

**Iran's Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Monday
That Some 133 More Iranians Have
Died from Coronavirus Disease
Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing the
Total Deaths to 20,776**

IRAN NEWS

**A Spokesman for Afghan Foreign
Ministry Says a delegation From
Afghanistan Has Traveled to Iran to
Issue Electronic ID Cards and
Passports for Afghan Refugees Who
Are Living in Some Iranian Cities**

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Blast in Natanz Nuclear Site Was Act of Sabotage

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In an interview with Al-Alam on Sunday night, Spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi said security investigations have confirmed that the July 2 incident in Natanz nuclear site was an act of sabotage.

"What is definite is that an explosion occurred in Natanz (nuclear site), but the security officials will announce at an appropriate time how and with what materials the blast took place and what the details are," he explained.

On the latest status of Iran's nuclear industry, Kamalvandi said the stockpile of heavy water produced inside the country has surpassed 3 tons, noting that part of the product would be exported to other countries, including a number of European states. The spokesman, however, refused to name those purchasers, citing the US pressure on the target countries.

Commenting on IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi's forthcoming visit to Tehran, the spokesperson expressed hope that the trip would help allay the concerns of both sides, according to the government's official website.

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Iran Attends 6th Int'l Military Forum Army in Russia

MOSCOW (IRNA) - The sixth International Military Forum Army-2020 was held in the presence of high-ranking defense officials, namely from Iran, in Patriot Park near Moscow.

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier-General Amir Hatami, heading a high-profile delegation, is now in Moscow to participate in the event and to hold talks with counterparts.

The five-day event is underway in an area covering 500,000 square meters showcasing over 28,000 weapons, military equipment and maquette of missiles. Russian defense ministry had invited over 130 countries to attend the event but due to the outbreak of coronavirus 90 countries, including Iran, South Africa, Uzbekistan, Armenia, China, Belarus, India and Kazakhstan attended the event.

According to Russian media 'Tass', during the forthcoming Army-2020 forum, the KBP Instrument Design Bureau's display will feature the Hermes high-precision guided missile system with over-the-horizon range of up to 100 km.

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Three Energy Megaprojects Come on Stream



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani on Monday inaugurated three national large projects in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries.

Marking the Government Week, President Rouhani inaugurated the three megaprojects at a videoconference on Monday morning.

Implemented with a total investment of €4.7 billion, the projects include the development and improvement of the gas dispatching site and a series of gas pipelines in the national network, the first phase of Bushehr petrochemical plant, as well as a 500-MW combined cycle power plant in West Karun and its adjoining power transfer equipment and station.

The 1,200-km pipelines from the sixth section of the national gas network have the capacity to transfer 110 million cubic meters of gas from the South Pars gas field to the western provinces every day.

Another pipeline in the ninth section of the countrywide network stretches for 125 kilometers from the western areas of Behbahan into the Bazargan border crossing and north of Maku in northwestern Iran to supply 60 million cubic meters of gas per day.

The new pipeline would ensure sustainable gas supplies in the country's cold regions and would also allow for the exports and energy exchanges with the regional countries.

The first phase of Bushehr petrochemical plant includes gas sweetening section and shops producing ethane, methanol, oxygen, and 9.6 million cubic meters of input per day for the South Pars refineries.

The 500-MW West Karun combined cycle power plant is also the other major project that would generate power for the oil and gas fields west of Karun River, including the North and South Azadegan as well as North and South Yaran oilfields.

The project also includes electricity transition equipment and gas pressure reduction station at the power plant. Addressing the ceremony, President Rouhani highlighted his administration's major achievements in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries, saying the country's natural gas delivery system is globally unique.

In remarks at a videoconference, he said his administration's great achievements in the oil and gas sector would serve the Iranian nation and the next administrations.

"This administration has done great jobs in the oil and gas industries and in the joint fields," he noted, adding that all but one of the phases in the South Pars gas field have come on stream and Iran has become self-sufficient in producing gasoline and diesel.

The president also said his administration has increased gas extraction from the joint gas fields by 2.5 times, while the crude output from the common oilfields has risen by around 6 times.

The oil output at the joint oilfields has increased from 70,000 to 400,000 barrels per day, President Rouhani stated, adding that the daily gas production has also reached one billion cubic meters.

The administration has connected 17,000 villages to the national gas network and runs at least 89 power plants with gas, he added.

Natural gas has great significance in the country, the president stressed, saying Iran consumes around 800 million cubic meters of gas in the wintertime, which is equivalent to 5 million barrels of oil.

The president finally pointed to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's emphasis on preventing the sale of raw materials, saying the administration has taken proper measures in constructing petrochemical plants.

Iraq to Significantly Cut Gas Imports From Iran Next Year

ERBIL (Dispatches) - Iraq will "significantly" reduce its heavy reliance on Iranian energy imports by as soon as next year, Iraq's finance minister said in an online interview with an American international affairs think tank on Friday.

Minister Ali Allawi's comments to the Atlantic Council on the future of his country's energy sector follow Iraq's latest round of strategic dialogue with the United States, a longtime adversary of Iran.

"This has been going on for several years now, it is unlikely we can find a short term substitute, but a medium-term effort can be done by linking the Iraqi grid to the Gulf grid," Allawi said. "The dependence on Iranian electricity and energy will begin to trail down significantly sometime next year."

Allawi was part of a delegation accompanying Iraqi prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on his visit last week to Washington, where a second round of US-Iraq strategic dialogue took place. Talks focused on security, economic, and energy cooperation between the two countries. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and US President Donald Trump both highlighted expanding economic ties in comments to the media after a meeting in the White House on Thursday.

Baghdad and Washington signed a series of oil and energy agreements to develop Iraq's energy sector. Among them was an agreement with US energy giant Chevron to "develop the Iraqi oil and gas sector," the finance minister told the Atlantic Council.

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IAEA Has Access To Iranian Sites More Than Any Country

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that in his first press conference that Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency have had ups and downs in relations, but, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action led to the highest level cooperation.

The access the IAEA has to the Iranian nuclear sites is the most ever in the history of the Agency, said Khatibzadeh on Monday. Congratulating the National Government Week, he said that the Governments have always defended the interests of the people in the past four decades.

He added that in the past turbulent seven years, the Government has tried powerfully to defend the rights of the people. Despite strong objections, like those of the US, "We are witnessing the emergence of a powerful Iran," he said.

Regarding the recent trip of Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif to Lebanon to express Iran's people and government's solidarity with the Lebanese people and government, he said that Zarif had meetings with Lebanese officials and Hassan Nasrullah and spoke with Palestinian foreign minister and the head of the Islamic Palestinian organization Hamas about occupied lands and to express solidarity with Palestinians.

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Official Accuses NATO, U.S. of Trafficking Afghan Narcotics

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Brigadier General Eskandar Momeni, Secretary-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Drug Control Headquarters, has said that according to credible information, NATO and U.S. aircraft are trafficking narcotics from Afghanistan.

Iran is definitely dealing honestly with all kinds of drugs, and this is a necessity that has been done over the last four decades, he highlighted. In 2000, the total production of narcotics in Afghanistan was about 200 tons, which in 2017 reached more than 9,000 tons, an increase of nearly 50 times, he lamented.

"According to credible information, NATO and U.S. planes are trafficking drugs from our neighboring country, so while we continue to fight smuggling, there is no way but to prioritize the prevention approach." According to Momeni, about 500 tons of drugs were discovered in the first five months of this year, which has increased by 30 percent compared to the same period last year.

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Turkey's Gas Imports From Russia, Iran Fall Sharply

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's natural gas imports from Iran and Russia declined by 44.8% and 41.5%, respectively in the first half of this year compared to the same period of 2019, according to Energy Market Regulatory data compiled by Anadolu Agency on Monday.

Turkey's natural gas imports in the January-June period of this year dropped by 3.5% to 22.5 billion cubic meters (bcm). Out of this amount, Turkey imported 12.1 bcm via pipeline and 10.3 bcm as liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Turkey's pipeline gas imports fell by 22.8% while LNG imports grew 44.8% during this period.

The country imported the highest amount of gas at 5.44 bcm in the first half of this year from Azerbaijan, marking a 23.4% increase compared to the same period of 2019. Transmission from the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline was a factor in the growth of imports.

Turkey imported 46% less gas from Iran in the first half of this year, dropping from 3.75 bcm to 2.02 bcm, with no gas imports made from April to June of this year.

Likewise, imports from Russia significantly fell by 41% in the January-June period of this year to 4.7 bcm relative to the same period last year.

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IRGC Smashes Terrorist Team

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) forces attacked a team of terrorists in northwestern Iran, killing three and confiscating weapons.

According to the public relations department of the IRGC's Hamze Sayyid al-Shohada Base, its servicemen clashed with an anti-Revolution team of terrorists affiliated with the "global arrogance" who had plans to infiltrate into the country from Maku region in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan on Sunday night.

The IRGC troops killed all three members of the terrorist team, it added.

