

Iran's Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Saturday That Some 110 More Iranians Have Died From Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Russia's Permanent Representative To International Organizations In Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov Said That The Re-Leak of New IAEA Director General's Confidential Reports On Iran Is Shameful

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Iran Sees 'Positive Outlook' For Ties With IAEA

LONDON (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations Kazem Gharibabadi hailed IAEA's report on Safeguards Agreement (NPT) with Iran, saying that the report creates positive and constructive prospects for relations with Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog.

Talking to reporters late on Friday, he added that the report is significant and can be scrutinized from two angles.

Formally, he said, this report deals with the developments and progress of relations and cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over the past three months.

It indicates the constructive interaction of the two sides during the period to reach a common understanding and find solutions to issues, he said.

In terms of content, this report clearly portrays a clear and positive image of the current state of cooperation and a positive and constructive outlook in relations between Iran and the IAEA, which is expected to be welcomed by the overwhelming majority of IAEA member states and the Board of Governors, the envoy added.

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Iran Foreign Trade Touches \$24.6b in Five Months



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN- Iran's total foreign trade in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year stood at \$24.6b which shows a decline comparing to the same period last year because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

According to the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade's statistics, the total foreign trade volume of the country in the first five months was \$24.6 that value of exports was \$10.9b and imports' share was \$13.7b.

The report indicates that the trade exchange with other countries was over 52m tons in terms of weight that exports' share was 38m tons and almost 85 percent of the imported goods were basic goods and raw materials.

China, Iraq, the UAE, Afghanistan and Turkey have been the five top destinations for Iran's exports and China has been Iran's major trade partner in the first five months.

Meanwhile China, the UAE, Turkey, India and Germany have been the five top exporters to Iran in the same period.

Meanwhile Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Hamid Zadboum said yesterday that most of the country's current imports are limited to the raw materials or basic goods.

"Over 84 percent of the imported items include raw materials, basic goods or intermediaries that are necessary for the production and operation of domestic units," TPO portal quoted Zadboum as saying.

Referring to the restriction of order registration for goods that have similar productions inside the country, the official said: "Last year, the imports of 1,600 items with an eight-digit HS code was banned. The number, however, has reached 2,400 items this [Iranian calendar] year (started on March 19)."

He further put the value of imports in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21) at \$11 billion saying: "We are trying to reduce the registration of orders for goods that are already produced inside the country by weekly monitoring of imported goods and gradually in the near future, we will completely ban the import of all such products in order to boost domestic production."

According to the official, Iran's imports during the first quarter of this Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20) exceeded \$7.6 billion, which compared to the \$10.4 billion in the same period last year, experienced a decrease of 26.8 percent, and yet in terms of weight, the figure was 8.9 million tons, which is 0.8 percent less than the figure for the same period last year.

Indian Defense Minister to Make Stopover in Tehran

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh will visit Iran for a brief stopover tonight while returning from Russia. He is scheduled to have a bilateral with Iran's defense minister. In a tweet, Rajnath said, "Leaving Moscow for Tehran. I shall be meeting the Defense Minister of Iran, Brigadier General Amir Hatami."

Rajnath Singh was in Moscow for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization defense ministers meeting. The eventful visit to Moscow saw a meeting between Indian and Chinese defense ministers amid the Line of Actual Control (LAC) row. The meet came at the request of the Chinese side.

Iran is an observer country of the SCO grouping. The visit to Iran is significant in view of India's considering the country as part of its extended neighborhood and also key to connectivity projects. The Chabahar port project, where India has berths, provides connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries.

This is also the first visit to Iran by any Indian minister since the assassination of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's Qasem Soleimani by Americans earlier this year.

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Enemies Try to Shut Down Iran Due To Coronavirus

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani said that since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in the country, the enemies wanted to shut down Iran under the pretext of this disease.

Speaking on Saturday at the meeting of the heads of the committees of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, President Rouhani said, "Shutting down the country under the pretext of fighting coronavirus was the wish of the enemy and their propaganda system, which failed, adding, "We will certainly defeat the virus, but we combine "health" with "activity" along with following all health protocols."

Rouhani once again called the juxtaposition of 'life and bread', 'health and religion' and 'health and education' as incorrect, and stressed that "closing schools is the easiest way", stating, "Our only problem is not just a virus; The main issue is to maintain the health of the body and soul of the people and the continuity of life and spirituality among them."

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UK Admits Debt Owed to Iran Over Shah's Tank Order

LONDON (Guardian) - British defense secretary, Ben Wallace, has for the first time acknowledged that he is actively seeking to pay a debt to the Iranian government that could finally help to secure the release of British dual nationals including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Wallace assured lawyers acting for the families that the government was exploring every legal avenue to pay the debt, which for the first time he formally acknowledged the government owes.

The admission came in a letter to the lawyers acting for Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who has been detained in Iran in jail and then house arrest since 2016.

The UK is thought to owe as much as £400m to the Iranian government arising from the non-delivery of Chieftain tanks ordered by the Shah of Iran before his overthrow in 1979.

An international arbitration in 2008 ruled the UK owed the debt, but in subsequent protracted court battles, lawyers acting for International Military Services, the Ministry of Defense's now-defunct arms sales agency, have questioned not only the debt's size, but at times whether any debt was payable.

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Disgraceful Act of French Publication a New Manifestation of Modern Ignorance

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's High Council of Human Rights in a statement on Friday condemned desecration of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) by a French publication, saying that the disgraceful move is a new manifestation of modern ignorance.

The insulting act of the French magazine 'Charlie Hebdo' in republishing insulting cartoons about the 'mercy of all the worlds', the great Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) tormented the hearts of hundreds of millions of people, the statement said.

It noted that setting fire to the book of guidance and dignity, the Holy Quran, once again proved the modern-time ignorance.

This is the same modernity that has ridiculed human values, enslaved the freedom in its misconceptions and under the pretext of freedom, supports terrorist acts and encourages blasphemy, the statement read.

And at the same time, in the context of following the bullying of the American regime in exerting maximum pressure on a free and freedom-loving nation, the free economic activity of millions of people has been limited even to meet their basic needs and contrary to all human rights rules and regulations, closes their access to medicine and treatment, the statement said.

Iran's High Council of Human Rights, while expressing its deep disgust with the shameful act of the French publication and regretting lack of deterrent response by the French authorities, considers this move as a violation of the rights of hundreds of millions of people and strongly condemns it, the statement said and called on the free thinkers across the world and international human rights organizations and the French legal circles to condemn the publication's hateful act in order to protect human rights and the sacred concept of freedom.

It went on stress that it expected the French government to deal with the perpetrators seriously.

Charlie Hebdo is a French left-wing satirical weekly magazine which has a history of publishing heinous cartoons. It published blasphemous cartoons in 2012 and 2015 which prompted Muslims across the world to protest against the move.

Iran, SCO Discuss Reinforcing All-Out Cooperation

BEIJING (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzadeh and Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Vladimir Norov reviewed developing all-out cooperation.

Norov reiterated the fact that both sides enjoy high capacity for maintaining cooperation in trade and cultural fields.

The road map of promoting SCO secretariat cooperation with members states which was signed last year has paved the way for Iran and other countries in line with boosting relations, he said.

He believed that it will prepare the ground for members' participation in SCO aiming to reinforce trade relations.

He further suggested that Iran take charge of a part of events especially for youth's affairs.

Keshavarzadeh, for his part, appreciated SCO role in establishing peace and security in the region.

Tehran is interested in reinforcing relations with SCO, he added.

He noted that Iran is ready to play active role with regard to developing relations with the SCO.

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Second Iranian Medical Aid Consignment Dispatched to Tajikistan

TEHRAN (IP) - The second shipment of medical aid donated by the Islamic Republic of Iran to Tajikistan to fight COVID-19 arrived at Dushanbe International Airport on Kish Air.

This consignment includes items such as ventilators and compressors, non-alcoholic disinfectant solutions, and diagnostic kits.

The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Tajikistan, Mohammad Taqi Saberi, handed over donations from Tehran to Shodikhon Jamshed, Tajik Deputy Minister of Health, and Saadi Sharifi, Head of the Middle East and African Countries Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

90% of Armed Forces' Weapons Needs Supplied Domestically

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Defense Minister said that more than 90 percent of the armed forces' weapons needs have been supplied domestically and the remaining 10 percent would not have a decisive impact on the country's defense power.

Brigadier General Amir Hatami made the remarks in an interview with Iran Newspaper. "Procurement of equipment for the Armed Forces is one of the main missions of the Ministry of Defense, which includes the provision of foreign and domestic resources and production," he said.

"The number of countries that can produce more than 90% of the equipment and armaments needs of the armed forces domestically is certainly less than the number of fingers," he added.

Stating that more than 90 percent of the armed forces' weapons needs have been supplied domestically and in indigenous ways, and the remaining 10 percent will not have a decisive impact on the country's defense power, he said, "Therefore, with the lifting of restrictions, we can use this legal right to interact with friendly countries."

"There are excellent products and technical capacities in the country's defense industry that can be used in the export of products and services," he noted.



