

**Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister  
For Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi  
Said on Tuesday That the Participants  
Of the Joint Comprehensive  
Plan of Action Should Stand Up to the  
U.S. Unilateralism**

# IRAN NEWS

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman  
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Tuesday  
That Some 101 More Iranians Have  
Died From Coronavirus Disease  
Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing  
The Total Deaths to 21,672**

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## Danish Co. Sets Up Insulin Production Line in Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's health minister said that the world's top insulin-maker, Novo Nordisk of Denmark, had unveiled on Monday a production line of the drug in Iran.

Saeed Namaki inaugurated the plant's production line, located in Alborz province, via video conference, the government website reported.

"Today we witness the inauguration of one of the most important projects since the (Islamic) revolution with the joint investment of Iran and Denmark," he said.

Namaki expressed hope that Iran could soon become a "drug distribution and production centre" for the Middle East.

The Danish pharmaceuticals giant has sold its products in Iran since 2005 through its subsidiary, Novo Nordisk Pars.

It signaled its intention to construct the 70 million euro (\$83 million) facility in 2015 and said it would take five years to complete.

That announcement followed an agreement reached between Iran, Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States in the same year, promising Iran sanctions relief in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear program.

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## U.S. Has No Right To Trigger Snapback Mechanism

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the UN says the United States is not eligible to use the Iran nuclear deal's snapback mechanism to restore sanctions against the country since Washington has formally withdrawn from the multilateral accord.

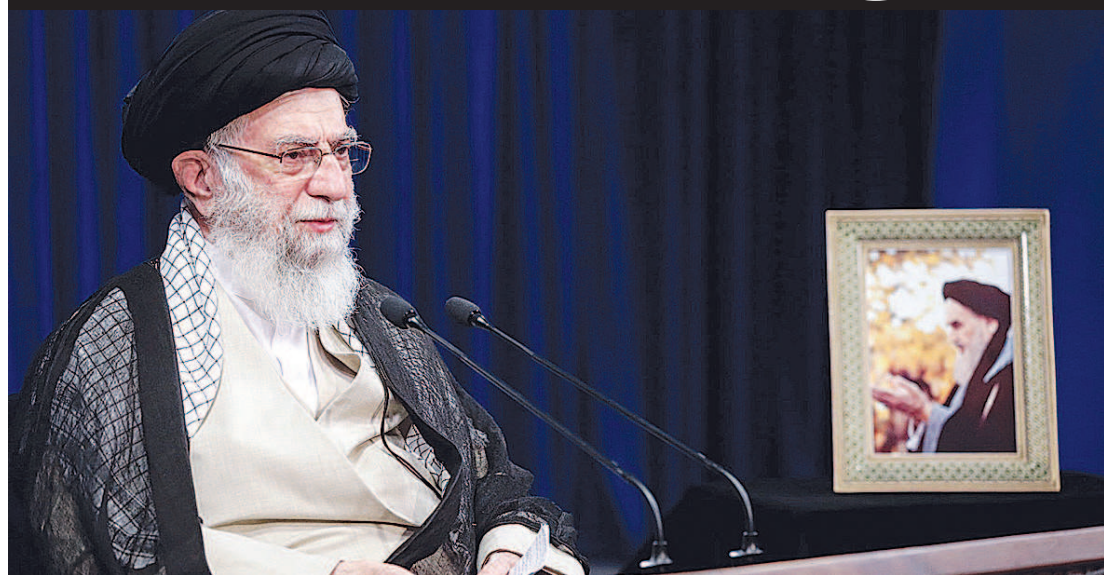
Addressing a meeting of the UN General Assembly on Monday, Majid Takht-e Ravanchi said the majority of Security Council members transparently reaffirmed their stances against Washington's push to resort to the so-called snapback provision in the 2015 nuclear deal — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — during a recent session. The Assembly meeting was held to review the annual report of the Security Council.

The Iranian official further said the legal arguments presented by Security Council members as well as the conclusion subsequently offered by the Council's president were unambiguous and rock-solid: the U.S. is in position to initiate anything in the Council.

"Following its withdrawal from the JCPOA, the US is not a 'JCPOA participant, and has no right to initiate a process to re-impose the Council's sanctions,'" he said, adding that the latest push is and will be void of any legal effect.

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## Leader: UAE Betraying Islam, Arabs, Region



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has betrayed the Islamic world, Arab states, the regional countries, and Palestine, with letting the Zionist regime into the region.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a video conference with the Ministry of Education officials due to COVID19 conditions Tuesday morning.

He said that the act of the treason by Abu Dhabi will not last long, but the disgrace will stay with them.

"The UAE betrayed the world of Islam, the Arab nations, the region's countries, and Palestine. Of course, this betrayal won't last long."

They let the Zionists into the region and consigned the issue of Palestine, which is the issue of usurping a country by normalizing their relations, the Leader said: "The UAE rulers opened the door to the region to the Zionists, and they have ignored and normalized the question of Palestine, which is a question about the usurpation of a country. This stigma will remain on them."

He went on to say that despite the fact that the Palestinians are under severe pressure from different directions, the UAE is cooperating with the Israelis and the Americans, including that Jewish person who is present in the Trump family, against the interests of the Islamic world and deal with absolute cruelty with the Islamic world.

"The nation of Palestine is under various, severe pressures. Then, the UAE cooperates with the Israelis and the filthy U.S. agents - such as the Zionist in Trump's family - against the interests of the world of Islam and commits the greatest atrocity against it," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

He hoped that the Emiratis will wake up soon and repent from what they have done.

Referring to the 2030 educational document, he said that the document is for spreading the Western lifestyle, which has already been done in some regional countries.

The Leader added that the social philosophy of the west has failed, which is clearly seen in the corruption of the Hollywood and the Pentagon.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that the enemy wants to do through 2030 document what they cannot do through military action; they want to raise humans like themselves to try for their goals so they can plunder wealth of the other nations.

## Iran-IAEA Ties Redefined Following Grossi's Visit to Tehran

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian official says relations between Iran and the UN's nuclear watchdog were redefined following a trip to Tehran by its director general.

The recent trip to Iran by Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi can be examined from different perspectives, a report by Iranian conservative daily Resalat says.

Although some regard the visit as a victory for technical issues over political propaganda, some others had criticisms about the final agreement reached between Tehran and the agency at the close of Grossi's trip to Iran.

The agreement ushered in a new era in Iran-IAEA relations. As spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi says, Iran-IAEA ties are based on three key components: the Safeguards Agreement, the Additional Protocol and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Nevertheless, what was achieved in Tehran was a "new and temporary framework" for the political will of both sides in a bid to resolve concerns and technical issues which both sides knew had political roots. Iran believed it is necessary to remain loyal to the three components; so, a new framework had to be formed which was able to preserve the future of the IAEA's technical approach toward Iran issues without harming already defined frameworks.

In an interview with the Resalat daily, Kamalvandi elaborated on the Grossi's trip and the agreement reached. He said Iran had rejected the IAEA's demand, a year ago, to inspect two sites in Iran.

"We had announced to the agency that none of those demands was in conformity with those three components; hence, we got into a period of time affected by differences of opinion between the agency and Iran," he said.

"Furthermore, the information which the agency had based its demand on had no legal ground, and was based on a series of fabricated documents provided by the Israeli regime," he added.

"So, talks were conducted to make sure that questions and demands [by the agency] are within a legal framework," the spokesman noted.

"These negotiations were underway in the previous months, and finally, we achieved the desired result during the IAEA director general's two-day trip and very intensive talks," he said.

"As a result of the agreement, and after Iran's concerns were eased, we agreed to voluntarily give the IAEA access [to the sites in question]," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the spokesman said the Iran-IAEA relationship based on a "fundamental framework" and with "proper management" can keep the US from cashing in on every opportunity move forward with its anti-Iran agenda.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



## Cruise Missile With Range of 1200km Tested

Iran's latest cruise missile, dubbed "Martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, which was test-fired in the first decade of month of Muharram is a cruise missile with the range of 1200 kilometers and if any point of Iran's borders is being targeted by the missile it can destroy it, in other words, it increases range of Iran's attacking power to 1200 kilometers.

If we deliver this missile to Venezuela, this country can be safe for 1200 kilometers of any point of its border. If it is delivered to Lebanon, it can cover all the West Asia to Africa and even East European countries. Of course whether we sell it to Yemenis or not is also on the agenda for analyzing the ways of reinforcing the geopolitics. Only mass-production of this missile will guarantee Iran from any attack and threat. In the Persian Gulf all warships will be under the range of this missile.

One can consider the unveiling of this missile as a strategic achievement whose deterrent effects have been less noticed and discussed. Suppose the ground for responding to a U.S. mischief is prepared. Before the tension between Iran and the U.S. escalates, the U.S. Army takes back its warships 700 kilometers off Iran's southern waters. Exactly what the Americans did a couple of months ago. Because in the most sensitive and critical condition, they had experienced that Iran's long-range anti-ship missile was "Ya Ali" missile with the firing range of 700 kilometers and 98.5% accuracy.

Today and after unveiling the mass-production line of Al-Muhandis cruise missile with the firing range of 1200 kilometers, the U.S. warships have to increase their distance from Iran's waters to 1200 kilometers in order to be safe from Iran's missiles. So with such a long distance, their fighting power would definitely diminish because their F35c fighter jets, which are designed to take off from the aircraft carrier carriers, can fly for 2200 kilometers in the unarmed mode (without carrying bombs) and their range of flight in the fighting mode by carrying bombs is some 1000 kilometers.

So due to the 1200 kilometer distance of warships from Iran's waters, such fighter jets have to fly some 2400 kilometers in order to reach Iran's shores and return, and this is impossible and unimaginable for the fighter jets even in their unarmed mode. **See Page 7**

## Tehran Calls for Resumption of Air Traffic With Kiev

### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran supports the resumption of direct flights with Ukraine, which was suspended after the Boeing crash near Tehran, but Kyiv disagrees, said Iran's Ambassador to Ukraine Manuchehr Moradi.

