

Iranian Envoy to China Stressed the Need for Promoting Cultural Ties and Exchanges With Members of the “One Belt, One Road” Project, Saying That Sino-Iranian Cultural Relations Continue to Grow

IRAN NEWS

Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Afghanistan Have Stressed the Need to Broaden and Develop Infrastructures for Booming Trade by Removing Hurdles in Way of Bilateral Trade

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Iran Reports Highest Daily COVID-19 Fatalities In Two Weeks

TEHRAN (IFP) - Health Ministry spokeswoman has confirmed 139 new deaths caused by the novel coronavirus, the highest one-day record since August 24, increasing the overall fatalities to 22,293.

In a press briefing on Sunday, Sima-Sadat Lari also confirmed 1,992 new cases of infection, raising the total number of infections to 386,658.

So far, she noted, 333,900 patients have recovered from the disease or been discharged from the hospital.

Lari said 3,722 patients are also in critical conditions caused by more severe infection.

The spokeswoman noted that 3,380,264 COVID-19 tests have been taken across the country so far.

She said the high-risk “red” zones include Tehran, Qom, Mazandaran, East Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Yazd, Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, Semnan, Gilan, Zanjan, Qazvin, and Kerman provinces.

The “orange” zones also include Lorestan, Ardabil, Golestan, Markazi, Alborz, Hormozgan, Ilam, Fars, Bushehr, West Azarbaijan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kermanshah, South Khorasan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Khuzestan provinces, she added.

Perpetrators of Natanz Nuclear Facility Incident Identified

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said on Sunday that those responsible for Natanz nuclear facility incident have been identified.

Behrouz Kamalvandi maintained that many cyber-attacks and industrial sabotages against Iran’s nuclear program have been foiled by intelligence agencies.

“Unfortunately, the incident at Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was an act of sabotage and the investigations are still underway,” he noted.

He went on to say that intelligence organizations have identified the perpetrators and are fully aware of this issue.

Kamalvandi described the country’s progress on the nuclear front as very promising.

He also elaborated on a recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about Iran’s nuclear activities.

He said the agreement reached between Iran and the IAEA during its Director General Rafael Grossi’s visit to Iran has, so far, went “as we expected.”

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Indian DM in Tehran to Discuss Bilateral Ties, Regional Security



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has visited Tehran where he held “very fruitful” talks with his Iranian counterpart Brigadier General Amir Hatami, saying they exchanged views on regional security and bilateral ties.

In a tweet on Sunday, Singh posted pictures of his meeting with Hatami in Tehran, saying the two sides had also discussed the situation in Afghanistan.

In another tweet, the Indian defense minister’s office said the meeting between Singh and Hatami took place in “a cordial and warm atmosphere,” adding both officials “emphasized upon the age-old cultural, linguistic and civilizational ties between India and Iran.”

Singh traveled to Tehran after concluding his three-day visit to Moscow, where he held talks with his counterparts from Russia, China and the Central Asian states.

Singh on Sunday said he discussed with his Iranian counterpart ways to bolster bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional security issues, including the situation in Afghanistan.

Singh reached Tehran from Moscow on Saturday on a transit halt after concluding his three-day visit to Russia where he attended a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defense ministers. He also held bilateral talks with his counterparts from Russia, China and the Central Asian countries.

“Had a very fruitful meeting with Iranian defense minister Brigadier General Hatami in Tehran. We discussed regional security issues including Afghanistan and the issues of bilateral cooperation,” he said in a tweet.

“Both the Defense Ministers discussed ways to take forward bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional security issues, including peace and stability in Afghanistan,” Singh’s office said in a separate tweet on the meeting held on Saturday at the request of the Iranian defense minister.

The meeting between the two ministers took place in a “cordial and warm atmosphere,” it said, adding that the leaders emphasized upon the age-old cultural, linguistic and civilizational ties between India and Iran.

Singh’s visit to Iran is considered to be significant as it came a day after he voiced India’s deep concern about the situation in the Persian Gulf and called upon the countries in the region to resolve their differences through dialogue based on mutual respect.

A series of incidents in the Persian Gulf involving Iran, the U.S. and the UAE in recent weeks have flared up tension in the region.

“We are deeply concerned about the situation in the Persian Gulf,” Singh said in his address at a meeting of the SCO in Moscow on Friday.

“We call upon countries in the region - all of which are dear and friendly to India, to resolve differences by dialogue based on mutual respect, sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of each other,” he said in his address at the combined meeting of defense ministers of the SCO, Collective Security Treaty Organization and Commonwealth of Independent States member states.