Hatami went on to say, "So certainly we were, and still are exporters of technical products and services, rather than importers in the field of defense products."

"Under Resolution 2231, we only restricted arms exports, while many defense industry products were not defined as weapons and we were not prohibited from exporting them," he added.

"Certainly, after lifting of sanctions, we can export, as in many other countries, within the framework of national and international policies and regulations," Hatami said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he added, "Our missile power is one of the effective defense components to which the enemy is sensitive."

Referring to Iran's airstrike to US airbase 'Ain al-Assad' in Iraq, Hatami said, "Satellite images released by the Westerners showed how the missiles hit their targets accurately. We have reached a relatively good maturity in the missile industry and the whole industry is indigenous."

No Compromise on Its Security

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian military commander has warned enemies against making any moves against the Islamic Republic, saying Iran will not compromise on its security.

Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said the Iranian navy is pressing ahead with its missions and activities despite the coronavirus pandemic.

"The fleets of the US and many other countries were gripped by the COVID-19 outbreak. One of their aircraft carriers, with around 5,000 crew members, as well as their destroyers were affected by the pandemic and the fallout from the virus outbreak took on military dimensions as well. However, activities and missions of the Naval Force of the Iranian Army have not stopped, and our mission have not been disrupted at all so far," said admiral Khanzadi, the commander of the Naval Force of the Iranian Army.

The top commander underlined that military units can hone their skills by taking part in war games, expressing Tehran's preparedness to hold joint military exercises with all regional countries.

He said the Navy is being equipped with ballistic missiles, drones and anti-submarine helicopters, which can surprise the enemies.

The top general said the Navy has also developed a mine-sweeping device which can spot and defuse smart modern sea mines.

Iraqi Finance Minister to Visit Iran Soon

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

BAGHDA- Finance Minister of Iraq Ali Abdul Amir Alavi is supposed to visit Iran soon, Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi said.

Masjedi and Amir Alavi in a meeting discussed results of the agreement between two countries during Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi's recent visit to Tehran.

They stressed following up and finalizing agreements. They also reviewed avoiding double taxation, customs cooperation and the agreement on mutual support for investment.

Iraqi minister and Iranian diplomat exchanged views on paying Iran's disbursement of selling gas and electricity.

Masjedi expressed Iran's readiness for buying surplus of Iraqi barley and wheat production.

Iranian envoy submitted invitation of the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Farhad Dejjasand for his Iraqi counterpart.

Iraqi minister also welcomed his invitation.

Masjedi also announced Tehran's readiness to buy a surplus of Iraqi barley and wheat production.

Tehran Welcomes Palestinians' Unity in Face of Israeli Atrocities

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign ministry spokesman has welcomed a recent meeting of Palestinian groups, saying the move indicates the prudence of Palestinian leaders in countering the Israeli regime as well as its supporters and accomplices.

In a Saturday statement, Saeed Khatibzadeh underscored the only way to secure the liberation of occupied Palestine and the holy Quds is for all Palestinian and resistance groups to remain united against the criminal and occupying regime of Israel.

"The resistant Palestinian nation has proved over the past decades that it will not give up its determination to stand up to those who have usurped Palestine despite years of occupation, killing and crackdown by the occupying Israeli regime against Palestinian people as well as compromise plans put forward by some treacherous Arab governments," he said.

"Governments as well as freedom-seeking and resistant nations across the world will stand with Palestinians on the path to achieving their demands," he added.

In a show of unity, Leaders of all Palestinian factions and groups in Ramallah and Beirut held a meeting to discuss "unified strategy" for countering Israeli-U.S. conspiracies, including their land grab agenda, following a controversial Washington-brokered normalization accord between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Thursday intra-Palestinian meeting was attended by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas's political chief Ismail Haniya, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah, among others.

Pakistan Keen on Highest Level of Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan's Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment announcing his participation in the upcoming 9th meeting of Iran-Pakistan Joint Trade Committee, to be held in Tehran, says that Pakistan is determined to take trade relations with Iran to the highest level.

Abdul Razak Dawood a senior politician and a well-known business personality made the remarks during an exclusive interview with IRNA.

After the formation of the incumbent government of Pakistan, he was appointed as Prime Minister Imran Khan's Advisor on Commerce and Investment.

He has served as Minister of Commerce in the cabinet of former Pakistani military ruler Pervez Musharraf from 1999 to 2002. In May 2019, he and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan paid a two-day visit to Iran, during which he met with Minister of Industry and Trade Reza Rahmani.

Swiss FM Visits Historical City of Isfahan



TEHRAN (IFP) - Ignazio Cassis, the head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), is touring the historical attractions of the central city of Isfahan as he arrives in Iran for an official visit.

During his day-long trip to the historical city, the top Swiss diplomat visited its ancient monuments and cultural sites as well as other tourist attractions and the local handicrafts industry.

The Swiss top diplomat is also scheduled to visit the Vank Church in Isfahan and meet Bishop Sepian Kashchian, the religious leader of Christians in Isfahan and southern Iran.

He is also slated to meet Isfahan Governor Abbas Rezaei.

Cassias and his accompanying delegation also meet a host of professors of the Isfahan University of Technology (IUT) to exchange views on the promotion of scientific, cultural and technological cooperation between the two countries.

The Isfahan University of Technology is in charge of coordinating Iran's scientific cooperation with Switzerland. After a trip to Iran by the Swiss minister of science in 2018, it was decided that Iranian and Swiss researchers present joint projects. The IUT is currently working with Swiss universities in different fields.

After visiting Isfahan, the Swiss diplomat will travel to Tehran for high-level talks with Iran's president, foreign minister, and Parliament speaker, among others.

Iran Underlines Support to Afghanistan Peace Process

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian Embassy in Kabul, In a statement on Saturday, announced Tehran's support to the Republic of Afghanistan and its constitution.

"Iran's principled policy towards Afghanistan is based on supporting the achievements of the country in the last two decades, and accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly backs holding presidential elections in Afghanistan," the embassy said.

"After the elections, Iran did its best to resolve issues among political rivals and establish a common understanding among them," it added.

An Iranian delegation, headed by Ebrahim Taherianfard, the representative of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, traveled to Afghanistan on Thursday.

Referring to the trip, the embassy noted that the trip comes while Afghan peace talks are underway. The delegation held meetings with senior Afghan officials, including the Afghan President, the former president, the acting minister of foreign affairs, the national security adviser, and some other prominent political figures of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

"In all these meetings, the unity among the Afghan political forces to protect the named achievements and to protect the fundamental rights of the people of this country as well as the effective and peaceful coexistence among them in the future were emphasized."

Students' Health, Quality of Education Are Gov't's Concern

TEHRAN (IP) – Minister of Education said that the main concern of the government in the new academic year is students' and families' health, as well as the quality of education in coronavirus pandemic condition.

In the symbolic beginning of the new school year, and the ringing of the school bells in the presence of President Hassan Rouhani, through video conference, Mohsen Haji-Mirzaie said: During the coronavirus pandemic, officials have wisely planned and observed health protocols throughout the country.

He noted that the academic year has started with the month of Muharram, and as Muharram rituals were held by observing the health protocols, by the capacities of the country we can pass this academic year without any problems.

The Minister of Education added, "Shortening the time of students' attendance in the classroom, banning their gatherings, using masks and other health protocols are some of the things that are tried to be observed in the new academic year."

Mohsen Hajimirzaie emphasized that the presence of students in school is an important event because school is the center of education, and forms the students' personality, and identity. "If students do not go to school, their social maturity and behavioral development will be impaired," Minister of Education stated.

He concluded that TV schools, student education networks, production of educational content are steps taken to improve the education of students, and we hope that students can benefit from these facilities.

Tehran, Moscow Emphasize Continuation of Nuclear Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP)- The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Russia and the Deputy Minister of International Affairs of the State Atomic Energy Corporation ROSATOM Nikolai Spassky held talks in Moscow on Saturday and they both stressed the continuation of cooperation between the two countries in the field of peaceful nuclear activities.

Jalali, and Spassky, discussed the latest state of nuclear cooperation between the two countries and the existing problems. During the meeting, Jalali and Spassky stressed the need for continued meetings and cooperation between Iran and Russia in the face of US irresponsible pressure on the JCPOA agreement.

The Russian company has participated in the construction of the first unit of the Bushehr nuclear power plant with a capacity of 1,000MW, and currently, the second and third units of this power plant are being built with the participation of the company. Russia is also cooperating with Iran to build two more 1,000-megawatt reactors in the second phase of the Bushehr Power Plant.

The two sides also have cooperation in the field of stable isotopes production.

India's 8th Wheat Shipment for Afghanistan Docks at Chabahar Port

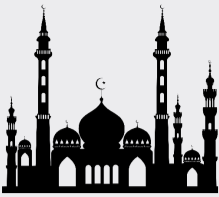
TEHRAN (FNA) - India's eighth wheat cargo for Afghanistan has berthed at Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port, Managing Director of Sistan and Balouchestan Ports and Maritime Organization, Behrouz Aqayee said.

