

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Sunday
That Some 141 More Iranians Have
Died From Coronavirus Disease
Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing
The Total Deaths to 20,643**

IRAN NEWS

**Agriculture Jihad Minister Says the
Animal Phase of the Trial of
Iran's Coronavirus Vaccine Has
Ended in Razi Serology Institute
And It Is Getting Ready for the
First Phase of the Clinical Trial**

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Iran Is Russia's Strategic Partner

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Russian Defense Min. Sergey Shoygu referred to the joint strategical, regional and international goals and interests between Tehran and Moscow, underlining the developing mutual defense cooperation between the two sides.

He made the remarks in a meeting on Sunday with Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami, held on the sidelines of the Army-2020 forum in Russia.

He stressed the need for continuing regional cooperation to establish peace and stability in the region, as well.

The Russian minister added that Russian-Iranian cooperation is consistently developing and gradually recovering from the created restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Shoygu noted that despite the difficult situation under the coronavirus pandemic, contacts between Moscow and Tehran remain quite intense.

The Russian minister said that the epidemiological situation is gradually returning to normal and the two sides are returning to holding significant multilateral events.

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Results of Analysis of Downed Ukrainian Plane Black Box Announced

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's aviation organization has announced the results of the examination of the flight recorder of the Ukrainian passenger plane that went down shortly after takeoff near the Iranian capital Tehran in early 2020.

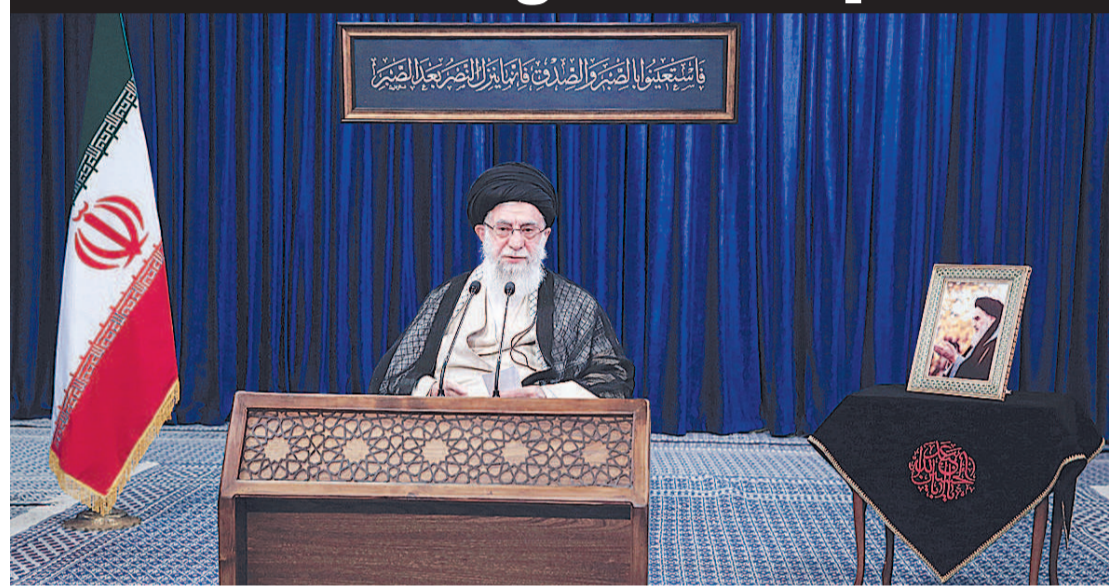
In a press conference on Sunday, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said the conversations inside the cockpit have been recorded on the black box until 19 seconds after the first missile hit the plane.

"Three members of the flight crew were present in the cockpit ... all of whom were aware of the out-of-the-ordinary situation and they were controlling the aircraft till the last second amid the unusual sound inside the cockpit," said CAO chief Touraj Dehqani Zanganeh.

"The recorded data contains no sounds or signs of the condition of the passenger cabin, and the way the flight crew were talking and reacting suggests they were physically well during those moments," the official added.

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Leader: Economy Should Not Be Linked to Foreign Developments



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei stating that the country's economy should not be linked to foreign developments in any way because this is a strategic mistake, underlined that economic planning for the country should not wait for the lifting of sanctions or the result of the elections of a certain country.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday on the occasion of Government Week in a video link with the President and his cabinet members called the last year of the current government's term a good opportunity to increase services in various fields.

He also made remarks on important economic issues such as production, investment, the value of the national currency, and also cyberspace and stated that the government should seriously remove the barriers to production and make more efforts to solve the problems.

Ayatollah Khamenei also called the Ashura incident the peak of jihad, sacrifice, and martyrdom, and referring to the coincidence of Government Week with the first 10-day of Muharram, added that the basis of Government Week is also diligence and martyrdom because Rajaie and Bahonar (the martyred president and prime minister), with continuous struggle, hard work, and effort during problems, refused to pursue personal interests and avoided in attracting the attention of the people, made themselves worthy of the great divine reward, namely martyrdom.

Referring to the great and important news that the president and members of the government announced in their reports, the Leader added that Government Week is a good opportunity to explain and inform the services of government members and review the strengths and weaknesses that the government should pay attention.

The Leader of the Revolution considered the last year of the government's term as a significant opportunity and in many ways very important and said the government should use the last opportunity as much as it can to serve the people and the country.

In this regard, Ayatollah Khamenei, referring to the serious housing problem in the country, said that the government has promised to build 600,000 housing units in the last year of its term, and the fulfillment of this promise can be effective in solving the housing problem.

Pursuing and making serious efforts to fulfill the promises made, including the weekly plans of the Ministry of Energy, the refinery policy to prevent the export of crude oil, the strengthening of knowledge-based companies, the continuation of good scientific and health services against Corona and increasing production was another strong recommendation of the Leader of the Revolution to the government for the last year of activity.

He also said the United States' model of governance has proven "an utter failure," and human values have taken the biggest hit in America. He added, "Human values like health, justice, and security are trampled upon the most in America."

"The social gap there is horrible, the number of the hungry and the homeless and their ratio [to the overall population] are higher than the conventional [rates of] world countries," the Leader said.

"According to rivals speaking explicitly in election campaigns, one in five American children suffers from hunger. And additionally, insecurity and crime rate are very high in America," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The fact that the U.S. is headed by people who are a source of humiliation for that country is another sign of the defeat of western models and the decline of western civilization in the world.

The Leader said that, apart from those internal and managerial problems, the United States also engaged in such "common practices" as "murder, the waging of wars, and the causing of insecurity" in foreign lands, such as Syria, Palestine, Yemen, and formerly in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Hiroshima (Japan).

U.S. Hands Over Base to Iraqi Troops Amid Calls for Withdrawal

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - U.S. troops and their allies have withdrawn from the Taji base north of Iraq's capital Baghdad and handed it over to Iraqi security forces.

The pullout took place on Sunday following several rocket attacks targeting the military base.

"The movement of coalition military personnel is part of a long-range plan coordinated with the government of Iraq," the US military said in a statement, adding that the Taji base held up to 2,000 forces, most of whom departed this summer.

The remaining U.S. troops, it said, will depart in the coming days after finalizing the handing over of equipment to Iraqi security forces.

The U.S. military further said that Sunday's withdrawal was the eighth transfer of a foreign portion of an Iraqi base back to local forces.

Major General Tahseen al-Khafaji, the spokesperson for Iraq's joint operations, confirmed that the Taji base "was being used to train, prepare, and rehabilitate the Iraqis by Australian, New Zealand, and American forces."

"It will now be dedicated for the usage of the Iraqi security forces," he told the Iraqi News Agency.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

U.S. More Hapless Than Ever

After the U.S. suffered an international failure and backlash and its proposed resolution on Iran arms embargo at the UNSC unanimously rejected and only a pint-size country, Dominican Republic, supported it, the U.S. is striving to save its face.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who had earlier claimed that if proposed resolution failed it would activate the snapback, threatened China and Russia that if they wanted to create hurdle in way of return of international sanctions against Iran, Washington would punish them.

In an interview with Fox News and when he was asked what would be the U.S. actions against China and Russia if they snub following the international sanctions on Iran, Pompeo said, "The U.S. would do what it has done so far against those countries which have violated its sanctions especially if the U.S. sanctions are violated. We have already taken actions against the countries which had violated the U.S. sanctions and those measures will continue especially in case the U.N. sanctions are violated."

In fact, the U.S. has lost its prioritized parallel challenges. On the one hand, it has not resolved its dispute with China and on the other hand it is record-holder in the number of Coronavirus-infected people. By the way, its gross domestic product (GDP) has led to the rise in the negative economic growth and it has challenged the climate for Americans' earnings, and on the other hand, the number of unemployed people has soared. At the same time, U.S. President Donald Trump in the polls is trailing his Democrat rival Joe Biden. The growing pressure by the public opinion and the budget have laid the ground for the pullout of the U.S. troops from the Middle East and Persian Gulf. All of these factors have made the U.S. hapless as it throws its hands to cling even to the smallest straw to save itself from drowning.

The U.S. expected at least 11 members of the UNSC, regardless of China and Russia, to support its resolution and to interact with it, but it missed the aim. The current atmosphere in the world does not acclimate to Trump's belligerent performance. The White House feels it has lost the war and now it should retreat and this retreat will lead to Trump's defeat in the November presidential election.