India-Iran commercial ties were traditionally dominated by Indian import of Iranian crude oil. In 2018-19 India imported USD 12.11 billion worth of crude oil from Iran.

However, following the end of the Significant Reduction Exemption (SRE) period on May 2, 2019, India has suspended importing crude from Iran, according to the Indian Embassy here.

Range of Iran Air-Launched Cruise Missiles to Exceed 1,000 km

TEHRAN (IFP) - Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami has unveiled plans to extend the range of homegrown air-launched cruise missiles beyond 1,000 kilometers.

In an interview with Iran newspaper, the defense minister highlighted the country’s advances in the missile industry, saying the Iranian naval cruise missiles are capable of hitting the hostile targets at a distance of more than 1,000 kilometers.

While the range of anti-surface and naval cruise missiles has surpassed 1,000 km, the ground-launched cruise missiles can travel as far as 1,400 km, and the range of the air-launched ones is going to exceed 1,000 km too, the minister added. He noted that Iran has developed a fully homegrown missile industry and has manufactured various solid and liquid-propellant missiles, although the range of the projectiles has been restricted to 2,000 kilometers considering the country’s needs and defense policies. The Defense Ministry has focused efforts to increase the output and boost the quality of various missiles with high maneuverability to surprise the enemy’s air defense, he added.

Brigadier General Hatami also noted that more than 90 percent of the arms demands are supplied domestically with the help of 5,700 private companies, including 655 knowledge-based firms. The minister then explained that the 10 percent dependence on the imports has no significant impact on Iran’s defense power, noting that termination of a UN arms embargo on Iran will allow the country to work with the other countries.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



What Is the Response to UAE’s Betrayal of Muslim World?

Many media outlets have written on the normalization of ties between the UAE and Zionist regime and have had different analyses on the issue. The Supreme Leader of Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in a televised videoconference has said, “The UAE has even betrayed Arabs.” That rulers of the UAE actually have committed such an action inevitably or without having a proper analysis as the Supreme Leader has said, being aware of their betrayal raises a question for all of the media.

The London-based Arabic language Rai al-Yaum online newspaper has its own justification on the normalization that it has tried to justify this strategic mistake in order to have found or created the least reason for this sinister decision.

This daily in an article written by its editor-in-chief Abdel Bari Atwan on Thursday, September 4, said, “Choosing the UAE for security and military penetration of Israel and the U.S. was reasonable and it was the result of studies and choosing the right time and condition. The UAE like most of the Persian Gulf states especially Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are concerned about growing military power of Iran and its threats. Now regarding the emergence of another new regional power, Turkey, and its bases on the borders of the UAE like Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, Israeli think-tanks plotted for this critical time to take advantage of this hallucinatory weakness of the UAE in favor of itself. Exactly like Israel and the U.S. did with Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)’s weakness, it means they isolated and besieged the PLO after Iraqi forces’ attack at Kuwait and immediately raised the issue of talks and then Oslo Accords in order to lure the UAE into normalization. If Oslo Accords is the biggest achievement of Israel, as former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said, as its signing is to celebrated next month in the White House and probably celebrating the first agreement (between the UAE and Israel), this will be the second strategic miracle of the Jews which due to ambitions of its mastermind, the son-in-law and senior Adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump, Jared Kushner, and with participation and supervision of Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s think-tanks, it enjoys the same significance and similar threat.”

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Haniyeh, Nasrallah Stress Hamas-Hezbollah Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh met and held talks with Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah on Saturday evening.

In this meeting the two sides underlined the significance of expanding mutual ties.

During the meeting, they discussed the political and military developments in Palestine and Lebanon, the dangers Palestine is faced with, especially the Deal of the Century and the plan to normalize the Arab rulers’ relations with the usurping Zionist regime as well as the nation’s responsibility towards it.

Haniyeh and Nasrallah also stressed the stability of the axis of resistance against all pressures and threats, as well as strengthening relations between Hezbollah and Hamas.

Leading a high ranking delegation, Haniyeh arrived in Beirut last Tuesday.

This is his first trip to Beirut in the past 27 years.

He met in Beirut on Wednesday with the Islamic Jihad Leader Ziad al-Nakhalah and Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Bari.