"The eighth vessel carrying 351 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU)s loaded with 8,097 tons of wheat has arrived in the strategic Iranian port," Aqayee said on Saturday.

He added that the cargo will soon be transferred to Afghanistan via land borders.

"The shipment is part of a total gift of 75,000 tons from India to Afghanistan," the official added.

Aqayee noted that the Iranian port has handled over 53,000 tons of India's wheat bound for Afghanistan since the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 20).



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

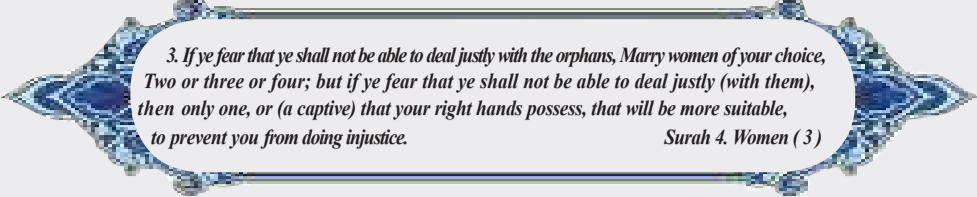
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:02

19:42

05:15

06:41



3. If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, Marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

Surah 4. Women (3)

Russian Cars to Roll On Iran's Streets

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iran Auto Importers Association Mehdi Dadfar says Russian cars are to enter Iran's car market from the upcoming autumn, and a plant with an area of 25,000 meters is getting ready for manufacturing some models of Russian car UAZ.

Mr. Dadfar said since most Russian companies have connection with American investors, there is some possibility that manufacture of Russian cars in Iran faces problem in the beginning.

He added that the plant is to manufacture different models of UAZ cars like SUV Patriot and single and double cabin pickups.

Dadfar reiterated that some issue should first be sorted out that Iran's car production and trade is in the monopoly of the biggest car-maker, namely, the government, and anybody who tries to break this monopoly should get past the bridge of this monopoly.

He added there have been several companies which were busy with assembling cars like Kerman Khodro which used to produce Chinese car of BYD but all have

faced strange and tough problems.

Dadfar further said most car-making companies in the country are doing their best to survive because car-making is in the monopoly of the government, adding that UAZ cars circulation in Iran may see only production of 2,000 to 3000 cars. He reiterated that if someone thinks that the number of UAZ car production in the country would be around 200,000 to 300,000, he is wrong and it is impossible

He said such car-making companies after one or two years of activities have faced resistance from the state-run car-makers and they were forced to withdraw.

He admitted that since Iranians have used European cars, Russian cars have tough job to meet Iranian users' tastes and one should wait and see whether the Russian car can find its way into Iran's car market.

No Iranian Truck Loaded to Georgia

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran and Georgia Chamber of Commerce Fatemeh Moghimi says no Iranian truck is loaded for Georgia and Georgian officials have not yet lifted restriction over Iranian trucks.

On the latest development on transit of goods to Georgia, she said problems have not been resolved despite Georgian government's decision that Iranian trucks could enter Georgia's territory by holding CMR document but the problems remain in place despite the fact that some Iranian trucks hold the CMR documents.

She noted that so, no Georgia-bond truck is loaded and trucks are forced to return at the Red Bridge border checkpoint.

Moghimi expressed hope that by change of Iran's ambassador to Georgia, these problems would be pursued seriously in order to resume exports to Georgia.

Since June, Georgia in an unexpected move has blocked the entry of Iranian trucks and despite Iran's talks, it has not been solved.

Tehran, Ankara Discuss Ways to Promote Bilateral Trade

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The head of Iran-Turkey joint chamber of commerce Mehrdad Sa'adat Dehqan announced that despite the coronavirus outbreak, Iran's exports to Turkey have increased.

The Iranian official said that fortunately, after the reopening of the borders between Iran and Turkey, mutual trade resumed and is now proceeding rapidly.

"Trade relations between the two countries are increasing because we are in high-quality negotiations with Turkey, which is hoped to be fruitful."

"Turkey is also very keen to cooperate and invest in Iran," he added.

Referring to the resumption of Turkish flights to Iran, Mehrdad Sa'adat Dehqan added "These flights must be resumed as soon as possible and we hope it will take place on a certain date."

Iran's trade with Turkey totaled \$1.07 billion during January-June to register a decrease of 72.54% compared with the first half of 2019, data released by Turkish.

Following the outbreak of coronavirus that forced the shutdown of almost all Iranian borders, some 88% of the country's crossings have reopened for trade exchanges and passenger traffic, says Mojtaba Mousavian, deputy head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran.

Sa'adat Dehqan added that he hopes trade between both countries would boost as negotiation between both countries progress well.

Passenger Car Manufacturing up 20%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN- Manufacturing of passenger cars in Iran has increased 20 percent during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21) compared to the same period of time in the past year.

As reported, among the major Iranian carmakers, namely Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), SAIPA Group, and Pars Khodro, Iran Khodro accounted for the lion's share of the production, while the company's five-month output rose 39 percent year on year.

Three major carmakers manufactured 863,263 vehicles during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19). During the previous year, IKCO manufactured 393,812 vehicles, of which 35,953 were produced in the last month Esfand (February 20-March 19).

Minister Briefs Asia-Pacific Conference on Iran Agricultural Achievements

TEHRAN (FAO) - Iranian Minister for Agriculture Jahad Kazem Khavazi on Saturday briefed the participants of the 35th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific on the achievements made by Iran in the agricultural sector, according to FAO office in Tehran.

The four-day Conference is hosted by the Government of Bhutan.

"Iran has followed adaptive strategies such as changing the cultivating season, changing cultivars, using new technologies, transferring cultivation from outdoor to indoor, limiting the cultivation of some crops such as rice in some geographical areas, increasing the volume of annually stored water through watershed management operations, soil erosion control, and also increase of forage production," the Iranian minister said.

"However, tackling these problems requires the use of international and regional scientific capacities. I hope this meeting will take the necessary steps in this direction," he added.

About 750 participants, including representatives of the private sector and civil society, pledged to work to transform food systems, making them more sustainable, productive and resilient, and to feed a hungry world in a way that is profitable for farmers yet produces healthy food that is accessible to all.

"To transform food systems for sustainable healthy diets we must have coherence, partnerships and solidarity to reduce the costs of production," FAO Director-General QU Dongyu said on the final day of the Conference.

"Big data, a digital economy and mobile technology will help producers achieve that."

Today, mobile technology is leading innovation "and a smartphone in the hands of a smallholder farmer is his new farming tool," the Director-General added.

The Conference also learned more about the establishment of a FAO Office of Innovation and the creation of an International Platform for

Digital Food and Agriculture.

The Conference heard that agricultural innovation can reduce back-breaking drudgery, and that food chains in the Asia-Pacific region are increasingly benefitting from technological innovation such as drones, satellite imagery, big data and block chains.

"Leveraging data, innovation and technology has shown that, here in Asia and the Pacific, we have brilliant minds, scientists and an entrepreneurial spirit that will lead us through the challenges presented by COVID-19 and help us conquer malnutrition and poverty," the Director-General said.

The Conference held a special session dedicated to the application of new technology and innovation in agriculture, which are wooing back young people and empowering women in the sector,

according to participants.

It was agreed that new and innovative food and agricultural policies, processes, investment and learning could get the region back on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (ending hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture) by 2030.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the world's undernourished people, and with the impacts of COVID-19 the number of hungry people in Southern Asia could rise by nearly a third to 330 million in the next ten years.

The participants heard how FAO's recently launched COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, would help countries mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while build back better, accelerating global hunger-fighting efforts through a focus on innovation.

The Conference also appreciated the FAO Hand in Hand Initiative that aims to enable matchmaking, bringing the right partners together at the right time, to help the region move forward and meet the needs of member countries. The Initiative has already seen the launch of state-of-the-art tools such as the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform and the FAO Data Lab for statistical innovation.

Over 464,000 Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - More than 464,519 MT of commodities worth over \$1,166m were traded on the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week.

According to the report from IME International Affairs and PR, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 168,219 MT of various products worth close to \$601m were traded last week.

On this trading floor, 151,732 MT of steel, 6,300 MT of aluminum, 4,735 MT of copper, 120 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 12 MT of precious metal concentrates, 320 MT of zinc ingot, 5,000 MT of coke as well as 20 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 293,714 MT of different commodities with the total value of \$576m were traded.

On this trading floor, 89,500 MT of VB feed stock, 51,604 MT of bitumen, 79,990 MT of polymer products, 37,460 MT of chemical products, 22,000 MT of lube cut oil, 565 MT of insulation, 1,450 MT of base oil, 200 MT of slaps waxes, 120 MT of argon, as well as 10,825 MT of sulfur were traded.

Moreover, the agricultural trading floor of the IME played host to trading of 2,000 kg of saffron strands.

Furthermore, 2,584 MT of commodities was traded on the side market of the IME.