Trump's rival in election, Biden, has recommended the softer policy and has put on his agenda. Biden with the Democrats' initiative won the race both with his Democrat partisans and also pushed Trump to the corner of the cage to bark.

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Venezuela and Iran Sign Trade Agreements

CARACAS (Prensa Latina) - With the first shipment of fruit to Iran, the commercial agreements signed between Venezuela and the Persian nation are finalized, the embassy of that Middle-East country here announced.

In the official account of the diplomatic headquarters it was reported that as part of the win-win commercial relations and the economic complementarity between both nations, the first shipment of Venezuelan mango and pineapple was shipped to Iran, a country that together with its neighbors can offer a large market of 400 million inhabitants.

Commercial alliances between both nations have strengthened in recent months.

As a result, between May and June, five Iranian ships with additives and gasoline arrived in this South American country to supply domestic demand, after a crisis triggered by the United States' blockade, which is hitting the Venezuelan oil industry hard.

This fact was considered historic because it was the first time that Iran exported fuel to Latin America, in solidarity and support with Venezuela, in open defiance of the threats from the United States government.

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Grossi Trip to Tehran, Has Nothing to Do With Snapback

VIENNA (IP) - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to international organizations based in Vienna stated that the visit of the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency has nothing to do with the U.S. move to use the snapback mechanism.

Kazem Gharibabadi posted a message on his Instagram

page, adding that Rafael Grossi, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, will travel to Tehran tomorrow (Monday) and will meet with officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Tuesday and Wednesday.

He added that Iran's trust in the IAEA has been damaged in recent months and that it is essential that the director-general's visit to Iran serves as building trust process.

Promoting Economic Resilience Axis of All Gov't Efforts

TEHRAN (MNA) – President Hassan Rouhani said that promoting economic resilience and implementing resistive economy policies have been the axis of all activities and efforts of the government.

Speaking on Sunday in a video conference in the presence of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Rouhani described "promoting economic resilience and implementing the policies of the resistive economy" as one of the most important and main guidelines of the Leader and said, "In this regard, promoting economic resilience and implementing resistive economy policies have been the axis of all activities and efforts of the government."

Referring to the coronavirus pandemic that has affected the Islamic Republic of Iran since the end of last year, Rouhani said, "Before the outbreak of coronavirus, the country had faced two other serious external shocks during this government. One was the fall in oil prices in early mid-2014 and the other was the tough U.S. sanctions since 2018," according to the President's press service.

"Although the fall in oil prices, and especially the unprecedented and oppressive US sanctions, created problems for the people, in the face of these problems, the government managed the country well. And using the experience of successfully dealing with these two shocks, it was also able to manage the country well in dealing with problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic."

Rouhani pointed out, "While the economy of many major countries in the world shrank by 20%, the Iranian economy was damaged by only 3% in the face of the problems caused by coronavirus outbreak, which is a sign of the government's ability



to withstand this problem and manage it."

Iranian President continued, "Of course, the government had already decreased the budget reliance on oil to 9.9 percent in 2019, in line with Your Excellency's emphasis on reducing the budget's reliance on oil, which has become even lower this year."

Explaining the achievements of the government and hope in the last 7 years, Rouhani said, "While the outbreak of coronavirus in all countries has increased unemployment, in Iran during the period we have faced the coronavirus pandemic, unemployment has decreased by 1.1 percent in total. This achievement has not been achieved by itself, but has been achieved through the efforts of the government in the past years under the guidance of Your Excellency."

The President referred to the doubling of hospital beds during the period of this government compared to all previous governments after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, adding, "Despite many economic problems, the government has made a great transformation in the health and treatment sector of the country, which has resulted in a lower number of coronavirus deaths in our country compared to many other developed countries."

Iran Eyes 1st Rank in Regional Petrochem Industry

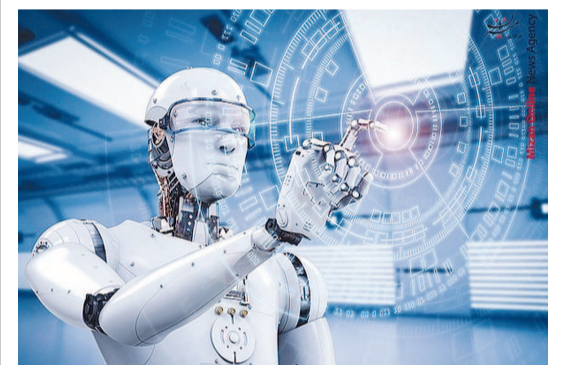
TEHRAN (Shana) – The Deputy Petroleum Minister for Petrochemical Affairs said Iran would rank first in the region once it materializes plans under the 3rd petrochemical leap by 2025.

Speaking to Shana, Behzad Mohammadi, who is also the CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), said 34 projects had been defined in the second and third leaps of the industry which would push Iran to the first rank of the region's petrochemical producers.

"Intelligent development of the petrochemical industry along volumetric development in line with global developments" is a topic that Mohammadi emphasized in an exclusive interview with Shana.

By realization of the two leaps, Iran will witness a major growth in petrochemical production capacity which would nearly double its annual output from currently 66 million tons.

AI Solutions Competing With Foreigners



TEHRAN (IFP) - Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari says the domestic companies and start-ups engaged in developing artificial intelligence technologies have made such progress that are competing with the foreign countries.

In a ceremony held in Tehran, Sattari unveiled two homegrown AI systems and an artificial intelligence product developed by the local experts and commercialized under the patronage of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

In remarks at the event, Sattari highlighted the administration's support for the AI companies and the targeted projects set up for development of artificial intelligence in the country, hoping that Iran would soon enter a competition with the world's top-notch countries in the AI field.

"However, it must be mentioned that even at present, a series of products and services provided by the Iranian technological companies active in the artificial intelligence fields can compete with the similar foreign products," the vice president added. A comparison with the advanced countries in the AI arena, such as China, shows that the Iranian-made products developed by the local knowledge-based companies are comparable with the foreign ones, he noted.

The vice president then highlighted the great contribution that the AI solutions make to a broad range of domestic businesses, saying they can be utilized for text-to-speech programs, face detection technology, analysis of emotions, detection of risk at the heavy industry factories, and tens of others sectors.

The Iranian enterprises can employ the online AI software to optimize their products and offer higher-quality services with the analysis of customers' feedback, Sattari explained.

He finally pointed to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology's serious support for the homegrown technologies, saying hundreds of AI companies and start-ups have come into existence in recent years, some of which have improved so dramatically that they have employed hundreds of programmers and staffers.

The vice president also unveiled the National Document on Artificial Intelligence, drawn up for submission to the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution.

UAE-Israeli tie Normalization Strategic Mistake

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis Speaker's Special Aide for International Affairs Amir-Abdollahian met and held talks with Palestinian Ambassador to Tehran Salah Zavavi on the UAE-Israel normalization ties.

Criticizing the UAE's move to normalize its relations with the Zionist regime, Amir-Abdollahian said that the UAE's act to normalize relations with the Zionist regime is a strategic mistake, and the UAE government must accept responsibility for all its consequences.

He emphasized the solidarity of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the Palestinian people, saying that Iranian Parliament Speaker in an official letter asked the parliament speakers of the Islamic countries to condemn the action of the UAE and support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Palestinian ambassador, for his part, criticized the UAE's treacherous act to normalize its relations with the Zionist regime, saying that Palestine strongly condemns this UAE-Israel normalization ties and calls on the UAE to back down from this historic mistake.

Appreciating the stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he called on all countries of the world to show their commitment to supporting the Palestinian issue, just like Iran.

The Israeli regime and the UAE have reached a deal that will lead to full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two sides, in an agreement that US President Donald Trump apparently helped broker.

S. Korea Offers Medical Equipment for Clearing Debt to Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hossein Tanhayi, head of the Iran-South Korea chamber of commerce said on Sunday that South Korea has made an offer to clear part of its \$7.5-billion debt to Iran via selling medical equipment to the country.

As he said, Iran has not responded to South Korea's offer, yet.

Tanhayi added that the trade volume between the two sides has dropped down to almost zero.

He informed that several mutual meetings have been held between the two sides and the South Koreans have made some promises but they have fulfilled none of them.

Underlining that Iran has the right to object about not receiving its oil revenues from South Korea, he said as previously announced, Iran may pursue a lawsuit in international courts against South Korean banks that have frozen the Iranian assets.

"South Korea's debt to Iran is about \$7.5 billion," Tanhayi said, "South Korea was to return \$50 million via dispatching basic goods and medical requirements to Iran but the job has not been done yet."

As he added, Iran is to prepare an agreement on receiving medical equipment from South Korea within two weeks. "The agreement is meant to clear part of South Korea's debt to Iran," he said.

Tanhayi's remarks came while Iranian First Vice President Es'hagh Jahangiri said on Thursday that South Korea has given a negative response to drug imports to Iran and it must be held accountable for this.

U.S. Dealt With "Unprecedented" Blow at UNSC

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Presidential Office chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said the U.S. was dealt with "unprecedented" blow at the United Nations Security Council when it got one yes vote out of 15 member states.

Last June, the White House announced that it would present a resolution to the UNSC to extend Iran's arms embargo, which was roundly turned down on August 15. Only the US and Dominican Republic gave a yes to the draft resolution.

Mahmoud Vaezi said in a live TV program on Saturday evening that the question is why came over the US government that sees itself a big power.