Ukraine has stopped direct flights with Iran since January 9 until the causes of the Boeing 737-800 crash near Tehran are clarified.

"Unfortunately, the government of Ukraine after the crash of the UIA plane canceled the permit for direct flights between Iran and Ukraine and, despite repeated requests from the Embassy, does not agree to issue a permit for direct flights," Moradi said in an interview with the Ukrainform News Agency published on Monday.

According to him, Iran is looking for an opportunity to resume direct flights between the two countries. The Ambassador noted that the Iranian side asks Kyiv to allow direct flights to at least Iranian airlines.

He also said that Iran offered Ukraine to hold a second round of negotiations on compensation for the downed plane of Ukraine International Airlines in Tehran.

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## Iran Ready to Provide Relieves To Afghanistan Flood Victims

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Energy announced Tehran's readiness to send the necessary aid and equipment to repair the damaged parts of Afghanistan's water and electricity facilities following the recent floods.

In a telephone conversation with Afghanistan's Minister of Economy, Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, the Minister of Energy of Iran Reza Ardakanian, expressed his condolences to the families of the victims of the recent floods in the country and said, at the request of the Afghan authorities, Iran will send the necessary equipment and specialized teams to repair the damaged parts of Afghanistan's water, electricity, and sewage infrastructures to provide the necessary platform for faster assistance to the flood victims.

## Iran Asks Niger to Counter U.S. Polices as UNSC President

**TEHRAN (IFP) – President Hassan Rouhani has hailed Niger for its refusal to support a US-initiated resolution on the extension of the UN arms embargo on Tehran, urging the African country to act independently during its presidency of the UN Security Council and stand against the US government's unilateralism.**

In a telephone conversation with his Nigerien counterpart Mahamadou Issoufou on Monday evening, President Hassan Rouhani congratulated Niger on holding the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council in September.

"I am confident that the Republic of Niger, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, will act quite independently and professionally during its presidency of the United Nations Security Council in the same way that it adopted a very constructive stance on the illegal resolution on extension of Iran arms embargo, and will prevent the US from abusing the United Nations and the Security Council for excessive demands and unilateralism," President Rouhani added.

The president also highlighted the "constructive and positive" cooperation between Iran and Niger in the international organizations, such as the UN, the NAM and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and expressed gratitude to Niger for constant supports for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the UNSC Resolution 2231 that endorses the nuclear deal.

"Certain countries' abuse of the international circles has been the root cause of many problems in the contemporary world," President Rouhani underscored,



saying Tehran and Niamey share the view that the international relations must be based upon justice, righteousness, and human values founded on independence, solidarity and dignity.

Pointing to four decades of close cooperation between the two Muslim nations in various fields such as mineral exploration, health sector, and agriculture, President Rouhani expressed Iran's readiness to share its experiences in the fight against terrorism and in the battle with the coronavirus pandemic with the republic of Niger.

For his part, the Nigerien president voiced the African country's readiness to enhance relations with Iran in all fields.

He also highlighted the cooperation between Iran and Niger in the international organizations, including the NAM and the UN, and expressed satisfaction with the common views of the two Muslim nations about various international issues.

Niger has always tried to establish the international cooperation on the basis of major humanitarian values, Issoufou added, saying his country would employ the same strategy at the UN Security Council.

## Rouhani Felicitates Uzbekistan on Independence Day

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani felicitated Uzbekistan's Independence Day to his counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

In a message on Tuesday, Rouhani expressed congratulations to Uzbek people and government over the country's Independence Day. "I would like to congratulate Your Excellency and the people of your country on the Independence Day of Uzbekistan," he said.

"Cultural commonalities and joint efforts between the two countries have played a significant role in the expansion and continuation of interactions in the context of the global crisis of the coronavirus," he added. "I hope that the relations between the two countries will develop and deepen in all fields with the efforts of economic officials of Iran and Uzbekistan," Rouhani said. He added, "I wish Your Excellency health and success, and the people of Uzbekistan prosperity and felicity."

Uzbekistan's National Day commemorates independence from the Soviet Union on 1 September 1991.

## U.S. So-Called Maximum Pressure to Fail Soon

TEHRAN (MNA) - Government Spokesman Ali Rabiei said the Islamic Republic of Iran continues its 'maximum resistance' against the U.S.'s so-called 'maximum pressure', which is expected to fail in the near future.

"The sanctions and the maximum pressure policy against the Iranian nation will soon face a memorable fiasco," Rabiei said during his weekly presser on Tuesday.

"The signs of this failure are clear today, and we can see the desperateness in the faces of the American regime's leaders."

"It is no coincidence that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is the most failed minister in the history of that country, and this is a sign of the failure of maximum pressure."

Noting that the U.S. regime has always been trying every means to impose sanctions against the Iranian nation, Rabiei said, "The United States should know

that the maximum pressure is a failed experience. This new maneuver is nothing new for us."

Referring to the U.S. regime's struggles to use the UN Security Council for its own purposes, reiterating such dreams will never come true.

He said, "On the other hand, we are taking advantage of new opportunities in the international community, along with domestic capacities, to propel our economic plans despite the external obstacles."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to the U.S.' claims of reinstating all UN sanctions against Iran within the so-called framework of the "snapback mechanism."

"The U.S. claim has no legal basis. This country [the U.S.] is not a party to the JCPOA anymore and is not allowed to use its frameworks."

## Austria Calls JCPOA Most Effective Deal, Urges Efforts to Keep It

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Austria's foreign minister has described the 2015 nuclear deal as the "most effective" diplomatic accord, calling for multilateral efforts to save it.

Alexander Schallenberg on Monday called on the remaining parties to the multilateral accord, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), to live up to their commitments under the deal.

The Austrian top diplomat stressed that Vienna will continue its partnership to the JCPOA to rebuild trust in the region. He made the remarks in a meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, who is in Vienna to attend a meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission.

The meeting is to be co-chaired by Araqchi and Secretary-General of the European External Action Service Helga Schmid on September 1.

The event will be attended by representatives of France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia.

It will be held at the level of deputies and political directors of the foreign ministries of Iran and the P4+1 group of countries. Araqchi is also to hold separate talks with heads of a number of delegations attending the Joint Commission meeting.

The JCPOA Joint Commission meeting is being held upon a letter sent in July by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to Schmid regarding the non-adherence of European countries to the nuclear deal.

## Iran Eyes Producing 33m Tons Steel Ingot This Year

TEHRAN (MNA) – With the studies made, it has been targeted that 33 million tons of steel ingot will be produced before termination of the current year (to end March 20, 2021).

The steel industry is considered as the most important achievements of the current administration dubbed 'Hope and Prudence' which has experienced a considerable jump in recent years.

According to the statistics, steel output volume would hit 33 million tons by yearend.

Another statistic showed that about 120 million tons of steel was produced in 2013, the rate of which hit about 210 and 260 million tons in 2018 and 2019 respectively,

showing significant growth during these years.

Accordingly, 8.2 million and 12 million tons of steel was exported from Iran to other countries in 2018 and 2019 respectively. In this regard, about 25 million tons of steel was produced in 2018, the rate of which hit about 28 million tons in the past year (ended March 20, 2020).

Statistics of foreign trade of the country indicated that a huge amount of special steels (alloys) were imported into the country last year and presently, domestic steel production units are moving forwards to meet the domestic demand and prevent steel products from being imported into the country.

## No Foreign Pilgrim Allowed In Iraq for Arbaeen

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Baghdad has decided to bar all foreign pilgrims from visiting Iraq for this year's Arbaeen season due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, an Iranian deputy minister said.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Hossein Zolfagari said he has been informed by Iran's ambassador to Baghdad about the plans for the mourning rituals marking Arbaeen –the religious gathering in commemoration of the third Shiite Imam.

Iran's envoy has quoted the Iraqi officials as saying that they would not allow any foreign pilgrims to visit Iraq for this year's Arbaeen season considering the coronavirus restrictions, Zolfagari added.

Each year, millions of Shiites flock to the Iraqi city of Karbala, where the holy shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) is located, to perform mourning rites 40 days after Ashura.

## 7 Industrial, Agro and Tourist Units Inaugurated in Aras Free Zone



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Concurrent with the Government Week, seven industrial, agricultural and tourist units with a credit and working capital worth of 6,512b rials and creation of 230 jobs were inaugurated in Aras Free Zone in presence of Vice-President and Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank.

Accordinging reports, seven projects out of 310 projects, which are underway in the free zones in the country and are to come on stream by next July, were inaugurated in Aras Free Zone.

In the heavy industry and petrochemical sector, the first phase of Aras Behin Taghtir Refinery was inaugurated with working capital around 1,379b rials plus investment of 340b with annual production capacity of 20,000 tons of different types of oil products. The refinery has created 50 direct jobs in the first phase as it produces 90,000 tons of bitumen annually. In the wood industry, Asia Panda Wood Factory of Aras was inaugurated with annual production capacity of 315,000 cubic meters of wood products with an investment around \$1.5m and creation of jobs for 50 persons. The Chinese have been major investors of the project.

In the agriculture sector, two projects were inaugurated with investment around 53b rials. Meanwhile two projects in the apparel sector were inaugurated.

Meanwhile the historic bathhouse museum of Jolfa with an investment around 12b rials by Aras Free Zone Organization was renovated and inaugurated. With inauguration of the museum, 5,000 jobs have been created.

## Phase 1 of Jask Oil Terminal Ready for Operation

TEHRAN (Shana) – The head of Jask Oil Terminal Project said the first phase of the terminal would be launched by the end of the current calendar year, which began on March 21.

