon clear of the Dutchman by 1.5 seconds, but not surging clear as he backed up Verstappen towards the Finn.

By lap 12, he was lapping faster and reeling off fastest laps, opening a gap of 1.7, which he increased to four seconds by lap 15 while Bottas, third, closed to within two seconds of Verstappen.

All of the top ten drivers had started on softs, the rest on mediums. This meant pit-stops were inevitable with tyre-wear and strategy sure to be critical factors.

Albon was the first to blink, taking a set of hard tyres for his Red Bull as the team sought the means for him to make progress and opted, in vain, for a one-stop race. He returned for mediums on lap 43.

By lap 20, a frustrated Verstappen was grumbling about his soft rear tyres.

Behind the leaders, the mixed strategies ensured plenty of positional battles including scraps between Lando Norris of McLaren and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc for 10th and the two Racing Points for fifth.

Leclerc's hopes ended on lap 38 when his engine cut out and he spun at the chicane. He re-joined in 20th before pitting and retiring as black thunderclouds loomed.

De Bruyne Named Premier League Player of the Season

LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne was named the Premier League Player of the Season on Sunday, becoming just the third Belgian to win the award for the league's top performer.

The 29-year-old set up 20 goals in the 2019-20 campaign, equalling the record for most assists in a Premier League season set by Arsenal striker Thierry Henry in 2002-03.

He also scored a personal best 13 goals but was unable to help City defend their top-flight crown, with Pep Guardiola's side finishing 18 points behind champions Liverpool.

De Bruyne beat Liverpool trio Jordan Henderson, Sadio Mane and Trent Alexander-Arnold, Southampton striker Danny Ings, Leicester City's Golden Boot winner Jamie Vardy and Burnley goalkeeper Nick Pope to the award.

De Bruyne's former City team mate Vincent Kompany and ex-Chelsea winger Eden Hazard are the two other Belgians to win the accolade.

Alexander-Arnold was named Young Player of the Season earlier this week, while Juergen Klopp won the Manager of the Season award.

Bencic Joins List of Stars Skipping U.S. Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Eighth-ranked Belinda Bencic, whose deepest Grand Slam run was into last year's U.S. Open semi-finals, said Saturday she will skip this year's U.S. Open and return in Rome next month.

The 23-year-old Swiss joins a host of top players who are passing on playing at Flushing Meadows when the next Grand Slam tournament begins on August 31. "I have made the difficult decision to skip the U.S. swing in New York and will return to the tour starting next month in Rome," Bencic said in a statement.

"I am looking forward to returning to New York next year and wish everyone competing there in the coming weeks the best of luck."

Reigning U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu of Canada, who ousted Bencic in last year's U.S. Open semi-finals, said Thursday she will not play in New York, joining men's 2019 winner Rafael Nadal in skipping the tournament.

Also absent from this year's US Open will be Australia's top-ranked Ashleigh Barty, Ukraine's fifth-ranked Elina Svitolina, seventh-rated Kiki Bertens and past winner Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia.

Serena Williams, seeking a 24th career Grand Slam title to match Margaret Court's all-time record, will compete at the US Open, as will men's world number one Novak Djokovic.

Fans Urge BCCI To Retire Dhoni's Number Seven Jersey

NEW DELHI (AFP) - Players and fans Sunday urged India's cricket board to retire Mahendra Singh Dhoni's number seven jersey in a tribute to the two-time World Cup winning captain.

Dhoni, 39, called time on his 16-year-old international career Saturday with a cryptic message on his Instagram post that read "From 1929hrs consider me as retired".

The Board of Control for Cricket in India confirmed the news in a statement, saying: "The boy from Ranchi, who made his ODI debut in 2004, changed the face of Indian cricket with his calm demeanour, sharp understanding of the game and astute leadership qualities."



Ivic Tasked With Returning Watford to Premier League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Vladimir Ivic said after being named manager of relegated Watford he needs to adapt as fast as possible to English football if he is to take them straight back to the Premier League.

The 43-year-old Serbian signed a one-year contract -- with the option of extending it by a further year -- and replaces Nigel Pearson. Pearson was controversially sacked last month with two matches remaining of the Premier League season, and Hayden Mullins failed to keep them up as caretaker manager. It ended a five-year stay in the top tier for

the 2019 FA Cup finalists.

Ivic -- who coached PAOK to the 2017 Greek Cup and guided Maccabi Tel Aviv to successive Israeli league titles the past two seasons -- is Watford's fourth full-time manager in less than a year.

"First of all, from the beginning I have a big expectation of myself and of my coaching staff," Ivic told watfordfc.com.

"It's my first time in England and I need to adapt as fast as possible, to do the best for the club is very important to me."

The former Serbia international midfielder will start work with Watford on Monday, alongside his three-strong coaching team.

"I've worked with my coaching staff for three years, so I know that we will ask the most from ourselves so we can help the players to achieve the club's goals," said Ivic.

The Championship season is due to get underway on the weekend of September 12.

Sevilla Stun Wasteful Man Utd to Reach Europa League final

COLOGNE (AFP) - Manchester United were made to pay for their profligacy in front of goal as Sevilla enjoyed another special night in the Europa League by coming from behind to reach Friday's final with a 2-1 win in Cologne.

Bruno Fernandes's early penalty was cancelled out by Suso's strike for Sevilla in a fiercely contested first half. But United made and wasted almost all the big chances after the break as Bono produced a string of stunning saves until substitute Luuk De Jong turned home Jesus Navas cross 12 minutes from time.

United had already secured their place in the Champions League next season by finishing third in the Premier League, but their three-year wait for a trophy continues and a third semi-final defeat of the season exposed the work that still lies ahead of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer to restore the Red Devils to their former glories.

Sevilla have now won 25 of their last 26 Europa League knockout ties and will believe they are destined to win the competition for a sixth time when they face Inter Milan or Shakhtar Donetsk in the final after riding their luck.

Julen Lopetegui's men are now unbeaten in a club record 20 games, but were unsettled by the pace and movement of United's front four early as Marcus Rashford was wiped out by Diego Carlos after his initial effort was saved by Bono. Fernandes has ensured United's early season woes from the spot are long forgotten as the Portuguese converted his eighth penalty for the club and the 22nd the Red Devils have been awarded in a 13-month long campaign.



Halep Wins WTA Prague Open

PRAGUE (AFP) - Top seed Simona Halep won the Prague Open, the second post-lockdown WTA event, after beating Belgium's Elise Mertens in straight sets on Sunday.

Romania's Halep, the 28-year-old reigning Wimbledon champion and world number two, beat the 23rd-ranked Mertens 6-2, 7-5 in an hour and 33 minutes.

It was her 21st career WTA title, making her the fifth most successful active player behind Serena and Venus Williams, Kim Clijsters and Petra Kvitova.

Mertens took a 2-0 lead in the first set but Halep then won seven games in a row to win that set and start the second on a high, extending her lead to 4-2.

Leaning on her superb backhand, Mertens put Halep under pressure with her aggressive display, coming back for a 5-4 lead.

But that was it from the 24-year-old Belgian as Halep won the next three games to seal the victory.

"Even the first set was not easy, she's a great opponent and it's always tough to play against her because she's fast," Halep told the public broadcaster Czech Television.

"The second set was a little bit tougher but I was strong and that's why I could win this match."

Halep said she would decide on whether to play the US Open on Monday.

"Now it's too fast to take a decision, I just want to enjoy this victory and then I will have a thought about the US Open," she added.