Vaezi said that since Trump took office, he has made

numerous mistakes in various fields, including the way and depth of relations with U.S. allies and his approach toward U.S. domestic issues. He added that Trump's popularity has fallen in the past three years and his problems increased; the US government did very badly in fight against COVID-19 and there have been protests in all over the US over the past two months and many other issues.

There are 70 days left to the U.S. election day and polls show that Trump will lose, so now he embarked on a populist move to escape the impasse, Vaezi said, adding that U.S. created a media hype that went on 50 days and thought that when they take the draft resolution to the UNSC, all countries would follow it and extend arms embargo on Iran. Then, they could sell it to the Americans as a big achievement.

The U.S. had never had "such a humiliating defeat". Now the White House intends to use an agreement, which it is not a participant in, he said.

He added that the U.S. claims that the sanctions will come back in 30 days, whereas the period starts after all the sessions of the member states are held and procedures are followed. Now, the 4+1 have not accepted the US claims; the UNSC does not accept it; and basically, the U.S. is not a participant to the deal.

One concern of Trump is that when his government is over, and Democrats take the office in the White House, they may come back to the JCPOA. So he is trying his best to totally destroy the deal, he said.

Iran, UN, EU Launch Joint Project for Revival of Hamoun

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Department of Environment, the United Nations Development Program and the European Union launched a joint five-year project for revival of Hamoun International Wetland.

Speaking in an online meeting, deputy head of the Department of Environment for maritime and wetlands affairs Ahmad Lahijanzadeh said the international project for revival of Hamoun Wetland is considered as a valuable opportunity for the country and especially for Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

He added that the project will revive one of the biggest wetland ecosystems of the country, promote economy of local people and reduce effects of dusts near the wetland.

Hamoun is one the wetlands which is under the influence of climate change and the issue has affected the environmental issues, job opportunities of people especially women and youths.

Meanwhile, the EU official responsible for Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) said that Iran and the European Union have common interests and have developed cooperation over the last few years.

He described inauguration of Hamoun revival

project as another example of cooperation between Iran and EU.

In the meantime, UNDP Resident Representative in the Islamic Republic of Iran Claudio Providas said Sistan and Baluchestan is under the influence of climate change, natural disasters and humanitarian factors.

He thanked EU for the budget allocated to this project and vowed for continuation of cooperation in line with reaching tangible results.

Iran Signs 15-y Deal for Power Purchase From Biogas Plant

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Two departments from Iran's Ministry of Energy have signed a contract for guaranteed purchase of electricity from the country's largest biogas plant located south of the capital Tehran.

A report by the official IRNA agency on Saturday said that the 15-year contract had been signed between Tehran's Wastewater Company and the Organization of Renewable Energies and Electricity Efficiency, which is known as SATBA.

Under the contract, SATBA guarantees to buy 500 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity from the biogas plant located at Tehran's southern sewage treatment facility at a minimum price of 10,500 Iranian rials (\$0.48) for each kilowatt for the 15-year period ending 2034.

The biogas plant, one of the largest of its kind in the world, is nominally capable of producing 44 gigawatts (GW) of electricity and 140 Terajoules (TJ) of heat energy per year, according to an official from the Ministry of Energy.

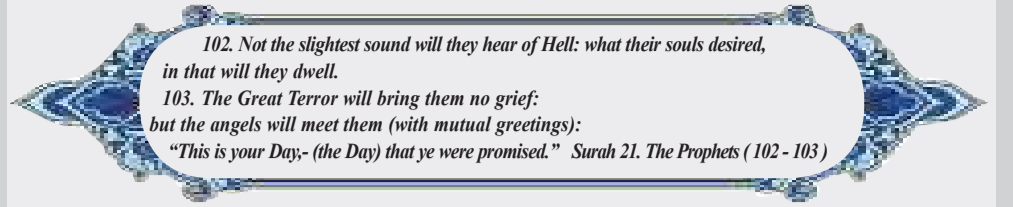
Abbasali Mesrzadeh said that the electricity generated in the biogas plant could power a city of 60,000 people, adding that a thermal power plant would normally need around 100,000 barrels of oil or 400,000 cubic meters of gas per year to produce a similar amount of power.

Iran relies on natural gas and oil-based fuels for much of the energy it needs to run its massive thermal power plants although the share of natural gas is increasing to allow the government to save more fuels for exports.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:01
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:31



Over 510,000 Jobs Created in Free and Special Economic Zones

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank in a TV program on the occasion of the Government Week said some 510,000 jobs have been created in the free trade and economic zones, adding that over 95 percent of the employed in economic zones and 40 percent employed in free zones are busy in the production and industry sectors.

Mr. Bank said that 95 percent of occupation in the special economic zones is in production sector, reiterating all of 210,000 people who are active in the special zones are all in production sector and they are not active services sector.

He said all investments in the special economic zones, like Lamard, Shiraz, Salafchegan, Kerman and Sirjan zones are in production, are from the private sector and the government has not injected even one rial into the zones.

Mr. Bank then pointed to the statistics of occupation in the free trade zones and said 40 percent of the occupation belongs to the production sector, over 30 percent to the services sector and some 20 percent to the jobs related to the stores and miscellaneous.

He further said the international stock market is to be launched on Kish Island in the next two months, reiterating that all activities in the free zones are in compliance with international norms.

He then pointed to using cultural figures in the national free zones, noting that one of the honors of the council is that it has succeeded in linking the cultural community of the society to the free zones and one of the big goals of the free zones is to link with the local communities who are very influential in economic development and cultural processes.



Mr. Bank stated that there are general regulations for economic, cultural, social and political activities but free zones are run with special and certain regulations that some of them are only economic, social and cultural.

He further said that economic activities in the zones can speed up if the infrastructures are ready aotherwise in case the infrastructures are not ready, all activities slow down. On using the domestic or foreign investors in the free zones like Assalouyeh, he said Assalouyeh is a special economic zone and one of the biggest and most important parts of national economy.

He added most investments in Assalouyeh are done by the government sector but the participation of private sector especially in the petrochemical sector in the zone has increased.

Mr. Bank added that one of the biggest developmental parts of the country is in the petrochemical sector especially in Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ), saying that most of oil and chemical products are exported from this zone as some part of the investment in this zone is governmental and some part by private sector.

He reiterated that PSEEZ is one of the biggest achievements of the Islamic Revolution, adding that Iran's contract with Japan on developing petrochemical sector in the zone had been prepared before the revolution but after the revolution, the Japanese left the contract due to several reasons and paid the damage, and Japanese's money was spent on developing Assalouyeh by the then government.

He said today the amount of petrochemical exports from Assalouyeh is valued at \$20b.

IDRO Calls for Accurate, Timely Holding of General Meetings



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) says fiscal discipline, transparency and being process-centered of activities of affiliated and subset companies of IDRO have always been key points in continuous monitoring, and underscored holding accurate and timely general meetings of companies as symbols of this commitment.

Speaking at the general meeting of Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex Company (ISOICO) held for reviewing the performance of the company, Mr Amir Bayat said creativity and upgrade in the affiliated companies of IDRO especially with an approach to the creating opportunity in the sanctions era is an undeniable necessity. Referring to the capabilities of ISOICO, its affiliated companies and its specialized groups, Mr Bayat called for introducing and promoting more the capacities to the activists in the marine and offshore fields. He reiterated no section of ISOICO should work with less than its maximum capacity.

Meanwhile in the meeting, deputy head of IDRO on developing transportation industries Mr. Behzad Etemadi said interaction between oil ministry with ISOICO in the process of building marine infrastructures and gas platforms, which has led to registering valuable records, is an appropriate example for developing more relations benefiting this complex and also urged ISOICO to seriously put on its agenda the implementation of the projects in hands with high quality and on time.

Gas Extraction From 3rd Platform of S. Pars Phase 13 Begins

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Platform 13C, the third platform of Phase 13 of Iran's South Pars Gas Field's development project, officially started sending gas to the refinery, Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) which is in charge of developing the gas field announced.



Payam Motamed, the operator of Phase 13 of developing South Pars, put the volume of sent gas from this platform to the onshore refinery at 400 million cubic feet, Shana reported.

According to Motamed, this platform is connected through an 18-inch pipeline to Platform 13A, and the gas extracted from the 13C is sent to the 13A through the mentioned pipeline after which it is transmitted to the refinery.

He said that the Platform 13C of South Pars, along with all its accessories, including jacket, communication tower, and torch structure, weighs about 7,000 tons.

This platform was built in Bushehr Yard and the installation and commissioning stages of this platform were all carried out by domestic experts and engineers.

Motamed put the current capacity of Phase 13 offshore platforms at 43 million cubic meters per day and said that 28.5 mcm of this figure is related to the two projects of 13B and 13D from the first phase of this project which started operating two years ago.

"The new platform has added 14.2 million cubic meters to the previous 28.5 mcm," he said.

Pointing to the 13A platform, which is the last platform of Phase 13, the official said "This platform is the last link in completing the production chain in the South Pars Phase 13 development project, and after completing its development the gas extraction capacity of this phase will reach 56 million cubic meters."

Platform 13C was installed on its designated offshore spot in early March.

The first platform of Phase 13 (namely 13B) was installed on its designated offshore spot in early December 2018 and the mentioned platform along with the second one (13D) became operational in late January 2019.

South Pars Gas Field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters.