According to Pars Oil and Gas Company, Vahid Maleki, said that the project entails systems for measuring or metering crude oil, 6 series of seabed pipelines and three SBMs, adding: "In the first phase, with the aim of early commissioning of the project until the end of this calendar year, a set of metering tools, two 36-inch pipelines, a marine manifold and an SBM will be put into operation."

He announced a 35% progress in the Jask oil terminal project by late August, adding: "Based on the planned target, 10% monthly progress has been set for this project until the final commissioning stage."

Maleki said that development of the Jask oil terminal project was awarded to Pars Oil and Gas Company by the National Iranian Oil Company back in June 2019 as the last piece of the major Goreh-Jask crude oil transfer chain.

Jask oil terminal project is aimed at loading a million barrels per day of crude oil on vessels.

## Tehran, Islamabad Highlight Collaboration In Regional, Int'l Forums



TEHRAN (IP) - In a telephone conversation, Iran and Pakistan Parliament speakers stressed the bilateral cooperation in political, economic, cultural, trade, and parliamentary sectors.

The Speaker of the Senate of Pakistan Mohammad Sadeq Sanjarani spoke with Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on Monday evening during a phone call.

Referring to the friendly and brotherly relations between the two countries, Qalibaf added: "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as a friendly and neighboring country, has a special place in the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategy and the development of relations between the two countries is very important."

Stressing the need for developing relations between the two countries' parliaments, Iran's Parliament speaker said, "Fortunately, the Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group has been established in Iran's parliament, which will help to strengthen the relations between the two countries in regional and international forums through bilateral consultation and cooperation."

Emphasizing the common and long border between Iran and Pakistan, Qalibaf added: "Border cooperation will have a special impact on improving the security of the two countries' borders."

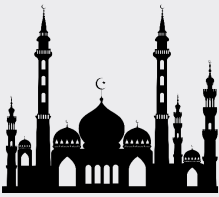
Announcing readiness to develop political, economic, cultural, trade, and parliamentary cooperation, Qalibaf expressed hope for cooperation between the two countries in the fight against coronavirus, emphasizing the exchange of experiences between health and medical sectors.

Speaker of the Senate of Pakistan Mohammad Sadeq Sanjarani also emphasized on the continuation of talks and parliamentary consultations between the two countries, saying: "The unity between Islamic countries in international forums will have important effects in the international community."

Sanjarani described the comprehensive development of bilateral relations, including border and economic as one of his country's priorities.

He added: "Preventive measures and implementation of health instructions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fight against coronavirus are significant."





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

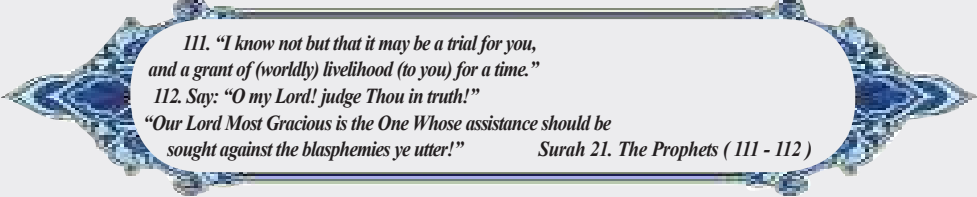
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:05

19:57

05:05

06:33



111. "I know not but that it may be a trial for you,  
and a grant of (worldly) livelihood (to you) for a time."  
112. Say: "O my Lord! judge Thou in truth!"  
"Our Lord Most Gracious is the One Whose assistance should be  
sought against the blasphemies ye utter!"  
Surah 21. The Prophets ( 111 - 112 )

# \$10b Investments Made In Oil, Petrochemical Industries This Year

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

**TEHRAN - Some \$10b investments have been made in oil and petrochemical industries over the past five months since the beginning of the current Iranian year (started on March 21, 2020), Oil Ministry said on Tuesday.**

The government has plans to inaugurate 17 petrochemical projects by the end of this year which has caused this year to be called the “golden year of petrochemical industry”. Once the new plants are inaugurated, the country’s petrochemical output will reach 100 million tons a year which will be able to produce some \$25 billion annually. The government also plans to inaugurate an oil terminal out of the Persian Gulf waters by March 20, 2021 so that the country will no longer have to use the Strait of Hormuz for the exports of its oil. The construction project of the new oil terminal in Makran and a pipeline for

transfer of oil from Goureh to Jask was inaugurated on June 26. Some \$2 billion has been allocated to the project which is expected to create 4,000 new jobs. Meanwhile the CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company stated that the current capacity of gas production from the South Pars joint gas field is 700 million cubic meters per day, and said: “420 million cubic meters of this amount was added to the field’s production capacity under the Rouhani administration.” Mohammad Meshkinfam noted the 94% fulfillment of the company’s instructed production plan, saying all phases of the gas field, excluding phase 11, were productive.

## Over 2.7m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME


*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - Different trading floors of the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trading of more than 2,787,865 tons of commodities worth over \$5,368m in August. According to the report by the IME’s International Affairs and PR, during the last month, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of the IME played host to trading of 1,644,125 MT of commodities worth more than \$2,512m. On this trading floor, more than 470,219 MT of bitumen, 286,506 MT of polymer products and 138,786 MT of chemical products, 532,000 MT of VB feed stock, 184,000 MT of lube cut oil, 19,095 MT of sulfur, 4,630 MT of insulation, 2,200 MT of slaps waxes, 590 MT of argon as well as 6,099 MT of oil products were traded by customers. The metal and mineral trading floor witnessed trading over 1,136,602 MT of commodities worth more than \$2,849m. On this trading floor 1,102,886 MT of steel, 11,720 MT of copper, 490 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 51 MT of precious metals concentrates, 2,465 MT of zinc, 18,990 MT of aluminum as well as 70 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers. Furthermore, in agricultural trading floor of the IME more than 250 kg of saffron was traded by the customers. The side market of the IME experienced trading of 700 MT of PDA TAR, a total of 1,020 empty barrels, 1,050 MT of tomato paste, 93 MT of used locomotive engine oil, 69 MT of metal scrap, 5,000 MT of phosphate concentrates, 180 MT of normal paraffin, 45 MT of pipe tape as well as a commercial real estate.

### Necessary Support From ESCO Is on the Cards

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN – Representative of Mobarakeh Constituency to Majlis Ms. Parvin Salehi says Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) is mother of national steel industry and it rightly deserves support and soon it get its due support. On the sidelines of her visit to the pavilion of ESCO at the Metalex 2020 exhibition, Ms. Salehi said fortunately ESCO has fully become self-sufficient in producing rail and it is good news. She added that ESCO now has capability to provide the country with its needed rail for rail tracks, noting, “We can trust domestic producers and be proud of it and we strongly support it.” Ms. Salehi stated that she wants the government to use domestically-made products in order to support the national productions. She reiterated that majority of lawmakers in Majlis oppose sale of raw materials, adding they will move on course to supporting national production by blocking sale of raw material.



**The Information Technology and e-Government Advisor and Secretary of the Information Technology Strategy Committee of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones announced:**

# Realization of e-Government in The Free Zones

Mohammad Aminollah Dad said: “In recent years, the Free Zones have been able to reduce the time required for processes of businesses, to a reasonable extent, by launching a Single Window Service while contributing to the development and realization of e-government.” In an interview with Iran News daily, the Adviser and Secretary of the Strategic Committee of Information Technology of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones, looking at the mission of the Strategic Committee of Information Technology, said: From the beginning of Dr. Bank’s tenure in the Free Zones, the role of information technology and communication in development, as a factor of progress, and the opportunities existing in to create a suitable infrastructure for the prosperity of business and tourism was examined; and accordingly, Single Window Service project was introduced.Mohammad Aminollah Dad stated that the Strategic Committee for Information Technology has been established since 2018, with the aim of managing research, analysis and redesigning of processes and technical development and establishing of the required projects in this field. He added: “This Committee was formed within the framework of the Free Zones Law, chaired by the Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Zones, and is responsible for approving and leading major projects in this field.”Emphasizing that successful Free Zones in the world have reached this position through the principle of business facilitation, he added: The World Bank annually examines the Business Ease Index, which is considered as one of the criteria for investors to enter a country’s market, and since 2005, when this index was used, Iran has not been able to gain a good position. Noting that there are ten sub-categories in the

Business Ease Index, the Secretary of the Strategic Committee of Information Technology of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones said: Business Ease Index has various indicators such as construction permit, economic activity permit, banking issues, issues related to compensation, etc. In today’s world, Free Zones use the capabilities of information technology to improve the convenience of businesses, in a way that the activities which used to require the presence of the applicant to obtain licenses, now they obtain them through the system, at a lower cost and in a shorter time; and, on the other hand, all processes are transparent. Stating that the Single Window Service has played an effective role in facilitating business, Allah Dad stated: “ for instance, currently, economic actors need the permit from the Value Added Commission to import their goods to the mainland. Until the introduction of this project, the examination of files would take about 90 days and an average of 1,500 copies were used in each file, and, nevertheless there were fluctuations in the percentages. But now the Commission is electronically reviewing files in 15 working days and stays in line for review for a maximum of one session; and on the other side, there is not need to copy documents and etc., and finally the files are attended on the basis of system calculations and through using the knowledge and expertise of the meeting members. Emphasizing that previously the license to establish an industrial unit required, also, a license from the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade along with the Free Zones license, he said: “In the current situation, after an agreement with the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade, only Free Zones licenses are to be obtained.” All documents are sent electronically to the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade.Noting that the processes are integrated by a Single Window, the Secretary of the Strategic Committee of Information and Technology of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones said: All processes in the Free Zones of the country have been standardized and communication has been established between the Free Zones and all the Zone have access to the required information in accordance with the protocols. On the other hand, additional processes have been eliminated with the help and consensus of the Zones. Emphasizing that economic activists may reflect their criticisms and suggestions through the call center of the Free Zones Service Portal, Allah Dad said: These comments are reviewed on a daily basis and are used in process reform. This system is new and, naturally, encounters problems and the economic actors, as its users, could provide us with the best advice in this regard.Stating that the Single Window Service has reduced process time, he said: In the past, many services were best done in one week, but today many processes, if they take a week, are systematically monitored and the reason why the process took so long