Over 180 Illegal Water Service Lines Identified in Isfahan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company says so far this year the company has identified over 180 water service lines in the central district of the town of Isfahan that 100 items have been discovered in recent days.

Eng. Hashem Amini said 80 items of discovered illegal water service lines have been in the districts of Baraan and Karaj as 50 items of them have been used for villas and gardens.

He added that the minimum area of a garden-villa is 1000 cubic meters and according to the studies, the amount of water consumption in every garden-villa is 60 cubic meters per month.

Amini reiterated that by organizing and controlling this kind of illegal water consumptions, the company has saved some 3,000 cubic meters of water without any earning revenues per month.

He further said last year over 360 illegal water service lines in the central district in the town of Isfahan have been discovered, adding after inspection and controlling water meters and popular reports, the company took action to discover illegal water service lines.

Amini went on to say that over 28,800 water subscribers exist in 61 villages and one town of the districts of Baraan and Karaj which have been inspected and checked this year in order to discover illegal water consumption.

He reiterated that after discovery of these water service lines, the pressure of water supply in villages has been enhanced in the central district.

He added that in the past two years, some 700 illegal water service lines have been discovered in the central district of town of Isfahan and so far 500 of them have been organized and some 150 more are in their final legal stages and will be organized by the yearend.

New Mali Junta Opens Talks On Transition to Civilian Rule

BAMAKO (AFP) - Mali's military junta held meetings on Saturday to discuss its promised transition to civilian rule after mounting pressure from neighbors to yield power in the weeks since it overthrew the nation's leader.

The West African country has long been plagued by chronic instability, a simmering jihadist revolt, ethnic violence and endemic corruption, prompting a clique of rebel colonels to detain elderly President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita last month. They pledged to step down after an undefined transition period, but the putsch has prompted Mali's neighbours and former colonial ruler France to demand a swift transfer of power, with fears the crisis could impact neighbouring states.



Belarus Opposition Leader Calls for UN Monitoring Mission

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya called on the United Nations on Friday to condemn the crackdown by President Alexander Lukashenko on protesters who charge he rigged his re-election victory last month.

Speaking to a virtual informal session of the U.N. Security Council, Tsikhanouskaya also urged the United Nations to send an international monitoring mission to Belarus and said the U.N. Human Rights Commission should hold a special session on the human rights situation there. Tsikhanouskaya also called on the international community to impose sanctions on the individuals responsible for electoral violations "and crimes against humanity."



Greece, Turkey Spar Again After NATO Mediation Move



ATHENS (AFP) - Turkey on Friday accused Greece of shunning dialogue and lying after Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said NATO-brokered talks to reduce tension in the eastern Mediterranean could only be held if Ankara stopped making "threats".

The two nations have been at loggerheads over energy resources in the region since Turkey deployed an exploration vessel escorted by warships last month. "Greece showed once more than it's not in favor of dialogue," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg on Thursday said Greek and Turkish leaders "agreed to enter into technical talks at NATO to establish mechanisms for military deconfliction to reduce the risk of incidents and accidents".

But Athens said it had never agreed to the technical talks, which in any case did not constitute dialogue with Turkey. "Published information claiming Greece and Turkey have agreed to hold so-called 'technical talks' on de-escalating tensions in the eastern Mediterranean do not correspond to reality," Greece's foreign ministry said.

The Greek foreign ministry stressed that "de-escalation will only take place with the immediate withdrawal of all Turkish vessels from the Greek continental shelf". "Let threats go away so that the contacts can begin," PM Mitsotakis said Friday as he met a visiting senior member of the Chinese Communist party.

Stoltenberg on Friday clarified that his effort was designed "to reduce the risk of incidents and accidents in the eastern Mediterranean," not address the root of Turkey's maritime claims against Greece.

"What NATO is doing, what I am trying to do, is not to address the underlying problem, but to deconflict and to try to develop and enhance mechanisms for deconfliction," or avoiding the massed military forces stumbling into an accidental battle, he told reporters in Brussels.

Such measures were needed "as long as we have so many ships in the eastern Mediterranean," Stoltenberg added.

"No agreement has been reached yet, but the talks have started," the NATO chief said. Wading into the dispute on Friday, Cyprus president Nicos Anastasiades denounced Turkey's "aggressiveness" which he said masked "an intention to control the whole area."

"So we are experiencing a growing tension, and the situation that evolves is extremely volatile and worrisome," Anastasiades told AFP in an interview. He urged Turkey to agree to either take the matter to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, or to international arbitration.

In Ankara, Cavusoglu said Greece did in fact agree to the NATO proposal when it was made.

"Greece denied the secretary general's (remarks) but the one lying here is not the NATO secretary general, it's Greece itself," Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara.

Thousands Protest in Pakistan Over Reprinting of Prophet Cartoons in France



KARACHI (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of people protested across Pakistan on Friday against French magazine Charlie Hebdo's reprinting of cartoons mocking the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), chanting "Death to France" and calling for boycotts of French products.

"Decapitation is the punishment of blasphemers," read one of the placards carried by protesters.

The cartoons sending up the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) triggered outrage and unrest among Muslims around the world in 2005 when they first published by Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten.

Earlier this week, Charlie Hebdo - a satirical weekly - revived the cartoons to mark the start of the trial of suspected accomplices in an Islamist militant attack on its Paris office in January 2015.

"Vaccine Nationalism" Would Prolong Pandemic

GENEVA (Reuters) - WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Friday that "vaccine nationalism" would only slow the effort to quash the pandemic and called for vaccines to be used fairly and effectively.

Tedros said 78 high-income countries had now joined the "COVAX" global vaccine allocation plan, bringing the total to 170 countries, and the "number is growing". He urged others to join by the Sept. 18 deadline for binding commitments.

Joining the plan guaranteed those countries access to the world's largest portfolio of vaccines, with nine candidates currently in the pipeline, he said, adding that a further four were "promising".

The WHO and the GAVI vaccine alliance are leading the COVAX facility, aimed at helping buy and distribute vaccination shots fairly around the world.

But some countries that have secured their own supplies through bilateral deals, including the United States, have said they will not join COVAX.

"Vaccine nationalism will prolong the pandemic, not shorten it," Tedros told a WHO briefing in Geneva, without mentioning any specific countries.

"If and when we have an effective vaccine, we must also use it effectively ... In other words, the first priority must be to vaccinate some people in all countries, rather than all people in some countries," he said, adding that priority should be given to healthcare workers, the elderly and those with underlying conditions.

Tedros thanked Germany, Japan, Norway and the European Commission for joining COVAX during the last week.

"Certainly by the middle of 2021 we should start to see some vaccines actually moving into countries and populations," said WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan, reiterating earlier comments. Noting that there were 13 experimental vaccines currently in clinical trials, Swaminathan called it an "optimistic scenario" since the typical success rate of 10% could mean several vaccines are approved.

The Islamist gunmen who stormed into Charlie Hebdo, killing 12 people, sought to avenge the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), a French court heard on Wednesday on the first day of the trial. Publication of the cartoons was cited as the reason for the attack.

Friday's protests were organized by the hardline Islamist Tehreek-e-Laihak Pakistan (TLP) party with rallies held in Karachi, the country's largest city, as well as in Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Lahore and Dera Ismail Khan.

Protesters paralysed traffic in Karachi, Pakistan's financial and business capital.

"It (re-printing of cartoons) amounts to big terrorism; they repeat such acts of blasphemy against Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) every few years. It should be stopped," said Razi Hussani, TLP district leader in Karachi.

Similar rallies held in Pakistan in 2015 turned violent, with scores injured as police clashed with protesters trying to make their way to the French consulate in Karachi.

Thai Protesters Tie White Ribbons at Prison for Activists

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Thai protesters tied white ribbons to the gate of a prison in Bangkok on Friday to call for the release of two activists whose bail was revoked as they face charges over anti-government demonstrations.

Rights lawyer Anon Nampa, 36, and student activist Panupong "Mike" Jadnok, 24, were sent to the Bangkok Remand Prison on Thursday after the court said political activities since their Aug. 8 release breached their bail conditions.

Around 100 protesters gathered at the prison. "We are tying white ribbons to demand justice for our friends who face political prosecution," said Patsaravalee Tanakitvibulpon, leader of the Free People Movement.

"Not just Anon and Mike, but there are others who

face injustice and there are many who are being charged just for speaking the truth."

A government spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Demonstrators have taken to Thailand's streets since mid-July to call for the removal of the government of 2014 coup leader Prayuth Chan-ocha after a disputed election last year. Prayuth says the vote was fair.

Anon and Panupong are among more than a dozen demonstrators charged recently with inciting unrest and breaching regulations that ban public gatherings, after they took part in a rally on July 18.

Anon also made a taboo-breaking speech on Aug. 3 in which he called for reforms to the powerful monarchy. He faces additional charges over that protest.



U.S. Vote-by-Mail Begins as White House Campaign Turns Ugly



WASHINGTON (AFP) - The U.S. election is officially open: North Carolina on Friday launched vote-by-mail operations for the November 3 contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, which is getting uglier by the hour.

