

Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on
Wednesday That Some 153 More
Iranians Have Died From COVID-19
Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing
the Total Deaths to 20,125

IRAN NEWS

Head of the Presidential Office
Mahmoud Vaezi Dismissed the
U.S. Claim of Confiscating Four
Iranian Tankers and Said It Is
Every Country's Right to Buy and
Sell Oil in International Waters

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Any Aggression on Iran to Be Responded With "Rain of Fire"

TEHRAN (MNA) - Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami praised the country's defense prowess, noting that the forces are ready for a strong response to any form of military aggression.

Speaking in a live IRIB TV program on Tuesday night on the occasion of the country's Defense Industry Day - to be marked on August 21 - Hatami noted that the country's defense power is 'incomparable' to the previous decades and centuries.

"The message of this defense power for our enemies is that this area of the world is safe; any aggression will be met with crushing response and now nobody finds the courage to conduct aggression; and if that happens, they will be met with a rain of fire; we will destroy the source of the aggression on their head; and if they launch an attack from an aircraft carrier, we are able to sink it," Hatami said.

The minister noted that America along with the Zionist regime are the most important threat in the region and Iran is prepared itself to confront them.

Iran's defense industry has passed the reverse engineering stage "We have reached maturity in all defense industry sectors, completely passed the stage of reverse engineering, and implemented a whole innovative system," Hatami added.

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Big Ammunition Smuggling Gang Dismantled

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Intelligence forces have identified and dismantled a big arms and ammunition smuggling band in Alborz Province.

According to the Iranian intelligence ministry on Wednesday, through extensive operations carried out by the Intelligence Ministry forces in Alborz Province, the members of a big arms and ammunition smuggling gang were identified and arrested.

This gang has been active in Alborz, Tehran, Kermanshah, Lorestan, Isfahan, Sistan and Baluchestan, West Azerbaijan and Kerman provinces.

According to the confessions and documents, the members of the gang smuggled weapons and ammunition, illicit drugs and alcohol, currency, coins, gold and antiques.

More than 20 key members of the gang were arrested in coordination with the judiciary, and a significant number of weapons, ammunition, hunting, munition and vehicles were seized. The gang members abused the correspondence and titles of individuals in the Ministry of Intelligence, government agencies, the judiciary, and the military, forging the documents.

U.S. Not Allowed to Use 'Snapback' Mechanism Against Iran



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says the United States is not legally authorized to trigger the so-called "snapback" mechanism to reinstate UN sanctions against Iran.

President n Rouhani said on Wednesday that Washington has pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and, hence, is not legally authorized to invoke the sanctions. "It is stipulated in that mechanism (snapback) that signatories or one of the signatories to the JCPOA can use this mechanism. However, the U.S. cannot use this mechanism as it has clearly announced that it has pulled out of the JCPOA, and that it is the worst agreement, and has withdrawn from it," said Rouhani.

He then criticized some people who claim the U.S. would not have been able to withdraw from the JCPOA if the foundation of the agreement were stronger.

"Is there an agreement which the US has not pulled out of?" asked the president rhetorically.

"You are saying that the foundation of the JCPOA was not strong enough, but how about the US withdrawal from the WTO, UNESCO, NAFTA and the Paris Climate Agreement? Was their foundation weak, too? The U.S. has pulled out of whatever useful agreements," said Rouhani.

He then touched upon sanctions, which, he added, has put Iranian people under pressure, and said, "We are standing up to these sanctions, which will come to an end one day ... and the rule of tyrants at the White House will not last forever, either."

"Economic war is in line with plots hatched by the global arrogance against the country," Rouhani said speaking at the cabinet meeting on Wednesday morning.

He further said, "We have a very heavy responsibility during the Government Week, like the conspiracies that were plotted against us in the 1970s, and today the global arrogance has plotted against us. At that time, they wanted to overthrow the Islamic system by assassinating the officials. The next day, they pursued this goal with the imposed war and today with the economic war."

The President called the month of Muharram a large and large school in the world of Shiism and Islam and said: the atmosphere of the country should be Hosseini from the first day of Muharram.

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Seoul Preparing To Unblock Part of Iran Money

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-South Korea Chamber of Commerce Hossein Tanhaei says South Koreans are interested in restoring ties with Iran after Iran warned them of taking legal action and currently Koreans are seriously pursuing the issue of unblocking Iran's frozen money in South Korean banks.

Speaking to ILNA, Tanhaei talked about the latest development on Iran's frozen money in South Korea and said after talks with head of South Korea's Chamber of Commerce, the Korean official said that they are preparing a contract for unblocking some part of the money hygienic and medical goods.

He added that although during the early talks it was decided that medical items worth of \$50m were sent to Iran, it did not happen and the medical items worth of \$3m sent to Iran.

Tanhaei added that he informed the South Korean official of Iran's decision to take legal action against them and it seems that Koreans are now more serious to settle the issue.

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Iran Defense Industry Strongly Supports National Security

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said on Wednesday that the defense industry is strongly supporting the armed forces to defend the independence and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In a message on the occasion of Defense Industry Day, Major General Baqeri extended congratulations to the officials, jihadis, experts, and staff of the country's defense industry, also stressed that the Iranian experts in the field of the defense will develop defense capacities more than before.

Declaring that the national defense industry is a strong supporter of the armed forces in defending the independence and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and protecting the achievements, values, and ideals of the Islamic Revolution and Establishment, Major General Baqeri said, "The country's defense industry has taken great steps towards self-sufficiency through the persistent and constant efforts of national expert forces."

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Russia Again Urges U.S. to Consider Early Summit on Iran

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Russia calls on the United States to consider the need to hold an online summit on Iran as soon as possible, since many contradictions have accumulated on this issue, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said.

On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia remained fully committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear program, and proposed to hold an online meeting of leaders of the UN Security Council member states with the participation of the leaders of Germany and Iran in the very near future in order to avoid an aggravation of the situation. When asked if he would support the initiative of Russia, US President Donald Trump replied that Washington would wait until the end of the US elections in November.

"We regret the signal that we received from Washington regarding the proposal to organize an online summit, but I want to note that the US side did not reject the idea in principle, it spoke in favor of postponing it to a later date. Of course, the delay may have a number of complications," Ryabkov told Russian journalists in Vienna.

He explained that Putin had proposed to hold the summit urgently and without delay.

"The reasons are clear: there has accumulated "not to say critical, but close to this" a mass of contradictions, tensions, even confrontations on the Iranian issue, and an open and deep conversation of top leaders about what to do with this and how to go out is needed now more than ever," he explained.

Ryabkov noted that the United States believes that its policy of maximum pressure will be effective, but "this policy did not work before, it will not work now." According to the deputy minister, the U.S. is also "mistaken" if it believes that it can implement the arms embargo against Iran, despite failure of the UN initiative. "The stubbornness with which the United States is moving on this issue, acting literally ahead of time and without looking back at any kind of arguments, is a direct path to a very serious crisis in the UN Security Council, a blow to the system of international relations. This will be another reminder of how flawed and vicious unilateral approach is," the diplomat said.

According to Ryabkov, this does not add confidence that the JCPOA will continue, while he admitted that Washington, perhaps, is pursuing the goal of destroying the JCPOA and "attacking the authority of the UN Security Council."

"But we have a radically opposite view of what and how to do. We nevertheless urge Washington to weigh pros and cons and once again take a closer look at the proposal of the Russian President, analyze what the alternative might be and what the advantages might be from the implementation of this idea," he added.

U.S. Complaint Against Iran to UNSC Fails

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations called the U.S. attempt to file a new complaint against Iran to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) a failed policy.

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Majid Takht-Ravanchi said: "What kind of policy is the policy that caused the US isolation and showing this isolation in the UN Security Council where even the U.S. close partners left them alone?"

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is scheduled to arrive in New York on Thursday (today) to meet with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Washington will file its complaint against Iran to the UN Security Council on the same day; In the U.S. complaint, Iran is accused of violating its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The United States should learn from a previous UN Security Council meeting where it could only urge the Dominican Republic accompany it," Takht-Ravanchi added.

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Iran Ready to Help Afghan Peace Process

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Hanif Atmar in a phone conversation reviewed peace talks, the importance of intra-Afghan talks without foreign intervention, calling for achievements of the peace talks over the last 18 years to be saved.

Iranian and Afghan foreign ministers reviewed bilateral ties and other issues of mutual interests.

Both sides also exchanged views on finalizing Iran-Afghanistan comprehensive contract.

Chance of Success Scant For Putin-Proposed Summit

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesperson for the Iranian government says a seven-way online summit of the UN Security Council permanent members, Germany and Iran, proposed by the president of Russia, is unlikely to produce results as the U.S. government lacks any sincere intention.

In written reply to questions from the Iranian journalists as part of a weekly press conference, the administration's Spokesman Ali Rabiei commented on a recent proposal from Russian President Vladimir Putin to hold an online summit with the US, Britain, France, China, Germany and Iran in a bid to avoid confrontation at the United Nations.

"We are aware of Mr. Putin's goodwill in de-escalation of tensions, but at the same believe it is unlikely that such summit would be effective in the absence of sincere intentions of the U.S. government," he noted.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's stance is totally clear. Irrespective of the speculations, whenever all parties receive a formal request for the proposed summit, we will consider it seriously and announce the final decision," the spokesperson added.

He also noted that a recent voting at the UN Security Council that rejected a US-initiated resolution on the extension of the arms embargo on Iran indicated that the views of Iran and the other P4+1 members on Washington's law-breaking and bullying policies are crystal clear.

Maybe the U.S. president lacks the courage to take part in any other meeting, as he is confident of the US' isolation, Rabiei stated.

Highlighting the Iranian government's success in dealing with the cruel sanctions and protecting the lives of people, the spokesman said the US has failed to achieve its dream of collapse of the Islamic Republic.