Qalibaf Urges Europeans to Pursue Independent Policy

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said today President Trump realized that the maximum pressures against Iran have not been effective, and if there were not Martyr Soleimani, ISIS would have reached the heart of Europe.

Qalibaf yesterday met with the Swiss Ambassador to Tehran, Markus Leitner, who also represents the interests of the United States in Iran.

The Speaker said: "Although European countries are under the pressure of the United States, they must pursue an independent policy."

He added: "Switzerland's position is an exception due to its independent and neutral policies. In addition to expanding relations with Asia, we are interested in developing economic relations with independent European countries."

Referring to the historical and friendly relations between the two countries and the need to expand economic relations between Iran and Switzerland, the spokesman said: "Creating a financial channel between Switzerland and Iran is a good initiative, but we should try to increase the volume of economic relations through this channel on Health, food, and other fields."

Pointing out that the United States is putting pressure on the Iranian people by



imposing oppressive sanctions, he added: "The U.S. thought that with the pressures it could create national problems in Iran, which is a false notion."

"That there is real democracy in Iran, and added: "In the elections, it is the Iranian people who decide which path to take," the speaker concluded.

"We have a coherent, trust-based policy on bilateral relations between Iran and Switzerland," said the Swiss ambassador.

Markus Leitner continued by pointing to the need to expand comprehensive cooperation: "The Swiss financial channel is ready and active, and part of it has been implemented, and we also believe that the function of this financial channel should be developed."

Referring to the visit of a Swiss parliamentary delegation to Tehran, the ambassador added: "We want to develop cooperation and parliamentary relations between Iran and Switzerland."

Iran Not to Allow U.S., Israel to Mock IAEA's Goals

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif has lashed out at the US and the Zionist regime for threatening world security with their nuclear weapons, stressing that Tehran won't allow those parties to mock the UN nuclear agency's purposes.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will not allow the parties that disagree with the International Atomic Energy Agency and threaten world security with their nukes, namely the US and the Zionist regime, to mock the IAEA's goals, Zarif told reporters on Monday.

Highlighting Tehran's transparent cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog, Zarif emphasized that Iran's beliefs and strategic considerations ban any plan to achieve nuclear weapons, which are deemed to be detrimental to the country.

The foreign minister finally noted that the visit that IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi is going to make to Iran on Monday has nothing to do with the JCPOA's snapback mechanism, which he described as a wrong expression popularized by Americans.

Caracas Seeking to Strengthen Strategic Ties With Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said in a TV interview that he can rest assured that Iranian assistance will help his country develop strategic capacities to carry out economic development projects.

Iran has implemented all programs it had and has been able to create a powerful energy industry in the past 40 years, said Maduro, calling for Iran-Venezuela strategic relations in energy and oil industry.

Saying that Iran has always supported Venezuela's economic development and progress, he added after signing several agreements on manufacturing sector and social fields, the union between the two countries has grown up dramatically.

Regarding his Saturday's remarks about looking into arms negotiations with Iran after the false claims made by Colombian President Ivan Duque, Maduro said that for defense purpose against the threats of the US and the neighboring country, he had ordered Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino to explore all the capacities of Iranian military technology.

He also said that Duque intends to deviate the public opinion from the catastrophic health conditions his country has. Maduro said Duque, with 35 years of massacre, may decide to do anything, but he is sure of Venezuela's defense capabilities.

In May, Iran supplied Venezuela with five tankers of gasoline, leaving all the U.S. threats null and void.

COVID-19 Breaks Traditional Resistance to Online Businesses

TEHRAN (IFP) - Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari says the novel coronavirus pandemic has broken the traditional resistance to online businesses and helped them thrive.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Sattari said the virus has had certain benefits in addition to the harms it inflicted on the Iranian economy.

"Despite all the serious harms the coronavirus crisis inflicted, it has considerably helped ICT companies to thrive. Those active in the field of online education and e-sale have improved [their businesses] very much," Sattari noted.

"The coronavirus broke the traditional resistance and the old barriers that hindered these businesses, and they managed to release their optimum products in the society, which resulted in multiplication of their profit," he noted.

The vice-president made the remarks on the sidelines of a ceremony held in Tehran to open the country's first Export Acceleration Centre with the support of the Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology and Iran's



Chamber of Commerce.

Sattari said he is hopeful that the opening of the center would facilitate the trend of exporting the country's services and high-tech products.

"The entire capacity of the Vice-Presidency's export corridor has been allocated to knowledge-based companies and export-based start-ups, and the Vice-Presidency is prepared to provide any kind of support for these high-tech exporters," he noted.

During the ceremony, Sattari visited in person various parts of the Export Acceleration Centre, which accommodates various teams and start-ups including a platform to facilitate diagnostic and medical services, an online exhibition of medical and pharmaceutical equipment, and a start-up company offering services in the field of online international research.

The vice-president also rewarded the winners of an event called "Jump in Export in the Path to Jump in Production". The winners included a platform for online exchange of foreign currencies, another platform for offering technical-engineering services, and a portal for export of specialized educational courses.

Tehran Welcomes Joint Venture Investment of Turkish Private Sector

QAZVIN (IRNA) - Vice President and Head of the Budget and Planning Organization Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said on Monday that the Government welcomes joint venture investment of Turkish private sector in Iran.



Speaking in a meeting with Turkish investors in 'Caspian Industrial Town' in Qazvin Province, Nobakht said that the Government contributes to foreign investment by preparatory and infrastructural facilities.

He added that 'AGT' company will be able to take advantage of the provincial capacities for processing its products. He vowed for removal of customs barriers in 'Caspian Industrial Town'. He reiterated that all legal supports will be provided for this company.

According to its official website, AGT; (Technology That Develops the Wood) which started its activities in Antalya in 1984 with the dream of processing and developing the wood specifically for individuals and institutions with developing technology, operates today as one of the world's leading companies in the furniture components industry.

"In its modern production facilities established in Antalya Organized Industrial Zone on a total area of 450 thousand square meters; AGT provides service to the furniture and decoration sectors with MDF, MF MDF, Panel, Profile production and it also provides service to the construction sector with flooring and skirting board production."

Iran Becoming Regional Hub of Repair to Russian Copters

TEHRAN (TASNIM) - The CEO of the Iran Helicopter Support and Renewal Company (IHSRC) highlighted the country's constant progress in carrying out repairs on Eastern helicopters ever since the Armed Forces purchased Russian Mil Mi-17 choppers years ago.

The IHSRC has received permission from the helicopter manufacturers for repairing the products and is moving to create the hub of region for repair to the Eastern choppers inside Iran, General Rouhani added.

"A number of Russian experts oversee the process of providing the infrastructures for that center. With such mutual cooperation, we are going to be able to do the job (repair) on behalf of the Russians," the CEO of IHSRC stated. He said Iranian technicians have even impressed the Russian experts by manufacturing a number of testers and improving the avionics systems of the helicopters.

The general also unveiled plans for the production of the second version of Saba-248 homegrown helicopter. The new platform of Saba-248 is under construction, Rouhani noted, saying the new version would be propelled by custom-ordered engines.

The general added that the new Iranian chopper's engine is being manufactured inside the country in cooperation with a domestic company, and its composite rotor blades would also be produced by the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company.

U.S. Has No Legal Right to Push So-Called Snapback Mechanism

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission dismissed any legal right for the US to push a so-called snapback mechanism in JCPOA to restore UN sanctions against Iran.

"The Americans have no legal right and argument to push for activating such a mechanism," Mojtaba Zonnour said on Monday.

He pointed out to the U.S.' withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and noted that Washington is no longer a participant to the pact. "So, if the non-participant US is allowed to activate a mechanism in JCPOA, any other country could!"

Referring to the recent failure of the U.S. at the United Nations Security Council to extend an arms embargo on Iran, Zonnour said the U.S., after its failure in UNSC, is sticking to any means to achieve its goals. "However such goals will not materialize."

FM Protects Iranians' Interests Beyond Borders

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a twitter message to mark National Government Week that the diplomatic apparatus protects Iranians interests beyond borders.

In his Twitter message which was released on the occasion of national government week, Khatibzadeh said that relentless efforts in line with fulfilling people's demands are a great service.

He paid tribute to martyrs Mohammad Ali Rajaei (former president) and Mohammad Javad Bahonar (former prime minister).

On August 30, 1981, a bomb explosion claimed the lives of top officials, including the then-president Mohammad Ali Rajaei and Prime Minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar.

President Rajaei's government was only in office for 29 days.

The terrorist group Mojahedin-e Khalgh Organization (MKO) was responsible for the 1981 attack.

Iran's Import of Turkish Chemicals Slump

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Export of chemical products from Turkey to Iran significantly dropped by 42.54 percent from January 2020 through June 2020, making up \$151.3 million, according to the data released by Turkish Trade Ministry.

In June 2020, Turkey exported the chemical products worth \$43.9 million to Iran, which is 23.14 percent more compared to the same month of 2019.