With two months until Election Day, Trump is seizing on fears over violent protests in US cities and questioning the integrity of voting by mail, while challenger Biden intensified his criticism of a "deplorable" leader who he said is not fit for office.

Worries about the unabated spread of coronavirus are expected to prompt a surge in the number of ballots cast by mail, as millions seek to avoid polling stations. In a country on edge over the health crisis and a national reckoning about race, the next 60 days will test the ability of the world's largest economy to organize its election profoundly changed by a pandemic that has killed 187,000 Americans.

North Carolina was to begin mailing out more than 600,000 ballots, in response to a major spike in demand.

Other key battleground states such as Wisconsin -- which both candidates visited separately in recent days -- will follow in the coming weeks. How Americans vote has become another flashpoint in an increasingly divisive political landscape.

A recent poll by USA Today and Suffolk University showed that 56 percent of Republican voters surveyed said they would go in person to vote, while only 26 percent of Democrats plan to do the same.

One out of every four Biden voters said that if the Democratic former vice president loses on November 3, they would not be ready to accept a Trump victory as "fairly won." About one in five Trump voters said a similar thing.

As he seeks a second four-year term, Trump has for months sowed doubt among his base about the legitimacy of an election with a significant number of mail-in votes. Trump -- who himself votes by mail in his adopted home state of Florida -- has repeatedly, and without evidence, said mail-in voting could lead to widespread fraud.

He even has suggested to his supporters that they try to vote twice to test the system -- earning him scorn on social media and from Democrats.



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roof garden
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Shanon (adviser)

Niavaran Villa (\$5000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

((\$2400))
Zaferanieh
190sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
marble fl, F.F

Kamranieh Apts
(\$2000) 2bdrs, 160sq.m
(\$3000) 3bdrs, 200sq.m
with S/pool, S, J, & F.F

((\$10000))
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France Could Do Better Than Forecast 11% Economic Contraction

PARIS (Reuters) - French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire believes that the French economy could perform better than currently forecast this year, he said on Friday.

"I think we will do better in 2020 than the 11% recession forecast at the moment," Le Maire told BFM TV.

Le Maire was speaking a day after France announced a 100 billion euro (\$118.4 billion) plan to pull its economy out of one of Europe's worst slumps through a fast-moving recovery programme that revives President Emmanuel Macron's pro-business reforms with a greener tinge.



No-Trade Deal Brexit Fears Rise as Talks Stumble on State Aid

LONDON (Reuters) - The chances of Britain leaving the European Union without a trade deal have risen sharply as negotiations have been threatened by London's insistence that it have full autonomy over its state aid plans, negotiators and diplomats said.

The United Kingdom left the EU on Jan. 31, turning its back after 47 years on the post-World War Two project that sought to build the ruined nations of Europe into a global power.

The British exit followed more than three years of wrangling over an exit deal since the 2016 referendum that sent shockwaves through global financial markets. Since Brexit, talks on a new trade deal have so far made little headway.

But fears in London, Brussels and other European capitals are mounting that a British exit without a trade deal could sow yet more economic chaos amid the turmoil of the coronavirus crisis which has hammered European economies.

"The chances for a deal, or a no-deal, are 50/50," said one senior EU diplomat. "There has been absolutely no movement from the British side in the talks. If this approach doesn't change quickly, we won't be able to negotiate a deal in time."

Failure to reach a trade deal could hammer financial markets as nearly a trillion dollars in trade, from car parts and medicines to lamb and fish, would be thrown into turmoil.

Sterling fell 0.6% to \$1.3199.

A British source close to the negotiations said the European Union was slowing down negotiations and should understand that its demands on state aid and fishing were not compatible with Britain's status as an independent country.

"We have also consistently tried to move discussions forwards but have been prevented from doing so by an EU which insists that everything must go at the pace of the most difficult issue," the source said.

"Their ask that we accept continuity with EU state aid and fisheries policy is simply not compatible with our status as a fully independent country," the source said.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said if the EU was sensible, it would give Britain the Canada-style solution it is seeking. But that Britain was ready for any eventuality over Brexit.

European Council President Charles Michel told reporters: "Sooner or later, the UK should clarify what they want. It's not possible to leave the European club and at the same time keep all the benefits."

"We have no certainty that we'll reach a deal. I hope it will be possible - but not at all cost," he said.

The current sticking point is state aid.

The bloc's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier went to London on Tuesday to tell his UK counterpart, David Frost, that Britain must move on state aid, or there will not be an agreement, according to EU diplomats.

German Industry Orders Edge Up

BERLIN (Reuters) - Orders for German industrial goods rose by a weaker-than-expected 2.8% in July, indicating an initial snap back from the coronavirus shock is fading into a slower recovery in Europe's largest economy.

The rise compared with a Reuters forecast for a 5.0% gain on the previous month, signalling a slow return to pre-crisis levels. June figures were revised up to show an increase of 28.8% from 27.9% previously reported, the Federal Statistics Office said on Friday.

Order intake in July was still 8.2% lower than in February, before lockdown measures were imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

"In the coming months, we will probably see that the low-hanging fruit has been harvested, and now the economic race to catch up will lose momentum," said Jens-Oliver Niklasch, economist at Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg.

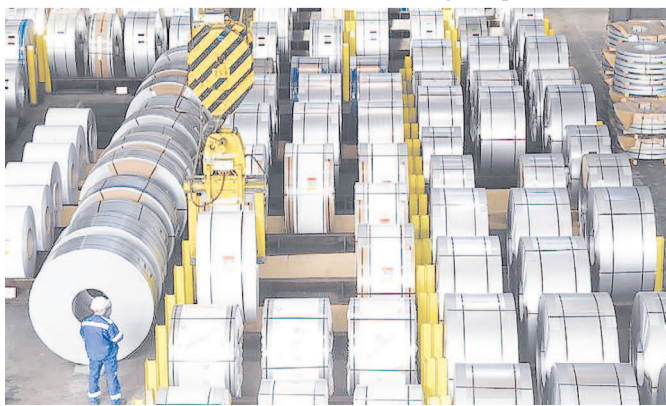
"We will not see the pre-crisis levels quite as quickly as some had hoped," he added.

The German economy contracted by a record 9.7% in the second quarter as household spending, company investment and trade all collapsed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A government stimulus package includes a temporary cut in value-added tax (VAT) from July 1 until Dec. 31, worth up to 20 billion euros (\$24 billion), to give an additional push to domestic demand, which remains sluggish.

Domestic industrial orders fell by 10.2% on the month in July but orders from abroad were up 14.4%, the Statistics Office said. ING economist Carsten Brzeski said the figures showed "an enormous twist between domestic and foreign demand".

The weak domestic demand chimed with figures published on Wednesday showing German retail sales fell unexpectedly



in July, dashing hopes that household spending can drive a strong recovery in the third quarter.

Earlier this week, the chief executive of Germany's Daimler DAIAGN.DE said global demand for Mercedes-Benz cars had stabilised from a sharp drop in sales triggered by the coronavirus crisis.

"In China we saw a V-shaped recovery. That's not the case in Europe and North America but we have rebounded from the freefall," Chief Executive Ola Kaellenius said.

Germany's response to the pandemic has been effective by European standards, keeping infection and death rates relatively low despite imposing restrictions that were both milder and shorter than in many other countries.

China's August Exports Seen Keeping Solid Momentum

BEIJING (Reuters) - China's exports likely posted a second month of solid gains in August as more of its trading partners relaxed coronavirus lockdowns and reopened their economies, while imports edged back into growth, a Reuters poll showed on Friday.

China's export performance, boosted by record shipments of medical supplies and robust demand for electronic products, has not been as severely affected by the global slowdown as some analysts had feared, adding to hopes for a sustained economic recovery.

Exports in August are expected to have risen 7.1% from a year earlier, according to a median estimate of a Reuters poll of 23 economists, compared with a rise of 7.2% in July.

Imports likely rose 0.1% on year, the poll showed, still sluggish but improving after falling 1.4% the previous month. A private survey on manufacturing activity showed Chinese factories reported the first increase in new export orders this year in August as overseas demand slowly revives. The pick-up in business also led to a further expansion in production, marking the sharpest gain in almost a decade.

Stronger exports could signal a faster and more balanced recovery for the Chinese economy, which is rebounding from a record first-quarter slump thanks largely to domestic stimulus measures.

July exports confounded analysts' expectations by rising the most this year, while some raw material imports hit record highs.

"Exports are back in play to be the key driver for Asia's biggest economy," Prakash Sakpal, an economist at ING, said in a note this week.

However, external demand could suffer if virus control measures have to be re-imposed by trade partners later this year on a resurgence of the epidemic. China also is looking to reduce its reliance on overseas markets for its development as U.S. hostility and the pandemic increase external risks that could hamper longer-term progress.

China May Dump U.S. Treasuries as Sino-U.S. Tensions Flare

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China may gradually cut its holdings of U.S. Treasury bonds and notes, in light of rising tensions between Beijing and Washington, state-backed newspaper Global Times cited experts as saying.