He then hit back at U.S. President Donald Trump for his allegation that the Iranian government masks a regime behind the false guise of a democracy, noting, "The Iranian nation, along with the international community, gave the US a harsh



lesson. Now, this is Trump that has been unmasked at the United Nations and the international arena."

On the August 4 blast in Beirut, Rabiei said Iran is worried that the tragic incident would become a pretext for foreign interference in Lebanon and the plots to control Lebanon's internal affairs.

Iran favors stronger international cooperation, including with the European states, to help the Lebanese people overcome the crisis, Rabiei added, but underlined that the foreign governments should work in coordination with the Lebanese government and nation.

Asked about a recent agreement between the United Arab Emirates and the Israeli regime on normalization of ties, the spokesman denounced Abu Dhabi's "irresponsible decision" as a gift for the US president ahead of the elections.

"By signing this deal, the UAE deprived itself of a constructive role in the Islamic world and came under constant suspicion. Any form of the Zionist regime's entry into the Persian Gulf would result in nothing but escalation of instability and insecurity for all regional countries," he added.

Rabiei stressed that Iran is closely monitoring the political ties between the UAE and the Israeli regime, and is "ready to make a decisive decision if a threat originating from such poisonous (UAE-Israeli) relationship" risks the regional security.

People Should Feel Resistance Against Enemy Been Effective

TEHRAN (MNA) –President Hassan Rouhani said that people should feel that their resistance against enemies has been effective in success of the Establishment.

Speaking on Tuesday evening at a meeting of clarifying achievements of the government with the aim of 'surge in production', held in the presence of ministers and senior officials in the field of production, he reiterated that noble people of the country should feel that their resistance against enemies' sanctions has been effective in success of the Establishment.

Rouhani urged all ministers and officials at the executive organizations to take advantage of the opportunity of commemorating the "Government Week" and inform people of the salient achievements and services made by the government in various sectors especially in the development and prosperity as well as considerable agricultural and industrial production growth.

People should know that after the US withdrawal from JCPOA in May 2018 and exertion of maximum economic pressure, the government dubbed 'hope and prudence' in cooperation with people could prove resilience and reduce the harmful effects of sanctions, he emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani pointed to the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in the country and added, "The government outshined in the field of battling coronavirus in the country and managed to showcase acceptable performance as compared with other claimant countries."

Rouhani described clarification of achievements and successes of the government as encouraging factor behind increase of hope among people and more encouraging entrepreneurs, industrialists and those who are active in economic sector.

With the drastic measures taken by the government in the field of removing barriers, production activities of the country will be more accelerated, he said, adding, "Accordingly, the country will witness production boom and also realizing objectives of the motto of the current year entitled 'surge in production'."

Explaining successes and salient achievements of the Establishment will disappoint sanctioning countries and raise glimmers of hope among people of the country who resisted against conspiracies of enemies and played an important role in the success of the Establishment with the help and support of the government.

Iran Predicted to Export \$3b Goods To Afghanistan by Yearend

TEHRAN (MNA) –Chairman of Iran-Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce said that it is predicted that Islamic Republic of Iran would export \$3 billion worth of products to neighboring Afghanistan by the yearend (March 20, 2021).

Like previous year, Iran's yearly export of products to Afghanistan is predicted to be realized in the current year (started March 21, 2020).

Hossein Salimi broke the news on Tue. in an interview with FNA and pointed to the growing export trend of the country to Afghanistan in the recent months and added, "With the studies made, it is anticipated that Islamic Republic of Iran will export \$3 billion worth of non-oil goods and commodities to Afghanistan before the termination of the current year."

He pointed to the problem of goods transfer in Milak Border and said, "the problem of transportation of goods via Milak Border Crossing has been settled and presently, goods and commodities are transported via Milak and Dogharoon borders without any problem."

Elsewhere in his remarks, chairman of Iran-Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce added, "there was problem for fueling trucks at Milak Border but presently, this problem has been resolved and goods transfer is underway at this border."

1953 Coup, a Clear Sign of U.S. Enmity Against Iranian Nation



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker said UK-U.S.-led coup d'état that removed Iran's democratically elected leader 61 years ago, is a clear sign of U.S. enmity against the Iranian nation.

Addressing Majlis open session, Qalibaf stated that on the eve of the Islamic lunar month of Muharram, the hearts of the lovers of Imam Hussain (a.s.) are eager to mourn the tragedy of Ashura. The historical miracle of Ashura bids farewell to falsehood and promises victory to all the deprived and oppressed.

"61 years ago, a few U.S. agents plundered Iran's resources with a simple coup against the nation. The same nation, and perhaps the same people, a few years later stood up to the most sophisticated plans of U.S. terrorism. The same nation became so strong that they cleared the region of the United States and the Zionists," the Iranian Parliament Speaker noted.

Qalibaf went on to say that the 19th August 1953 coup is a clear symbol of US sworn enmity against Iran. Whenever the rulers of these people trusted this enemy, the security of the country was endangered and the nation was humiliated, and whenever they were treated with rationality and prudence, historical victories were achieved for the nation.

The 19th August 1953 coup plotted and executed by the United States and Britain against the then democratically- elected government of Iran is a reminder of an important turning point in contemporary Iranian history.

Qalibaf also pointed to the effectiveness of standing against enemies, noting that the resistance has always brought great victories for the country.

He said, "History shows us that standing against Terrorists as well as governing the affairs of the country with ration and prudence will always lead to achieving great victories."

Free Education of Half a Million Int'l Students in Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Education Mohsen Haji Mirzaei said that Iran has facilitated the education of more than half a million foreign students without receiving financial assistance.

Haji Mirzaei on Wednesday added about the educational conditions of international students, that the students study alongside Iranian students and enjoy the same services as Iranians.

He also pointed to the education of the students at the time of the outbreak of the coronavirus, stating that studying in the corona time is not different for international students because of Iran's policy towards foreign nationals and Iranian students is the same.

Iran's Minister of Education called on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations to fulfill their obligations vis-a-vis these students.

According to the Interior Ministry, about 1.5 million refugees are living legally and about 2 million are living illegally in Iran, most of them are Afghans.

Zarif Congratulates Omani Foreign Minister on Assuming Post

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a message congratulated new Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood al-Busaidi on assuming the post.

I congratulate the dear brother and friend, His Excellency Mr. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood al-Busaidi, for his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the brotherly Sultanate of Oman, and he received the trust from a wise brother His Excellency Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Zarif wrote in his Twitter account on Wednesday.

Iranian foreign minister also wished success for Omani minister.

He wished health for former Omani foreign minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah

Customs Administration Bans Rice Imports as of August 22

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) has banned any registration for imports of rice as of the beginning of the next Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 22) until further notice.

IRICA Deputy Head Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi told a local radio program that the plan for the seasonal ban on rice imports, which aims at supporting the domestic farmers, should have been implemented in the beginning of the current Iranian calendar month (July 22) but was postponed to the next month.

According to Orounaqi, nearly 800,000 tons of rice was imported into the country and was cleared from various customs in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19). The official noted that rice imports have decreased by about 20 percent in the current year, saying: "About 390,000 tons of rice has been cleared through customs, while some cargoes are still stored in customs."

According to the Secretary of Iran Rice Association Jamil Alizadeh Shayeque, Iranian farmers managed to produce 2.6 million tons of rice during the past Iranian calendar year 1398.

The country's rice production stood between 2.2 and 2.3 million tons in the preceding year 1397 (March 2018-March 2019) and the increase in the production consequently decreased the imports of the commodity.

Iran's annual rice consumption stands at about three million tons. That means nearly 400,000 tons of the product is required to be imported into the country, according to Shayeque.

Gov't to Open 6,000 km of Highways Until Its Term Ends

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Roads and Urban Development said on Tuesday that the government will inaugurate 6,000 kilometers of highways until the end of its term (mid-summer 2021).

Mohammad Eslami said that by the end of the current presidential term some 3,100 kilometers highways will be built. Some 3,170 kilometers highways have already opened by the incumbent Government comes an end.

Speaking in a TV interview, Eslami said that more than twice this length or more is being studied or constructed. Each year, Iran will add 800 kilometers to its highways to make them 6,000 kilometers long in 5 years.

He added that some 5,600 km roads have been made since 2013.

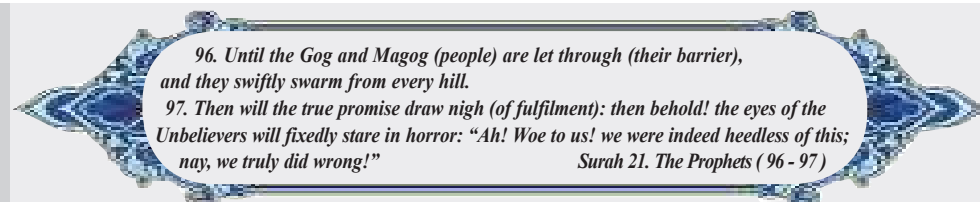
He also said that rail transportation should be added from 10% to 30%.

Regarding Iran's national plan of housing, he said that the first priority of the plan is the poor. The governments to plans to provide housing for them with land with low and zero interest.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:06
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:58
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:28



Iran Fisheries Production Hit 1.28m Tons Last Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Fisheries Organization says the total fishery products of Iran last year was 1.28m tons which is ahead of the Sixth Development Plan.

During a meeting, Mr. Nabiollah Khoon Mirzaee said that the most important issue in the fishery is production and the total production of fishery products last year was 1.28m tons which is ahead of the target set in the Sixth Development Plan.

He also pointed to the growth in fishery products in Iran since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, adding that the fishery product consumption per capita has grown in the country concurrent with the growth in production and it has increased from one kilo in 1979 to over 13 kilogram in 2019.