Turkey's export of chemical products to foreign markets decreased by 13.9 percent from January through June 2020 compared to the same period of last year and stood at slightly over \$8.6 billion.

Turkey's export of chemical products abroad amounted to 11.5 percent of the country's total export for the reporting period. In June 2020, Turkey's export of chemical products to world markets exceeded \$1.4 billion, which is 10.2 percent more compared to the same month of 2019, the ministry said.

Turkey's export of chemical products in June this year made up 10.6 percent of the country's total export.

During the last 12 months (from June 2019 through June 2020), Turkey's export of chemical products to world markets made up \$19.2 billion.

Persian Gulf University Signs 18 MoUs With Foreign Universities

BUSHEHR (IRNA) - The Persian Gulf University has signed 18 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with 18 foreign prestigious universities to develop international cooperation on science and technology, Chancellor of the Persian Gulf University Abdolmajid Mosleh said.

Abdolmajid Mosleh said that one of the achievements of the Persian Gulf University, which has been particularly developed under the Government of 'Initiative and Hope', is moving towards the international arena by international cooperation on science and technology.

In this regard, for the first time in 2017, this university started giving admission to foreign students and so far 104 foreign students have been admitted, Mosleh added.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:59
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:03
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:32

104. The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed),- even as We produced the first creation, so shall We produce a new one: a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it.

Surah 21. The Prophets (104)

Iran, Qatar Free Zones Review Ways to Boost Mutual Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Free trade zones officials of Iran and Qatar reviewed ways of joint economic cooperation and attracting investment.

In an online meeting, Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Mr. Morteza Bank and Chairman of Qatar Free Zones Authority Ahmad bin Mohammed Al-Sayed exchanged views for boosting joint cooperation and investment.

During the virtual meeting, Mr. Bank emphasized that Iran is always ready for cooperation with neighboring countries and welcomes expanding ties with Qatar. He also expressed his satisfaction over deepening of ties between both states despite sanctions.

He added that Iran and Qatar, due to their major agreements like customs duty exemptions, getting double tax, supporting the mutual investment and joint economic cooperation, have provided appropriate measures for future cooperation.

Mr. Bank noted free zones in Qatar and also 8 free zones and 32 special economic zones in Iran can help effectively the continuation of cooperation between both states.

He then pointed to the launch of international stock market in the free zones of Iran which will be launched o Kish Island soon, adding that the stock market will function based on the international standards and presence of foreign investors have been predicted and soon talks for presence of domestic and foreign investors in the stock market will begin. He noted that Qatar's stock market and free zones can cooperate with Iran's free zones in this field.

Meanwhile, Al-Sayed, for his part, welcomed Mr. Bank's proposal for launching a virtual window for setting up a joint workgroup between both states, adding that Iran stood beside Qatar during the cruel sanctions of other countries and Qatari people will never forget Iran's stand.



He further pointed that Iran and Qatar have always had good political ties, expressing hope that their relations especially in the economic and investment fields would enhance.

He also said Iran's free zones should study ways of presence of Iranian companies and investors in Qatar's free zone in order that the grounds for developing cooperation could be laid. He also reiterated that Qatar welcomes presence of Iranian investors especially in Qatar's free zones.

Al-Sayed also invited Mr. Bank to pay a visit to Qatar's free zones. Touching upon international stock market on Kish Island, he said he is willing to know more about the international stock market on Kish Island in order to convey information to the Qatar government.

He also stated that the proposal for setting up a technical and expertise workgroup for studying different grounds for economic cooperation in attracting investment and services in the free zones is a good idea.

Al-Sayed added that the workgroup can be effective for exchange of bilateral experiences.

Creation of the offshore bank, setting up joint investment fund for monetary and banking cooperation, cooperation in the joint investments in different sectors like tourism, hoteliering, fishery, agriculture, and oil and petrochemical fields were the other issues which were discussed in this virtual meeting.

EDBI Signed Finance Contracts Worth of \$22.5b in 7 Years

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director of the International Affairs Department at Iran Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) Hamid Reza Maboodi says the bank has signed refinancing contracts worth of \$290m and finance contract worth of \$22.5 with foreign banks in the past seven years.



Maboodi said that the bank in the past seven years has signed contracts for imports of basic goods and medical equipment, adding that EDBI has signed refinance contracts worth of over \$29m and finance contracts worth of over \$22.5b with foreign banks.

He added that after the nuclear deal, the bank put on its agenda unblocking the frozen money and granting credits for foreign purchases.

Maboodi noted that after the JCPOA, some \$65m euros which had been blocked for rural projects and project in Sri Lanka and Cuba was unblocked.

He added that some damages and installments in projects in Sri Lanka and Sudan were paid by Iran Export Guarantee Fund.

He then pointed to the electricity project in Armenia, adding the agreement has been signed and the project will be launched this year.

PGSOC Appoints Head of Budget And Cost Control Department

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) Mr. Mohammad Ali Dadvar in a decree appointed Ruhollah Zakeri as the head of budget and cost control department of the company.



Dadvar in an interview announced the appointment of Mr. Zakeri as the head of budget and cost control department.

Defending his appointment, he said after studying precisely and expertly, Mr. Zakeri who is one of the capable forces in Hormuzgan Province was appointed for the job.

He also announced the beginning of the process for drawing up the organizational structure for making the company agile and systematic.

He added that the project is aimed at easing the executive activities and boosting the managerial and operational process.

Dadvar noted that by implementing the project, the company can have strong presence in the national and international markets and boost sales of its products.

47 Oil and Gas Wells Drilled, Completed in Five Months

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The deputy Managing Director of National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) Hamidreza Khoshayand says the company has drilled and finished drilling of 47 oil and gas wells in the first five months of the current year by its own fleet.



Speaking on the second day of the Government Week in the year of Surge in Production, Khoshayand said, "The company has drilled and completed drilling of 47 oil and gas wells. One of the wells is explorative, 18 are developmental-descriptive and 28 are workover."

Khoshayand added that 37 wells are in the operational range of National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), four wells in the operational range of Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC), four wells in the operational range of Iran's Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), one well in the form of project and one well at the order of NIOC Exploration Directorate.

He went on to say that the company has over 70 heavy and super heavy onshore and offshore rigs and since the beginning of the year and in five months, it has dilled some 32,803 meters of wells.

He hailed the efforts of the operational staff of the company who finished drilling of 9 wells 141 days ahead of schedule.

Iran Gas Export Capacity Hits 80m cu. m Per Day



TEHRAN (IRNA) – Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh pointed to the operation of Iran's sixth and ninth gas transmission lines and said that Iran's total capacity increases to 80 million cubic meters per day.

Zanganeh made the remarks in the inaugural ceremony of three plans for the sixth and ninth gas transmission lines, 5 compressor stations, Bushehr petrochemical and the west of Karoun and accessories.

He went on to say that Iran's oil industry, despite the strongest pressure and foreign sanctions, was not only successful in operation but also carried out development plans.

In the ceremony, Zanganeh said that during the National Government week this year, oil and gas industry plans to be inaugurated would hit €4.7 billion.

"The investment fund for the construction of Iran's sixth and ninth gas transmission lines has been €3 billion, the volume of investments in petrochemicals at Bushehr would hit €1.3 billion and at the west of Karoun power plant is estimated to be €320 million and all of these projects will be inaugurated today.

"There is a long-distance between the main gas production centers in the south with consumption intentions in the center and the east, and the west and the north, so we need a 12 - inch pipeline and pressure - strengthening stations, which will be needed for each cost line between \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million, each station also needs €75 million.

When we want to move 600 million cubic meters of gas from Asaluyeh - Southern Iran - to other parts of the country, "we need more than six pipelines and dozens of pressure" - strengthening stations, said Zanganeh.

The investments in these projects are €3.1 billion, of which €1.1 billion have been carried out by the private sector.

The pipeline will sustain gas exports as far as 80 million cubic meters of gas exports are now available, he added.

Exporting Technical, Engineering Services Top Priority

TEHRAN (IP)- Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian said that the technical and engineering services of Iran's water and electricity industry is at the top of the list of Iranian exporters.

Ardakanian in response to a question on the importance of exporting technical and engineering services of water and electricity industry stated that Trade Promotion Organization has reported on its 6 consecutive years of exporting technical and engineering services in water and electricity exporting industry, saying it is at the top of the list of exports.

"Iran's water and electricity industry has a good ability to be indigenized in order to meet its needs and the quality of services is excellent," he highlighted.

Ardakanian said that Iranian engineering companies in the water and electricity industry have a relatively good presence in the regional markets and over \$1 billion worth of projects are currently underway abroad.

Iran's energy minister noted that one of these projects is the third line of energy exchange with



Armenia, which we hope will be completed by the end of 2020 and the energy exchange capacity will increase.

The senior official also stated that the plan to synchronize the electricity systems of Iran, Russia, and the Republic of Azerbaijan is on the agenda and Iran's water and electricity industry still has good potential for development.

Speaking on the sideline of the press conference on the occasion of Government Week, Aradakanian also made the remarks that Iran has signed a three-year agreement with Iraq in order to help this country reconstruct its power grid and equipment which have been damaged during the war.