Iran Annual Export to Afghanistan May Touch \$3b by Next March

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's exports to Afghanistan is anticipated to reach \$3 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), according to the chairman of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Referring to Iran's rising trend of exports to its neighbor Afghanistan in recent months, Hossein Salimi said that based on the studies, the country's expected value of exports to Afghanistan will be materialized this year. He further pointed to the problem of transferring goods via Milak border and said, "This problem has been removed and commodities are currently transported via Milak and Dogharoon borders without any problem."

He explained that there was a problem with fueling trucks at Milak border, but this problem has been resolved and the transfer of goods is now underway at this border. About the decrease in the exports of Iranian products to Afghanistan in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-May 22) due to the coronavirus pandemic, the chairman of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce said, "Trend of Iranian products export to Afghanistan has been accelerated in a way that the country is compensating its export decline to this country."

65% Progress in Mobarakeh Steel Co.'s Hydration Project

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Mobarakeh Steel Company's project for changing the method of hydration from Zayandehroud River in coordination with the district water company, without any change in the amount of taking water from the river, is going well and it has progressed 65 percent.



Alireza Esteki, the Executive Manager of Energy and Fluids Projects at Mobarakeh Steel Company, announced the news that the project is in the works with an eye on observing social responsibility and the society's expectation and it has progressed 65 percent.

He added that last week the CEO of the company Eng. Hamid Reza Azimian inspected the trend of the progress of the project and called for its acceleration.

Mr. Azimian said that any change in method of taking water from the river has been put on agenda in line with

cooperation and approval of the custodians of the river and it is expected the project to come on stream in October.

Meanwhile Manager of the Energy and Fluids Department of the company Mr. Seyed Amir Tabatabaian said that the company since its establishment in 1975, has signed agreement with district water organization for provision of water for the company, and the contract in 1386 and before the launch of the production line was renewed for demanding 40m cubic meters of water from Zayandehroud River.

He added despite three-fold rise in the production of the company comparing to its nominal capacity and launching several projects and mills, its water demand from the river by March 2020 has declined by 50 percent.

KSC to Run Professional Sport Clubs

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Khorasan Steel Complex (KSC) like most industrial groups and companies is to enter the sport scene by running professional sport clubs.

According to a report, the CEO of Khorasan Steel Company and governor of town of Neishabour after a meeting jointly announced the launch of port clubs of the company, and in the first step, Neishabour volleyball team will start its activities in the national volleyball professional league.

The public relations of the company said the CEO of the company Mr. Kasra Ghafoori announced the presence of Neishabour's team in the national professional volleyball league. This valuable event has happened for the sport of the town after talks between Mr. Ghafoori with the president of Iran's Volleyball Federation Mr. Davarzani.

Speaking on this development, Mr. Ghafoori said Khorasan Steel Complex due to the huge potentials of Neishabour's athletes and talents, the company tries to play its role in developing sport in the town.

He said after consultation with officials in the town and province, the company decided to involve more in sports activities by supporting sport activities of the town.

He added that in the first step, Neishabour's volleyball team is to take part in the national volleyball league. He noted that the town has introduced several volleyball stars to the national volleyball scene in the past, expressing hope new talents would rise by launching the club.



U.S. Police Shoot, Kill Black Man

LOUISIANA (Dispatches) - Police in Louisiana have shot and killed a man as he tried to enter a convenience store with a knife, authorities have said.

The shooting was captured on video, and the state American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on Saturday condemned what it described as a "horrific and deadly incident of police violence against a Black person".

The Louisiana State Police said in a statement that officers from the Lafayette Police Department were called to a store on Friday at 8pm about a disturbance involving a man with a knife. As officers tried to apprehend him, he fled. Officers deployed Tasers, but they were ineffective, the statement said.



Sudan Ready to Cooperate With ICC Over Darfur

KHARTOUM (Reuters) - Sudan's prime minister said on Saturday the country was ready to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) so those accused of war crimes in Darfur appear before the tribunal, a list that includes ousted President Omar al-Bashir.

Bashir, who has been in jail in Khartoum since he was toppled after mass protests last year, is wanted by the ICC for alleged war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur in a conflict that killed an estimated 300,000 people.

The government reached a deal with rebel groups in February that all five Sudanese ICC suspects should appear before the court but Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok had not previously publicly affirmed Sudan's position.



World Virus Deaths Top 800,000 As Nations Ramp Up Measures



PARIS (AFP) - The global death toll from the new coronavirus has surpassed 800,000, according to an AFP count on Saturday, with numerous countries ramping up restrictions in an effort to battle an eruption of new cases.

Western Europe, particularly Spain, Italy Germany and France, has been enduring infection levels not seen in many months, sparking fears of a fully-fledged second wave.

And in Asia, South Korea, which had largely brought the virus under control, became the latest country to announce it would boost restrictions to try to stem a new outbreak.

Across the world, the number of deaths has doubled to just over 800,000 since June 6, with 100,000 fatalities in the last 17 days alone, while more than 23 million cases have been registered.

Latin America is the region the most affected, while more than half the global fatalities have been reported in the hardest-hit United States, Brazil, Mexico and India.

The surging numbers come after the UN health agency said Friday that the world should be able to rein in the pandemic in less than two years.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sought to draw favourable comparisons with the flu pandemic of 1918 which cost the lives of as many as 50 million people. "We have a disadvantage of globalisation, closeness, connectedness, but an advantage of better technology, so we hope to finish this pandemic before less than two years," he said.

"(By) utilising the available tools to the maximum and hoping that we can have additional tools like vaccines, I think we can finish it in a shorter time than the 1918 flu." The WHO also recommended children over 12 years old now use masks in the same situations as adults as the use of face coverings increases to stop the virus spread.

With no usable vaccine yet available, the most prominent tool governments have at their disposal is to confine their populations or enforce social distancing. South Korea announced ramped up restrictions on Saturday, after 332 new cases were reported in the past 24 hours -- the highest daily figure since early March.

"We are at a very precarious stage where we could see the beginning of a nationwide second wave," Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said at a press briefing. The expanded measures include restrictions on gatherings and activities including professional sports, which will be played behind closed doors again, while beaches nationwide will close.

Italy -- once the European epicentre of the virus -- said Saturday it had registered more than 1,000 new infections in the past 24 hours, the highest level since the end of a punishing lockdown in May. The story is similar across Spain, Germany and France. The Rome region also said it had recorded a record number of cases in the past 24 hours, a rise health officials blamed on people returning from holiday.

Belarusian President Orders Army to Defend Borders

MINSK (AFP) - Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenko on Saturday ordered his defence minister to take "stringent measures" to defend the country's territorial integrity after mass protests erupted against his claim to election victory.

The 65-year-old authoritarian leader, who said he won a sixth presidential term with 80 percent of the vote in the August 9 ballot, made the comments while inspecting military units in Grodno, near Belarus's border with Poland, according to the president's press service.

Lukashenko denounced the recent mass protests, which he said were receiving support from Western countries, and ordered the army to defend western Belarus, which he described as "a pearl".

"It involves taking the most stringent measures to protect the territorial integrity of our country," Lukashenko said. His visit comes ahead of large-scale military exercises planned in the Grodno region between August 28 and 31.



The former collective farm director said that NATO troops in Poland and Lithuania were "seriously stirring" near their borders with Belarus and ordered his troops into full combat readiness.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda denied the accusation Saturday. "The regime is trying to divert attention from Belarus's internal problems at any cost with totally baseless statements about imaginary external threats," Nauseda told AFP.

Lithuania's foreign ministry also announced Saturday that US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun will visit Lithuania and Russia next week for talks on the elections fallout.

Opponents of Europe's longest serving leader have organised strikes and the largest demonstrations in the ex-Soviet country's recent history to protest his re-election and demand that he stand down.

The opposition has called for a major rally in Minsk on Sunday after more than 100,000 people flooded onto the streets of the capital and other cities in Belarus last weekend demanding Lukashenko's resignation.

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The government has already released 4,680 Taliban prisoners, while the armed group says it has kept its side of the deal with the United States by releasing 1,000 pro-government prisoners.

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Kremlin Critic Navalny in Worrying Condition

BERLIN (Reuters) - Gravely ill Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was evacuated to Germany for medical treatment on Saturday, flown out of the Siberian city of Omsk in an ambulance aircraft and taken to a hospital in Berlin.

There was no word yet from the Charite hospital on his condition but the founder of the activist group that arranged the flight called Navalny's health condition "very worrying".

A long-time opponent of President Vladimir Putin and campaigner against corruption, Navalny collapsed on a plane on Thursday after drinking tea that his allies believe was laced with poison.

Medical staff at the hospital in Omsk said on Friday evening after clearing Navalny to be flown out that he was in an induced coma and his life was not in immediate danger.

The air ambulance, arranged by the Cinema for Peace Foundation, flew to Berlin early on Saturday and Navalny, 44, was rushed to the Charite hospital complex.

The hospital said in a statement it would provide an update about his condition and further treatment once tests have been completed and after consulting with his family.

A spokeswoman for Charite said later that it was unlikely that the hospital would give a statement on Navalny over the weekend.

Cinema for Peace founder Jaka Bizilj, speaking to reporters outside the hospital, said "his health condition is very worrying".

"We got a very clear message from the doctors that if there had not been an emergency landing in Omsk, he would have died," said Bizilj, adding that it would be up to doctors and Navalny's family to provide further information on his condition.

Bizilj, a Slovenian-born activist and filmmaker, was earlier quoted by Bild tabloid as saying Navalny's condition was stable during the flight and after landing.