He emphasized that growth in production in the fishery sector is indebted to boosting infrastructures, studies and training the skilful workforce, stipulating that in all countries in the world, fishing and marine pressure is on breeding fisheries and Iran is pursuing this approach.

He noted Iran ranks first in fishing in the west of the Indian Ocean, stating that in



fishing the aquatic animals, Iran ranks 25th in the world and 18th in breeding aquatic animals. He further said Iran ranks second in fishing tuna in the Indian Ocean and ranks first in fishing in the west of the Indian Ocean.

Khoon Mirzaee added that Iran ranks first in the world in producing trout in salty and sweet water and it ranks 14th in breeding shrimp while the country ranks third in producing meat of caviar fish and second in producing caviar in the world.

He said breeding shrimp in the country has grown significantly during President Hassan Rouhani's governments, expressing hope that this year which has named surge in production, the country would see such a surge in the country.

He noted that in the recent 20 years, production in fishery products has seen an almost sustainable trend and fishery products have comparative advantage and high profitability.

Third Line of Power Transfer to Armenia to Be Launched in 6 Months

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Finance Management for International Affairs of the Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) says the third line for transfer of electricity to Armenia will be designed, manufactured, installed and launched in the next six months.

Mr. Kamran Razavi said the third line of electricity transfer from Iran to Armenia will be a dual-400 kilowatt circuit network with the length around 275 kilometers and it will be designed, manufactured and launched along with power transfer stations in the next six months.

He said that the project with the investment around \$83m euros has been financed by EDBI in form of buyer's credit, adding that this unique banking tool has been only offered by this bank in the national banking system which is considered a strategy for penetration into the export market targets.

Pointing to the launch of the project of the third line for transfer of electricity to Armenia, Razavi said the project with the budget around \$83m euros has been financed by the bank and it will come on stream in six months.

He added that finance in form of buyer's credit is one of the successful methods of financing by the banking system in the current condition, adding that buyer's credit is one of the basic facilities whose technology is in hands of famous Exim banks in the world and in Iran, and, EDBI is the only bank in Iran which offers such a service, in line with its duty of supporting the exports and easing the process for trade exchange in the macro-economic level, to the banks and foreign buyers of Iranian goods and technical and engineering services.

Rezavani added that in fact EDBI has implemented one of the methods common in the advanced countries as well as conventional and normal facilities which dominate the national banking system which is mainly aimed at financing the exporters.

He then pointed to the trend of signing the contract for this project, adding that due to strategic economic ties between Iran and Armenia especially Armenia's position in link of Iran's electricity network to Eurasian and European countries, this project is very important and was signed between EDBI and its Armenian counterpart.

He reiterated the project for transfer of Iran's electricity to Armenia guarantees Iran's electricity exports to other Eurasian Union states and it is an important step in winning the export markets in this region.



FAO Supports Iran to Strengthen Its National Agricultural Drought Monitoring

TEHRAN (FAO) - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized a three-day workshop to equip Iranian experts with operational knowledge and skills required to establish a country-level Agricultural Stress Index System (ASIS).



Designed by FAO to assist the countries in monitoring agricultural drought and managing its risk, ASIS as a part of the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture uses satellite data to detect agricultural areas where crops could be affected by drought and as a result it helps the countries to strengthen

their agricultural drought monitoring and early warning systems.

"ASIS can monitor the crop-specific areas during the crop cycle, detecting water stress and forecasting drought – that can produce a production reduction – two months ahead," said Oscar Rojas, FAO Natural Resources Officer who led this three-day workshop held for the Iranian experts.

Initially developed by FAO-HQ covering all around the world, the country-specific version of ASIS once calibrated with field data – including land-use maps, sowing dates, crop cycle duration and crop coefficients – it will detect periods of water stress in crops and forecast crop yields more accurately.

"The tool simplifies the results in the form of easy-to-interpret maps enabling decision-makers at national and local levels to implement drought mitigation activities in agriculture, including the payment of parametric crop insurances and the provision of social protection schemes, on a timely basis. These results are also useful for guiding public investments such as water harvesting, irrigation, and water reserves," added Rojas.

In this endeavor, and as part of "Integrated Program for Sustainable Water Resources Management in the Urmia Lake Basin" project jointly implemented by FAO and Urmia Lake Restoration Program (ULRP) and funded by the Embassy of Japan, the Organization supports Iranian authorities to establish country-level ASIS. "ASIS can assist in close monitoring of the agricultural stress within the Urmia Lake basin in order to manage the impact of those stresses on water resources management. Moreover, adding a probabilistic forecast to the ASIS which is going to be implemented within the extension of the ULRP-FAO project would be a proper tool for decision-makers," said Behdad Chehrenegar, the Head of Research Division of ULRP.

In this respect, "National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center (NDWMC) which is affiliated to Iran Meteorological Organization, is nominated as the national counterpart to have access to the decadal update of ASIS indicators. NDWMC will calibrate the indicators in the Urmia Lake basin in the first phase and then develop the outcome to the whole country," added Chehrenegar.

According to Chehrenegar, "NDWMC has the technical capacity for establishing an automated process of calculating the ASIS indicators. However, NDWMC requires specific assistant from FAO experts on the calibration of ASIS indicators."

Tehran, Sofia Finalizing Document on Exchanging Workforce

TEHRAN (MNA) –Labor Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari informed that Iran and Bulgaria are negotiating the endorsement of a mutual document on exchanging workforce, which is hoped to be finalized soon.

In a video conference with his Bulgarian counterpart Denitsa Sacheva, Iranian Minister of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare Mohammad Shariatmadari said the Islamic Republic seeks to dispatch expert Iranian workforce to Bulgaria. He also voiced Iran's readiness for providing Bulgaria with Iranian coronavirus test kits.

Referring to the 19th session of the Bulgarian-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic, Industrial, Trade and Technical Cooperation in Sofia, back in 2019, Shariatmadari said, "Following the talks held in that event, Iran has voiced its readiness on sharing experiences on issues such as technical protection and occupational health, employment, entrepreneurship, technical and vocational training, social support for vulnerable groups, social security, and etc. with Bulgaria."

He also elaborated that Bulgaria suggested for endorsement of a bilateral document on exchanging workforce with Iran and the Islamic Republic has welcomed it.

The Bulgarian minister for her part hoped that the draft of the document would be signed in the near future.

In this video conference the two sides also briefed each other on the taken measures by their governments about supporting workforce in their countries under the Covid-19 pandemic.

In April 2019, and during the 19th session of the Bulgarian-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission, Iran and Bulgaria signed six Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) to boost cooperation in different fields, including ports and marine transport, postal services, trade, meteorology, and standardization policies.

The agreements were signed during a meeting between Iran's visiting Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami with Bulgarian senior officials, including Prime Minister Boyko Borissov.

Imports of Pesticide From Europe Halted

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran's Plant Protection Organization says consumption of dangerous pesticide in the agriculture sector of the country has dropped sharply, adding that imports of pesticides from European countries has been halted due to sanctions.



Speaking at a presser, Keikhosrow Changelvaei highlighted the latest performance of the organization in combat with pests in the agro sector. He said in the wheat fields, combat with two pests of rust and age are very important because these two pests can inflict heavy damages on the fields and production.

He said that in the current year, combat with rust pest carried out in the wheat fields over 570 hectares, reiterating the combat saved the country from damages worth some 1500b tomans. He also said that the level of area for combat with age pest of wheat is some 2.5m hectare.

He then pointed to the country's challenge with desert locusts, adding that this year the combat with the aggressive desert locusts has been carried out in an area around 400,000 hectares of agro lands.

Changelvaei added that each swarm group of desert locusts can use two million tons of wheat and it can inflict thousands of billion tomans of damage.

He warned that the population of aggressing desert locusts may become 20-fold in October, adding that due to heavy rains in India and Pakistan, the number of locust would increase in Iran. He says it is expected the next invasion of locusts to happen in December. He said the locusts originally come from Arabian Peninsula.

Changelvaei added that the country needs at least 300b tomans of credit for better fight with this invasion.

He also said in the past ten years, the organization has tried its best to eliminate hazardous pesticides and replace them with lowly dangerous ones, adding that in 1996, hazardous pesticides accounted for 29 percent of farmers' consumption basket but it was reduced to 5 percent last year.

He said that the amount of pesticide consumption in the world is 2.8 kilograms per hectare while in Iran it is 2.5 kilograms per hectare. He reiterated that the amount of consumed pesticides in the developed countries like Japan is 19 kilograms per hectare.

He noted that almost all pesticides used in the country are imported, noting that 95 percent of the needed pesticides are imported from India and Pakistan and the remaining amount is provided through other countries.

Changelvaei added that due to sanctions, imports of pesticides from European countries like Germany have been halted.

PGSOC Special Supporter of Domestic Producers

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Manager of commercial department of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) Mr. Emad Zarei underscored the company's policy of supporting the domestic producers and providers, noting this approach has a key role in creating pick-up in production, increase in competition and quality of domestic-made products.



Zarei in an interview pointed to this year which has been named Surge in Production by the Supreme Leader, adding that in this year, all efforts of the commercial department of PGSOC have been focused on materializing this smart slogan, adding that in the first quarter of the year, major purchases of the company for its refinery have been from domestic producers and knowledge-based companies.

He reiterated that the policies of the company since the beginning of the process for constructing its refinery have been to support the domestic producers and providers and this approach has had key role in pick-up in production, boosting competition and quality of the domestic-made products.

Zarei said that the company ordered the domestic companies for producing sensitive parts of the refinery like compressors and mechanical seals of pumps which was a very successful experience and it is source of pride that trust to the domestic producers led to creation of such a self-belief feeling and followed by indigenization of technology and replacing foreign-made products with their domestic-made likes.