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Lawmakers Urged to Take Appropriate Measure If DRM Activated

TEHRAN (MNA) – More than 300 university students in a letter to the Iranian Parliament on Sunday called on the lawmakers to take appropriate and drastic measures in case of activation of the so-called ‘Snapback Trigger Mechanism’ by the U.S.

The students urged parliamentarians to approve rules for collecting IAEA’s surveillance cameras, expelling IAEA inspectors, and then complete withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), exiting from Additional Protocol (AP) and even from the Non-Proliferation Treaty

(NPT) if Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM) is activated by the U.S. at the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Students’ Basij (Volunteer Forces) Department of 307 universities of the country in a letter penned to the representatives at Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission pointed to the US anti-Iran moves for activating ‘Snapback Trigger Mechanism’ under JCPOA and emphasized that Parliament should take urgent measures to deal with the US behavior in this respect.

Iran Will Never Forgive U.S. for Damages Caused by Sanctions

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf expressed Tehran’s opposition to any talks with Washington, saying the Iranian people will never forgive the US for the harms it has done through the sanctions.

“The Iranian nation will never forgive the damages caused by the American sanctions,” Qalibaf said in a meeting with Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland Ignazio Cassis, held in Tehran on Sunday.

Highlighting Iran’s policy of cooperation with all countries within the framework of its principles, the parliament speaker said, “In addition to such cooperation, we are opposed to any hegemony, and the refusal to negotiate with the US is because of their hegemonic approach.”

Qalibaf said that an “independent Europe” could establish dynamic relations with Iran, adding, “Europe must not come under the influence of the U.S. policies, particularly given that their (American) measures have led to instability and insecurity in the region.”

Taking a swipe at the U.S. for assassinating top Iranian commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani, the parliament speaker said withdrawal from the region is the price the US will have to pay for committing such a crime.



Qalibaf further warned that the decision from certain regional countries to normalize ties with the Zionist regime would not settle the region’s problems, adding, “Such measures would escalate instability in the region.”

He also hailed Switzerland for its performance that has proved that it is contributing to world peace and humanitarian issues.

For his part, the visiting Swiss diplomat said Iran is suffering from the economic problems caused by the cruel sanctions.

He also expressed hope that the 100th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between Iran and Switzerland would result in the promotion of bilateral ties and that his country would be able to play its role well as a government representing the interests of the US in Iran.

Palestine Main Priority of Muslim World

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Special Assistant to the Speaker of the Iranian Majlis for International Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Sunday that the countries of the region and the Islamic Ummah consider the issue of Palestine as their main priority and will fight for liberation of the Holy Quds and occupied Palestinian territories.

Amir-Abdollahian said that the recent meeting of the leaders of the Resistance and Palestine in Beirut was a decisive step for the future of Palestine and liberation of Palestinian territories from the grip of the racist, criminal, and terrorist occupying regime.

Amir-Abdollahian, the incumbent Secretary-General of the Permanent Secretariat to Support Palestinian Intifada, said that Palestinians awakening and dynamics of resistance are the reasons for defeat of the so-called Deal of the Century and the conspiracy of some Arab states normalizing relations with the occupying regime.

He hoped that Palestinian groups unity and focus on the process of resistance will bring about cancellation of the compromise and starting a new popular Intifada.

He also said that it has become clear for all Palestinians that the only language the Zionist usurpers understand is the language of resistance and power.

Referring to the role of the Zionists in destabilizing the region, he said that Iran has been supporting the Palestinian people and resistance over the past 40 years.

No Connection Between Repayment of British Debt and Prisoners

TEHRAN (IP) - Foreign Ministry’s spokesman said that the issue of paying off Iran’s debt by the British government has nothing to do with the release of dual-national prisoners.

Saeed Khatibzadeh pointed to the report suggesting that the British government confirmed its country’s debt to the Islamic Republic of Iran over the purchase of Chieftain tank (before the victory of the Islamic Revolution).

“Some are trying to link the payment of the debt to the release of a dual Iranian-British prisoner (Nazanin Zaghari),” he said. “The British government has a definite 40-year debt to the Islamic Republic of Iran and it does not matter whether this debt is accepted by a British government official or not.”

The fact is that the British government has repeatedly delayed the payment of this debt to the Islamic Republic of Iran up to the present time, he continued.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has emphasized through various channels and in all its talks with the British side that this definite debt must be paid by the British government and this has nothing to do with any other issue, Khatibzadeh underlined.

The British defense Secretary Ben Wallace has acknowledged his country owes Iran hundreds of millions of pounds that he is actively seeking to repay.