Referring to the sanctions, the minister stressed that Iran never welcomes sanctions, but even if sanctions would not be lifted and continue, there is no worry to provide water and electricity.

For energy efficiency, Iran's energy ministry has two plans on its agenda; the first of which is educating the public on how to consume energy, and next is equipping each house with a solar panel, Ardakanian noted.

ESCO's Actions on Course to "Surge in Production"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Felicitating the Government Week, the CEO of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) highlighted major actions taken by the company on course to materializing the surge in production.

Mr. Mansour Yazdizadeh said considering this point that one of the major challenges of this mammoth industrial complex is shortage of raw material especially iron ore, the company pursues the policy of improving the chain of sustainable provision of raw materials and to this end, has prioritized activities like active presence in presenting mineral materials on the mercantile exchange, ownership of iron ore and mineral materials, activating small-scale mines and signing long-term contracts with providers and producers.

He further said one of the other major policies of ESCO in line with surge in production slogan is the boost in agility and productivity in the production process and to this end it has constructed and launched Blast Furnace No. 1 and cauldron-like furnaces, oxygen production unit based on BOT method and reforming the existing convertors (LD-Optimized), and has launched some new units to boost production.

Yazdizadeh noted that one of the other policies of the company is marketing for its products and it has taken measures to improve the quality and to reduce the weight of products as well as offering them on the mercantile exchange.

Expanding indigenization of equipment and parts is one of the other actions taken by the company, he added.

He further said cutting the expenses and reforming the capital structure of the company and settling the debts of the company were of the other major actions of the company.

Yazdizadeh also noted that to boost the skill and capabilities of the staff, the company has held several training and educational courses.



South Korea Tightens Virus Curbs

SEPUL (AFP) - South Korea ramped up coronavirus restrictions on Sunday to try to contain a growing outbreak, as many countries around the world battled worrying surges in infections.

The pandemic has killed more than 800,000 people globally, and continues to unleash destruction with areas such as Western Europe detecting spikes in infections not seen for many months.

Infections have soared past 23 million globally, and some countries are still facing their first waves -- such as India, which crossed three million cases on Sunday. South Korea, which had largely brought its outbreak under control, tightened curbs to try to contain a new, growing cluster of cases.



Canada Conservatives Electing New Leader to Take on Trudeau

OTTAWA (AFP) - Canadian conservatives will reveal Sunday their pick for a new leader and main contender to challenge liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in possible snap elections.

Four candidates vied to replace outgoing Andrew Scheer, including two former ministers, the first Seventh-day Adventist ever to be elected to parliament, and an outsider seeking to become the first black woman to lead a major federal political party in Canada. Frontrunner Peter MacKay, 54, was looking to mark his triumphant return to politics following a five-year hiatus.

After leading Canada's foreign, defense and justice departments in the last Tory administration from 2006 to 2015, he ducked the limelight.



Belarus Protesters Flood Into Minsk



MINSK (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of protesters demanding President Alexander Lukashenko step down flooded into Minsk on Sunday, at one point demonstrating briefly near his residence in a pointed display of opposition to his long rule, before dispersing peacefully.

Huge nationwide demonstrations that erupted after the country's disputed election on Aug. 9 have provided the biggest challenge yet to the veteran leader's 26 years at the helm and tested the loyalty of his security forces.

The streets of Minsk turned red and white as a flood of demonstrators carried flags symbolising their opposition to Lukashenko and chanted for him to leave power and for new elections to be held. The crowd marched towards Lukashenko's residence at the Independence Palace, on the northern edge of the capital, the majority gathering at some distance, while a smaller group approached to between 10 and 20 metres of the building, a Reuters witness said.

A helicopter was seen flying out of the residence as protesters milled below, the Reuters witness said. Video circulated by state media journalists later showed Lukashenko arriving by helicopter at the residence holding a rifle.

After less than an hour, the majority of the protesters began to march back towards the city centre. It was the first time in this month's demonstrations that protesters have neared the building's doors. The building was surrounded by lines of armed police.

The approach to the palace took place after a crowd estimated by a Reuters witness to number as many as 200,000 rallied in central Minsk for the second weekend in a row.

The crowd began to disperse in early evening. Reuters witnessed no clashes with police. Earlier, the defence ministry said it would take on security around national memorials and issued a direct warning to protesters whom it likened to fascists.

The ministry said memorials, specifically ones to the dead of World War Two, were holy sites that must not be desecrated. "We categorically warn: any violation of peace and order in such places - you will have the army to deal with now, not the police," it said in a statement. "We, soldiers, will not allow these places to be desecrated, there can be no fascism there!"

The interior ministry issued its own statement warning that any unsanctioned protests would be considered illegal. It said 22 people had been arrested on Saturday when smaller-scale protests took place across 55 towns and cities.

Protests triggered by Lukashenko's claims of a landslide election victory on Aug. 9 found a leader in opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a former teacher who took her jailed husband's place on the ballot. Following threats to her safety, Tsikhanouskaya fled to neighbouring Lithuania.

Traditional ally Russia issued some of its strongest comments yet criticizing Tsikhanouskaya on Sunday.

Mali Junta Wants Three-Year Military Rule

BAMAKO (AFP) - The junta that seized power in Mali wants a military-led transitional body to rule for three years and has agreed to release the ousted president, a source in a visiting West African delegation and the rebel soldiers said Sunday.

Last week's coup -- Mali's second in eight years -- followed months of protests calling for Ibrahim Boubacar Keita to resign as public discontent with the government grew over the collapsing economy and a brutal Islamist insurgency.

"The junta has affirmed that it wants a three-year transition to review the foundations of the Malian state. This transition will be directed by a body led by a soldier, who will also be head of state," a source in the ECOWAS delegation told AFP after talks with the junta.

"The government will also be predominantly composed of soldiers" under the proposal, the source said on condition of anonymity.

A junta official confirmed to AFP that "the three-year transition would have a military president and a government mostly composed of soldiers".

The source and the official added that the soldiers have agreed to free Keita, detained along with other political leaders since the coup on Tuesday, and he would be able to return to his home in the capital Bamako.

"And if he wants to travel abroad for (medical) treatment, that is not a problem," said the source from ECOWAS, which stands for the Economic Community of West African States.

Prime minister Boubou Cisse, who has been held with Keita at a military base outside the capital where the coup began, would be moved to a secure residence in the city.

While the coup was met with international condemnation, thousands of opposition supporters celebrated the president's ouster in the streets of Bamako.

East Libyan Forces Dismiss Ceasefire Push by Rivals

BENGHAZI (Reuters) - The eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) dismissed a ceasefire announcement by authorities in the capital, Tripoli, as a marketing stunt on Sunday, saying rival forces were mobilising around front lines in the centre of the country.

Its spokesman, Ahmed Mismari, said the LNA was ready to respond to any attempted attack on its positions around the coastal city of Sirte, and Jufra, to the south.

Mismari's comments were the first by the LNA after the announcement on Friday of a ceasefire and a call for the resumption of oil production by Fayez al-Sarraj, who heads the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, in the west.

"The initiative that Sarraj signed is for media marketing," Mismari said during a briefing for journalists. "There is a military build-up and the transfer of equipment to target our forces in Sirte."

"If Sarraj wanted a ceasefire, he would have drawn his forces back, not advanced towards our units in Sirte."

Mismari made no reference to a parallel ceasefire call also issued on Friday by the head of Libya's eastern-based parliament, Aguila Saleh.

Saleh has gained influence compared to LNA commander Khalifa Haftar since Turkish military support for the GNA forced the LNA to retreat from a 14-month offensive on Tripoli in June.

For more than five years, Libya has been divided into rival camps based in the east and west of the country.

The LNA has received backing from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia, in a conflict that has become an arena for regional rivalries. There has been little fighting since June. In the past, both sides have accused each other of quickly violating truces and using them to rearm.

Afghan Taliban Visit Pakistan To Discuss Peace Process

KARACHI (Dispatches) - A delegation from the Afghan Taliban is arriving in Pakistan to discuss the ongoing peace process with the Pakistani leadership ahead of expected intra-Afghan dialogue, a spokesman for the militant group, as well as Pakistani diplomatic officials, said Sunday.

"A high-level Islamic Emirate [Taliban] delegation led by deputy political chief, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, has left for Pakistan upon the invitation of the country's Foreign Ministry to discuss the latest on the peace process, state of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, [cross-border] travel of people, and trade between the two neighbors," Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said in a series of tweets.

He did not offer any further details, including which Pakistani leaders the Taliban delegation would meet and the duration of the visit.

A senior official of Pakistan's Foreign Ministry told Anadolu Agency on condition of anonymity that the Taliban delegation was expected to hold meetings with "Pakistan's civilian and military leadership" on Monday.

The development came days after the Afghan government released some 80 key Taliban figures to pave the way for direct peace talks.

The move was part of a prisoner swap deal, following a landmark peace agreement between the US and Taliban in Qatar's capital Doha in February this year.