He then pointed to the ways of PGSOC for making the sanctions ineffective, adding that due to the cruel unilateral sanctions, the company shifted its approach for providing its needed parts and equipment from the overseas countries to the domestic producers and it set up a committee on domestic production which led to massive job creation in the country.

Mossad Spy Chief Visits UAE for Security Talks

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Israel's Mossad spy agency chief Yossi Cohen visited the United Arab Emirates for security talks, Emirati state media reported Tuesday, only days after the countries agreed to establish diplomatic ties.

The head of Israel's foreign intelligence service discussed "cooperation in the fields of security" with the UAE's national security advisor, Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi, reported the official WAM news agency.

Cohen's trip marked the first visit to the UAE by an Israeli official after the announcement last week by US President Donald Trump that the two countries had agreed to normalise relations.



Oman's Sultan Names New Foreign Minister

MUSCAT (AFP) - Oman's Sultan Haitham on Tuesday appointed a new top diplomat, replacing the long-serving Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah in a government reshuffle.

Sultan Haitham, since his accession in January, has vowed to maintain Oman's policy of neutrality and non-interference.

Badr Albusaidi, 60, was named foreign minister, a title held by the late Sultan Qaboos himself but with Alawi responsible for foreign affairs for the past two decades. Albusaidi has been in the diplomatic service since the 1980s and held a number of posts, including foreign ministry secretary-general.



Greece, Cyprus Seek Tougher EU Stand on East Med Dispute



NICOSIA (AFP) - Cyprus and Greece on Tuesday urged the European Union to take a tougher stance against Turkey's tension-ratcheting activity in the eastern Mediterranean.

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias made an unscheduled trip to Nicosia to coordinate policy among the two EU allies, as a crisis brews after Turkey sent naval ships into disputed waters.

Dendias met his Cypriot counterpart Nikos Christodoulides and President Nicos Anastasiades.

Nicosia and Athens seek a tougher stance from Brussels as they argue that Turkey has violated their sovereignty as well as that of the EU.

"The escalation of Turkish aggression" is directed at the EU, Dendias told a news conference.

"Turkish provocations show contempt for the clear positions of the EU, the US... contempt for European values, international law... and constitute unacceptable militarisation," he said after meeting his Cypriot counterpart.

He accused Turkey of playing a "destabilising role" in the region. "For a long time, Cyprus and Greece have pointed out that the appeasement of Mr Erdogan would result in an unprecedented escalation of Turkey's delinquent behaviour," Christodoulides said, referring to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Tensions were stoked last week when Ankara dispatched a research ship, Oruc Reis, accompanied by Turkish naval vessels off the Greek island of Kastellorizo. Greece also deployed warships to monitor the vessels.

The mood has soured since Greece and Egypt signed an agreement on August 6 to set up an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has said his country would step up energy exploration and not "compromise" on its rights.

Ankara has also sent a drillship into waters that Cyprus has designated as its EEZ for gas exploration licensed to US, French and Italian energy companies. France has "temporarily reinforced" its military presence in the eastern Mediterranean in support of Greece and Cyprus. A French navy frigate could be seen off southern Cyprus on Tuesday.

The search for oil and gas has long been a source of tension between NATO allies Greece and Turkey.

Ankara paused its operations off a Greek island last month, saying it wanted to see how talks with Greece and Germany progressed.

But Erdogan has announced a resumption of the search for energy, accusing Greece of reneging on its promises. Turkey was incensed by the Egypt-Greece deal, branding it "null and void".

Ankara signed its own controversial agreement last year with Libya's UN-recognised government, claiming extensive areas of the Mediterranean for Turkey.

Abbas Says Palestinians Not Worried About Nonsense Israel-UAE Deal

RAMALLAH (Reuters) - Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Tuesday that Palestinians were not concerned about the normalisation deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, referring to the accord as "nonsense".

In his first public remarks since the U.S.-sponsored deal was announced last week, Abbas accused the Persian Gulf Arab state of turning its back on Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank and an Israeli-led blockade in Gaza.

However, Abbas said: "We aren't worried about the nonsense that happens here and there and especially in recent days, when a trilateral agreement between the Emirates, Israel and America was announced."

Israel, long shunned by most Arab and Muslim countries in the region, on Thursday agreed with the UAE to forge full relations, angering Palestinians who have long looked to oil-rich Persian Gulf states for support in their quest for statehood.

"They (the UAE) have turned their backs on everything: the rights of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian state, the two-state solution, and the holy city of Jerusalem," Abbas said during a meeting of factions in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Abbas, 84, accused the UAE of trying to justify the deal by arguing it helped stop Israeli annexations in the West Bank, a move which the United States says it will not consent to for "some time" in order to focus on implementing the agreement.

In a rare sign of unity, Abbas's meeting at his presidential compound was attended by rival groups including the Islamist group Hamas, which rules Gaza and from which Abbas's Fatah party, which dominates the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, has long been estranged.

Although senior Palestinian officials have called for an urgent meeting of the Arab League over the deal, few countries have come to the Palestinians' defence in wake of the agreement.

Kuwait said its position towards Israel is unchanged, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar have remained silent. Others, like Bahrain and Oman, have welcomed the deal, stirring speculation that the two Gulf states could follow in formalizing ties with Israel.



Democrats Nominate Biden for President, Vowing to End Trump Chaos

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Democrats formally nominated Joe Biden for president on Tuesday, vowing his election would repair a pandemic-battered America and put an end to the chaos that has defined Republican President Donald Trump's administration.

The second night of the party's four-night national convention, under the theme "Leadership Matters," featured elder statesmen like former presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, rising stars of the Democratic Party as well as prominent Republicans, who made the case that Biden would return integrity to the White House and normalcy to American lives.

Biden's wife, Jill, an educator, delivered the headline speech from a Delaware high school where she once taught, offering a deeply personal account of how their love helped him heal after his first wife and infant daughter were killed in a car accident.

"I never imagined at the age of 26 I would be asking myself, 'How do you make a broken family whole?'" she said. The answer, she said, is the same for a broken nation: "With love and understanding."

"If we entrust this nation to Joe, he will do for your family what he did for ours: bring us together and make us whole," she said. Throughout the evening, Democratic leaders contrasted Biden's long experience with what they described as Trump's deadly mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak and his willingness to corrupt democratic institutions. "At a time like this, the Oval Office should be a command centre," Clinton said in a prerecorded video. "Instead, it's a storm centre. There's only chaos. Just one thing never changes - his determination to deny responsibility and shift the blame."

With the four-day convention largely virtual due to the coronavirus, delegates from around the country cast votes remotely to confirm Biden as the nominee in a coast-to-coast roll call that drew instant raves on social media.

In clips that showcased the party's diversity, Democrats explained why they were supporting Biden while putting their own state-specific spin on the proceedings, from a calamari appetizer in Rhode Island to a herd of cattle in Montana. After hearing from his home state of Delaware, which went last in his honour, Biden appeared live alongside Jill Biden to thank the party for nominating him, more than three decades after his first unsuccessful run for the White House.

"Thank you very, very much from the bottom of my heart," said Biden, who will deliver his acceptance speech on Thursday. "It means the world to me and my family."

Russia Used Manafort, WikiLeaks To Boost Trump in 2016

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Russia used Republican political operative Paul Manafort and the WikiLeaks website to try to help now-U.S. President Donald Trump win the 2016 election, a Republican-led Senate committee said in its final review of the matter on Tuesday.

WikiLeaks played a key role in Russia's effort to assist Republican Trump's campaign against Democrat Hillary Clinton and likely knew it was helping Russian intelligence, said the 966-page report, which is likely to be the most definitive public account of the 2016 election controversy.

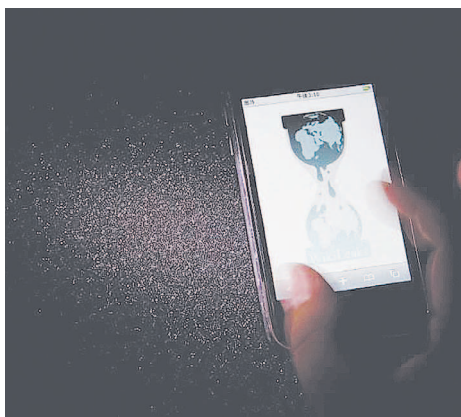
The report found President Vladimir Putin personally directed the Russian efforts to hack computer networks and accounts affiliated with the Democratic Party and leak information damaging to Clinton.

Asked about the report at an event in Yuma, Arizona, Trump said: "I don't know anything about it. I didn't read it."

"It's all a hoax," Trump told reporters.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence alleged Manafort collaborated with Russians, including oligarch Oleg Deripaska and "Russian intelligence officer" Konstantin Kilimnik, before, during, and after the election.

The panel found Manafort's role and proximity to Trump created opportunities for Russian intelligence, saying his "high-level access and willingness to share information with individuals closely affiliated with the Russian intelligence services... represented a grave



counterintelligence threat."

A lawyer for Manafort did not respond to a request for comment. WikiLeaks did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

It was not clear what effect, if any, the report might have on the current presidential campaign. Trump will face Democratic candidate Joe Biden on Nov. 3.

Russia's alleged election interference, which Moscow denies, sparked a two-year-long U.S. investigation headed by Special Counsel Robert Mueller.

In a report released last year, Mueller found no conclusive evidence of coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign. He cited 10 instances in which Trump may have tried to impede his probe but did not say if this constituted obstruction of justice.

Trump and his supporters have consistently bristled at suggestions foreign interference helped his upset 2016 victory. They have sought to discredit the intelligence agencies' findings as the politically charged work of a "deep state."

Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh on Tuesday said the report vindicated his stance that there was no "collusion" between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russia.

Biden campaign spokesman Andrew Bates said Trump had welcomed Russian assistance in 2016 "with open arms."

"Donald Trump may believe that the Russian government should have a say in our elections, but it is for the American people to decide," Bates said.