shall be put on the agenda. Mentioning that any innovative activity requires infrastructure and legal licenses, the Secretary of the Strategic Committee for Information and Technology of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones said: Until there was no license to develop the third and fourth generation (3G, 4G) Internet in the country, the activity of the startups which today have become part of people’s lives, did not make sense on the Internet. Therefore, for the realization of e-government, it is necessary for all institutions to help in turn and create an interactive legal infrastructure. In the Free Zones, for instance, because there is the policy of delegating authority, in different sectors, there is a legal opportunity to pilot e-government in the Zones, which should be used effectively. In fact, there are currently 309 services in the Free Zones which need to be provided to people, of which, so far, we provide 125 in the form of a Single Window Service. That is, in a sense, the duty of the Free Zones in the field of development and implementation of e-government.Regarding the company registration system in the Free Zones, Allah Dad said: “According to the law, company registration is within the authority to the Free Zones, but due to the fact that the system was not previously integrated with the mainland, the registration of new companies could face problems.” For this reason, last year, an integrated company registration system was created within the framework of the Strategic Committee on Information Technology, and its connection to the mainland system was pursued, and today the path of company registration in the Free Zones is easier and more transparent than before.As for the impact of launching the international stock exchange in the Free Zones, he said: “Today, new technologies in the world, including blockchain, have been very helpful for financial transactions and have provided new areas for the development of communications and financial services.” Our country can look at these new technologies as a tool to overcome obstacles and problems, despite all the issues arising from sanctions. On the other hand, in the event that such a profitable market is formed in the Free Zones, investors will look more at their profitability and return on investment, and the restrictions imposed by sanctions will no longer be the only factor influencing their decisions. Pointing out that economic and industrial infrastructure has been created in the Free Zones in recent years, the Secretary of the Strategic Committee of Information and Technology of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones added: If the Single Window Service in the Free Zones is completed by the end of this year, it can be said that in the coming years, the Zones will have good opportunities to attract investors, as in the current situation, despite sanctions and economic restrictions, they have been able to play an effective role in attracting capital.



## Czechs Summon Chinese Envoy Over Taiwan Row

PRAGUE (AFP) - The Czech foreign ministry said Monday it had summoned the Chinese envoy to Prague after threats were made against an opposition politician who is currently visiting Taiwan.

A delegation led by Czech Senate speaker Milos Vystrel arrived in Taipei on Sunday, angering China which is trying to keep the island isolated from the rest of the world.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday that China would make Vystrel "pay a high price for his short-sighted behaviour and political speculation" on his ministry's website, calling the journey a "provocation".



## China Detains Australian Journalist

SYDNEY (AFP) - China has detained an Australian news anchor working for its state-run English-language television network CGTN, Australia's foreign minister said on Monday.

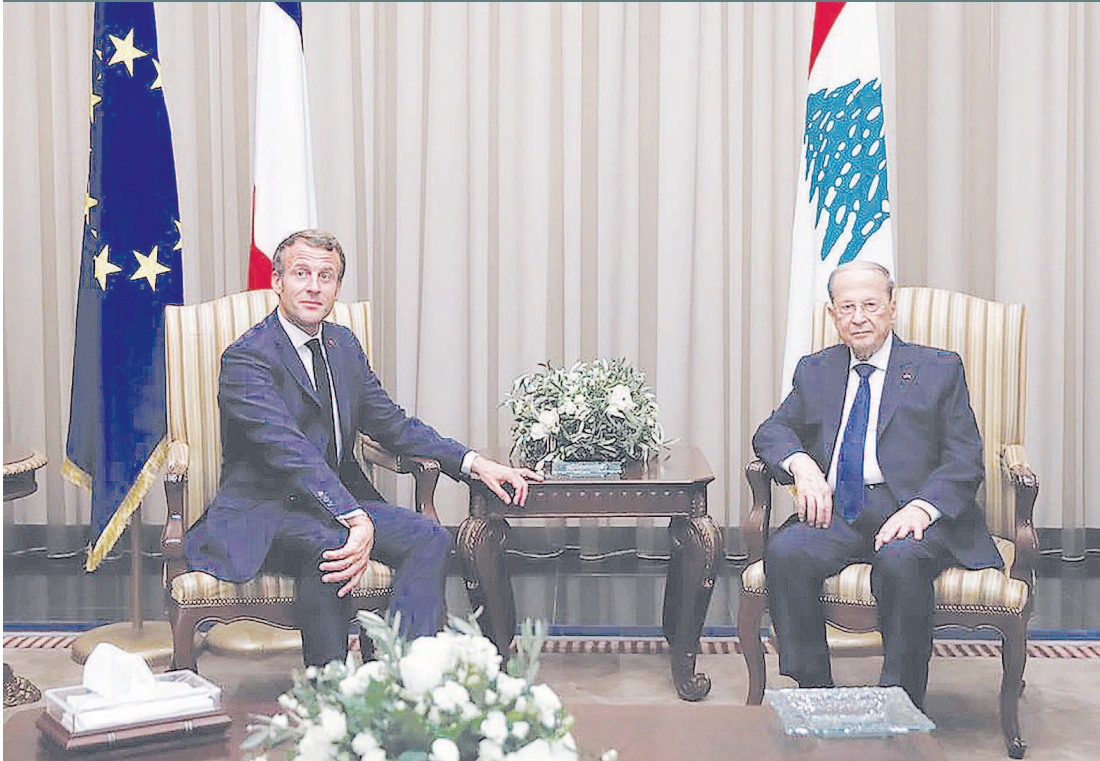
The detention of journalist Cheng Lei is a new blow to deteriorating relations between the two countries that have seen China warn its citizens of travelling to Australia and vice-versa.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said Australia was informed on August 14 that Cheng was being held by Beijing authorities.

Australian consular officials spoke to Cheng in her detention facility via video link on August 27 and were in touch with her family, Payne said in a statement.



## Macron to Press for Lebanon Reform After New PM Named



BEIRUT (Reuters) - France's President Emmanuel Macron said he would press for reforms aimed at dragging Lebanon out of a financial abyss as he began a visit to Beirut hours after Lebanese leaders named diplomat Mustapha Adib new PM on Monday under French pressure.

With its economy in deep crisis, a swathe of Beirut in tatters following a huge explosion on Aug. 4, and sectarian tensions rising, Lebanon is facing the biggest threat to its stability since the 1975-90 civil war.

Macron was met at the airport by President Michel Aoun as the French leader made his second visit in less than a month. "So President, it's been a busy day, hasn't it," Macron told Aoun.

Macron told reporters said he wanted to "ensure that the government that is formed will implement the necessary reforms."

Foreign donors say Lebanon must tackle corruption and waste before they release financial support.

Senior Lebanese officials said Macron's mediation was essential in securing agreement on a new prime minister in the 48 hours before consensus emerged on Adib, the former ambassador to Germany. Politicians had been deadlocked last week.

"The opportunity for our country is small and the mission I have accepted is based on all the political forces acknowledging that," said Adib, who won the support of nearly all Lebanon's main parties in consultations hosted by Aoun.

"There is no time for talk and promises ... It's the time to work with everyone's cooperation," he said.

He called for the formation of a government of competent specialists in record time, an immediate start to reforms and a deal with the International Monetary Fund. Lebanon's talks with the IMF have been stalled since July.

"We welcome the nomination of a new prime minister and hope that a new government will be formed shortly with a mandate to implement the policies and reforms that Lebanon needs to address the current crisis and restore sustainable growth," an IMF spokesperson told Reuters.

Adib, who has a doctorate in law and political science, later visited areas hardest hit by the explosion that killed some 190 people and injured 6,500.

"Our children died. We don't recognise you," a passer-by shouted at him. Another offered to shake hands with Adib, who wore a mask against COVID-19.

The explosion, in which volatile chemicals stored unsafely for years detonated, led to the resignation of the previous government, now acting as caretaker.

## Hamas and Israel Strike Deal To End Gaza Escalation

GAZA CITY (AFP) - Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas announced Monday they have reached a Qatari-mediated deal to end more than three weeks of cross-border exchanges of fire with Israel.

After talks with Qatari envoy Mohammed el-Emadi, "an understanding was reached to rein in the latest escalation and end (Israeli) aggression against our people," said the office of the Palestinian group's Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar.

In the latest escalation, Israel has bombed Gaza almost daily since August 6, in response to airborne incendiary devices and, less frequently, rockets launched across the border.

The fire bombs -- crude devices fitted to balloons, inflated condoms or plastic bags -- have triggered more than 400 blazes and damaged swathes of farmland in southern Israel, according to the fire brigade.

An Egyptian delegation had been shuttling between the two sides to try to broker a renewal of an informal truce under which Israel committed to ease its 13-year-old blockade of Gaza in return for calm on the border.

The delegation was joined by Emadi, who also held talks with Israeli officials in Tel Aviv.



## Ex-India President Mukherjee Dies at 84

NEW DELHI (AFP) - Former India president Pranab Mukherjee, a veteran powerbroker once described in leaked US diplomatic cables as "the ultimate Congress Party fixer", died Monday at the age of 84, his family said.

He died of multiple organ failure after being admitted to hospital weeks ago, having also contracted coronavirus.

The Bengal-origin politician was a protege of former premier Indira Gandhi and was a member of her cabinet when she suspended democratic rights in the infamous "Emergency" of 1975-77.