With Sino-U.S. relations deteriorating over various issues including coronavirus, trade and technology, global financial markets are increasingly worried if China would sell the U.S. government debt it holds as a weapon to counter rising U.S. pressure.

"China will gradually decrease its holdings of U.S. debt to about \$800 billion under normal circumstances," Xi Junyang, a professor at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, was quoted as saying on Thursday, without giving a detailed timeframe.

"But of course, China might sell all of its U.S. bonds in an extreme case, like a military conflict."

China, the second largest non-U.S. holder of Treasuries, held \$1.074 trillion in June, down from \$1.083 trillion the previous month, according to latest official data.

China has steadily decreased its holdings of the U.S. bonds this year, although some market watchers suspect China may not have necessarily sold U.S. Treasuries as it may have used other custodians to purchase Treasuries.

Dropping to \$800 billion from the current level could mean shrinking its holdings by more than 25%. Analysts say large-scale Chinese selling, often referred to as the "nuclear option", could trigger turmoil on global financial markets.

Another reason the state newspaper cited was the potential default risk in the United States as the debt of the world's largest economy has surged sharply to about the same size of its gross domestic product, a level not seen since the end of the World War Two and well above the internationally recognized safety line of 60%.

China is heavily exposed to the U.S. dollar and dollar-denominated assets. Its official foreign exchange reserves stood at \$3.154 trillion at the end of July.

U.S. Labor Market Slowing as Fiscal Stimulus Boost Ebbs

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. job growth slowed further in August as financial assistance from the government ran out, threatening the economy's recovery from the COVID-19 recession.

Government hiring for the 2020 Census accounted for nearly a fifth of the employment gains reported by the Labor Department on Friday. Companies from transportation to manufacturing industries are announcing layoffs or furloughs. The moderation in hiring could pressure the White House and Congress to restart stalled negotiations for another fiscal package, and will likely become political ammunition for both Democrats and Republicans with just two months to go until the presidential election.

Programs to help businesses pay wages have either lapsed or are on the verge of ending. A \$600 weekly unemployment supplement expired in July. Economists credited government largesse for the sharp rebound in economic activity after it nearly ground to a halt following the shuttering of businesses in mid-March to control the spread of the coronavirus.

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 1.371 million jobs last month after advancing 1.734 million in July. Government employment rose 344,000, with 238,000 temporary workers hired for the population count. Job growth peaked at 4.781 million in June. The unemployment rate fell to 8.4% last month from 10.2% in July, even as more people entered the labor force. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 1.4 million jobs added in August and the unemployment rate sliding to 9.8%.

Friday's report is one of just two monthly labor market scorecards left on the calendar before the Nov. 3 presidential election. President Donald Trump, who is trailing in polls behind former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic Party nominee, is likely to tout the continued job gains as a

sign that the economy is improving after suffering its biggest shock in at least 73 years in the second quarter.

But employment remains 11.5 million below its pre-pandemic level and the jobless rate is 4.9 percentage points higher than it was in February. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices fell.

Most of the job gains have been workers being recalled from furloughs or temporary layoffs. Though new COVID-19 infections have subsided after a broad resurgence through the summer, many hot spots remain.

United Airlines UAL.O said on Wednesday it was preparing to furlough 16,370 workers on Oct. 1. American Airlines AAL.O has announced its workforce would shrink by 40,000, including 19,000 involuntary cuts. Ford Motor Co F.N said it was targeting 1,400 U.S. salaried jobs for elimination by year end. Mass transit rail operators are also eyeing furloughs.

Kazakhstan Loses \$3.8b in 8 Months Due to OPEC+ Production Cuts



NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan's budget for the first eight months of 2020 didn't receive 1.6 trillion tenge (\$3.8 billion) from oil production, First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smailovna told a briefing on September 4.

Earlier it was reported that since the beginning of the year, Kazakhstan's GDP decreased by 2.9%. Due to quarantine restrictions, the planned decline in oil production rates has become a constraining factor in economic growth.

"In the field of oil production, following the results of eight months of this year, budget revenues decreased by 46% compared to last year. This is 1.6 trillion tenge. In this regard, export losses in the field of oil production amounted to 350 billion tenge (\$833 million)," Smailov said.

Earlier, Kazakhstan's Energy Minister Nurlan Nogayev said oil and condensate production decreased by 1.4% in the first seven months of 2020. Kazakhstan is fulfilling its obligations to reduce oil production within the framework of OPEC+.

"According to the results of seven months of this year, oil and condensate production amounted to 51.5 million tons. This is 1.4% lower compared to the same indicator in 2019," the head of the Energy Ministry said. He explained that the decline in oil production is associated with the implementation of the agreements reached by OPEC+.

Oil exports amounted to 42 million tons (an increase of 0.4%).

Gas production for the reporting period - 33.4 billion cubic metres (an increase of 1%).

In April, Kazakhstan joined new obligations under the Agreement between the OPEC + member countries to collectively cut oil production by 9.7 million barrels per day in May-July 2020.

Kazakhstan has undertaken obligations to reduce oil production by 390,000 barrels per day for May-June.

Deaths at Work in Iran Half the Global Average

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The death rate at work in the country is 5.5 percent, which is twice less than the global and Asian rates, said deputy minister of labor and social welfare.

Hatam Shakarami said that protecting the workforce means ensuring the safety of working conditions in a way that maintains the health of the workforce.

Surge in production and promoting productivity in workplaces will not be materialized in the absence of efficient and healthy workforce, he said, noting that all the existing capacities were used to prepare the work environment for a healthy activity and achieve the goals of the firms.



Coronavirus Risks Deepening Refugee Children Schooling Crisis

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations has warned that the coronavirus pandemic risks deepening a schooling crisis for refugee children, nearly half of whom were already out of school before the emergence of COVID-19.

A new report published on Thursday by the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) cautioned that many refugee children - especially girls - who had attended school before the pandemic would not be able to return.

"After everything they have endured, we cannot rob them of their futures by denying them an education today," UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi said in a statement, calling for action to support refugees' right to an education.

The report, using data from 12 countries that host more than half of the world's refugee children, found that more than 1.8 million of them - or a full 48 percent of all refugee children of school age - are out of school.

Attendance is particularly lacklustre in secondary school and higher.

About 77 percent of the refugee children were enrolled in primary school, but only 31 percent attended secondary school and 3 percent were in higher education, according to the report.

While the UNHCR said a shift in methodology made it difficult to compare with data from previous years, it noted the statistics, dire as they look, actually represent a small improvement.

A 2019 report indicated that only 1 percent of refugees worldwide were in higher education. But the pandemic is now threatening to undo even the small advances made, it said.

The report found that while children in every country have been hit by the impact of the pandemic and containment measures put in place to rein in the virus, refugee children have been especially disadvantaged.

They are far more likely than others to face difficulty returning to their studies, with many refugee families no longer able to afford school fees, uniforms and books as income sources dry up.

They are also less likely to have access to the technologies needed for remote learning and could be required to work to help keep their struggling families afloat.

This is particularly true for refugee girls, who already had less access to education than boys.

By the time they reach secondary level, refugee girls are half as likely as their male



peers to be enrolled in school, according to the UNHCR, which warned the coronavirus crisis risked widening the gender disparities.

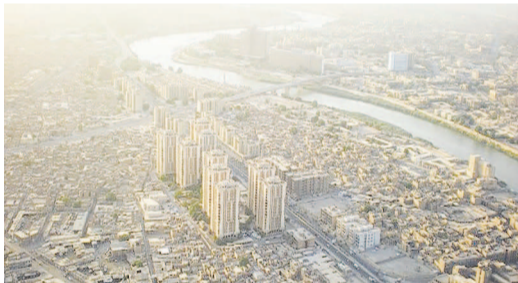
Using UNHCR data, the Malala Fund, which works towards removing barriers preventing girls from going to school, estimated that half of all refugee girls who were attending secondary school when the pandemic hit will not return when classrooms reopen this month.

And in countries where less than 10 percent of refugee girls were enrolled in secondary school, all of them were at risk of dropping out for good. That is "a chilling prediction that would have an impact for generations to come", the UNHCR said.

Matthew Saltmarsh, a UNHCR spokesman, told Al Jazeera from London on Thursday: "We think there are a number of steps that need to be taken. First of all, we think inclusion is the most important thing and a number of countries have included refugees in their national education system.

"More can be done by the international community to provide a medium-term sustainable aid for education, but also for education in emergencies. Private sector and other actors can come in," he said.

Iraq Looks to Be Exempted From OPEC+ Cuts in Q1 2021



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq has asked OPEC to be exempted from oil export cuts in the first quarter of 2021, the oil minister of OPEC's second-largest producer and the least compliant member of the pact, said.

According to remarks of Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabba to local media, as reported by Reuters, Iraq has raised the issue with OPEC at several meetings.

"The minister revealed efforts to exempt Iraq from the agreement to cut exports in OPEC and the subject has been broached with the organisation's oil ministers in three consecutive meetings," Iraqi state news agency INA reported.