Afghanistan has so far released 4,600 Taliban prisoners, in addition to 500 prisoners who were not on the Taliban's list, according to local media.

In December 2018, Pakistan arranged rare direct talks between Washington and the Taliban, paving the way for a negotiated settlement of the lingering conflict.

Pakistan also facilitated the landmark first round of direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Islamabad in July 2015.

That process broke down after the Taliban announced the death of their long-time leader Mullah Omar, triggering a bitter internal power struggle.

The process was further hampered by the killing of Omer's successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, in a U.S. drone strike on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in 2016.



Two Killed in Ivory Coast Vote Violence

ABIDJAN (AFP) - At least two people were killed in ethnic clashes in Ivory Coast following President Alassane Ouattara's controversial announcement he would run for a third term, a hospital source and local residents said Sunday.

Young opposition supporters on Saturday took to the streets to voice loud and violent protest in several major cities, especially the southern cocoa growing hub of Divo, after Ouattara accepted his party's nomination for the October poll.

"One person evacuated to the regional hospital succumbed to their injuries and died this morning," said a hospital source in Divo, adding that "several were badly wounded with machetes".

Several local people also said they had seen the body of a teenager killed in a fire in a local bar.

Ouattara was officially anointed as candidate by his ruling RHDP despite having already served two terms -- the maximum permitted under the constitution -- since 2010.

He had planned to hand the reins to prime minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly, but his presumed successor died of a heart attack in July.

Six people had already died in violence following Ouattara's August 6 announcement that he would run again, while 100 were hurt.

The president and his supporters say a 2016 constitutional tweak has reset the clock on the two-term limit.

"Going back on my decision was not easy" but "there is nothing preventing me from standing," Ouattara said Saturday.

Saturday's violence in Divo saw a bus station, bars and shops set on fire and looted, MP Famoussa Coulibay told AFP, while barricades were set up and tyres burned in former president Laurent Gbagbo's hometown of Gagnoa.

Election authorities on Friday rejected an appeal by Gbagbo as well as former rebel leader Guillaume Soro to be allowed to run in October.





Shanon
(adviser)

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J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

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1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2500) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F
Gheitarieh (\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
Fereshteh (\$2000) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
Jordan (\$1200) 120sq.m, 2bdrs, F.F

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German Labor Minister to Extend Short-Time Work Allowance

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - German Labour Minister Hubertus Heil is seeking to extend by one year the period during which the state will pay short-time work allowances - a supplement for people put on reduced work hours - weekly newspaper Bild am Sonntag (BamS) reported on Sunday.

The newspaper cited a Labour Ministry paper as saying the allowance, which covers some of the salary shortfall, will be extended to March 22, 2022. Members of the ruling coalition will meet on Tuesday to hammer out the

details and find a solution, as the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) are expected to reject the proposal.

Short-time work, or Kurzarbeit, is a form of state aid that allows employers to switch employees to shorter working hours during an economic downturn to keep them on the payroll. It aims to prevent shocks such as the coronavirus crisis from leading to mass unemployment.



Trump Raises Possibility of Complete Decoupling of U.S. Economy From China

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump has hinted at the possibility of “completely” decoupling the American economy from China as tensions between the economic giants continue.

In a video excerpt for Fox News for an interview airing today, Trump initially told interviewer Steve Hilton “we don’t have to” do business with China, and then later said about decoupling: “Well it’s something that if they don’t treat us right I would certainly, I would certainly do that.”

Trump entered into a high-stakes trade war with China before reaching a partial Phase 1 trade deal in January. Trump has since shut the door on Phase 2 negotiations, saying he was unhappy with Beijing’s handling of the pandemic.

In June U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said a decoupling of the U.S. and Chinese economies will result if U.S. companies are not allowed to compete on a fair and level basis in China’s economy.

Earlier this month Trump had said his relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping had frayed in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic and that he has not spoken to his Chinese counterpart in a long time.

“I used to have a very good relationship with him,” Trump told Fox Sports Radio in an interview, citing their Phase One trade deal hammered out last year and signed in early 2020. “I had a great relationship with President Xi. I like him, but I don’t feel the same way now.”

Trump said his feelings changed amid COVID-19. “I certainly feel differently. I had a very, very good relationship, and I haven’t spoken to him in a long time.”

Trump, who is seeking re-election in the November 3 U.S. election, made challenging China a key part of his 2016 presidential campaign and touted his friendly ties with Xi during much of his first term in office as he sought to make good on his trade deal promises.

But he said that the fallout from the outbreak was worse than the conflict over trade. “This is a thousand times the trade deal what happened with all of the death and ... the world had to shutdown. It’s a disgrace,” he told Fox.

U.S.-China ties have also frayed over Beijing’s crackdown in Hong Kong and the disputed South China Sea, among other issues.

China, Pakistan Agree to Push on With Rail and Power Projects

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is the largest foreign investor in Pakistan, accounting for US\$27 million of the \$114.2 million logged last month, according to figures from the State Bank of Pakistan.

Andrew Small, a senior fellow with the Asia program of the German Marshall Fund, a non-profit organization in Washington, said the CPEC was enjoying a “mini-revival” ahead of a possible visit to Pakistan by Xi was expected to visit earlier in the year but the trip was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. A revised date has not been set.

“Given its status as the belt and road’s flagship, the Chinese government wants to ensure a narrative of momentum and success around the CPEC, especially with the additional spotlight a visit [by Xi] would shine on it,” he said.

“There is no chance that they would have been able to sustain that narrative without a new investment package, given the slowdown that CPEC has experienced in recent years.”

Earlier this month, Pakistan approved a US\$6.8 billion scheme – known as the Main Line 1 upgrade project – to improve the South Asian country’s main railway line, which runs for almost 1,900km (1,180 miles) from Karachi to Peshawar.

The much-delayed project is the most expensive to date under the CPEC. Until 2018 it had a budget of \$8.8 billion but that was slashed by Islamabad over debt concerns.

Other CPEC projects have also suffered delays and funding problems. A key section of highway missed a construction deadline in December, as government ministries slashed payments for it.

“The CPEC is costing Pakistan a lot of money. This is no gift, and Pakistan is accumulating a lot of debt,” said Claude Rakisits, an associate professor at the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University. The progress on the rail project comes as China and Pakistan remain in conflict with India.

On Thursday, India’s foreign ministry said New Delhi and Beijing had agreed to “sincerely work towards complete disengagement” following their latest talks, though Indian media reports said the talks had failed to make any progress on the issue. Rakisits said progress on the CPEC was indicative of China’s growing influence in South and Central Asia.

“China has the money and the infrastructure-building capacity to link Pakistan, but also Afghanistan and Iran, to its Belt and Road Initiative,” he said.

“Not surprisingly, India, which simply cannot compete with China in that regard, will be worried that its influence in the region may be waning as China’s grows.”

Turkey Expects Big Drop in Natural Gas Imports After Black Sea Find

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey expects its energy imports to fall significantly following a major Black Sea natural gas find and more

discoveries could be made in another area now being evaluated, Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said.

President Tayyip Erdogan announced the discovery of a 320 billion cubic metre (11.3 trillion cubic feet) gasfield on Friday that could come on stream as soon as 2023 and said Turkey was determined to become a net energy exporter.

If the gas can be commercially extracted, it could transform Turkey’s dependence on Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan for energy imports, which cost the country \$41 billion last year.

Any reduction in Turkey’s energy imports would also boost government finances and help ease a chronic current account deficit that has helped drive the lira to record lows against the dollar.

“With the discovery, we expect a serious fall in imports. We have established the groundwork for our citizens to use natural gas at much more economic costs,” Donmez told reporters.

“There is a new area of 6,000 square kilometres ahead of us. The evaluation of our experts is that we may see similar structures there too,” he said in Istanbul.

“We can already say that the gas we will produce ourselves will be more economic than the gas we import ... It is inevitable for prices to fall where the product is abundant.”

Turkey has also been exploring for hydrocarbons in the Mediterranean, where its surveys in disputed waters have drawn protests from Greece and Cyprus. Greek and Turkish warships shadowing a Turkish survey vessel collided there last week.

U.S. Openly Pushes Europe Not to Cooperate With Russia Economically

MOSCOW (TASS) - The American administration openly calls on their European

colleagues not to develop cooperation with Russia in the economic area, said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in an interview with the Vesti program on the Rossiya-1 TV channel.

“Americans, in principle, are not very shy when they need to promote their economic interests. Diplomatic subtleties, half-hints, half-tones have long been discarded. You mentioned US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, with whom I regularly communicate, the last time the telephone conversation was on August 16. He he was just returning from Europe, where, among other things, he actively campaigned against the European countries, including the countries he visited, to develop mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation with Russia,” Lavrov said.

“For example, in the Czech Republic he insisted in plain text that all plans for the further development of nuclear energy in the Czech Republic should be oriented towards the United States, not Russia,” Lavrov added.