Mukherjee's star waned after Gandhi's assassination in 1984 when he was a rival to her son and heir Rajiv Gandhi for leadership of the Congress party.

He briefly broke away from Congress, but after Rajiv Gandhi was killed in 1991 his political fortunes revived.

He became Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's right-hand-man during his decade in power from 2004-14, serving as defence, foreign and finance minister, winning a cross-party reputation as a skilled negotiator.

However, Mukherjee's performance as finance minister was criticised for his failure to push through economic liberalisation measures.

In 2012 he moved away from active politics and assumed the largely ceremonial role of president, serving a five-year term until 2017.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from the arch-rival nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, said Mukherjee "left an indelible mark on the development trajectory of our nation."

"A scholar par excellence, a towering statesman, he was admired across the political spectrum," Modi said on Twitter.

Current president Ram Nath Kovind called Mukherjee "a colossus in public life" who served India "with the spirit of a sage".

## Baltic States Impose Sanctions on Lukashenko and Other Belarus Officials

VILNIUS (Reuters) - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia imposed travel bans on President Alexander Lukashenko and 29 other Belarusian officials on Monday, signalling impatience with the West's cautious approach by announcing sanctions without waiting for the rest of the EU.

The three small Baltic states have led calls firm measures against Lukashenko, who is accused by opponents and the West of rigging an Aug. 9 election to prolong his 26-year rule. The sanctions target officials they accuse of having a role in vote-rigging and in violence against protesters since the election. The inclusion of Lukashenko was a prod to other European countries, so far reluctant to back measures against him personally.

Belarus expressed "sincere disappointment" and signalled it would retaliate in kind to what it called "hasty steps".

"We said that we need peaceful dialogue and agreement between the regime and society, but we see that the regime is not ready for that," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda said. "We see that we need to move forward and to show an example to other countries."

The European Union has been working on a list of individuals in Belarus to target with similar sanctions, expected to exclude Lukashenko. Western countries have mostly been cautious, wary of provoking an

intervention from Russia.

"We have said before that Belarus will need to take adequate measures to respond to the initiators of these steps. This will be done," Anatoly Glaz, spokesman of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, told RIA news agency.

The three Baltic states are all members of the EU and NATO, and Lithuania and Latvia border Belarus. Lithuania has been hosting Belarusian opposition presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who fled there after the election her supporters say she won.

Tsikhanouskaya will speak to the U.N. Security Council on Friday at Estonia's invitation, her spokesman said. Seeking to keep pressure on Lukashenko to step down, Tsikhanouskaya's team called for students to hold a one-day nationwide boycott of schools and universities on Tuesday to coincide with the start of the new school year.

Three weeks into a mass demonstration movement that has peaked at weekends, tens of thousands of protesters again took to the streets in central Minsk on Sunday.

Lukashenko has shown no sign of bowing to the protests. The former Soviet collective farm boss has denied rigging the election but on Monday referred to Belarusian public life being governed by "a somewhat authoritarian system".



## Walesa Warns Poles Over Populism

GDANSK (AFP) - Poland's anti-communist icon Lech Walesa on Monday warned against populism as his deeply divided country marked 40 years since a landmark deal gave rise to the freedom-fighting Solidarity trade union.

Concerns over the strength of Poland's democracy have mounted since 2015 when the right-wing populist Law and Justice (PiS) won office and began introducing controversial reforms, criticised both at home and abroad.

"People today are electing populists and demagogues because they promise change... they (populists) have correctly diagnosed (today's problems) but their cure is wrong," Walesa told hundreds gathered at the historic Gdansk shipyard on the Baltic coast.

It was here on August 31, 1980, that a deal was sealed between the communist regime and striking shipyard workers led by Walesa -- an electrician at the time -- which enabled the creation of Solidarity, the Soviet bloc's first free union.

"We need to take over the initiative from these populists and demagogues and replace it with wiser solutions and better structures," said Walesa, 76.

He then placed flowers on the shipyard gate and symbolically opened it as he did four decades ago after inking the Gdansk Accords.

The communist regime backtracked on the deal in 1981, imposing martial law to crush Solidarity, which had snowballed into a movement of 10 million members, or more than one Pole in four.

Solidarity went underground, returning to the fore in 1989, when it negotiated a deal for free elections with the regime. This victory accelerated the largely peaceful demise of the entire Soviet bloc over the next two years.

Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 for his leadership of Solidarity, Walesa went on to become Poland's first democratically elected president after 1989.

Poland successfully adopted democracy and a market economy before joining NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

But now reforms by the ruling PiS are tarnishing its democratic credentials with critics, including the European Union, accusing it of eroding the independence of courts and the rule of law.







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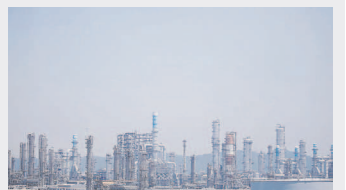
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## South Korea's Factory Activity Grows for Second Month in a Row

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea's factory output grew for a second straight month in July, after marking the fastest growth since 2009 in June, though a resurgence in coronavirus infections is expected to further weigh on the economy.

Industrial production in July rose by a seasonally-adjusted 1.6% from a month earlier, Statistics Korea said on Monday, down from 7.2% in June and slightly missing the median forecast of a 1.9% rise. But the economic recovery may lose momentum as South Korea extended Phase 2 social distancing rules - the second-strictest level - for at least another week and toughened restrictions on some businesses to battle the resurgence of the virus in August.



## Turkey's Economy Plunges As Tourists Stay Away

ANKARA (Dispatches) - As Turkey experiences an economic decline, the conversion of the Hagia Sophia and Chora museums into mosques dealt a blow to Turkey's tourism industry which has already been dealt a blow from the global coronavirus pandemic. In the second quarter of 2020, Turkey's economy shrank 9.9 percent from the previous quarter.

Revenue from the mosques was set to be around \$35 million this year. But because of the pandemic and the conversions of the mosques, that revenue will not materialize.

In July 2020, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a controversial decision that was condemned by the international community, converted the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque. Built as a Christian church under the Byzantine Empire and converted to a mosque during the Ottoman Empire and then museum after the founding of the Turkish Republic, the decision sparked outrage by critics who said Erdogan was pandering to his conservative, religious base to bolster domestic support.

At the start of August, Erdogan announced that another historic site was also going to be converted into a mosque. This time it was the Chora museum. This museum, like the Hagia Sophia, was built as a church and became a mosque under the Ottomans, only to become a museum following the founding of the Republic.

Every year, millions of people used to visit the two museums, bringing in tens of millions of tourism dollars for the Turkish economy. Now, however, tourists are still free to enter outside prayer times, but they do not pay entrance fees for the highly trafficked sites.

The loss of funds could pose a threat to the Turkish economy that depends on tourism for around 30 percent of its annual income. However, even without Erdogan's controversial decision, this year has seen drastically lower numbers due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Almost \$35 million was expected [this year from the mosques]," Turkish economist Mustafa Sonmez told Al Arabiya English, "but unfortunately this is almost zero [because of the pandemic]." In 2019, total revenue from tourism hit a high \$34.5 billion, Turkish state media TRT World reported.

Turkey's lack of tourism and economic woes have already started to have an effect on the country's tourism industry with some businesses forced to lay off employees and others having to close their doors. As of now, the government has provided very limited economic relief for the businesses in the tourism industry.

"Many hotels and many other touristic places, their capacity has decreased and their employment has decreased," Sonmez explained. "They are bad conditions and many have closed their shops and don't work anymore. Nobody knows what will happen because the pandemic situation is not getting better and is actually worsening."

Businesses were hoping that tourism would see a surge this autumn, when people are more likely to visit cultural sites rather than going to the beach or sea due to the drop in temperature, but some fear that with the Hagia Sophia and Chora becoming mosques, tourists may forgo planned visits.

"Turkish tourism had already suffered a blow with the pandemic when the European Union did not include Turkey as a 'safe' country," Nazlan Ertan, a Turkish journalist, told Al Arabiya English. "Still the Turkish tourism operators were hoping to make a late recovery, meaning, in late autumn and when you speak of late autumn, of course, you are speaking about cultural tourism."

According to Ertan, these decisions by Erdogan send a message that he and Turkey prioritize Islam and Muslims over other all other things, especially for those who are looking to visit from the West.

## Japan Factory Output Up But Retail Sales Down

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's factory output rose in July at the fastest pace on record, driven by automobiles and car parts, signaling a gradual recovery from the blow delivered by the coronavirus pandemic.

But retail sales fell for a fifth straight month and at a somewhat faster pace, a worrying sign for private consumption, which accounts for more than half of the world's third-largest economy. Monday's data underscored the fragility of an economy that suffered a record 27.8% contraction in the April-June quarter as the pandemic took a heavy toll on both domestic and external demand.

While analysts believe the economy has bottomed out after lockdowns were lifted in late May, they say any rebound will be modest amid worries about a second wave of infections. "The bounce-back in factory output will run its course in August and we expect a pullback in production in October-December," said Toru Suehiro, senior market economist at Mizuho Securities.

"Factory output will fluctuate from now on to settle in at about 90% of the pre-coronavirus crisis level," he said.

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) data showed Japan's industrial output grew 8.0% in July from the previous month, versus economists' median estimate of a 5.8% gain and following a 1.9% increase in June.

The growth rate was the fastest on record going back to 1978, the government said.

It was also the second straight month of gains after having hit its lowest level in May since the global financial crisis.

Manufacturers surveyed by METI expect output to increase 4.0% in August and grow 1.9% in September. METI officials said industrial output will continue to improve but activity would remain below pre-crisis levels for some time. The officials said they were closely watching the impact of a resurgence in coronavirus infections.

Compared with a year earlier, output was down 16.1%.