Merkel Rules Out Easing Coronavirus Rules

DUSSELDORF (AFP)

- Chancellor Angela

Merkel warned on

Tuesday there could be no further relaxation of coronavirus restrictions while Germany grapples with a surge in new infections.

She urged Germans to follow the rules on hygiene precautions and reminded travellers returning from risk areas that quarantine was not an option "but a must" so long as they could not show a negative test.

"We are seeing that an increase in mobility and closer contacts are leading to a higher number of cases," Merkel told a press conference in Duesseldorf.

"I believe there can be no further loosening (of restrictions) at this point," she said in her first public comments on the pandemic since returning from her summer break.

Germany has fared better than many European neighbours in suppressing the virus so far but like elsewhere, the number of coronavirus cases has jumped significantly over the summer holidays.

Much of the rise has been blamed on returning holidaymakers as well as parties and family gatherings.

Germany has in recent weeks reported an average of well over 1,000 new cases a day, compared with around 350 in early June.

"This is a trend that cannot continue and must be halted," Merkel told reporters.

"When I say we need to pull in the reins I mean the rules need to be enforced very consistently."

Germany earlier this month introduced free, mandatory tests for anyone returning from areas deemed a high risk for COVID-19 infections, including tourist hotspot Mallorca.

People awaiting their results must stay in quarantine at home until the test comes back negative, Merkel said, warning that those who fail to comply face fines.





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S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Darrous Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Darrous
240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S
S, J, balcony, pkg, & F.F

Niavaran bldg
7storey, 20bdrs, S/pool, S, J
green yard, pkg lots, New

Farmanieh Apts
(\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F
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French to Wear Masks in Workplaces

PARIS (AFP) - The French government warned on Tuesday that mask-wearing would soon be compulsory in all workplaces to keep the coronavirus under control, as countries across the world ramped up localised restrictions on nightlife and socialising.

South Korea's capital Seoul was the latest region to shut nightclubs and some types of restaurants and ban large gatherings, following similar moves in parts of Spain and Italy.

The Seoul cluster of a few hundred cases sprang up among a congregation of a Protestant church, but health official Kwon Jun-wook warned: "If the spread cannot be contained this week, daily life in the entire country may have to stop."



New U.S. Curbs Threaten Huawei's Smartphone Crown and Hit Suppliers

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - Ramped-up U.S. restrictions on Huawei are likely to choke the Chinese company's access to even off-the-shelf chips, threaten its crown as the world's largest smartphone maker and disrupt global tech supply, executives and experts warned.

The Trump administration expanded its curbs on Huawei on Monday and banned suppliers from selling chips made using U.S. technology to the firm without a special license - closing potential loopholes in its May sanctions that could have let Huawei access the tech via third parties.

The curbs underscore the growing rift in Sino-U.S. ties as Washington presses governments to squeeze Huawei out, alleging the company would hand over data to Beijing for spying. Huawei denies it spies for China.

"If the choking of Huawei continues there will be reverberations across the semiconductor complex," said Neil Campling, head of TMT research at Mirabaud Securities. "And the retaliation from China remains unknown and a significant risk." The tech giant's business has suffered since America first blacklisted it a year ago. If Huawei cannot source chipsets as a result of the expanded curbs, its "handset business will likely disappear", Jefferies said in a note. Other brokerages, including JP Morgan, echoed that view, adding this would give players such as Xiaomi and Apple an opportunity to increase their market share.

Huawei did not respond to requests for a comment.

Earlier this month, Huawei flagged it would stop making its flagship Kirin chipsets from September because U.S. pressure on its suppliers had made it impossible for its HiSilicon division to keep making the chipsets that are key components in mobile phones. Huawei's HiSilicon division has relied on software from U.S. companies such as Synopsys (SNPS.O) to design its chips. It outsourced the production to Taiwanese contract chipmaker TSMC, which uses equipment from U.S. companies.

The U.S. ban represents a setback for chip suppliers too, at least in the near term, as they have to apply for licences that comply with the new rules, experts said.

It is yet unclear how many suppliers require these licences and whether they will get them. In Asia, memory chipmakers including South Korea's Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, Japanese image sensor maker Sony and Taiwanese chipset maker MediaTek may be affected, a chip industry source said.

Shares in MediaTek, which counts Huawei as a major customer, slumped 10% on Tuesday. MediaTek said it was monitoring new developments of rules to remain in compliance, but that it did not expect a material impact to near-term operations, based on available information. In Europe, German chipmaker Infineon which counts Huawei as a key customer for its power management products, and Austrian sensor specialist ams said they were reviewing the impact of the latest U.S. restrictions.

European tech stocks were firmer, however, reflecting their relatively low exposure to Huawei, which accounts for 7% of sales at ams, 3% at Infineon and 4% at STMicroelectronics, according to figures cited by Mirabaud's Campling.

Several questions remain about the how the new curbs will be implemented, and how hawkish a stance Washington plans to take. For example, a semiconductor vendor would "potentially be required to know where all its products end up so they do not engage in any transaction where a Huawei affiliate might be a purchaser, intermediate consignee, ultimate consignee or end-user", political risk consultant Eurasia Group said in a note. But there are likely to be some winners in the longer term if Huawei is forced to relinquish its spot as the world's largest smartphone maker.

"Huawei currently has 45-50% market share in China and, if this becomes vulnerable, Xiaomi, along with Oppo and Vivo, are likely to be the biggest beneficiaries," JP Morgan analyst Gokul Hariharan said, referring to Chinese smartphone makers. "Huawei would also be likely to lose further ground in the international smartphone space and 5G base stations, both of which could benefit Samsung. The Apple food chain could also benefit from potential iPhone share gains."

TSMC, which has said it would not ship wafers to Huawei after Sept. 15, will be slightly hurt in the long run, Bernstein said in a note. "TSMC is 'everybody's foundry' eventually."

Trump Promises Tax Credits for Firms That Bring Jobs Back From China

MANKATO (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday vowed to create 10 million jobs in 10 months, in part by setting up tax credits for U.S. companies that relocate manufacturing facilities to the United States from China.

Trump, seeking to build support ahead of the Nov. 3 election, told supporters during a visit to Mankato, Minnesota, his administration would also strip federal contracts from companies that outsourced work to China. "We will create tax credits for companies that bring jobs from China back to America," Trump said during an hourlong speech. He also predicted the U.S. economy would bounce back strongly from the economic shock caused by the coronavirus pandemic - as long as he was re-elected. "What we're doing together is nothing short of an economic miracle and now we're doing it again," Trump told cheering supporters. "We built the greatest economy in the history of the world and now I have to do it again." Trump hailed increased retail sales in recent months. But data released last week showed U.S. retail sales increased less than expected in July as consumers cut back on purchases of motor vehicles. They could slow further in the months ahead amid spiraling new COVID-19 infections and a cut in unemployment benefit checks.

The Trump administration is taking action on multiple fronts to rebalance U.S. economic ties with China, including through restrictions on Chinese firms like technology giant Huawei, bans on popular apps like TikTok, and a spate of executive orders aimed at ensuring domestic production of key products.

At the time, the administration is using "Buy America" requirements and incentives to persuade U.S. firms to bolster domestic supply chains, especially for critical supplies, such as drugs and medical equipment.

Japan's Low Jobless Rate Masks Deepening Worker Despair

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's low unemployment rate on paper suggests an economy weathering the coronavirus reasonably well, but official figures belie worsening prospects for the country's army of temporary workers, who make up about 40% of the jobs market.

A rise in job losses would undermine one of the few successes of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics" stimulus policies, aimed at reviving the economy. Japan's jobless rate stood at 2.8% in June, much lower than 10.2% in the United States and 7.8% in the 19-member euro zone.

But a close look at data shows a rising number of people dropping out of the jobs race. That prevents the official jobless rate - the

ratio of job seekers who are yet to land work - from rising much.

About 2.4 million furloughed workers are kept on payrolls backed by state subsidies, which the government is seeking to extend beyond its end-September expiration.

"The huge number of furloughed workers suggests companies are saddled with excess labour and are under pressure to cut jobs down the road," said Hisashi Yamada, senior economist at Japan Research Institute. "Job losses will hurt Japan's economic recovery as they spread to broader sectors in coming years, eroding households' purchasing power," he said.

Japan's economy plunged by a record pace in the second quarter as the pandemic hit consumption and exports.

In the jobs market, the pain has been felt most by those categorised as "non-regular workers," including those with low-paying, part-time jobs, who make up 38% of all employees in Japan.

Non-regular workers account for roughly three quarters of those employed by restaurants and hotels, many of which were hit hard by the pandemic, according to the labour ministry.

A government survey showed more than 40,000 workers, about 15,000 of whom are non-regular workers, have been laid off since February.

One worker in her 20s, who was employed as temp staff at a call centre in Kanagawa prefecture, quit her job in June. "My employer would not allow us non-regular workers to work from home," she told Reuters, on condition of anonymity. "I was told that I could take time off but would not be paid, so I quit, thinking it'd be better living on unemployment insurance." Some economists estimate the jobless rate would be closer to 4% if furloughed workers were included in the official figures.

More broadly, the downturn has affected both those at the start and end of their careers.

India Urges Auto Companies to Cut Royalties to Foreign Parents

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India's commerce minister has asked automakers

to find ways to reduce royalty payments to foreign parent companies for use of technology or brand names, two sources told Reuters, in an effort to boost local investment and reduce outflows.

In India's competitive auto market, top-selling carmakers Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor's local unit pay millions of dollars in royalties to parent companies in Japan and South Korea for using their technology and brand to build and sell cars.

The minister, Piyush Goyal, in a meeting last week asked officials from groups representing carmakers and auto parts manufacturers to review such payments with a view to reducing them, said people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"The concern raised during the meeting was that the outflow is high, even for old technologies, and something should be done about it," said one of the sources.