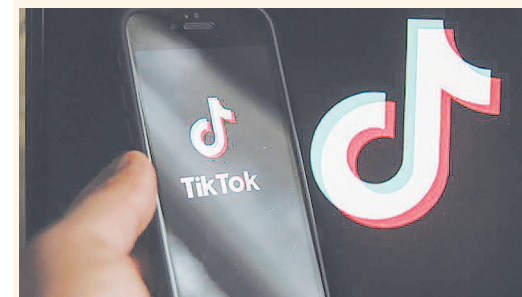
Lavrov noted, it is very difficult for Moscow to interact with this logic: “We have always proceeded and continue to proceed from the fact that the key to success in any international endeavors is initiative, creative proposals, but always aimed at mobilizing collective efforts to solve global problems.”

According to Lavrov, the U.S. administration is doing everything not to be bound by any international multilateral obligations, using, in particular, extraterritorial sanctions.

“When the United States decides that China is a threat because it sells too much to the United States and buys too little, the Americans impose restrictions on imports from the PRC. When the United States decides that Iran, although it is doing everything that was agreed in the JCPOA, no less misbehaving (all the others do not think so), then sanctions are imposed against Iran,” he said.

“When the United States thinks that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro deserves punishment, they announce sanctions against him. And then they tell the rest of the world that they do not dare to trade with those states that the United States wants to isolate,” Lavrov added.

TikTok Says to Sue Over Trump Crackdown



NEW YORK (AFP) - Video app TikTok said it will challenge in court a Trump administration crackdown on the popular Chinese-owned platform, which Washington accuses of being a national security threat.

As tensions soar between the world’s two biggest economies, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on August 6 giving Americans 45 days to stop doing business with TikTok’s Chinese parent company ByteDance -- effectively setting a deadline for a potential pressured sale of the app to a U.S. company.

“To ensure that the rule of law is not discarded and that our company and users are treated fairly, we have no choice but to challenge the executive order through the judicial system,” TikTok said in a statement.

“Even though we strongly disagree with the administration’s concerns, for nearly a year we have sought to engage in good faith to provide a constructive solution,” it said.

“What we encountered instead was a lack of due process as the administration paid no attention to facts and tried to insert itself into negotiations between private businesses.”

ByteDance said in a separate statement that the suit would be filed today.

TikTok’s kaleidoscopic feeds of short clips feature everything from dance routines and hair-dye tutorials to jokes about daily life and politics. It has been downloaded 175 million times in the US and more than a billion times around the world.

Trump claims TikTok could be used by China to track the locations of federal employees, build dossiers on people for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage.

The company has said it has never provided any US user data to the Chinese government, and Beijing has blasted Trump’s crackdown as political.

The U.S. measures come ahead of November 3 elections in which Trump, behind his rival Joe Biden in the polls, is campaigning hard on an increasingly strident anti-Beijing message.

U.S., EU Hatch Mini-Deal to Cut Lobster, Other Tariffs

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The United States and the European Union announced a mini-deal valued at around \$200 million (152.74 million pounds) to cut import tariffs on a small range of products, including U.S. lobsters, in a sign of easing transatlantic trade tensions.

The two, who have been at odds over aircraft subsidies and U.S. President Donald Trump’s imposition of punitive tariffs on EU steel and aluminum, announced the deal in a joint statement.

“The importance of the deal is that it has unleashed positive results elsewhere,” an EU official said.

Under the agreement, the EU will remove tariffs of 8%-12% on imports of lobsters, while the United States will halve its duties on imports of certain glassware, ceramics, disposable lighters and prepared meals.

To comply with World Trade Organization rules, the lowered and removed tariffs will apply to all WTO members, although the products have been chosen so as to maximize the mutual benefits.

The whole deal is worth some 168 million euros, based on 2019 trade. The EU imported some 42 million euros of U.S. lobsters and exported to the United States 126 million euros of the other products involved. The apparent mismatch is partly because the United States will only be halving, not removing, tariffs.

Lobsters have been a big concern for Trump, who threatened in June to impose tariffs on Europe and China over lobster duties. Lawmakers from Maine have repeatedly called for aid for the lobster industry, which supports the livelihood of 4,500 state-licensed lobstermen and an additional 10,000 people.



U.S. Senator Angus King said the agreement would help level the playing field for U.S. producers whose European sales declined after a trade deal between Canada and the EU eliminated tariffs on Canadian lobsters. The U.S. industry has also been hurt by Chinese tariffs imposed in 2018 and the collapse of sales to restaurants during coronavirus-related lockdowns.

The agreement will still need approval from EU governments and the European Parliament. That could come within weeks.

Washington has subjected \$7.5 billion of EU products, including Scottish whisky, French wine and European cheese, to tariffs because of a WTO case it won over EU subsidies given to planemaker Airbus (AIR.PA).

Carpets Exported To 57 Countries

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Iran’s Customs spokesman said that Iranian carpets, kilims, and rugs have been exported to 57 countries in the past four months, about half of which were to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. Seyyed Ruhollah Latifi, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), said that more than 20,000 tons of Iranian carpets, kilims, and rugs have been

exported in the past four months, and Iran is the largest producer of carpets in the world.” Latifi added: Iranian carpets, kilims, and Gabbeh exported to countries such as Canada, Australia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Kuwait, Kenya, Iraq, Pakistan, Bahrain, Belgium, Qatar, Thailand, China, France, England, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Denmark.



Abe Ties Sato for Longest Uninterrupted Term as Japan PM



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Shinzo Abe brought up his 2,798th consecutive day in office on Sunday, tying him with his great uncle Eisaku Sato, who served between 1964 and 1972, for staying in the top government post for the longest uninterrupted term. When combined with his short 2006-2007 stint, Abe, who returned to power in late 2012, has spent more than 3,000 days in office, eclipsing Taro Katsura, who led the country for 2,886 days in the early 1900s. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks to reporters at his office in Tokyo on Aug. 19, 2020, returning to work after a three-day break, during which he underwent a medical checkup at Keio University Hospital in Tokyo amid speculation about his health. (Kyodo) Aside from Abe, there are only 10 people who have served as the country’s prime minister for more than 1,000 consecutive days, including his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, at 1,241 days. Still, a rough road is expected ahead as Abe scrambles to leave what can be called a legacy amid the coronavirus pandemic. The prime minister hopes to achieve his long-held hope of constitutional reform before his term as the head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party ends in September next year. The course of his remaining tenure, however, is clouded, as speculation is rife that he is not in the best of health after he reportedly vomited blood in July and made a hospital visit earlier this month. In addition, the novel coronavirus has taken a serious toll on the country’s economy and has given rise to criticism of his government’s response. Economic recovery under his key economic policies, dubbed Abenomics, has been wiped out by the pandemic forcing many businesses to close and people to stay at home. The country’s annualized gross domestic product for the April-June quarter stood at 485 trillion yen (\$4.6 trillion), lower than the 504 trillion yen in the January-March

period of 2013 or the first quarterly GDP after Abe reassumed power. The size of the latest GDP is equivalent to that of the three months ended June 2011 when the world’s third largest economy was whacked by the devastating earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis in northeastern Japan. As Japan strives to fight against the new coronavirus, Abe has come under fire for the slow distribution and poor quality of government-sponsored cloth face masks. He also met criticism for pushing a tourism promotion campaign this summer despite the resurgence of virus infections. His government had to make a last-minute change to exclude Tokyo residents from the subsidy program to address concerns over a spike in new cases in the capital.

India Needs More Global-Sized Banks to Achieve \$5 Trillion Economy Goal

KOLKATA (Dispatches) - Chief economic adviser K V Subramanian on Sunday said that India needs more global sized banks to help the country achieve \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25. He rued the fact that India has only one bank in top 100 global bank list while a country much smaller in size has more such banks. State Bank of India (SBI) at the 55th position is the only bank in the global top 100 list. China has 18 banks while the U.S. has 12 in the list. “India is the fifth largest economy in the world. So, if the Indian banking sector was proportional to the size of its economy, India should have been where South Korea is, which has six banks in the global top hundred. But in contrast, India has only one bank in the global top hundred,” he said. Even countries that are a fraction of India’s size for example Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Norway have at least one bank in the global top hundred, he said while delivering a lecture at the fifth anniversary event of Bandhan Bank. “If you take countries like Sweden and Singapore, Sweden is one-sixth the size of the economy, Singapore is one-eighth the size of the economy, they have three banks in the global top hundred,” he said. Subramanian said that “like cricketer M S Dhoni who had shown the country how to win in the foreign shores, the Indian banking system also needs to scale up to global standards”. “The Indian banking system needs to conquer the world. Rather being tigers at home, it should scale up its presence in the world rankings where China is leading in terms of the number of banks, followed by the U.S.,” he said. That’s what should now be the goal of the Indian banking sector, because India is not any more a small economy but the fifth largest economy in the world, he said. “So, the basic point I’m trying to make here is that now in order for India to become a \$5 trillion economy, the banking sector needs to be proportional at least proportional to the size of its economy, if not bigger than the proportionality,” he said. In addition to global sized banks, the chief economic adviser said India needs more banks. For instance, he said the US, which is one third of India in terms of population, has 20 times more banks. More banks will enhance competition in banking and bring down the cost for consumers, he said. Laying emphasis on adoption of technology, he said there is also a need to focus more on data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning as banking has become more technology driven. Citing a study, Subramanian said technology can play a key role in both scale, and quality of lending. By investing in data analytics and technology, it is possible to actually defeat the nefarious designs of wilful defaulters by using proper data, because there are enough leading indicators available, he added.