Highlighting weak consumer demand, however, retail sales fell 2.8% year-on-year in July, worse than a 1.7% drop seen by economists in a Reuters poll and following a 1.3% drop in June, separate METI data showed on Monday. Declines in car demand dragged down overall retail sales, and department stores and supermarkets suffered from sluggish consumer activity amid a surge in new COVID-19 cases.

Clothing demand also suffered, while oil product sales fell reflecting declines in crude oil prices, the data showed.

On a seasonally-adjusted basis, retail sales fell 3.3% month-on-month in July, posting the first drop in three months.



## Italy Plunges Into Major Recession Following Coronavirus Shutdown

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy posted a record economic contraction on Monday after household spending and investment crashed during lockdown, driving the eurozone's third-largest economy deep into recession.

The country's gross domestic product fell by 12.8 percent in the second quarter compared to the previous quarter, and by 17.7 percent versus the same period last year, national statistics agency Istat said.

"The full estimate of the quarterly economic figures confirm the exceptional extent of the drop in GDP in the second quarter, due to the economic effects of the health emergency and the containment measures adopted," Istat said.

The contraction was even worse than predicted in July, when Istat estimated a second-quarter drop of 12.4 percent.

A recession is commonly defined as two consecutive periods of a quarter-on-quarter drop in GDP.

Italy's economy shrunk 5.4 percent in the first quarter.

In the second quarter, household spending fell by 11.3 percent compared to the first quarter, while exports plummeted 26.4 percent, the agency said.

Overall Italy will lose 16 billion euros in consumer spending in 2020, an average of 1,900 euros a head, retail group Confindustria said on Monday.

This will be a year-on-year drop of 10.9% at a national level, it said.

The north is the worst-hit area with an 11.7% drop, with almost 60 percent concentrated in eight regions. Lombardy, home of the financial capital Milan, is to see the biggest drop, worth 22.6 billion euros.

The south will see a drop of 8.5 percent.

Italy, the first European country to be hit full force by the coronavirus outbreak, went into total lockdown in early March as Covid-19 tightened its grip on the country.

The peninsula is set to suffer its worst recession since World War II this year, with experts estimating GDP to plummet between 8.0 to 14 percent.

The eurozone economy is predicted to contract by a record 8.7 percent this year, with mass unemployment and other dire consequences still very much a possibility.

## VAT Cut Pushes German Inflation Into Negative Territory



BERLIN (Reuters) - German annual consumer prices fell for the first time in more than four years in August due to a VAT cut as part of the government's stimulus push to help Europe's largest economy recover from the coronavirus shock, data showed on Monday.

German consumer prices, harmonised to make them comparable with inflation data from other European Union countries, fell 0.1% year-on-year after stagnating in the previous month, the Federal Statistics Office said.

This compared with a Reuters forecast for 0.0% and was the first negative reading since May 2016.

"The inflation rate is influenced, among other things, by the VAT cut that came into effect on July 1, 2020," the office said in a statement.

Germany's stimulus package includes a cut in VAT - value added tax - for regular goods to 16% from 19% and for food and some other goods to 5% from 7% from July 1 until Dec. 31. The reduction is estimated to cost the federal government up to 20 billion euros (\$24 billion).

The government hopes that its rescue and stimulus measures will help companies and consumers recover more quickly from the coronavirus shock which plunged the economy into its deepest recession on record in the second quarter.

ING economist Carsten Brzeski said the VAT cut was most visible in prices for food and clothing, while inflation for services remained almost stable.

While higher unemployment and weak pricing power for companies generally suggest deflationary trends during the pandemic, monetary and fiscal stimulus eventually speak in favour of more inflationary pressure, Brzeski said.

But the German inflation data showed that at least "for the time being, the deflationary threat is clearly more pressing than any inflationary one", Brzeski added.

The European Central Bank has a target of keeping inflation close to but below 2% in the euro zone.

ECB board member Isabel Schnabel told Reuters in an interview published on Monday that the central bank has no reason for now to add to its stimulus measures as disruptions related to the recent surge in coronavirus infections were already factored into its policy.

## India Economic Growth Hit by Record Slump After Virus Lockdown

MUMBAI (AFP) - India's economic growth suffered a historic 23.9 percent decline between April and June, official figures showed Monday, as manufacturing and productivity were battered by a strict coronavirus lockdown.

The contraction was the biggest since New Delhi started publishing quarterly statistics in 1996, and the latest figures came as the country's coronavirus cases surged past the 3.6 million mark. The steep dip in Asia's third-largest economy reflected the impact of a months-long nationwide shutdown that saw most industrial and manufacturing activity grind to a halt. The virus restrictions dealt a severe blow to an economy that was already struggling with a protracted slowdown through 2019, hit by the twin shocks of shrinking consumer demand and rising unemployment levels.

The decline was worse than expected, with a survey of economists by Bloomberg earlier predicting a contraction of 18 percent. On Monday the government warned that the figures could be revised further since the pandemic had also affected the ability to collect accurate data on economic activity.

"The entire quarter was spent in lockdown and it was a complete washout for the Indian economy," Mumbai-based economist Ashutosh Datar told AFP.

He added that the clouds of gloom were unlikely to lift "for the next few quarters".

"We started publishing quarterly growth figures only from 1996 and this is the worst quarterly performance on record ever since," he said. The sudden shutdown from late March prompted a huge exodus by millions of migrant workers who fled cities for their villages due to a lack of food and money. Many have yet to return even as restrictions have eased, leaving factories struggling with labour shortages. "This is a health crisis that has metamorphosed into an economic crisis," State Bank of Baroda chief economist Sameer Narang told AFP.

## Gazprom Second Quarter Net Profit Halved

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian natural gas giant Gazprom's second-quarter net income more than halved year-on-year to 149.2 billion roubles (\$2 billion), but it said energy markets were recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The company slightly improved its forecast for gas exports to 170 billion cubic metres (bcm) for this year from an earlier projection of around 166 bcm but did not change its expectations for gas prices in Europe.

Oil and gas producers across the world have been affected by lower prices and a collapse in fuel demand because of movement restrictions to tackle the pandemic.

But the state-run Gazprom still managed to deliver a profit after a first-quarter loss of 116 billion roubles and said third quarter trading was improving.

Gazprom's shares reversed a morning positive trend, losing more than 1% by the close in line with a 1% decline in the Moscow stock market .IMOEX.

Gazprom's Deputy Chief Famil Sadygov said in a statement the company was sticking to its previously announced dividend plans. Markets had improved in the third quarter and spot gas prices had exceeded \$100 per 1,000 cubic metres in Europe, he said.

Alexander Ivannikov, the head of Gazprom's financial department, told investors in a follow-up call that the net debt/EBITDA ratio may exceed 2.5 by the end of the year - a level which triggers changes to dividend policy - but the company still aims to "fulfil its pledges on dividend payout".

In its financial report, Gazprom said April to June revenue fell to 1.16 trillion roubles from 1.78 trillion roubles in the same period of 2019.

The company's natural gas sales to Europe, a major source of income, fell in the first half of the year by 47%, year-on-year, to 756.3 billion roubles (\$10.3 billion).



## Porto Completes Signing Of Mehdi Taremi

TEHRAN (MNA) – Primeira Liga's defending champion FC Porto announced the signing of Iranian striker of Rio Ave Mehdi Taremi for a four-year contract.

Porto has reportedly paid around €4.5m plus 25-year-old forward Andre Pereira for this transfer. The Iranian striker impressed Portugal's league with

21 goals and five assists in the last season, being named one of the top goal scorers of the league. He had reportedly been under the radar of other Portuguese giants including Sporting Lisbon and Benfica.

Porto hopes to defend its title with goals that will be added by Taremi.



# ASEAN Agrees to Review Trade Pact With India

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - After months of inaction and the government's threat to pull out of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with ASEAN, members of the trading block have agreed to review the trade pact amid concerns that China is using the treaty to ship goods to India, which is unable to take full advantage of the 10-year-old arrangement.

While the scope of the review will be finalized at the official level, New Delhi is keen that some of the anomalies be removed at the earliest. Chief among them is the inability of Indian exporters to get a level-playing field. An official told TOI that Indonesia had lowered duties on only 50% of the items, while close to 75% of its products were getting customs duty benefit in India. A similar problem persisted with some of the other ASEAN members, although those such as Indonesia are not classified as least-developed countries.

Government officials also pointed to other deficiencies. For instance, Japanese automobiles can be imported into Thailand and Indonesia at 5% duty, while Indian cars faced 35% tariff. Ditto with two-wheelers. Similarly, against 35% duty on rice for trade among ASEAN members, Indian rice faced a 50% levy.

Another key concern for India are the weak rules of origin meant to check the misuse of treaty benefits by countries that are not part of the agreement. The ASEAN trade agreement requires at least 35% value addition in one of the member countries for a product to get duty advantage in India. But the rules are seen to be lax with government officials listing Chinese set top boxes, copper and polyester among products which were allegedly misusing the CECA.

The government is also demanding better customs procedure, which will also allow Indian customs authorities to verify the details, a facility that is currently unavailable. Then a provision on exchange of data is also proposed to be provided for as part of the review. While India has data on imports through the preferential duty route, corresponding numbers on exports are inaccessible to it.



Given that the Modi government has criticized its predecessor, UPA, for rushing through with the ASEAN CECA, it is set to bargain hard when the talks begin. ASEAN members were earlier linking the review to the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Cooperation agreement, where India walked out late last year, arguing the deal was not favorable to it.

## Spain's Economy Growing Over 10% in Q3



MADRID (Reuters) - The Spanish economy has been growing at a rate of more than 10% so far in the third quarter after a record drop in the preceding quarter due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Economy Minister Nadia Calvino said on Monday.