The sources declined to be named as the talks are private.

The ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

India, for years, has debated imposing stricter caps on royalty payments which spiked after 2009 when foreign investment rules were eased and restrictions on such payments were removed.

The country's markets regulator last year suggested imposing curbs on payments exceeding 2% of revenue. The limit was finally set at 5% after complaints from some sectors and fears it may dissuade foreign firms from investing or sharing technology.

Recently however, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has made a renewed push to make the country a major manufacturing hub by encouraging domestic production and curbing imports. It also wants to increase local investment and reduce foreign outflows.

While India does not restrict the amount that can be paid as royalty, any payment by a locally listed company exceeding 5% of revenues needs shareholder approval.

Listed companies such as Maruti Suzuki and parts makers including Bosch, Schaeffler India and Wabco India typically pay royalties of between 1%-5% to their foreign owners.

Maruti Suzuki paid 38.2 billion rupees (\$510 million) as royalty to its Japanese parent Suzuki Motor in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, amounting to 5% of its revenue, according to its annual report.

Privately-owned companies such as Hyundai's local unit paid \$150 million or 2.6% of revenue as royalties to its South Korean parent in fiscal 2019 and Toyota Motor's India arm paid \$88 million or 3.4% of revenue to its Japanese parent, government data shows.

Royalty provision has been important in attracting foreign investments into various sectors in India, especially autos, said Vaibhav Gupta, partner at tax firm, Dhruva Advisors.

Rebuilding Europe After Pandemic Akin To Post-War Reconstruction



FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Rebuilding Europe after the coronavirus pandemic will be akin to the post-World War II reconstruction effort and the bloc must reaffirm its core values despite challenges from global powers, former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said.

The pandemic risked the destruction of human capital not seen since the war so reconstruction should focus on the people who must pay off the unprecedented amount of debt amassed this year, Draghi said in a lecture in Rimini, Italy.

Moreover, even as Europe transforms it must recommit to some of its key principles, including multilateralism and the global rule of law, even as powers such as the United States and China question these principles, Draghi added.

"We should take inspiration from those who were involved in rebuilding the world, Europe and Italy after World War II," said Draghi, who has spoken rarely since leaving the ECB late last year.

"The debt created by the pandemic is unprecedented and will have to be repaid mainly by those who are young today," Draghi said. "It is therefore our duty to equip them with the means to service that debt."

Draghi said low rates did not automatically make debt sustainable and that the funds must be used for productive purposes, including investing in human capital, productive infrastructure and research.

He said spending should also reflect society's changing preferences, including towards environmental protection, better health care and digitalization, since remote working was bound to gain prominence.

"However, there is a sector which is critical for growth and therefore for all the transformations I have just listed, and where a long-term vision must be married with immediate action: education and, more generally, investment in young people," he said.

Indonesia Posts Largest Trade Surplus in 9 Years in July

JAKARTA (Reuters) - Indonesia posted its biggest trade surplus in nine years in July, as exports improved while domestic demand for imports remained subdued amid the coronavirus pandemic, data from the statistics bureau showed on Tuesday.

Southeast Asia's largest economy reported a \$3.26 billion surplus in July, the bureau said, the biggest since August, 2011, according to Refinitiv Eikon data.

The figure handily beat a forecast in a Reuters poll for a \$680 million surplus and followed a \$1.27 billion surplus in June. July exports grew 14.33% from June to \$13.73 billion, though were 9.90% below the value of shipments in the same month last year. Still, the pace of contraction was slower than the poll's prediction for a 16.65% drop.

By value, exports were the highest since March. Statistics bureau chief Suhariyanto attributed this to sales of agricultural products like palm oil, herbs and birds' nests, and despite weaker exports of coal, rubber and oil and gas.

Imports plunged 32.55% on an annual basis to \$10.47 billion, steeper than the 22.48% fall expected in the poll.

The data indicates the potential for a further narrowing of the current account deficit for the rest of the year, even after it significantly narrowed in the first half due to the pandemic.

Central bank data earlier on Tuesday showed Indonesia's current account gap in April-June was equal to 1.2% of GDP, less than half the deficit in the same period in 2019.

Bank Danamon's economist, Wisnu Wardana, said despite the trade data the central bank may need to consider a number of other indicators before utilising "a limited room of monetary easing", such as inflation and the rupiah's movement. Bank Indonesia (BI) is due to wrap up a two-day policy review on Wednesday. The majority of economists in a Reuters poll, including Wardana, expects the benchmark rate to remain unchanged after four cuts to support the economy.



Russia Ready to Supply Industrial Machinery With Long-Term Payment

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Russian Trade Center to Iran Pavel Bukhanov said that Russia is willing to supply mines and industrial machinery with bank facility and interest rate less than the European banks at 1.5%.

Pavel Bukhanov said the Russian Export Center Group has a special plan for supplying mineral

machinery and equipment.

He added that the bank facility interest rate of European countries is 4% but Russia will charge 1.5% for loans to purchase industrial machinery.

He noted that 2,500 items are included in this category and Russia will provide its support.



Fitch Affirms Pakistan's Rating

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Fitch Ratings has affirmed Pakistan's long-term foreign credit rating at 'B-' with a stable outlook, anticipating a surge in foreign exchange reserves to a four-year high at \$16 billion by June 2021 under the ongoing International Monetary Fund's (IMF) loan program and available Saudi Arabia's financing.

It expects Riyadh would withdraw the remaining deposit of \$2 billion from the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) foreign exchange reserves on the scheduled timeline of 2022. Besides, the country has plans in place to float Eurobond and Sukuk to borrow more from the international market by December 2020, the global credit rating agency noted.

The foreign currency reserves stood at \$7.7 billion about a year ago, it said. "Fitch Ratings has maintained Pakistan's sovereign rating at 'B-' with a 'stable outlook', which further confirms Moody's assessment published earlier this month. Once again, this is a clear affirmation of the government's well-considered and effective economic and financial policies in some of the most challenging circumstances in living memory created by the Covid-19 pandemic," the finance ministry tweeted on Monday.

Fitch Ratings, in its rating action commentary on Monday, stated, "The external finances appear resilient to shock due to the authorities' policy actions and continuing multilateral and bilateral financial support."

It expected economic revival in FY21, expecting gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 1.2% compared to a contraction of 0.38% in FY20.

It also found Pakistan's policy actions on the economic front like a tight monetary policy and a flexible rupee-dollar exchange rate regime very much sound.

The Covid-19 outbreak, however, prompted authorities to significantly cut the benchmark interest rate by 625 basis points to 7% to help households and businesses to cope with the pandemic. With this, the real interest rate has fallen to negative.

Moreover, the net foreign exchange reserves dropped to negative and the rupee depreciated further mainly due to panic pullout of investment by foreigners from rupee-denominated treasury bills and Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs) to the tune of \$3 billion since the Covid-19 emergence.

The current challenges to the economy like weak public finances, large fiscal deficits, high government debt-to-GDP ratio and large external debt repayments against low foreign exchange reserves led Fitch to rate Pakistan's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating (IDR) at 'B-'.

"The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these challenges by depressing economic growth and pressuring public finances," it said.

Pakistan may face challenges in collection of revenue in taxes and workers' remittance may drop due to Covid-19 challenges. It, however, finds it difficult for authorities to announce a second stimulus package for individual and businesses to cope with Covid-19 challenges.

The situation may increase debt-to-GDP ratio to 90% in FY21 and expected to reduce to 85% by FY25, Fitch estimated. The agency, however, strongly expected the country's economic indicators to improve growing forward, as Pakistan is committed to implement the economic reform agenda under IMF loan program.



"Foreign holdings (in T-bills/PIBs) have stabilised since then (Covid-19), and reserves have been restored through multilateral and bilateral disbursements. The central bank's net forward position has increased somewhat in the past months and net reserves remain negative, even though they have narrowed," Fitch said.

Pakistan's current account deficit narrowed to 1.1% of GDP in FY20, from a peak of 6.1% in FY18, due mainly to import compression and lower oil prices. Fitch forecasts a slight widening of the current account deficit to 1.7% in FY21 due to a modest recovery in imports and declining remittances.

"Remittances rose unexpectedly by 7.3% in 4QFY20, but we view this as temporary and expect a decline of about 10% in FY21 due to the impact of the global economic shock on Pakistan's overseas workers."

External financing requirements have declined, in line with the narrowing of the current account deficit. However, the government's external debt repayments remain high at about \$10.3 billion (about 80% of current gross liquid reserves) in FY21 and \$8.9 billion in FY22.

"The \$3 billion in deposits at the central bank from Saudi Arabia were slated to be rolled over through 2022, but the Saudi authorities requested repayment on

\$1 billion of the deposits in July. In our baseline scenario, we assume the additional \$2 billion will be rolled over when the respective tranches mature in December and January, but this is subject to some risk," it said.

Egypt, Iraq to Establish Firm to Boost Bilateral Ties in Oil Sector

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Egypt and Iraq discussed strengthening bilateral relations in the oil and gas sector through operating Egyptian oil companies in Iraq and establishing a joint company to implement projects.

Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Tarek el-Molla said that the agreement to import 12 million barrels of Iraq's crude oil is still active, noting that the six-month deal is renewed regularly.

The Egyptian petroleum sector is ready to reinforce the presence of its companies in Iraq in the coming period with various oil, gas, and petrochemical activities, announced Molla during his meeting with the Iraqi Ambassador to Cairo, Ahmed al-Dulaimi.

The Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources issued a press release, a copy of which was obtained by Asharq Al-Awsat, noting that Cairo discussed sending Egyptian experts in the field of oil refining to train Iraqi personnel. The two officials also agreed to train the cadres in this vital industry and meet Iraqi needs.

During the meeting, Molla stressed the importance of permanent coordination and continuous consultations between the oil and gas sectors of both countries to enhance cooperation.