Kira Yarmysh, Navalny's spokeswoman, said on Twitter that "This is another proof that nothing was preventing Navalny from being transported, and it was necessary to do so as early as possible."

German doctors flew to Russia on Friday to evacuate Navalny at the request of his wife and allies who said that the hospital treating him was badly equipped.

But there was then a delay flying him out as the Omsk hospital initially said his condition meant he could not travel. The Omsk doctors later said they had no objections after the German doctors deemed him fit for travel.

Navalny's wife, Yulia, sent a letter to the Kremlin directly appealing for it to intervene and grant permission for him to be flown out.



U.S. House Passes Bill To Send \$25b to Postal Service, Block Cuts

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Democratic-led U.S. House of Representatives voted on Saturday to provide the cash-strapped Postal Service with \$25bn and to block policy changes that have stirred concerns about mail-in voting in advance of the November 3 election.

The chamber passed the emergency bill, dubbed the "Delivering for America Act", on Saturday during a rare Saturday session called by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi during the congressional August recess. The bill passed 257 to 150.

Twenty-six Republicans broke party ranks and voted for the bill. The legislation would undo any recent changes to operations that may slow the Postal Service's mail delivery, provide an infusion of cash for the agency to deal with the extra workload during the election and the continuing coronavirus outbreak, and require all ballots be treated as first-class mail.

It would also prevent Postmaster General Louis DeJoy from making any operational changes to the agency until after next January or the end of the coronavirus health emergency, whichever comes later. The bill is unlikely to be taken up in the Republican-controlled Senate and the White House Office of Management and Budget said it strongly opposes the measure and would recommend President Donald Trump veto it.

Trump has repeatedly denounced mail-in voting, which is expected to surge due to the coronavirus pandemic, as a possible source of fraud, despite a dearth of evidence supporting that claim.

Democrats, meanwhile, have accused Trump of trying to undermine the Postal Service for political gain and DeJoy, a Trump donor who was selected to the position by a board of governors appointed by Trump, of making financial cuts and policy changes that will slow the delivery of mail-in ballots.

Last week, the Postal Service reportedly warned 46 of the 50 US states, as well as the District of Columbia, that mail-in ballots may not arrive in time under the states' current deadlines for sending the ballots. DeJoy has since suspended the financial cuts and assured a Senate committee on Friday that the Postal Service would deliver ballots "securely and on time", however, he said he would not restore the already-made cuts to mailboxes and sorting equipment.



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200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J
L.balcony
marble fl
pkg, & F.F

Shanon (adviser)

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

Parsian

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1800) 2bdrs, S/p, F.F
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(\$3000) 4bdrs, S/p, F.F

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Brazil Adds Net 131,010 Formal Jobs in July

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil's economy added a net 131,010 formal jobs in July, economy ministry figures showed on Friday, the most for that month since 2012 and a strong signal that the worst of the employment crisis sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

It followed a downwardly-revised 19,579 formal job losses in June, and brings the net loss in the first seven months of the year to 1.1 million, the figures showed.



Lebanon's Real GDP Could Decline by 25%

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's real GDP could decline by 25 percent with its nominal GDP in U.S. dollar terms collapsing close to \$20 billion in 2020 from \$55 billion in 2019, the lowest level in at least 15 years, according to Fitch Ratings.

This projection is highly uncertain given the unfolding economic crisis and assumes an average effective exchange rate of LBP5,000 to the U.S. dollar. There are multiple exchange rates currently in operation, ranging from the official LBP1,500 to a parallel rate of around LBP7,000 (which had weakened to LBP9,000).

In April, Lebanon outlined a financial recovery plan, including an indicative debt restructuring plan, but has not reached agreement with external or domestic bondholders. A number of interlocking factors have been hindering progress, including the need to also restructure the banking sector and the balance sheet of Banque du Liban (BdL), the central bank, domestic disagreement between the newly-resigned government and the financial sector over the restructuring process, failure to secure an IMF deal and now the need for a new government.

Progress with reform and debt restructuring will require greater unity among political and economic elites, the prospects for which remain uncertain.

The short-lived government of Hassan Diab resigned on August 10 following the catastrophic blast in the port of Beirut, which provided irrefutable evidence of the country's widespread governance failings.

It is unclear when a new government will be formed and whether parliamentary elections due in 2022 will be accelerated. The international community has emphasised the need for Lebanon's political class to show commitment to reforms to unlock external financing.

The IMF would likely require some prior actions before agreeing to a funding programme.

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Lebanon's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at Restricted Default (RD) and Long-Term Local-Currency IDR at "CC".

The Agency has previously downgraded Lebanon's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'RD' from 'C'.

Lebanon remains in RD on its foreign currency government debt, following the sovereign's failure to pay the principal on the Eurobond that matured in March.

The government has stopped servicing its outstanding stock of Eurobonds pending a debt restructuring. The government is servicing its local-currency government debt to private creditors while it decides on the timing and approach to restructuring it.

The immediate problem remains the negative foreign currency position at BdL and the consequences of this for banks and depositors.

Turkey Tells Airlines to Think About Sacking Foreigners First

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has floated proposals that would require its airlines to ax foreign pilots and cabin crew before dismissing local workers as the coronavirus crisis shatters travel demand and destroys jobs.

The Ankara-based Directorate General of Civil Aviation, or SHGM, has written to 10 operators including flag-carrier Turkish Airlines seeking their opinions on the plan, according to a copy of the letter seen by Bloomberg News.

The localization drive comes as airlines worldwide cut tens of thousands of jobs amid a slump in flights that's expected to last for years. Turkish carriers had previously recruited large numbers of expatriates amid a travel boom, with the proportion of overseas crew reaching 11%, the SHGM said in the letter.

The government is also under pressure from unions that are ramping up a campaign for carriers to employ more Turkish staff as the pandemic pushes national unemployment close to 13%, based on the most recent data.

"If needed, the recruitment of foreign staff should be reduced and that of our citizens, and their income, should be protected," the Hava-Sen labor group, which has 1,500 airline members, told the SHGM on May 29.

The union said the state has a "national duty to use our resources effectively and efficiently during the economic crisis," and that "discrimination" toward Turkish citizens by European Union nations should bolster that push.

The SHGM's letter to airlines says authorities want to reduce the proportion of foreign staff in the aviation industry so that Turkish nationals are no longer at a disadvantage. It says the process would be a gradual one with "minimal impact to current operations."

Pegasus Airlines, Turkey's biggest low-cost carrier, and the SunExpress leisure venture between Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa AG, also received the letter, as did cargo specialist MNG Airlines. Shares of Turkish Airlines rose 1% as of 2:49 p.m. local time, while Pegasus shares were unchanged. The SHGM verified the authenticity of the letter but didn't comment further.

Argentina Ponders Belt and Road Initiative Endorsement

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina could become the biggest economy in Latin America to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an action that would allow Alberto Fernández's heavily indebted government to deepen trade and investment ties with China even further.

Yet such a move is politically complicated. To solve its external debt problems, Argentina must strike a balance in its relations with both China and the United States, its largest creditor.

The country has already sealed a deal with the majority of its foreign private creditors, which have agreed in principle to restructure bonds worth more than US\$65 billion. But with an economy in recession and default, a thirst for investment and foreign exchange, and the need to overcome the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, Chinese capital would greatly help struggling Argentina.

The BRI is Chinese state policy and seeks pragmatic cooperation with Argentina.

Launched in 2013, the initiative first sought to revive the ancient Silk Road and maritime trade routes, but has since expanded its scope to improve political and economic cooperation with countries that formally endorse it.

Yet in Argentina, political alignments are forever changing. Bilateral relations with China intensified during the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015), but when Mauricio Macri rose to power (2015-2019) he questioned several flagship Chinese projects.

Alberto Fernández, who took office in December 2019, intends to revitalise the relationship and reactivate the controversial Chinese-backed dams in Santa Cruz province, as well as nuclear power plants. However, the government needs first to finalise its external debt problem with private bondholders, mostly US-based, and renegotiate its US\$44 billion debt with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in which Washington has a hugely influential role.

By joining the BRI, Argentina could unlock Chinese finance for vital investment in infrastructure and transport, fossil and renewable energy, mining, manufacturing, agriculture, innovation and information technology. This would enable the country to bridge infrastructure gaps and better integrate with countries such as Chile, which enjoys strong commercial corridors that connect it to foreign markets, thereby lowering logistics costs and enhancing competitiveness.

Diego Mazzocco, executive director of the Latin American Center for Chinese Political and Economic Studies, which has strong links with the government, said of the BRI that the debt renegotiation "slows the membership down a little", since "the government needs a good political relationship with the US."

Mazzocco said this would likely be overcome however. "For China it's important that Argentina is not in default, that it can successfully finish negotiating the foreign debt. No investor wants to invest in a country in default."

Saudi Arabia's Crude Oil Exports Dip to Record Low In June

LONDON (Dispatches) - The world's top oil exporter, Saudi Arabia, saw its crude oil exports in June drop to their lowest on record at just below 5 million barrels per day (bpd), as OPEC's de facto leader led efforts from the OPEC+ group to withhold a record amount of crude from the market in response to the crash in demand.

According to data from the Joint Organisations Data Initiative (JODI), Saudi Arabia's crude oil exports plunged by 17.3 percent in June compared to May, to stand at 4.98 million bpd.