The Spanish economy was one of the worst-hit by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns in Europe, posting an 18.5% contraction in April-June from the previous quarter as non-essential activities ground to a halt for most of the period. It had contracted 5.2% in the first quarter.

"With all the precaution and prudence, we can expect growth of more than 10% in the third quarter of the year," Calvino told a financial event held in the northern city of Santander.

The growth estimate from Calvino, who also said the labour market was rebounding, is slightly more conservative than that by fiscal watchdog AIReF, which last week upgraded its third quarter GDP expansion forecast to 15.2%.

To repair the ravaged economy, the Spanish government is counting on the 140 billion euros (\$167 billion) it is due to receive from the European Union's recovery fund, about half of which will be in non-repayable grants.

"A plan that, according to government estimates, will lift up our country's economic growth by more than two percentage points in the long run," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told a conference in Madrid.

The Spanish central bank has said the economy could contract by 9%-11.6% in 2020, without ruling out an even sharper contraction of 15.1% due to the possibility of a new wave of coronavirus.

## Iran, Asian Nations Discuss Solutions to Tackle Development Challenges in Agriculture and Rural Areas

TEHRAN (FAO) - To address the most immediate threats posed to the agriculture sector and rural development in the Asia and the Pacific, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) along with its 46 member nations, private sector and civil society organizations in the region convene a conference, providing an inclusive platform to examine ways forward to strengthen the resilience of agro-food systems and livelihoods, and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and climate change on agricultural sectors in this, the most populated part of the world.

Represented by H.E. Mr Alimorad Sarafrasi, the Acting-Head of Public Relations and International Affairs Center of the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Hossein Emadi, Iran Permanent Envoy to FAO and H.E. Mr Ali Kiani Rad, the Head of Iran's Agricultural Planning, Economic and Rural Development Research Institute, Iranian delegation share its concerns regarding the increasing challenges the agriculture sector faces at both regional and global scales, particularly highlighting the adverse effects of climate change, the lack of knowledge-loaded agricultural practices, low-skilled workforce, the prevalence of poverty in rural communities and youth emigrations.

Engaging actively in the discussions held on solutions strategies, the Iranian delegation underscores the need to increase the investment in food systems and



promoting the utilization of digital technologies in this sector, as the two key factors to boost both productivity and sustainability of agricultural activities. According to a press release published by FAO Representation in Iran, The 35th session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, organized virtually from 1 to 4 September 2020, is focused on, among other things, the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture; setting regional priorities to manage water for agriculture under conditions of water scarcity; building sustainable and resilient food systems; harnessing innovation and digital agriculture and implementing FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative – as an evidence-based, country-led and country-owned program forged to accelerate the agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty, and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition across the region.

Home to more than half a billion of the world's undernourished people, Asia and the Pacific region due to COVID-19-linked lockdowns is experiencing an economic slowdown, widespread job losses, collapsing incomes, and falling remittances that further threatened the food security and increased the acute hunger in the region. These circumstances require collective efforts and FAO and its national counterparts call on all stakeholders and interests groups to link the arms to tackle these converging challenges in the Asia and the Pacific.

## Brazil's Fiscal Fragility Stokes Funding Fears, Despite Record Low Rates

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil's official interest rates and the average cost of servicing its public debt have never been lower, but investors are becoming worried that the government could face a funding crisis next year.

The premium that investors demand to lend longer-term to Brazil has risen amid record borrowing and government debt, along with concern that the far-right administration of President Jair Bolsonaro will relax a key fiscal discipline rule to combat the COVID-19 crisis.

That is forcing the Treasury to borrow for much shorter durations, such as six months, reducing the average maturity of Brazil's debt profile and increasing the need to refinance on a more regular basis.

As long as the benchmark Selic interest rate stays low and lenders are willing to accept these historically low returns, the debt situation will be manageable.

But with the fiscal outlook deteriorating and almost 1 trillion reais (\$180 bln) of public debt maturing next year, nerves are fraying. This prompted official approval last week for the central bank to transfer 325 billion reais to the Treasury to help ease the strain.

"When you shorten the debt profile, you raise the risk of refinancing in the future. You force yourself to issue bigger volumes, and risk being forced to issue at any price," said Sergio Goldenstein, former head of open market operations at the central bank. "This is a really risky debt management approach."

Brazil's Treasury on Friday raised its 2020 ceiling for the federal public debt to 4.9 trillion reais and revised the profile of its debt stock to reflect the economic crisis and market volatility this year.

The share of short-term debt maturing in the next year will be increased to as much as 28% of the total, and the average maturity of the overall debt stock

## Cruise Missile...

FROM PAGE 1

The operational range of Iran's missiles give Iran this possibility to have an upper hand in the probable military tensions in the region. Regardless of Iran's enough full-scale deterrent military power, the country's regional enemies either Saudi Arabia and recently the UAE and their Zionist, British and American allies are investing on creating domestic popular discontent in Iran and they have had considerable and huge investment on this issue.

In the Sunni-populated areas of Iran, they are trying to promote the idea of secession and in the central provinces, they are to make people discontent under the guise of seemingly nationalism. The virtual space today has been railed for toppling the regime and this seemingly aligned current is actually more aligned with the enemies' tricks and intentions. But due to the revolutionary maturity and awareness of Iranian people, they are digging their own graves.

The penetrator with its act and behavior makes people know him very well and due to the sincere mourning in this decade of month of Muharram which will have the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s Household's blessing, today Zeinab (A)-like patience has laid the ground for exposing the internal enemies and it is going to provide the ground for a valuable government to shape in 2021 by disgracing them.



## Danish Co...

FROM PAGE 1

But the deal has been on life support since US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord and reimposed sanctions on Iran in 2018, dashing hopes for foreign investment in the country.

Drugs and medical equipment are technically exempt from the U.S. sanctions, but purchases are frequently blocked by the unwillingness of banks to process purchases for fear of incurring large penalties in the United States.

According to the head of Iran's food and drug administration, Iranian diabetic patients require 800,000 insulin pens per month. "Procuring insulin is significantly foreign currency-intensive and is made harder during the difficult time of sanctions," Mohammadreza Shanesaz told Mehr news agency.

Novo Nordisk has promised to save Iran 25 million euros in the first year and 45 million euros in the second after production starts, he added.

## U.S. Has No Right...

FROM PAGE 1

During the meeting, Takht-e Ravanchi also called on the Security Council and its members to adhere to their commitments, criticizing the highest UN body for remaining silent on U.S. crimes.

He pointed to the U.S. violations of Iran's territorial waters and airspace in 2019, saying that "this country continued its adventures against Iran to the extent that regional anti-terrorist heroes, like Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, were assassinated" upon the direct order of U.S. President Donald Trump in "gross violation of the charter of the United Nations and international law, while the Security Council remained silent."

He further criticized the U.S. for its earlier attempts to extend the UN arms embargo against Iran in violation of the UN Security Council resolution that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal.

## Tehran Calls for...

FROM PAGE 1

"According to the agreement reached, the next round of negotiations will take place in October in Tehran. The Iranian side handed a note to the Ukrainian Embassy in Tehran and proposed a period from Oct. 18 to 21 for the second round of negotiations a few days ago ... At the moment, we expect a response from the Ukrainian side regarding the proposed period," said Moradi.

The first round of negotiations ended on July 31 in Ukraine, where technical and legal aspects of the incident were examined, and details of the October round of talks in Tehran were agreed upon. The Boeing-737, en route from Tehran to Kiev, was shot down by two rockets shortly after takeoff from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on Jan. 8. The tragedy resulted in the deaths of all 167 passengers and nine crew members on board, who were citizens of Ukraine, Iran, Canada, Sweden, Afghanistan, and Britain.

Later, Iran's armed forces confirmed that an "unintentional" launch of a military missile by the country was the cause of the incident. In late July, the transcript of the black boxes from the plane confirmed the fact of an illegal interference with the plane.

## Climate Change Bigger Economic Risk Than Pandemic

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates in the clearest terms why central banks must take a bigger role in fighting climate change even if the issue at first appears unrelated to monetary policy, European Central Bank board member Isabel Schnabel said.

Initially just a health crisis, the pandemic has set off economic shockwaves around the globe, affecting every nation and forcing central banks to provide unprecedented support to underpin economic activity. With climate change posing an even bigger risk, the ECB must keep this issue high on its agenda as it reviews its policy framework, Schnabel told Reuters in an interview.

"Climate change is probably the biggest challenge we are facing, much bigger than the pandemic," Schnabel said. "Even though this health shock was entirely unrelated to monetary policy, it nevertheless has huge implications for monetary policy," she said. "The same is true for climate change and this is why central banks cannot ignore it."

Through its supervisory arm the ECB could require banks to provide a climate risk assessment, which could then affect their access to central bank funding if this assessment has a direct implication on collateral valuations, Schnabel said.

The central bank should also push the European Union to add a green element to its long-delayed project to set up a capital markets union as a focus on green finance could give the bloc a competitive advantage, she argued.

Schnabel, who in the past has expressed scepticism about skewing ECB bond purchases towards green bonds, added that her view on the topic was still "developing".



## Oyarzabal out of Spain Squad After Positive COVID-19 Test

MADRID (Reuters) - Real Sociedad winger Mikel Oyarzabal has withdrawn from Spain's UEFA Nations League squad after testing positive for COVID-19, with Villarreal forward Gerard Moreno taking his place. Oyarzabal, 23, said on Sunday he would have to self-isolate at home and miss next month's Nations League matches against Germany and Ukraine. "I want to communicate that I've received a positive result from my last test," Oyarzabal, who has won seven caps, wrote on Instagram. "I have to be at home for a few days and I won't be able to go to the national team."