UN Chief Honors Work of Humanitarians

TEHRAN (UNIC) – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on World Humanitarian Day, 19 August 2020, honored the work of humanitarians who overcome huge challenges to save and improve the lives of millions of people.

The full text of his message reads:

On World Humanitarian Day, we honor the work of humanitarians who overcome huge challenges to save and improve the lives of millions of people.

These real-life heroes are doing extraordinary things in extraordinary times to help women, men and children whose lives are upended by crises.

This year, humanitarian workers are stretched like never before.

They are responding to the global crisis of COVID-19, and with it the massive increase in humanitarian needs from the fallout of the pandemic.



The loss of jobs, education, food, water and safety is pushing millions more to the brink.

Movement restrictions to slow the spread of the virus have meant that communities, civil society and local organizations – as so often before – are the very first responders.

This year, we celebrate them: people who are often in need themselves, like refugees helping host communities, local health workers who care for the sick and vaccinate children, and humanitarians who negotiate access in areas of conflict to bring food, water and medicine.

They are the unsung heroes of the pandemic response – and they all too often risk their own lives to save the lives of others.

Today, join me in renewing our appreciation and support for the brave humanitarians, health workers and first responders who show solidarity and humanity in this time of unprecedented need.

Iran Defense...

FROM PAGE 1

The top Iranian general added that the country's defense industry is manufacturing advanced and modern military products, including fighter jets, drones, ballistic and precision missiles, radars, satellites, submarines, helicopters, tanks, and other defense needs and what the country's defense industry does have become an encouraging model for the success of other production areas, especially in the field of economy and industry which uses its non-military abilities for resolving countries' need in confronting coronavirus pandemic".

Pointing to the shameful failure of the United States to pass a resolution to extend the arms embargo on Iran, he said, "Surely, the improvement of Iran's defense industry with complete independence is because of the untiring efforts of the Islamic Revolution forces, which with expertise, commitment and self-confidence have made Iran self-sufficient in obtaining advanced defense technologies." Major General Baqeri emphasized the need to promote defense powers components for the Iranian system and nation, as well as comprehensive support from the armed forces.

New COVID-19 Lockdowns to Add to Economic Burden on S. Koreans



SEOUL (Dispatches) - The number of new coronavirus cases has surged sharply in recent days, feeding concerns about another round of lockdowns here, and the nation's central bank said that most South Koreans are likely to suffer economically if heavy restrictions are put in place once again.

"If lockdown and social distancing measures are strictly enforced due to the resurgence of the virus, nonessential workers without the option of remote working will be extremely vulnerable to losing their jobs," the Bank of Korea said in its regular report on economic issues.

Nonessential workers are people employed in jobs that are not considered crucial in an emergency such as the current pandemic. Nonessential jobs account for 42 percent of the job market in Korea and the category includes many positions dealing with accommodation, food and beverages, real estate, the arts and sports.

"Nonessential workers without the option of remote work account for 35 percent of the total workforce, which means that under a strict lockdown, 1 out of 3 employees here will face difficulty in participating in normal economic activities due to reduced working hours and temporary leave," it added.

Jobs at high risk from the pandemic also include non-remote jobs and those that require frequent face-to-face interaction. The former account for 74 percent of the job market and the latter 55 percent.

The BOK said that jobs requiring frequent face-to-face contact without the option of remote work -- leaving workers vulnerable to infection -- accounted for 46 percent of the market. Job losses in this segment would take a "long time" to recover from, the central bank noted.

Low-income people, people with low levels of education and women are more likely to hold jobs that leave them vulnerable in the pandemic.

Korea lost about 277,000 jobs in July, marking a sharp drop in the number of employed people in the country for a fifth consecutive month.

U.S. Not Allowed to...

FROM PAGE 1

He added, "Once again we are on the eve of the blessed and life-giving month of Muharram. We receive the cultural blessings, trust, and strength of our resistance from the month of Muharram, and always in the month of Muharram, we open the windows of our souls and hearts to the shining sun of guidance and salvation, the Ashura culture, to receive both the light of guidance and the life-giving warmth of that sun.

President Rouhani noted, "The people of Iran witnessed well these days, and on August 19, 1956, the enemy apparently achieved an apparent success that year, but inwardly their path was wrong, but these days, on August 15, 2020, they did not seem to succeed either and they failed in the Security Council".

"They prepared all this, they sent people and they were begging in different countries and they called, even on the day of the voting, they were constantly pressuring other countries, but they still failed," he said.

The President said: "I thank the 11 countries that did not vote in the UN Security Council on the plan to extend the arms embargo on Iran, and the two friendly countries - Russia and China - that voted unequivocally against the United States."

He stated that the U.S. is left alone, the Iranian nation must see this greatness because this victory belongs to the nation and the government is the representative and servant of the people and this event is unprecedented in the history of the United Nations.

The head of the government, stating that strengthening the Islamic Republic is in the interest of all of us, said: Of course, in these special circumstances, we understand and know that the enemy has not achieved and will not achieve its goals with its pressures, but has caused problems and harassed people.

President Rouhani pointed out: "We must stand against the enemy because this period is coming to an end. If anyone in Iran thinks that this regime of the White House and that these oppressive sanctions are permanent, they are both wrong. Both the tyranny of the White House will not last forever and the sanctions will not last forever and the sanctions will break and disappear."

Any Aggression on...

FROM PAGE 1

"We conduct research and design products according to threats and requirements," he added.

The minister noted that missile are among fundamental elements of the country's defense capability, describing it as a 'tool' to prevent war. "Our perspective is that of an active deterrence and the Islamic Republic of Iran's defense power reflect this deterrence to enemies."

"As long as we need defense, this power should remain updated and ready; of course, enemies seek to take away this capability so that we would not be able to respond to their probable measure ... we want to be independent and should have this power as one of the most important components of power is the missile capability."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hatami said that new achievements will be unveiled on the occasion of Defense Industry Day. The production line of 'Owj' jet engine and a new Iranian engine will be unveiled, he said, adding that an exhibition on Iran's UAV's will also be inaugurated.

Seoul Preparing...

FROM PAGE 1

He noted that Iran's Central Bank is to lodge a complaint against South Korea but some believe that Iran should wait till the U.S. presidential election but with this decision, the country would fall behind in its activities.

On Tuesday, Iranian and South Korean officials had a virtual meeting. After the meeting South Korean Finance Ministry in a statement said that it would continue talks with the South Korean companies dealing with Iran to continue their cooperation in order that both countries could have close cooperation in health and medical items. Iran's blocked money in the South Korean banks is estimated to be around \$8b.

U.S. Complaint...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations called the imposition of various pressures and sanctions on the Iranian people the result of the White House policy, highlighting: "Whatever it is, it cannot be called diplomacy."

The U.S. resolution obtained only two votes in favor -- the United States and the Dominican Republic. Russia and China voted against the measure, and the other 11 council members including Britain, Germany, and France, the European allies of the United States, abstained. A resolution needs at least nine positive votes and no vetoes to be adopted.

No Exit Talks Between Barca and Messi

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona insisted they had not heard from Lionel Messi that he wants to leave the club, as an emergency board meeting was held at Camp Nou.

Barca officials, including under-fire president Josep Maria Bartomeu, were due to discuss wholesale changes following the team's humiliating 8-2 Champions League quarter-final defeat by Bayern Munich on Friday.

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Ter Stegen Sidelined For Start of Season

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen will miss the start of the La Liga season after undergoing knee surgery which will rule him out for two and a half months, the Catalan club said on Tuesday.

Ter Stegen, who had one of the worst nights of his career last Friday when Barca were trounced 8-2 by Bayern Munich in the Champions League, volunteered to undergo the operation on the right patellar tendon in his right knee in order to prevent future damage.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY AUGUST 20, 2020

Despite Mitchell's 57, Nuggets beat Jazz in OT

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jamal Murray scored 10 of his 36 points in overtime, Nikola Jokic had 29 points and 10 rebounds, and the Denver Nuggets overcame 57 points from Donovan Mitchell to beat the Utah Jazz 135-125 in Game 1 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series near Orlando on Monday.

Mitchell set a franchise postseason scoring record — and scored the third-most points in NBA playoff history — but had just six points in the overtime when Denver outscored Utah 20-10.

Jerami Grant had 19 points, Monte Morris added 14, Michael Porter Jr. scored 13 and Torrey Craig had 11 before fouling out for Denver. For the Jazz, Joe Ingles scored 19, Jordan Clarkson chipped in 18 off the bench and Rudy Gobert had 17 for the Jazz. Utah played without guard Mike Conley, who left the bubble for the birth of his son.

Los Angeles Clippers 118 — Dallas Mavericks 110

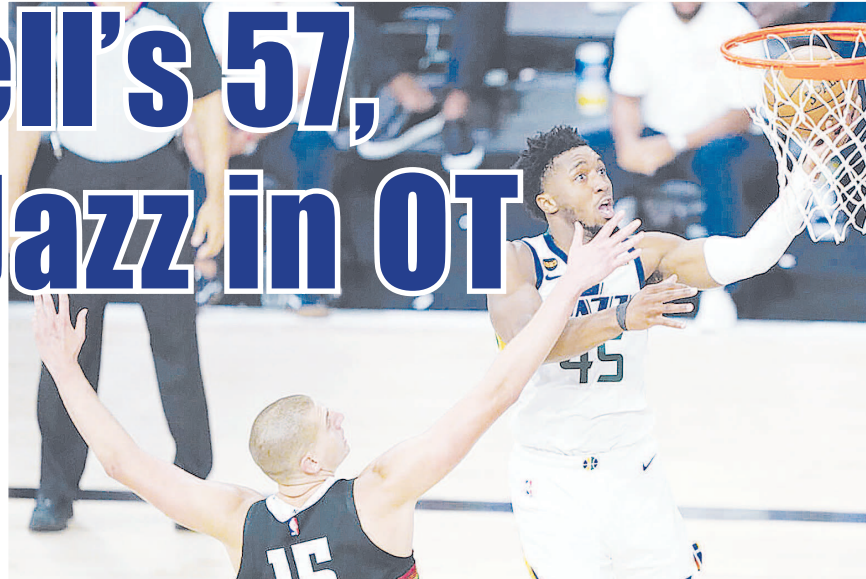
Kawhi Leonard registered 29 points, 12 rebounds, six assists and three steals to help Los Angeles hold off Dallas in the opening game of their Western Conference first-round playoff series.