Iraq relies almost entirely on oil revenues for its government income, so the oil price crash and OPEC+ cuts are making things very difficult for the Iraqi economy and its budget revenues.

Oil revenues are critical to Iraq's budget income, but in recent months OPEC's second-largest oil producer has come under pressure from its fellow OPEC+ partners led by Saudi Arabia to stop cheating on their production quotas and finally start complying with the OPEC+ agreement.

Iraq promised additional cuts of around 400,000 bpd in August in order to compensate for the lack of compliance with the deal in the previous months. These additional cuts are on top of Iraq's per-quota cut of 850,000 bpd under the OPEC+ pact.

Iraq, which has been the least compliant member of the OPEC+ production cut pact since it was first launched in January 2017, has been promising for months that it would reduce its oil production and fall in line with its quota—something it hasn't done since 2017.

Despite the pledges and the reduced exports, Iraq has yet to comply with the production cut deal.

Iraq's crude oil exports fell in August to 2.597 million bpd compared to July's exports of 2.763 million bpd, oil ministry data showed earlier this week.

According to the monthly Reuters survey, Iraq reduced its oil production in August and reached its highest compliance in recent years, but that compliance rate was still short of the 100-percent 'full conformity' that OPEC+ demands.

Oil Industry Placing Risky Bet on Plastics

LONDON (AFP) - Big oil producers are pinning their future growth on the world's insatiable appetite for plastic, researchers said Friday, in a "bet" on society's failure to tackle disposable consumption that risks stranding billions of dollars in petrochemical investments.

The industry has faced increasingly urgent questions in recent months about whether "peak" oil demand has been reached, with the coronavirus pandemic leading to a dramatic drop in transport fuel consumption, while cleaner energy makes ever greater headway.

But oil producers now see plastics as the biggest driver of future demand, according to a new report by financial think tank Carbon Tracker and sustainability and development group Systemiq.

Plastic production has increased around four percent every year since 2000, the report said, adding that most firms in the industry appear to expect that rate of growth to continue, driven mainly by emerging economies.

Plastics currently make up less than nine percent of oil demand, but the report said they are the largest component of oil demand growth.

It said the industry now plans to invest at least \$400 billion (337.8 billion euros) in the next five years to expand supply for so-called virgin plastics by a quarter, but warned that this risked huge losses for investors.

"The plastics industry, in its assumption of a doubling of demand for plastics in the next 10, 20 years or so, is making a bet that society will fail to find any solutions to reduce, substitute or recycle plastic," said report author Kingsmill Bond, energy strategist at Carbon Tracker.

He told AFP that it was an "unreasonable assumption to imagine that you could carry on doing for the next 50 years what you've done for the last 70 years, which is polluted with impunity".

Some 350 million tons of plastic are produced annually -- about half in Asia, 19 percent in North America and 16 percent in Europe. The International Energy Agency forecast in 2018 that the growth in demand for petrochemical products -- including plastics, fertilisers, detergents and other items -- would see them account for over a third of the predicted increase in oil demand to 2030, and nearly half to 2050.

But surging plastic use has caused a pollution crisis, with least 8 million tons thought to end up in oceans every year.

This has spurred governments to mandate greater recycling, impose tighter restrictions on waste disposal and in some cases introduce bans on single-use items.

The Carbon Tracker report forecast that mounting pressure to cut plastic use could slash growth in demand for virgin plastic from four percent a year to below one percent, with demand peaking in 2027.

It also found that the plastic value chain -- from extraction of the oil, to when it is burned, buried or recycled -- releases roughly twice as much carbon dioxide as producing a tonne of oil.

"These guys think that they are going to be completely unaffected by the world's attempt to cut down carbon usage," said Bond.

Overall, the report said that plastics impose "a massive untaxed externality upon society" of at least \$1,000 per ton -- or \$350bn a year -- from carbon dioxide, health costs, collection costs, and ocean pollution.

The European Union in July proposed a tax on non-recycled plastics of 800 euros per tonne.

UK...

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Neither Iran nor the UK government formally acknowledge that the release of UK dual nationals in Iranian jails is linked to the non-payment of the debt, although the issue has been raised by Iranian judges and is privately seen as the chief roadblock.

The former foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt said Wallace "has done something brave and important". He added: "If Nazanin is released soon I believe this acknowledgement of our historic debt will have played an important part."

In his letter, Wallace writes: "With regard to IMS Ltd and the outstanding legal dispute the government acknowledges there is a debt to be paid and continues to explore every legal avenue for the lawful discharge of that debt."

Any payment must not, however, fall foul of EU or possibly U.S. sanctions.

Wallace, as defense secretary, is the 99% shareholder of IMS and so the lead decision-maker.

As a backbencher and before becoming defense secretary, Wallace had been sharply critical of the delay over the payment of the debt, saying it was a stain on the UK. He adds in his letter: "I have previously stated my personal position and I remain committed to its resolution, but it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this time."

His remarks, affirming his views have not changed, are probably as far as the defense secretary can go and remain within the bounds of collective cabinet responsibility.

A further much-postponed court hearing over the debt is due to be held on 4 November, and Zaghari-Ratcliffe's lawyers claim it is not a coincidence that the case is being held after the U.S. presidential elections, a possible turning point in U.S.-Iranian relations.

Iran Sees...

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Gharibabadi further noted that the report referring to the 11th of August meeting of the deputy director general of the agency for Safeguards affairs in Tehran, deals with the director general's visit to Tehran on August 25-26, 2010 and meetings with the Iranian senior officials, as a result of which a joint statement was issued by Iran and the IAEA to strengthen cooperation and mutual trust.

According to the report, the agency gained access to one of the two intended sites, and access to the second location is scheduled for this month, he said.

Iran has shown goodwill in its interaction with the IAEA's new director general, and it expects the joint statement and director general's report be supported by members of the Board of Governors and other IAEA members, and be considered a major step toward normalizing two or three Iran-related safeguards with independent, impartial and professional implementation of agreements and commitments, Gharibabadi said.

Indian Defense...

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Meanwhile, Union Defense Minister Rajan Singh and his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe discussed the border tensions at LAC in Ladakh on Friday and agreed to find a solution through dialogue.

"Raksha Mantri categorically conveyed India's position on the developments along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) including in the Galwan valley in the Western Sector of the India-China Border Areas in the last few months," a statement from the Defense Minister's office said.

"RM emphasized that the actions of the Chinese troops, including amassing of large number of troops, their aggressive behavior and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo were in violation of the bilateral agreements," it added.

Enemies Try to...

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The President appreciated the strict observance of health protocols in the first ten-day period of Muharram month, citing the report of the Ministry of Health and Education, and emphasized on the continued strict implementation of health protocols in the occasions and mourning ceremonies of the following days of Muharram and Safar months.

The president also stressed the importance of holding face-to-face classes at universities, saying that university classes should be face-to-face and active where possible.

Rouhani said, "I thank all the grand clerics, and especially the Supreme Leader, who guided the people both verbally and in practice, as well as the media. Thank God, the glorious mourning ceremonies of Muharram month were carried out in accordance with the protocols, and it was very important that it was reported here that 80% of the population across the country implemented the protocols well."

Referring to the reopening of schools, the President said, "In the seven months since the outbreak of coronavirus in many countries, the closure of schools and the forced stay of children at home has created psychological problems for children and families. Children's going to school and attending that social atmosphere creates a beautiful relationship between home and school for the upbringing of children."

Rouhani said, "Attending school is not just about learning lessons and knowledge, but attending school brings about education and learning of morals and social skills for children, so it was decided to start school activities."

"At the same time, we strongly urge all teachers and school officials and educational institutions to priorities the health of students and children in this regard," said the President.

The president also stressed the importance of holding face-to-face classes at universities, saying that university classes should be face-to-face and active where possible.

Rouhani said, "Today, schools and universities have officially started their activities, and we will definitely talk with the Minister of Science in Thursday's meeting this week. University classes should be held face-to-face and active where possible."

The President expressed hope that in schools, as well as businesses and offices, the rate of observance of health protocols is above 70 and 80 percent, adding, "It is true that human power and knowledge is not endless, but we must also take into account that human beings are not doomed to extinction and we will finally find a vaccine and a cure for this virus".

Bottas Tops Monza Practice, Verstappen Crashes

MONZA (Dispatches) - Valtteri Bottas topped the times ahead of championship leader and team-mate Lewis Hamilton as Mercedes dominated Friday's crash-hit opening Italian Grand Prix practice at Monza.

The Finn, determined to revive his fortunes and his title bid, clocked a best lap in one minute and 20.703 seconds to outpace the six-time champion by 0.245 seconds, a healthy margin on one of the fastest circuits on the Formula One calendar.

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Tiafoe Feeling Positive Again After COVID-19 Negativity

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Frances Tiafoe says he would have probably laughed if someone told him he will make the third round of his home Grand Slam at the U.S. Open when he contracted the novel coronavirus in July.