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

### Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

### Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

### Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

### Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

### Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

### E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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## Messi Misses First Pre-Season Training Session

MADRID (AFP) - Lionel Messi boycotted Barcelona's first pre-season training session on Monday, club sources have confirmed to AFP, as the striker upped the stakes in his battle to leave this summer. After skipping coronavirus tests on Sunday, Messi was absent again from the Ciutat Esportiva, where Ronald Koeman held a session at 5.30pm, his first since being appointed Barca coach. It appears increasingly likely Messi will try to force a transfer by refusing to play in La Liga next season, which begins on September 12.

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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

# Djokovic Rolls Into Second Round At U.S. Open

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Novak Djokovic got his campaign to win a fourth U.S. Open, and 18th Grand Slam title overall, off to a flying start on Monday by beating Damir Dzumhur 6-1 6-4 6-1 to advance to the second round.

Djokovic broke Dzumhur's serve for a seventh time to seal the win in the first night match on Arthur Ashe Stadium court, which, due to COVID-19, was missing the thousands of rowdy New York tennis fans that usually flock to Queens every year.

After a dominant start, Djokovic struggled in the second set and lost his temper even after closing it out.

"I thought I started very well, a set and a break (up) then things got complicated," a masked Djokovic said in court-side interview.

"I lost my focus, he started missing less and he put some good variety in the game ... he came up with some good shots and it was anybody's game midway through the second set."

In the end Dzumhur, who hails from Bosnia and Herzegovina, had no answer to the world number one's blistering serve and stout defence in a match that lasted just under two hours.

The 28-year-old did not make it easy on himself, committing 41 unforced errors and eight double faults to fall to 0-3 lifetime against Djokovic.

With the win the Serbian, who won his fourth title of the year at the Western & Southern Open on Saturday, improved to 24-0 on the season.

Djokovic's health had been a question coming into Monday's match after he needed treatment on his neck at the Western & Southern Open but he said he had recovered.

"I feel fine, to be honest I did struggle a bit in the semis and final back-to-back but I had 48 hours to recover," said Djokovic, who resigned as head of the ATP's Player Council at the weekend and announced the formation of the Professional Tennis Players Association.

Next up is a second-round meeting with



Briton Kyle Edmund, who defeated Alexander Bublik earlier in the day. Djokovic holds a 5-1 advantage in their head-to-head meetings.

With the two other members of the sport's Big Three — Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal — absent from the tournament, Djokovic is a heavy favourite to hoist the trophy and pull within one Grand Slam title of Nadal (19) and two of Federer (20).

Meanwhile first seed Karolina Pliskova got a roaring start to her bid for a maiden Grand Slam title at the U.S. Open on Monday, downing first-round opponent Anhelina Kalinina 6-4 6-0 to kick off the action in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The 28-year-old Czech, who led the WTA in aces in four of the last five years, struggled with an uncharacteristically uneven serve in the first set, committing three double faults and getting only slightly more than half of her first serves in to give her unseeded opponent a fighting chance.

"I started not really great with the first game but after I was able to somehow, you know, like step in the court, was playing quite aggressive," she said.

Pliskova, the 2016 U.S. Open runner-up, did indeed find her footing in the second set, winning all her first-serve points and committing just one unforced error, as her Ukrainian opponent was left scrambling. "I think my game was quite good for a first round," said Pliskova, the world number three, who played in front of empty stands as the tournament is being held without fans due to the coronavirus outbreak.

"For sure I prefer to have people around me," she added.

The match took place on an eerily quiet court, with the roar of jet engines and the rumble of the New York City subway piercing the silence. Tournament organizers piped in crowd noise to offer a taste of normality in between games and after particularly strong plays.

## Ibrahimovic to Stay at Milan for Another Season

MILAN (Reuters) - Veteran forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic is to stay at AC Milan for another season in a bid to help the once-mighty club end their long wait for a major trophy and return to the Champions League, Italian media reported on Monday.

The charismatic Swede, who will be 39 in October, returned for a second stint at Milan in January on a six-month contract and inspired an upturn in form as they finished last season with a 13-match unbeaten run in all competitions.

That lifted them to sixth place in Serie A and booked them a place in the Europa League qualifying rounds.

Italian media, including Gazzetta dello Sport and Sky Sport Italia, said Ibrahimovic had signed a new contract on Monday.

Ibrahimovic gave a strong indication he would stay when he gave an interview to Milan's own television channel following his return from holiday on Sunday.

"Finally, everything's sorted out and I could come back to where I feel at home," he said. "Now, it's time to work hard and push on."

"As I've always said, I'm not here to be a mascot, I'm here to get results and help the team, the coach and the club to get AC Milan back to where we belong."

"We did very well over the last six months but we didn't win anything, and this season I have the possibility to be here from the start. We need to continue where we left off, work hard, and make sacrifices."

## UEFA Confirms Teams

## Could Forfeit Nations League Matches Over COVID-19

BERN (Reuters) - UEFA has confirmed that teams could ultimately forfeit upcoming Nations League matches if they are unable to turn out due to players testing positive for COVID-19, or that the drawing of lots could decide a result.

Soccer's European governing body said that matches could also be officiated by non-neutral referees should any of the originally-appointed match officials test positive.

Two rounds of matches will be played between Sept. 3 and 8, the first competitive internationals in Europe since the coronavirus outbreak, and UEFA acknowledged that preparations were progressing against "a background of difficulties".

All the matches are due to be played in the originally-scheduled venues except Moldova v Kosovo which has been moved to Parma in Italy, although this is because Moldova does not recognise Kosovo as an independent nation.

UEFA said that positive COVID-19 cases from tests conducted before matches could result in groups of players, officials or entire teams being placed into quarantine.

In the case of quarantined players, UEFA said the match would go ahead as long as the team still had 13 players available including at least one goalkeeper.

If a team did not have 13 players, UEFA said it would try to reschedule the match. However, if this was not possible, the disciplinary committee would decide on the outcome and the team judged to be responsible for the postponement would forfeit the game.

If neither or both teams were judged responsible, the result would be decided by the drawing of lots, UEFA said.

UEFA said that, should any match officials test positive, it might "exceptionally appoint replacement match officials who may be of the same nationality as one of the national associations and/or may not be on the FIFA list".



Immobile, who is 30, had the best league scoring season of his career, hitting 36 goals, 14 of them penalties, to lift Lazio to fourth place in Serie A.

# Immobile Commits to Lazio for Life

ROME (AFP) - Ciro Immobile, who won the Golden Shoe as top scorer in Europe's top divisions last season, has extended his contract with Lazio until 2025, the club said on Monday.

Immobile, who is 30, had the best league scoring season of his career, hitting 36 goals, 14 of them penalties, to lift Lazio to fourth place in Serie A.

"With this choice, Immobile has opted for Lazio for life," said Stefano De Martino, Lazio's communications director on the club's website.

Immobile had previously finished top scorer in Serie A in 2013-14 with Torino and 2017-18 with Lazio, when he tied for first with Mauro Icardi.

He was previously under contract until 2023.

For Immobile "it's a professional, sentimental and family choice" said Lazio adding that they intends "to consolidate what was done last season before further improving the squad."

## Dutch Team Disappointed With Koeman's Departure

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - The Netherlands team are disappointed with their coach Ronald Koeman's decision to leave for Barcelona but understand he could not turn down the offer, captain Virgil van Dijk said on Monday.

"It was not a shock but we are all disappointed because we have seen a tremendous coach depart. But it was his dream. We give him that. It is sad for us but we understand," Van Dijk said of Koeman's resignation this month to take up a two-year contract with the Spanish club, where he was once a player. "The players don't feel let down by Koeman, they only wish him the best," the skipper added as the Netherlands gathered for their two Nations League games in Amsterdam against Poland on Friday and Italy next Monday.

Koeman had been a popular figure among the players and revived Dutch fortunes after failure to qualify for the 2016 European Championship and the 2018 World Cup. After Koeman took over, they reached the final of the last Nations League and secured a berth at Euro 2020, which has been postponed to next year.

His former assistant Dwight Lodeweges is taking charge of the two games but Van Dijk, at a news conference, urged the Dutch football association to appoint a permanent replacement quickly. "We as a players' advisory body have given them our opinion already. We want to proceed with the vision. We are glad that the association is listening to us but ultimately they must make a choice. But it is equally important that they know how we feel." Louis van Gaal, who steered the Netherlands to the World Cup semi-finals in Brazil six years ago, expressed an interest in a possible return on a weekend television discussion programme, prompting questions to Van Dijk on Monday about his opinion of the former Manchester United manager's suitability.



## Tottenham to Go To Bulgaria in Europa League

PARIS (Dispatches) - Tottenham Hotspur will face a trip to Bulgaria in the Europa League second qualifying round in September after being paired with Lokomotiv Plovdiv in Monday's draw.

The tie will be played on Thursday, September 17, five days after Jose Mourinho's side kick off their Premier League campaign at home to Everton. They are due to play away at Southampton on Sunday, September 20.

Lokomotiv qualified for the Europa League by winning the Bulgarian Cup for the second year running. Spurs qualified by coming sixth in the Premier League.

Meanwhile, League of Ireland side Shamrock Rovers have been handed a glamour tie at home to seven-time former European champions AC Milan in Dublin.

Steven Gerrard's Rangers have been drawn away at Lincoln Red Imps of Gibraltar, the minnows who beat Celtic 1-0 at home in a Champions League qualifier in 2016 before losing the return in Glasgow.

After being knocked out of this season's Champions League at home by Ferencváros in the second qualifying round last week, Celtic will enter the Europa League in the third qualifying round, the draw for which takes place on Tuesday.

Complications caused by the coronavirus pandemic mean that all qualifying ties are being played as one-off matches at the home of the first team drawn from the hat, rather than over two legs.

All European ties are going ahead behind closed doors. The delayed 2019/20 Europa League was only completed on August 21, with Sevilla beating Inter Milan in the final behind closed doors in Cologne to win the trophy for the sixth time in 15 years.