The Mavericks led by five points early in the third quarter before big man Kristaps Porzingis was ejected following his second technical foul of the game. The Clippers immediately responded with a 9-2 run. Luka Doncic recorded 42 points, nine assists, seven rebounds and three steals, setting an NBA record for the highest point total in a player's postseason debut. He also committed 11 turnovers, one shy of the postseason record set by the Houston Rockets' James Harden in 2015.

Toronto Raptors 134 — Brooklyn Nets 110

Fred VanVleet scored a career playoff-best 30 points and added 11 assists as Toronto set a franchise record for points in a playoff game to top Brooklyn in the opener of their best-of-seven first-round series.

The Raptors dominated early and led by as many as 33 points in the second quarter only to have the lead shrink to nine points



entering the fourth quarter. Toronto regained control early in the fourth quarter and increased the lead to 18 points at 114-96 with 7:09 to play on a dunk and a free throw by OG Anunoby.

Serge Ibaka had 22 points and seven rebounds off the bench for the Raptors, and Pascal Siakam added 18 points and 11 rebounds. Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot matched his career best with 26 points for the Nets.

Boston Celtics 109 — Philadelphia 76ers 101

Jayson Tatum scored a playoff-career-high 32 points, Jaylen Brown added 29, and Boston beat Philadelphia in the opener of their first-round playoff series.

Brown had 15 points in the fourth as the Celtics outscored the 76ers 34-22 in the quarter to take Game 1 of the best-of-seven series. Tatum finished with 13 rebounds, and Kemba Walker chipped in 19 points. Gordon Hayward left the game in the fourth with a right ankle sprain and did not return. He is reportedly set to undergo an MRI exam.

Joel Embiid led Philadelphia with 26 points and 16 rebounds, and Josh Richardson and Alec Burks each scored 18. The 76ers played without All-Star guard Ben Simmons (knee surgery).

Koeman in Talks to Coach Barca



BARCELONA (Reuters) - Ronald Koeman has said he is in talks to leave his role as Netherlands manager in order to succeed Quique Setien as coach of Barcelona, who continued a restructuring effort on Tuesday by sacking sporting director Eric Abidal.

Koeman, who is revered by Barca fans for delivering their first European Cup, will be expected to lead Barca's rebuilding work after they were subjected to an 8-2 drubbing by Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarter-finals.

The Dutchman, who has coached the Netherlands since 2018, told reporters outside the national side's headquarters on Tuesday that he wanted to coach Barca but had not yet finalised a deal.

"It is only definite when my signature is on the document. Until then I cannot say anything, even if I wanted to," Koeman said.

Koeman is fondly remembered at Barca for the role he played in Johan Cruyff's hugely successful side known as the 'Dream Team' and for scoring the only goal against Sampdoria in the 1992 European Cup final.

Spurs Sign Hart On Free Transfer

LONDON (Reuters) - Tottenham Hotspur have signed Joe Hart on a free transfer, with the former England and Manchester City goalkeeper signing a two-year contract, the Premier League club said on Tuesday.

The 33-year-old left Burnley at the end of his previous contract in June, having made three appearances in all competitions last season after he found himself behind compatriot Nick Pope in the pecking order.

Hart, who was capped 75 times by England, will compete with first-choice keeper Hugo Lloris and Argentinian Paulo Gazzaniga at Spurs. "We are delighted to announce the signing of Joe Hart on a contract until 2022," Spurs said in a statement.

Hart won the league twice with Manchester City but lost his place in the team after the appointment of manager Pep Guardiola in 2016. He later had loan spells at Italian side Torino and West Ham United before signing permanently for Burnley in 2018.

He is Spurs' second signing of the transfer window following the arrival of Denmark midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg from Southampton in a deal reportedly worth around 15 million pounds (\$20 million). Spurs finished sixth in the league and will play in next season's Europa League qualifiers.

The new Premier League campaign begins on Sept. 12.

Muguruza Doubtful for U.S. Open Due to Ankle Problem

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Spain's Garbine Muguruza is doubtful for the U.S. Open due to an ankle problem which forced her to withdraw from this week's Western and Southern Open, the two-times Grand Slam singles champion said on Tuesday.

The women's draw at the Open, which will be played in a bio-secure bubble in New York due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, has already lost six of the world's top 10 players, who have withdrawn due to various issues.

World number two Simona Halep has joined top-ranked Ash Barty, defending champion Bianca Andreescu, Elina Svitolina, Kiki Bertens and Belinda Bencic in skipping the event at Flushing Meadows.



The 29-year-old Spanish international's position has come under increasing pressure due to the form shown by Dean Henderson on loan at Premier League rivals Sheffield United.

The 23-year-old Englishman is believed to have told United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer he will seek a move away if he is not given the number one spot.

Chelsea are reportedly keen to sign Henderson as they seek to offload Kepa Arrizabalaga. His understudy Willy Caballero is 39.

De Gea, though, sounded a defiant note following United's 2-1 loss to Spanish side Sevilla in the Europa League semi-finals.

De Gea Shrugs Off Criticism

LONDON (Dispatches) - David de Gea says he has faith in his abilities despite a torrent of criticism in recent months and questions over whether he should remain Manchester United's first choice goalkeeper.

The 29-year-old Spanish international's position has come under increasing pressure due to the form shown by Dean Henderson on loan at Premier League rivals Sheffield United.

The 23-year-old Englishman is believed to have told United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer he will seek a move away if he is not given the number one spot.

Chelsea are reportedly keen to sign Henderson as they seek to offload Kepa Arrizabalaga. His understudy Willy Caballero is 39.

De Gea, though, sounded a defiant note following United's 2-1 loss to Spanish side Sevilla in the Europa League semi-finals.

Solskjaer showed his faith in De Gea in selecting him for the Sevilla clash ahead of Sergio Romero, who usually played in the Europa League.

De Gea has been at United since 2011 and signed new and improved terms with them until at least 2023 last September.

He has been United's player of the year on four occasions but last season was a trying one for him reaching a nadir with two glaring errors in their FA Cup semi-final defeat by Chelsea.

"No, I trust in myself," De Gea told the Press Association news agency.

"I showed my qualities all the years, so I just keep available for the manager.

"I'm always ready to play and try to help the team as always, as I did always."

De Gea said that despite losing in three semi-finals last season -- they lost to Manchester City in the League Cup -- saw definite progress at the club under Solskjaer.

Neymar Helps Lead PSG Into Champions League Linal

LISBON (AFP) - Paris Saint-Germain are through to the final of the Champions League for the first time after goals by Marquinhos, Angel Di Maria and Juan Bernat saw them ease to a 3-0 win over RB Leipzig in a one-sided semi-final in Lisbon on Tuesday.

It was 2-0 at half-time, with the first two goals set up by Neymar, the Brazilian again outstanding at the Estadio da Luz, just as he had been in last week's quarter-final against Atalanta.

Bernat's goal came in the 55th minute and snuffed out any hopes Leipzig had of a comeback. They could not handle the world's most expensive player, or the many other outstanding performers in the PSG side, who no longer appear overcome by the sense of occasion that surrounds a Champions League knockout tie.

After seeming to invent ever more absurd ways to lose in Europe in recent years -- the 6-1 loss against Barcelona in 2017 and last year's defeat by Manchester United in the last 16 stand out -- despite all the investment by the club's Qatari owners, here they lived up to their billing.

"We wanted to make history and we did it," Di Maria told French broadcaster RMC Sport. "If we continue the way we played today, that could help us in the final."

Bayern Munich and Lyon meet in the second semi-final for the right to face PSG in Sunday's final. Thomas Tuchel's team are the competition's first French finalists since Monaco in 2004.

Nine years after Qatar Sports Investments bought a moribund mid-table Ligue 1 team and began turning them into the untouchable force in France, they are now one game away from winning the trophy that really matters to them.



Bottas Is Feeling the Heat in Mercedes' Black Overalls

LONDON (Reuters) - Mercedes Formula One driver Valtteri Bottas is feeling the heat and suspects his team's new black overalls have something to do with it.

Mercedes changed their car and clothing livery this season from silver to black in support of the sport's anti-racism campaign and to emphasise a team pledge to improve diversity.

Bottas told reporters after sweating through Sunday's Spanish Grand Prix that he had shed three kilos over the 66-lap race.

"This year, it's been even hotter in the car," said the Finn, who was heard on the team radio complaining to his engineer about how hot the overalls were.

"Obviously, we had to change the colour of the overalls. And it's known that black colour takes more of the heat, especially when there's direct sun," added the 30-year-old.

Bottas finished third on Sunday and is now 43 points behind team mate, six-times world champion and race winner Lewis Hamilton, the sport's only Black driver.

"I don't know any numbers or facts, how much actually black versus white is in terms of temperature difference, but this year, it's been really hot in the car," the Finn said.

"And also there's a new homologation this year for the overalls, so they are thicker, and the underwear is thicker, so I don't know how much effect that has."

Bottas felt white overalls would be cooler and expressed concern that the discomfort and weight loss could affect performance. "I know that from all the drivers I'm one of the fittest, if not the fittest, so I can take it but it's never comfortable and there's always things that we can improve," he said.