Since March this year, Saudi crude oil exports have diverged a lot from the latest five-year range, jumping to more than 10 million bpd in April, when the Kingdom made good on its promise to flood the market with oil after the collapse of the previous OPEC+ deal. Saudi Arabia exported a record 10.237 million bpd in April 2020, up from 7.391 million bpd in March, JODI data showed earlier this year.

In May, Saudi crude oil exports plunged to 6.02 million bpd from more than 10 million bpd in the previous month, after OPEC+ reached a new deal to prop up the market and erase the glut that was building while global demand was crashing by 20 million bpd in April.

June was also the month in which Saudi Arabia voluntarily slashed its oil production by an additional 1 million bpd on top of the 2.5 million bpd it was supposed to cut.

Total Saudi oil exports, including crude oil and oil products, fell further month-on-month in June - by 1.41 million bpd to 6.07 million bpd, according to the data released by the JODI database, which collects self-reported figures from 114 countries.

Despite the easing of the OPEC+ cuts as of August 1, Saudi Arabia has signaled it would not rush to ramp up its crude oil exports significantly this month.



Pakistan's Long-Term Outlook "Stable"



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The Standard & Poor's (S&P) rating agency on Thursday affirmed Pakistan's 'B-' long-term and 'B' short-term sovereign rating while maintaining 'stable' long-term outlook.

The New York-based rating agency also affirmed 'B-' long-term issue rating on Pakistan's senior unsecured debt and sukuk trust certificates. It said the country's rating remains constrained by a narrow tax base and domestic and external security risks, which continue to be high.

Although the country's security situation has gradually improved over the recent years, ongoing vulnerabilities weaken the government's effectiveness and weigh on the business climate.

It said the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated Pakistan's economic downturn but forecast the real GDP to recover to 1.3 per cent during the current fiscal year. "We expect the sovereign's credit metrics to remain under pressure for the next two to three years", said the S&P.

The agency, nevertheless, noted that the government had made solid progress toward important fiscal and economic reforms prior to the start of the global coronavirus outbreak, and reform momentum should return once the pandemic was better contained. Multilateral and official funding will remain critical to Pakistan's external debt sustainability.

It said the stable outlook reflected rating agency's expectations that funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other partners, along with a recent improvement in Pakistan's balance of payments position will be sufficient for the country to meet its considerable external obligations over the next 12 months.

The rating agency said it may lower its "ratings if Pakistan's fiscal, economic, or external indicators deteriorate further, such that the government's external debt repayments come under pressure". Indications of this would include external or fiscal imbalances higher than expected.

Conversely, it may raise ratings on Pakistan if the economy materially outperforms expectations, strengthening the country's fiscal and external positions more quickly than forecast. It said the progress on reforms was likely to be delayed amid the pandemic.

The ratings reflect the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic on the country's already-weak economy, considerable external indebtedness and liquidity needs and an elevated general government fiscal deficit and debt stock.

"While Pakistan had made progress toward consolidating its fiscal accounts during the first nine months of its Extended Funding Facility programme with the IMF, related imbalances have been worsened by much slower economic growth since March 2020", it noted.

The agency noted in particular that domestic demand in the economy remained very weak, as evident from contractions in both real consumption and imports in the fiscal year ended June 2020. Prospects for a near-term recovery have dimmed following strict domestic virus containment measures implemented between March and June, and in the face of a much weaker global economic outlook.

India in Talks With Uzbekistan for Export, Import of Agri Products

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Though the combined annual trade with Central Asia is less than USD 2 billion, the level of trade does not reflect our political will that we enjoy with Central Asian countries, said Manish Prabhat, Joint Secretary (ERS), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Addressing a webinar titled 'The Way Forward for Developing India-Central Asia Air Corridor', organised by FICCI held on Friday, Prabhat said, "The combined annual trade with Central Asia is less than USD 2 billion. The level of trade does not reflect the political will that we enjoy with Central Asian countries."

He further said that Central Asian countries are in the position to support air traffic from India and laid emphasis on the potential of markets between India and Kazakhstan.

Vandana Aggarwal, Senior Economic Advisor, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India said that establishing an air corridor will be very useful in passenger growth and goods traffic.

"Central Asian countries need to look at ways to ease regulation of our carriers in terms of landing rights, parking etc.," she added.

She also highlighted that India has been looking at digitization of documents for seamless connectivity with the region.



SiciliAmbiente Award Goes To Iranian Short Film

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian short film 'Driving Lessons' directed by Marzieh Riahi received an award from SiciliAmbiente festival. According to official website of the event, SiciliAmbiente is an international festival of documentaries, shorts, animations, and fiction films related to environmental, sustainability, and human rights issues. "Driving Lessons" has won the Golden Apricot for the best short film in Armenia, Dublin Feminist Film Festival award in Ireland and several others from Italy and the United States. Also, Linda Kiani acting in Driving Lessons has won the best actress award of the 12th San Francisco Annual Iranian Film Festival in short film.



China Giving Experimental Coronavirus Vaccines to High-Risk Groups Since July

BEIJING (Reuters) - China has been giving experimental coronavirus vaccines to groups facing high infection risks since July, a health official told state media.

No vaccine has yet passed final, large-scale trials to prove it is safe and effective enough to protect people from contracting the virus that has led to almost 800,000 deaths worldwide.

The aim is to boost the immunity of specific groups of people, including medical workers and those who work at food markets and in the transportation and service sectors, Zheng Zhongwei, a National Health Commission official, told state TV in an interview aired late on Saturday.

Authorities could consider modestly expanding the emergency use programme to try to prevent possible outbreaks during the autumn and winter, added Zheng, who heads the Chinese government-led team that coordinates state resources for coronavirus vaccine development.

The guidelines for emergency use of potential coronavirus vaccines, approved on June 24 according to Zheng, have not been made public.

State media Global Times reported in June that China had been offering candidate coronavirus vaccines to employees at state-owned firms travelling overseas.

Some countries are sceptical about China's use of experimental vaccines. Papua New Guinea has denied entry to Chinese nationals who participated in a coronavirus vaccine trial, according to the Australian newspaper.

China's coronavirus vaccines will be priced close to cost, Zheng said.

"It does not mean that companies cannot make profits," Zheng said. "Companies should decide on moderate profits, or reasonable profits based on costs."



A potential coronavirus vaccine being developed by a unit of China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm) could cost no more than 1,000 yuan (\$144) for two shots, Sinopharm chairman Liu Jingzhen told state media last week. "[The price] will definitely be lower than what Liu said," Zheng said.

Russia Overtakes Saudi Arabia to Become Second Largest Oil Producer



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia produced more crude oil than Saudi Arabia in June, beating it to the second place of the largest oil producers in the world, behind the number-one producer, the United States, data from the Joint Organisations Data Initiative (JODI) showed.

In June, Russia's crude oil production was 8.788 million bpd, according to the data released by the JODI database, which collects self-reported figures from 114 countries.

To compare, production in Saudi Arabia in the same month was just below 7.5 million bpd. June was the month in which Saudi Arabia voluntarily slashed its oil production by an additional 1 million bpd for just one month, on top of the 2.5 million bpd it was supposed to cut as per the OPEC+ deal in force since May.

While Russia and Saudi Arabia are cutting production as part of the OPEC+ agreement, the United States remained the top crude oil producer in the world in June, despite the slump in crude oil production since May in response to the low oil prices. The JODI database showed that U.S. crude oil production averaged 10.879 million bpd in June, up from 10 million bpd in May, which saw the lowest U.S. monthly production since late 2017.

The U.S. became the world's biggest crude oil producer, surpassing both Saudi Arabia and Russia, in 2018.

The oil price collapse earlier this year forced Saudi Arabia and Russia to forge a new OPEC+ pact and cut much more production than in their previous agreement, while U.S. producers curtailed nearly 2 million bpd of production in response to the low oil prices.

The latest EIA estimates point to U.S. crude oil production dropping by an average of 990,000 bpd this year, for an average of 11.26 million bpd. Despite the fact that the estimate is a far greater loss than the EIA had expected in the previous month's forecast, the U.S. will continue to be the world's top crude oil producer, ahead of Saudi Arabia and Russia.

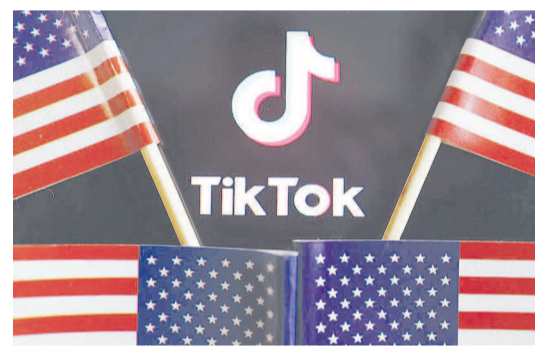
TikTok to Challenge U.S. Order Banning Transactions With the Video App

NEW YORK (Reuters) - TikTok is preparing to mount a legal challenge as early as Monday to President Donald Trump's executive order prohibiting transactions with the popular short video app and its Chinese parent ByteDance, according to people familiar with the matter.

Trump issued an executive order on Aug. 14 that gave ByteDance 90 days to divest the U.S. operations of TikTok. ByteDance has been making progress in talks with potential acquirers, including Microsoft Corp (MSFT.O) and Oracle (ORCL.N). Some of ByteDance's U.S. investors could also join the winning bid. TikTok's legal challenge pertains to an earlier executive order, which Trump issued on Aug. 6, the sources said. That order directed the Secretary of Commerce to come up with a list of transactions involving ByteDance and its holdings that should be banned after 45 days.