South Korea Urged to Follow Japanese Lead on Coal Finance Ban

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea has been castigated by environmentalists and international investors for failing to follow Japan in slashing funding for coal power overseas. The criticism was levelled as Moon Jae-in’s government touted investment in clean energy as part of a Green New Deal, a vital component of an unprecedented \$233bn stimulus that was pledged in the wake of the economic damage wrought by coronavirus. Tokyo last month announced it would cut most state support for coal-fired power plants. The move followed years of campaigning by environmentalists over concerns that cheap Japanese loans spurred decades of fossil fuel dependency in developing countries. The pressure on South Korea to follow suit comes

after rising investor concern about carbon emissions and climate change: state-backed Korea Electric Power Corp alongside Korean banks have been targeted by activists over involvement in coal projects in south-east Asia. Park Yoo-kyung, an adviser at APG Asset Management, the Dutch pension fund, said South Korea had fallen behind other OECD countries in taking “sincere” action to comply with the Paris climate agreement. “It used to be that South Korea and Japan were both considered inactive, but with the latest announcement made by the Japanese government concerned investors now consider Korea as the most underperforming country from a climate change perspective,” she said. “This undermines, significantly, the authenticity of the South Korean government’s latest Green New Deal.”

Official Accuses NATO...

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Iran seized some 1,000 tons of narcotics in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20), putting the country in the first place in the world, Momeni said in July. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has praised Iran’s efforts to fight against narcotics trafficking on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The organization also officially announced that the world’s first place in the discovery of opium, heroin, and morphine belongs to Iran. According to UNODC, Iran remains one of the major transit routes for drug trafficking from Afghanistan to European countries and has had a leading role at the global level in the drug-control campaigns.

Turkey’s Gas...

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Turkey, under its long-term LNG contract with Algeria, imported the highest LNG volume at 2.99 bcm during this period. However, the highest spot LNG volume was imported from Qatar at 2.85 bcm, showing a 124% increase compared to the first half of 2019. Turkey’s spot LNG imports from the U.S. also grew by 144% to reach 2.16 bcm during the same period. In the first half of 2020, Turkey received LNG from new source countries with imports of 633 million cubic meters (mcm) of spot LNG from Trinidad and Tobago followed by Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Egypt, Norway and Spain. Turkey also exported 203 mcm of gas to Greece during this period. Turkey consumed 3.8% less natural gas falling to 24.3 bcm in the January-June period of this year compared to the same period last year.

Iraq to Significantly...

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Also discussed in Washington was energy sector investment from Riyadh. “Saudi Arabia is to invest in the Iraqi energy and gas sector, including Saudi-owned companies Aramco and Aqua group,” Allawi confirmed in the Atlantic Council interview. Iraq has long suffered from chronic outages and shortages of electricity in a country where summer temperatures reach 50 degrees Celsius. Rampant electricity shortages have in past years been a rallying call for protestors, most notably in the summer of 2018. War, corruption, insecurity and lack of investment have all together contributed to a deteriorating grid, leaving Iraqis at times with as little as five hours of national electricity per day. Privately owned generators set up in neighborhoods try to supplement the lost hours, making Iraqis pay twice for electricity. To make up for the shortage, Iraq has been importing electricity and natural gas to power its generation stations from neighboring Iran, much to the ire of Washington, which has imposed crippling economic sanctions on Tehran. Washington has granted Baghdad several waivers to continue imports of Iranian energy without penalty, but ultimately expects it to gradually reduce its reliance on Iranian gas and electricity imports. The current waiver, Iraq’s ninth, issued in May, gives the country 120 days to continue its energy imports without financial penalties for the trade that has otherwise been banned by the US, after Washington withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and began reimposing sanctions on Iran in November 2018. The current waiver is due to expire next month.

Blast in Natanz...

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Kamalvandi also noted that the two sites in Iran that the UN nuclear watchdog has requested inspection are located near Shahreza in Isfahan Province and near Tehran. Iran was not initially opposed to inspection of the nuclear sites, but maintains that the IAEA’s questions must be based upon serious evidence and documents, he added. “Questions based on claims revolving around espionage and similar cases have not been and would not be acceptable by any means,” the spokesman stressed, saying the IAEA will be given conditional access to the sites provided that the questions and doubts are over once and for all. When the IAEA intends to ask a question, it is a member state’s right to demand relevant reasons and documents regarding that question, he noted. Kamalvandi added that Grossi is going to visit Tehran only for talks on issues relating to the Safeguards, protocols and the JCPOA, stressing that Iran has no confidential data to hide from the IAEA.

Iran Attends...

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“KBP will also display its Planshet-A artillery fire control system and the Parallax guidance and surveillance system, which uses virtual reality glasses to achieve the effect of “transparent armor,” it added. “High Precision Systems Company (a part of Rostec) will demonstrate the civilian version of the OSV-96 sniper rifle: the MTs-567 gun. The carbine has a folding design: it can be folded within several seconds for its transportation, with its length shrinking by a third. It has an accuracy range of 1,800 meters and a five-round magazine.” “The Kalashnikov Group will demonstrate this year a prototype of a new RPL-20 hand-held machine-gun, a new AK-19 assault rifle chambered for NATO’s 5.56x45 mm rounds and Russia’s first smart rifle with the option of synchronizing it with gadgets.”

IAEA Has Access...

FROM PAGE 1

He added that Senior Assistant to Foreign Minister in Special Political Affairs Ali Asghar Khaji met with Syrian President Bashar Assad and discuss the Astana peace process. He added that the Iranian delegation in Geneva is represented in the Syrian constitution committee and will have meetings with the peace guarantors’ delegations on the sidelines of the Syria meeting. Referring to Zarif’s message to Qatari Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al Busaidi, he wished success and health for al-Busaidi and his predecessor Yusuf bin Alavi. Khatibzadeh also talked about the new failures of the United States in the United Nations Security Council, he said the US demanded to distribute a statement among the UNSC members but Zarif registered a letter in the secretariat before his U.S. counterpart Mike Pompeo. In it, all the legal bases that proved Washington have no right to put forth the issue, so Iran was the plaintiff and the US the defendant. He added all the children of this land defended its esteem with all their power, which was fortunately successful. Touching Iran-Venezuela relations, he said that the relations between the two countries are based on national interests of both parties and do not concern any third country and that the relations have strengthened in the recent years and have been attacked by the U.S. due to independence. He said regardless of who the ship belongs to what the U.S. does is “piracy”. However, neither the ship nor the cargo belonged to Iran. Zarif’s tweet is quite clear, the spokesman said. Answering a question about IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi to Tehran and its relation with the trigger mechanism, he said that if by “trigger mechanism” you mean the snapback, it is a false word that the US has put; it has not been mentioned in the UNSCR 2231, adding that Iran has been expecting Grossi’s visit since last autumn, but the coronavirus outbreak postponed it. He said as long as the Agency acts with impartiality and independence, and far from political pressures of a third party, there will be no problems between the IAEA and Tehran. He added that Grossi was to arrive in Tehran last night and will meet with President Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Zarif, and Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). Regarding the trips of Pompeo to the region for forming a coalition against Iran, he asked if anyone has seen a country more isolated than the U.S. in the history of the international relations. In their own home, they could persuade only one country to accompany them. Don’t worry about coalition making against Iran, for they couldn’t do so in their own home, he added.

Teen Vietti Celebrates His Maiden Moto3 Victory

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Italian teenager Celestino Vietti held off Tony Arbolino on the final corners on Sunday for a career first victory in the Moto3 category of Styrian Grand Prix. Arbolino's Honda teammate Ai Ogura of Japan was third. "It's the best day of my life," said 18-year-old KTM rider Vietti. Vietti, however, took more care opening the bubbly on the podium. After finishing third in Andalucia at the end of July, he had tried to imitate Formula One driver Lando Norris and uncork the bottle by bashing the base on the ground, ending up with 22 stitches on his hand.

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Parma Sack D'Aversa as Manager

ROME (Dispatches) - Parma on Sunday sacked coach Roberto d'Aversa, who had led the club from the third division back into Serie A. Italian media reported he would likely be replaced by former Lecce boss Fabio Liverani. Parma said D'Aversa's sacking was "a result of the fact that over the last few weeks, the cohesion, unity of intent, harmony and mutual enthusiasm which have been so key to the successes achieved together over the last few years have disappeared".