Tiafoe, 22, returned a positive test for the virus and was forced to withdraw from the All-American Team Cup exhibition tournament in Atlanta.

Djokovic Brushes Aside Struff to Move Into Next Round

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Top seed Novak Djokovic continued his dominance of Jan-Lennard Struff on Friday with a 6-3 6-3 6-1 win to advance to the fourth round of the U.S. Open.

Djokovic, a three-times champion at Flushing Meadows, was never really pushed by the German, who has taken just one set off the Serb in their five career meetings.

The only drama came early on when Struff had break point opportunities but could not convert against Djokovic's serve in the first game.

The players stayed on serve until Struff sent a forehand wide on break point to give Djokovic a 5-3 lead. The Serb held to love the next game after firing an unreturnable serve to take the first set and coasted the rest of the way.

"It was a very, very good performance from my side," Djokovic said after recording his 600th career win on hard courts.

"I managed to read his serve well. Made one necessary break in the first set, I faced one or two break points in the opening game.

"Obviously the trajectory of the match can go differently if you lose your serve against a big guy like Struff, who serves really well and has a very aggressive, powerful game from the back of the court," said the Serb, who is looking for an 18th Grand Slam title.

"But I moved well and after the first set, the second and third was a really great feeling on the court."

Loew Fumes at Insane Fixture Jam For Germany Stars

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany head coach Joachim Loew has spoken out against the "insane" fixture list his stars face this season on top of his German team playing eight internationals in a dense schedule until the end of November.

Germany will twice play three games in six days in October, then November.

"I don't agree with that, it upsets me," said Loew after Thursday's 1-1 draw against Spain in Stuttgart in the Nations League.

"The fixture list is insanely full," Loew added.

Germany play a friendly and two Nations League matches, with two days break between each game this October and November.

"We have to be careful. I have always said that the health of the players is paramount.

"If you don't pay attention, we'll have big problems in March, April and May," Loew warned with the postponed Euro 2020 finals in June, a knock-on effect after last season was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. Loew acknowledged that the German Football Association needs the television revenue from home friendlies against Turkey on October 7 and the Czech Republic on November 11.

"I also represent the interests of the association. And the association is happy about the income." Loew rested many of his Bayern Munich players for Thursday's draw with Spain and Sunday's Nations League away match against Switzerland.

Southgate Aiming to Bring Maguire Back Into England Set-Up

LONDON (Dispatches) - Gareth Southgate plans to bring Harry Maguire back into the England set-up next month after withdrawing the defender from the squad following his conviction in a Greek court.

Manchester United captain Maguire was last month found guilty on a range of charges, including assaulting a police officer, days after an alleged incident on the island of Mykonos.

The 27-year-old, who said he feared for his life during his arrest, maintains his innocence and has lodged an appeal.

United said the appeal "extinguishes" the court verdict and nullifies the conviction.



Busta on Spain in the fourth round.

Meanwhile Czech Petra Kvitova struggled with unforced errors but still had enough weapons to defeat American Jessica Pegula 6-4 6-3 to advance to the fourth round of the U.S. Open.

The two-times Wimbledon champion had 28 unforced errors and five double faults but moved up a gear when it mattered to win her first career meeting with baseline battler Pegula.

Sixth seed Kvitova broke the world No. 63 twice in each set and completed the win when Pegula sent a return wide.

Pegula, who reached the last eight of the Western & Southern Open warm-up event, matched Kvitova shot for shot from the baseline early on, forcing the Czech left-hander to save two breakpoints in the fifth game.

Former champion Naomi Osaka survived a third-round scare before grinding out a 6-3 6-7(4) 6-2 victory over fearless Ukrainian teenager Marta Kostyuk to reach the last 16.

The Japanese fourth seed initially looked like she would enjoy a routine day on the court but was forced to dig deep to secure victory after two hours and 33 minutes against an 18-year-old making her U.S. Open main draw debut.

"She didn't back down from me or from, like, the speed of my ball, which for someone that young is kind of amazing, because I feel like, you know, the first set went that way, and then she could have faded in the second set," said Osaka.

Messi Saying at Barcelona to Avoid Court Fight



MADRID (Reuters) - Lionel Messi mended intense speculation about his future on Friday by saying he will remain with Barcelona for another year - but only because he did not want to enter a court battle with the club about his contract.

The Argentine six-times world player of the year had told the club last month that he wanted to leave, insisting a clause in his contract allowed him to do so on a free transfer.

Barcelona, backed by La Liga, have insisted that a 700 million euros (625.86 million pounds) release clause would have to be paid.

"I wasn't happy and I wanted to leave. I have not been allowed this in any way and I will stay at the club so as not to get into a legal dispute. The management of the club led by Bartomeu is a disaster," Messi told website Goal.com.

"There was another way and it was to go to trial," he added. "I would never go to court against Barca because it is the club that I love, which gave me everything since I arrived. It is the club of my life, I have made my life here.

Sanchez Wanted Man Utd Exit After First Training Session



MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan forward Alexis Sanchez has revealed he asked his agent if he could leave Manchester United after just one training session at the Premier League club.

Sanchez moved from Arsenal to United, then managed by Jose Mourinho, in 2018.

But the Chile international endured a torrid spell at Old Trafford, scoring only five goals in 45 appearances.

Sanchez was loaned to Inter Milan for the 2019/20 season, a move he made permanent last month.

The 31-year-old has explained his side of the story in a video on Instagram, admitting he immediately had a bad feeling about his switch to United.

"I ended up signing without much information about what was happening in the move," Sanchez said.

"The first days that I was with my colleagues, sometimes there are things that you do not realise until you arrive.

"The first training I had I realised many things. I came home and I told my representative: 'Can't the contract be terminated to return to Arsenal?'"

"They start laughing and I told them that something did not sit right with me. It (the contract) had already been signed."

Sanchez, who had scored 80 goals in 166 appearances for Arsenal, arrived at Old Trafford in the January transfer window with big expectations on his shoulders after becoming United's top-earner.

He believes he was the scapegoat for United's struggles under Mourinho.

"I'm telling you my experience, the journalists at times would speak without knowing the facts and it hurt -- they had no idea what was going on inside the club," said Sanchez.

"They said it was my fault, and this, and that, but sometimes a player depends on the environment, the family that is created around him, and I think that in that moment we weren't really a family."

Vettel Asks F1 to Act Responsibly Over Environment

MONZA (AFP) - Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel said Friday that Formula One must "act responsibly" over the environment if the sport wants to remain relevant.

"I think this sport has some big challenges ahead," the Ferrari driver told a video news conference ahead of this weekend's Italian Grand Prix. "Obviously, the whole situation with the pandemic around the world doesn't help, but nevertheless, there are some big questions to be answered for the future to make sure that this sport is still around in years to come.

"With where the world is going, there are big things that we need to tackle. We need to address (them) and Formula One is, maybe, not at the forefront of this.

"We can do better than what we're currently doing.

"Looking after the world, the environment, I think there's some interesting aspects that we are trying to fulfil or achieve, but I think F1 has to do more and be a bit more open and tolerant.

"Otherwise... it could get difficult in the future."

The 33-year-old German, who won successive world titles from 2010 to 2013, said F1 should be "setting examples rather than reacting to pressure from the outside" when it came to cleaning up its environmental performance.

"As a global sport, we should act responsibly," he said.

"When it comes to the environment, obviously we are driving around the weekend in cars, we're burning fuel which is probably a very small amount of the total energy, or total carbon footprint, if you want to talk in CO2 terms. But still I think we need to be setting the right example, not just in our carbon footprint, but also on other things. "Every little bit makes a difference. The amount of plastic bottles we consume during the weekend, I think there are solutions to that.



Anti-Doping Leaders Call for Surge in Testing Ahead of Tokyo

LONDON (Reuters) - International anti-doping leaders have called for a surge in testing ahead of the re-scheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympics next year, saying the COVID-19 pandemic should not be a free pass to dope.

During a two-part virtual meeting held this week, leaders also called for the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to conduct a thorough investigation into the recent dismissal of RUSADA Director General Yuri Ganas.

The ongoing pandemic has created huge challenges for anti-doping agencies with border closures and events being cancelled, prompting concerns that dopers could try and take advantage of the unprecedented circumstances. "The reduced level of testing worldwide (as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) is immensely frustrating for everyone, especially athletes," a joint statement from 16 national anti-doping bodies said on Friday.

"We understand clean athletes' concerns, and that's why, once operations are permitted to fully re-start, we encourage a surge in testing amounts by Anti-Doping Organisations ahead of the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. "Given the increasingly broad nature of anti-doping strategies -- this is a movement that no longer relies solely on testing -- the global pandemic does not, and must not, be seen as a 'free pass to dope.'"

Ganas was dismissed as head of Russia's national anti-doping body last week, having been appointed to help RUSADA's push to be re-instated by WADA.

Russia accused Ganas of presiding over serious financial violations, allegations he denied.

WADA and other global sports bodies had expressed their concern when RUSADA's supervisory board recommended that Ganas be fired, stressing that anti-doping agencies should operate without state interference.