TikTok plans to argue that the Aug. 6 executive order's reliance on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act deprives it of due process, according to the sources. TikTok will also contest its classification by the White House as a national security threat, the sources added.

It was not immediately clear which court TikTok plans to use to file its lawsuit. The company had previously said it was exploring its legal options, and its employees were also preparing their own lawsuit.



While TikTok is best known for its anodyne videos of people dancing and going viral among teenagers, U.S. officials have expressed concerns that information on users could be passed on to China's communist government.

The sources requested anonymity ahead of the lawsuit's filing. ByteDance declined to comment. A White House spokesman

declined to comment.

TikTok's legal challenge would not shield ByteDance from having to divest the app. This is because it does not pertain to the Aug. 14 order on the sale of TikTok, which is not subject to judicial review.

However, the move shows that ByteDance is seeking to deploy all the legal ammunition at its disposal as it tries to prevent the TikTok deal negotiations from turning into a fire sale.

The Trump administration has stepped up its efforts to purge what it deems "untrusted" Chinese apps from U.S. digital networks. Beyond TikTok, Trump has also issued an order that would prohibit transactions with Tencent Holding Ltd's (0700.HK) WeChat.

Trump has said he would support an effort by Microsoft to buy TikTok's American operations if the U.S. government got a "substantial portion" of the proceeds, but has also said there are other interested potential buyers such as Oracle.

Brazil Vice President Invites DiCaprio to See Reality of Amazon Rainforest

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazilian Vice President Hamilton Mourao called on actor Leonardo DiCaprio to visit the Amazon to see the reality of the situation there, as the government faces criticisms for rising destruction in the world's largest rainforest.

Mourao invited DiCaprio, an environmental campaigner, to go with him personally on a journey along a notoriously ill-maintained road in the remote far western Amazon near the town of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira.

"I would like to invite our most recent critic, Leonardo DiCaprio, to go with me to Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira to do an eight-hour ride through the jungle between the Sao Gabriel airport and the Cucui highway," Mourao said.

"He will learn with each big pothole that he has to pass that the Amazon is not a flat land and understand better how things work in this vast region."

Representatives for DiCaprio did not immediately respond to request for comment.

U.S. More Hapless...

FROM PAGE 1

Looking at the U.S. from any angle is like looking at a lion without mane and power. Pompeo's attack at China and Russia regarding their stands against the U.S. anti-Iran policies has beleaguered the future climate.



While the snapback mechanism has not been triggered, Chinese officials in different interviews have reiterated that it is impossible for a country which has pulled out of the JCPOA to activate the snapback mechanism. In fact if American people are to prioritize Trump Administration's issues in the remaining four months of his term, they would consider these issues. First, Trump should reduce the huge cost of the country by pulling out the U.S. troops from the Middle East because in the current dismal economic condition, those costs not only will do Trump and the White House any good but also will be a heavy burden added to the problems. So, this move not only will reduce financial burden, but also will help the hatred towards the Americans in the region to appease. Secondly, American people are unhappy with the government's performance in tackling the Coronavirus pandemic. So some major part of anti-racism protests in the U.S. was about this issue that the White House has not paid enough attention to the people's concerns over the pandemic. Thirdly, the process of dollar's losing value and gradually reaching the collapse has created a horrible concern among the American people and Trump and the White House ignore it clearly and instead of retrenching the costs and enhancing the power for repaying the trillion dollars debts, they unreasonably expend.

Today the U.S. is more hapless and wretched than ever and it is better like 99 percent other countries in the world to focus its own internal affairs rather than to play into the hands of the Zionists who only mind their own people than the Americans'.

Iran Is Russia's...

FROM PAGE 1

He added that at the Army 2020 forum, the Iranian visiting delegation has the chance to get acquainted with the latest Russian weapons.

The Iranian defense minister, for his part, appreciated the positive and constructive positions of the Russia against the recent US' anti-Iranian resolution.

"Meetings between the two countries are ongoing at a high and satisfactory level," he added.

Hatami named expansion of Tehran-Moscow ties as 'necessary and inevitable'.

"In recent years, Iran and Russia have launched a joint and purposeful effort to counter the unilateralism and bullying policies of the US and the Trump administration in the region," he noted.

"The realistic response of the UN Security Council and the rejection of the recent US anti-Iran resolution on extension of arms embargoes against Iran, once again, brought a major defeat for the US and its regional allies and proved the global opposition to unilateralism," he underlined. "JCPOA parties' reaction to activation of trigger mechanism and re-imposition of sanctions on Iran was another harsh response, rejecting America's excessive demands."

He added that the joint strategies applied by Tehran and Moscow in resolving regional affairs can bring peace and stability to the region, despite the U.S. unilateralist policies.

Organized by the Russian Defense Ministry, ARMY-2020 is underway on August 23-29 at Kubinka Air Base, Alabino Military Training Grounds.

Results of Analysis...

FROM PAGE 1

"As the recording of the voice and sound inside the cockpit stopped 19 seconds after the first explosion, and the second missile reached the plane at least 25 seconds after the first explosion, the black box provided no analysis of the effects of the second missile fired," he added.

"The explosion of the first missile did considerable damage to the plane, and parts of the missile hit the aircraft causing the FDR and CVR systems to shut down at some point in the following 19 seconds," he added.

The Ukrainian plane was accidentally shot down by the IRGC Air Defence in January, and all its 176 crew and passengers were killed.

Dehghani Zanganeh said that the data has been retrieved in a lab in France with the participation of involved countries.

He said that the data is not usually published for the public but in the case of Flight 752, as Iranian officials have highlighted the need for transparency, the details are being revealed.

The Iranian official highlighted that this revealing of the information is only aimed at preventing similar incidents and it should not be used to politicize the issue.

U.S. Hands Over...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, al-Dijlah TV reported that Taji's training sites had been handed over to the Iraqis and the remaining sites will follow as scheduled.

Iraq's military has confirmed an attacked against a U.S. military convoy near Taji base north of Baghdad, but denied reports of an earlier attack on a U.S. convoy at the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.

Anti-U.S. sentiment has been running high in Iraq since Washington assassinated top Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani and the second-in-command of the Iraqi popular mobilization units, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, in January.

Following the attack, Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill on January 5, demanding the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

More than 17 years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, President Donald Trump said Thursday the United States would eventually withdraw all American troops from the conflict-ridden nation, though he did not provide a timetable.

"At some point, we obviously will be gone," Trump said in his meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. "We look forward to the day when we don't have to be there," he added before the two men met privately.

Venezuela and Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

Recently, the Persian country inaugurated a large commercial center in Caracas, for the sale of food and basic products at preferential prices, which is well received by the population.

Both nations signed at the beginning of this year agreements on energy, scientific, economic and industrial matters, which have gradually consolidated due to the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic in the world.

Meanwhile Reuters quoted Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro as saying that it would be a "good idea" to look into buying missiles from Iran, a day after Colombia said Venezuela was considering such a plan amid growing ties between Caracas and Tehran.

Iran in May supplied gasoline to Venezuela to ease chronic shortages, triggering alarm bells in Washington as the two countries expand trade relations amid efforts to undermine aggressive U.S. sanctions programs. "It had not occurred to me, it had not occurred to us," Maduro said during a televised broadcast with cabinet members, instructing Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino to follow up and jokingly telling his cabinet to keep the plan a secret.

"Padrino, what a good idea, to speak with Iran to see what short, medium and long range missiles they have, and if it is possible, given the great relations we have with Iran." Colombian President Ivan Duque said on Thursday that Maduro is looking to buy Iranian missiles and is handing over weapons made in Russia and Belarus to Colombian armed groups, citing intelligence reports.

Marquez to Miss Another 2-3 Months

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Reigning MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez will be sidelined for another two to three months after fracturing his right arm in July's season opener, ending any chance of the Spaniard defending his title. "The objective of both Marquez and the Repsol Honda Team is to return to the World Championship when Marc's arm has fully recovered from the serious injury that occurred in Jerez," Honda said in a statement on Saturday. "It is estimated it will take between two to three months before Marc can return."

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Nishikori's U.S. Open Hopes Fade With Second COVID-19 Positive

TOKYO (Reuters) - Kei Nishikori's hopes of playing at the U.S. Open have faded further after the Japanese former world number four revealed he had tested positive for COVID-19 for a second time. The 30-year-old, a finalist at Flushing Meadows in 2014, withdrew from the Western & Southern Open hardcourt warm-up after his first positive test last week. "Just a little update, I just took another COVID test and am still positive. I have very minimal symptoms and am staying in full isolation in Florida," Nishikori posted on social media late on Friday.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

MONDAY AUGUST 24, 2020

Los Angeles Clippers Win at Dallas Mavericks

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Kawhi Leonard recorded 36 points, nine rebounds and eight assists to lead the Los Angeles Clippers over the Dallas Mavericks 130-122 to grab a 2-1 lead in a Western Conference first-round playoff series near Orlando.

Dallas star Luka Doncic finished the game watching from the bench due to a sprained left ankle. Doncic had 13 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists in 29 minutes, but he hit just 4 of 14 shots from the floor.