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SPORTS

TUESDAY AUGUST 25, 2020

Bayern Defeat PSG To Become European Champions for Sixth Time

LISBON (AFP) - Bayern Munich became kings of Europe for the sixth time on Sunday as Kingsley Coman's goal gave them a 1-0 victory over Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final in Lisbon, completing a fantastic season for the German giants and leaving their opponents still searching for the trophy they covet more than anything.

It was often a cagey final, with a bit of needle, but chances too, especially before former PSG player Coman appeared at the back post to head in Joshua Kimmich's inviting 59th-minute cross and wrap up a treble for a team who had already won the Bundesliga and German Cup.

PSG will regret not taking any of the chances that were offered up to them on a surreal occasion at an empty Estadio da Luz, but it is an extraordinary success for Hansi Flick, who was only appointed last November to replace the sacked Niko Kovac.

"I am proud of the team. When I started in November, all the headlines were about 'no more respect for Bayern', but the way the team has developed has been sensational," he told Sky Germany.

"PSG have really good forwards, but we deserved to win the final."

However, the outcome might have been different had Kylian Mbappe done better than shoot straight at Manuel Neuer just before half-time.

The World Cup-winning forward had spoken of his determination to go down in his country's history by helping PSG become just the second French winners of European football's greatest prize.

But they will have to wait for the chance to match Marseille, winners in 1993.

"We gave all our heart on the field. You can expect that from your team, but you can't control the result," PSG coach Thomas Tuchel told French broadcaster RMC.

PSG's Qatari owners spent a combined 402 million euros (\$474m) on Neymar and Mbappe in 2017 to win this competition. Yet in the end it was one who got away from Paris who denied them.

Coman was born in Paris and started his career at PSG, but left aged 18 in 2014 for Juventus, sensing he wouldn't get regular football if he stayed put.

"It is an extraordinary feeling. I'm so happy but I'm also a bit sad for Paris," Coman said.



The winger had been on the bench in the semi-final against Lyon but was promoted to the starting line-up for the final.

Now he may not be welcome back in his home city again.

Bayern were last European champions in 2013. Their tally of six victories puts them back level with Liverpool, winners last year. Only Real Madrid and AC Milan have won more. Flick's team ended the season with 21 straight wins and are unbeaten in 30 matches. They deserved to be crowned in a full stadium.

However, only a few hundred invitees were inside Benfica's ground to see the denouement of the 'Final Eight', at the end of a competition so long delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

The strangest of finals pitted together two clubs who have taken very different routes to becoming part of Europe's elite, with Bayern the traditional German powerhouse and PSG transformed by the Qatari takeover of 2011.

But on and off the pitch right now they are almost perfectly balanced, and that translated into the kind of proper match-up on the field that neither side often experiences these days.

Bayern almost opened the scoring midway through the first half when Lewandowski -- looking for his 56th goal of the season -- turned and shot against the post.

He also came close with a header that was saved by Keylor Navas, but PSG should have punished them at the other end in the first half.

Neymar was denied by Neuer after being set up by Mbappe, while Mbappe contrived to fire straight at the goalkeeper after David Alaba gifted him possession in the box.

Alaba earlier saw his central defensive colleague, Jerome Boateng, limp out injured. The giant Niklas Suele replaced him and helped contain the Paris attack as Bayern saw out their lead.

They had broken the deadlock just before the hour mark in a move that began with a sprayed Thiago Alcantara pass forward, and ended with Coman arriving from the left to head in Kimmich's delivery. Neymar ended the game with a yellow card for chopping down Lewandowski, and a runners-up medal, while Bayern celebrated.

Kovac Starts Monaco Reign With Reims Comeback Draw

MONACO (AFP) - Monaco drew 2-2 with Reims in Niko Kovac's first competitive game in charge on Sunday on the opening weekend of the Ligue 1 season.

Kovac, who left Bayern Munich in November, was appointed by the 2017 French champions to replace the sacked Robert Moreno in July.

Centre-backs Axel Disasi and Benoit Badiashile scored either side of the break to claim a point for Kovac at Stade Louis II.

Visitors Reims, who played in the first ever European Cup final, will play in the second qualifying round of the Europa League next month, as they return to continental competition for the first time since 1963.

Boulaye Dia opened the scoring for the hosts after five minutes as El Bilal Toure won an aerial battle with Disasi.

After 21 minutes, Toure curled an effort into the bottom corner from outside the box after a Disasi and his centre-back partner Badiashile failed to clear.

Disasi, who joined Monaco from Reims earlier in August, halved the deficit in first half injury time.

Badiashile levelled 10 minutes into the second half poking, in from the back post after a Aleksandr Golovin free-kick.

Kovac sent on French youth internationals Willem Geubbels and Sofiane Diop but the pair failed to threaten goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic.

Aurelien Tchouameni almost claimed all three points for Kovac's side but his additional time header glanced past Rajkovic's post.

On Friday, Bordeaux drew 0-0 at home against Nantes in a match which replaced Saint-Etienne's trip to Marseille which was postponed due to coronavirus spike in Andre Vilas-Boas' squad.



The Serbian coach is "absolutely asymptomatic", the club said on its website. "When he returned to Bologna on Friday, he underwent a control test for COVID-19 with positive results."

Bologna are due to start pre-season training on Monday, but Italian football protocols mean the 51-year-old coach, whose contract has just been extended for another year until

Bologna Coach Mihajlovic Tests Positive for COVID-19

ROME (AFP) - Bologna coach Sinisa Mihajlovic, who has undergone treatment for leukaemia since last year, tested positive for COVID-19 and is in isolation, the Serie A club announced on Sunday.

He also came close with a header that was saved by Keylor Navas, but PSG should have punished them at the other end in the first half.

Neymar was denied by Neuer after being set up by Mbappe, while Mbappe contrived to fire straight at the goalkeeper after David Alaba gifted him possession in the box.

Alaba earlier saw his central defensive colleague, Jerome Boateng, limp out injured. The giant Niklas Suele replaced him and helped contain the Paris attack as Bayern saw out their lead.

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2023, will have to remain in isolation for two weeks.

All the squad and staff must also be tested today.

As players and staff return from their brief holidays, tests have already revealed cases at several clubs, all asymptomatic.

These include four players (Filip Bradaric, Luca Ceppitelli, Alberto Cerri, Kiril Despodov) at Cagliari in Sardinia, a coronavirus hot spot.

Roma's substitute goalkeeper Antonio Mirante has also said he is positive. Sassuolo announced striker Jeremiah Boga was positive while Napoli said the same of striker Andrea Petagna. Torino reported two cases, without revealing names and Benevento also had an unnamed player test positive.

The Serie A season is due to start on September 19.

Ceferin Considers Future Final Eight Format for Champions League

LISBON (Reuters) - UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin says the single-game knockout format, used in the Champions League this year from the quarter-final onwards, has produced more exciting football than the usual two-legged games and could be revisited in the future.

The format was changed in order to allow the competition to be completed in a shorter time-span after the COVID-19 pandemic halted play for several months across Europe in March.

Eight clubs headed to Lisbon and the final will be contested later on Sunday, pitting Bayern Munich against Paris St Germain.

"We were forced to do it but in the end we see that we found out something new. So we will think about it in the future for sure," Ceferin told Reuters in an interview. The UEFA president said that without a second-leg to fall back on, teams have been forced to go for goals.

"(There has been) not so much tactics. If it is one match, if one team scores then the other has to score as soon as possible. If it is two legged system then there is still time to win the next match," he said.

"More exciting matches for sure but of course we also have to think about the fact that we have less matches and broadcasters (can) say 'you don't have as many matches as before, this is different' so we will have to discuss when this crazy situation ends."

The 'final eight' tournament took place without fans in stadiums and the prospect of supporters from eight clubs descending on one city could cause security issues among other logistical problems.



Murray Makes Winning Return

LONDON (Reuters) - Andy Murray claimed a hardfought 7-6(6) 3-6 6-1 first-round win over American Frances Tiafoe at the Western and Southern Open, as the ATP Tour made a jarring return from a five-month COVID-19 hiatus.

From a tournament normally played in Cincinnati but moved to New York because of the coronavirus pandemic to masked ball boys and girls, there was very little normal about the return of professional men's tennis.

With no spectators allowed into the sprawling Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, matches were played in eerie silence under the shadow of the massive Arthur Ashe Stadium that will be centerstage when the U.S. Open starts on Aug. 31.

Working his way back to match fitness after undergoing a second hip surgery in January, Murray got his first tournament of 2020 off to a positive start by surviving a near two-hour, 30-minute challenge from Tiafoe to reach the second round where a sterner test awaits in fifth seed Alexander Zverev.

"My goal is to come in and my hip to be feeling good," said three-times Grand Slam champion Murray.

"That's what I wanted so I don't mind how much tennis I get to play, I know that will come the practice, the more matches I get but the concern for me is my hip going to be well enough," the 33-year-old Briton added.

If Murray's game showed rust, his battling instincts remained sharp, particularly in the first set tiebreak when he trailed 5-2 before fighting back to take control.