Landry Shamet scored 18 points, Ivica Zubac added 15 and Marcus Morris Sr. had 14 points to help the second-seeded Clippers move in front in the best-of-seven series. Kristaps Porzingis registered 34 points and 13 rebounds, Seth Curry added 22 on 9-of-11 shooting, and Tim Hardaway also scored 22 for the Mavericks.

Doncic sprained his left ankle with 3:58 left in the third quarter. He couldn't put weight on the leg and hopped off the court. Doncic returned at the start of the fourth quarter, but he left for good with 9:02 remaining and the Mavericks trailing by 15. Doncic underwent X-rays on the ankle, which he also injured in Game 1 of the series.

Toronto Raptors 117 - Brooklyn Nets 92

Pascal Siakam scored 26 points, Fred VanVleet added 22 and Toronto Raptors never trailed in taking a commanding lead over Brooklyn in their Eastern Conference first-round series.

The second-seeded Raptors own a 3-0 series edge for the first time in team history. They can close out the Nets on Sunday night in Game 4.

The Nets' Tyler Johnson was elevated to the starting lineup and scored a playoff career-high 23 points while starting for Joe Harris, who missed the game for personal reasons.

Buttler Century Adds To Pakistan's Agony In Third Test

LONDON (Dispatches) - England's Jos Buttler hit just the second Test century of his career as, together with Zak Crawley, he continued to make Pakistan toil in their series finale at Southampton.

The hosts, 1-0 up in a three-match series and needing to avoid defeat at the Ageas Bowl to secure a first series win over Pakistan in a decade, were 373-4 at lunch on the second day of the third Test after a morning session extended by rain delays.

Crawley was 186 not out and Buttler 113 not out, with their unbroken fifth-wicket stand now worth 246 after they had joined forces at 127-4.

England resumed in a commanding position at 332-4. Crawley was 171 not out after scoring his maiden Test century on Friday and Buttler unbeaten on 87.

Buttler, whose 75 at Old Trafford helped England to a three-wicket win in the first Test, had moved into the 90s by the time the first of two rain breaks kept the players off the field for nearly two hours in total.

But the umpires, much criticised for not doing enough to get play underway in a drawn second Test at Southampton marred by weather interruptions, extended the pre-lunch session until 2:00pm. It took Crawley 25 balls to add to his overnight score but he did so in style, elegantly flicking a half-volley from left-arm quick Shaheen Afridi off his pads for four through midwicket.

Buttler went to 99 with an elegant forcing shot for four off Mohammad Abbas.

He was still on 99 when, after opposing wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan came up to the stumps, he was given out caught behind off Abbas, a probing paceman.

Buttler immediately reviewed umpire Richard Illingworth's decision and replays showed the ball had missed the outside edge, with the bat appearing to hit the pad instead.

Next ball, Buttler punched Abbas through point to complete a 189-ball hundred with 10 fours and two sixes.

It was the 29-year-old Buttler's second century in 47 Tests following his 106 against India at Nottingham's Trent Bridge two years ago -- an innings that took place soon after the World Cup winner's recall to England's red-ball side -- and first as a wicketkeeper.



Boston Celtics 102 - Philadelphia 76ers 94

Boston made three key defensive plays down the stretch and overtook Philadelphia to grab a 3-0 lead in their Eastern Conference first-round playoff series.

Kemba Walker scored a team-high 24 points, including a key jumper with 1:05 remaining that put third-seeded Boston up by four and set the stage for a possible sweep in the best-of-seven series. Game 4 is set for Sunday.

Joel Embiid led all scorers with 30 points for the sixth-seeded 76ers.

Utah Jazz 124 - Denver Nuggets 87

Mike Conley scored 27 points and Rudy Gobert added 24 points and 14 rebounds to power Utah to a 2-1 series lead over Denver in their first-round series in the Western Conference playoffs. Game 4 is on Sunday.

Donovan Mitchell added 20 points while Georges Niang scored a playoff career-high 16 points off the bench. Utah earned its second straight lopsided victory over Denver after going 18-for-37 from 3-point range. Conley led the way, going a career-playoff-best 7-for-8 from long distance.

Nikola Jokic scored 15 points and Jamal Murray added 12 to lead the Nuggets. Both players added five rebounds and six assists. Denver shot just 37.5 percent from the floor, compared to 51.2 percent for the Jazz.

Hiddink Appointed Coach of Minnows Curacao

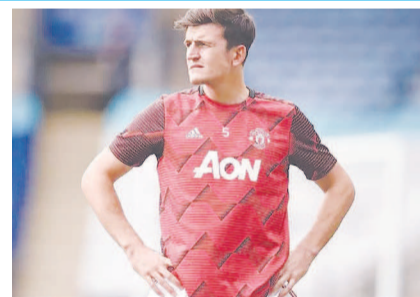
PARIS (AFP) - Guus Hiddink's latest stop on his well-travelled coaching career has taken him to Curacao, the Caribbean island state signing the 73-year-old Dutchman on a contract up to the 2022 World Cup.

"It may not be obvious, but it was difficult to say 'no'," Hiddink told Fox Sports of his new job with the side placed 80th in FIFA's world rankings. "Curacao has made good steps in recent years and I would like to help the players and staff to get one step higher in the international ladder."

The experienced tactician has been out of work since his sacking as China's Olympic team boss last September. In addition to two interim stints as manager of Chelsea, he has also coached Real Madrid, PSV Eindhoven and Valencia, among others.

But Hiddink is perhaps best known for inspiring co-hosts South Korea to a shock semi-final spot at the 2002 World Cup.

Curacao, a former Dutch colony with a population of almost 160,000 has yet to grace the World Cup stage. Among the players at Hiddink's disposal in his quest to try to steer Curacao through CONCACAF qualifying to Qatar are Juninho Bacuna and Leandro Bacuna who play for clubs in the English Championship.



Man Utd Captain Maguire Released After Assault Hearing

ATHENS (AFP) - Manchester United captain Harry Maguire was released from Greek police custody Saturday, TV footage showed, ahead of a hearing on assault charges on the island of Mykonos.

Wearing a baseball cap and mask, Maguire was shown leaving a courthouse on neighbouring Syros island, accompanied by what appeared to be members of his legal team, and boarding a dark minivan.

The England centre-back's hearing has been set for Tuesday but he is not obliged to be present. Manchester United said in a statement: "Following the appearance in court today we note the adjournment of the case to allow the legal team to consider the case file."

"Harry has pleaded not guilty to the charges. It would be inappropriate for the player or club to comment further while the legal process takes its course," the club said.

His lawyer Constantinos Darivas had earlier told Greek sports website gazzetta.gr that the England centre-back had denied the charges, and was in "fine condition" despite spending two nights in detention since his Thursday night arrest.

Greek TV channel Mega said Maguire's father had flown to Greece to be at his son's side.

The case is being heard on the island of Syros, the administrative hub of the Cycladic island group that includes Mykonos.

The £80 million (88 million euros) defender was arrested late Thursday after what Greek police described as an "altercation" between two groups of British tourists on Mykonos.

Murray Admits to Rustiness Ahead Of ATP Return

LONDON (Reuters) - Andy Murray says he's feeling off the pace for his return to the ATP Tour this weekend but is hoping to hit his stride ahead of the U.S. Open, which begins on Aug. 31.

Murray, 33, will face Frances Tiafoe in the opening round of the Western & Southern Open, which began this week in New York and serves as a warm-up event for players ahead of the U.S. Open.

The Briton, a three-time tennis Grand Slam winner, has not played competitively since November due to hip problems but took part in exhibition events recently with the professional circuit shut.

"I'm looking forward to be back competing. I've really enjoyed the last few days just practising with top players," he said in comments on the ATP website.

"I've been practising with Dominic Thiem, Andrey Rublev and Karen Khachanov. Those guys don't hold back. It's a bit of a different speed to what I've been used to. I felt a little off the pace but I'm feeling quite good on court in terms of my hip.

"That was really all I wanted. I wanted to get to the U.S. Open feeling pretty pain-free so that I could enjoy playing in a Grand Slam again."

The U.S. Open will take place without fans to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, and Murray is anticipating a few upsets.

"It's just going to be different playing in front of no fans. I kind of felt that a little bit yesterday. It's nice walking through to practice not getting stopped, but then the atmosphere is just not the same without the people," he said.



Conte to Stay at Inter

COLOGNE (Reuters) - Antonio Conte said he has no intention of quitting Inter Milan following his side's 3-2 defeat to Sevilla in a pulsating Europa League final on Friday.

The head coach's occasional angry outbursts have seen him clash with Inter's senior executives since taking over the reins in 2019 but the 51-year-old maintained that he would be staying with the club.

"There is no rancour, from me nor the club. There are people I already worked with, so that's not the issue," Conte said in a post-match interview. "It's about points of view, some situations that I faced this year and didn't like, with all due respect for everyone."

"We'll clarify the situation, without rancour, because I will always be grateful for having the chance to spend a great year at Inter, but on the other it was also very tough ... if you think I will step back, I won't."

Conte was left rueing the bad luck of Romelu Lukaku, who scored 34 goals this season after arriving from Manchester United but who ended up deflecting Diego Carlos's overhead kick into his own net in the second half.

"It was a tough, well-balanced game where in the second half one incident could change it. We had the opportunity, but instead there was that unlucky deflection off Romelu, so inevitably it became very difficult after that," Conte said.

"We have regrets to a degree, as the team gave everything it had against a team with a great deal of experience that was accustomed to these occasions and that had won the final many times. In the end, that made the difference."