The case of Ms. Nazanin Zaghari (a dual citizen who is serving her sentence in Iran) has nothing to do with paying off the UK’s debt to the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said.

Khatibzadeh reiterated, “She has served a part of her sentence in Iran and has been released on parole, which has its own judicial process and there is no difference between her and other prisoners.”

Expressing hope that Britain will pay its debt to Iran without delay, he added, “Ms. Zaghari’s case has a judicial process and Iranian judiciary is acting independently in this regard.”

Global Anti-Drug Fight Cannot Be Effective Without Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Global fight against illicit drugs will not have favorable outcome without Iran’s contribution, Iranian Director General for International Affairs of Drug Control Headquarters Amir Abbas Lotfi said on Sunday.

Amir Abbas Lotfi made the remarks in an interview with IRNA.

Lotfi made it clear that any anti-narcotic measures in the region should start from the source that is Afghanistan.

Iran sits on the main trafficking route from Afghanistan, major supplier of over 90 percent of

opium to the European and Asian countries.

Speaking about Triangular Initiative (TI) of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) Regional Program for enhancing anti-narcotic efforts, Lotfi said that Iran is the main partner in the anti-drug campaign structures; so that the global counter-drug measures cannot be effective without Tehran’s contribution.

The official stressed that Regional Program with participation of eight countries, which are neighbors to Afghanistan, will not work if it disregards the Triangular Initiative of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

Elaborating on TI began in 2007 and engaged by Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Lotfi said it is Iran’s initiative and part of Regional Program.

Later, TI took presence of the UN into consideration and it was named TI plus the United Nations Office for Drug Control, he added.

Joint planning office of TI is in Tehran and the three countries have taken good measures towards joint anti-narcotic operations, he underlined.

Fight against drug activities is the main question in the humanitarian fields, the official noted.

He went on to say that no challenges and obstacles can hinder Iran’s determination to counter narcotic activities.

Further, Lotfi expressed Iran’s readiness to cooperate with regional and extra-regional countries in counter-narcotic area.

The Iranian official hoped that the legitimate Afghan government would pass legislation effective across Afghanistan to prevent drug smuggling and narcotic activities.

He, then, said that Iran is fully prepared to support Afghanistan’s anti-drug activities at any level to uproot narcotics.

Iran, as one of Afghanistan’s neighbors, is on the route of illegal drug transit to Europe and the country has not been secured against such illegal activities.

3 Knowledge-Based Companies Progress on COVID-19 Vaccine

URMIA (IP)- Three Iranian knowledge-based companies have made significant progress in the production of a coronavirus vaccine, said Iran’s Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari.

Speaking at a news conference in Urmia, the capital of West Azarbaijan province, northwestern Iran, on Saturday night, Sattari said six knowledge-based companies were working on a coronavirus vaccine, and that three knowledge-based companies had made significant achievements in this regard.

Since the second month of the outbreak in Iran, the vice president for science and technology said, all the equipment, supplies, and drugs needed to treat it have been produced domestically.

Sattari said medical equipment, coronavirus test kits, CT scans, digital thermometers, masks, and all medications needed to treat the disease are produced domestically.

Referring to the process of return of Iranian elites to the country the VP said last month the rate of return of elites to Iran increased almost twice compared to the same period last year.

The official stated that 500 Iranian elites are expected to return home from the top 200 universities in the world this year.

Sattari said the elites will be employed after returning to Iran, adding most of the elites are working in knowledge-based companies and some are recruited as faculty members of universities.

During a one-day trip to West Azarbaijan province on Saturday, Sattari visited the Science and Technology Park, Cellular Medicine Research Institute, and the Center for Innovation and University Growth at Urmia University.

U.S. Cannot Use Snapback

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Iran’s parliament said no legal right is preserved for the U.S. to use the snapback mechanism.

The United States is seeking to use the snapback mechanism to reinstate sanctions against Iran after its attempts failed to extend arms embargoes on Iran in the UN Security Council.

Mojtaba Zonnuri said that under the articles 36 and 37 of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if either party violates its obligations, the other party can use the trigger mechanism, while the United States withdrew from the agreement in 2018 by violating its obligations under the international agreement.

Noting that the U.S. claim has no legal base, Zonnuri noted that Europeans’ not siding with the U.S. on the issue is a sign of U.S.’ isolation and scandal.

Following the failure of the United Nations Security Council to adopt a draft resolution to extend the arms embargo on Iran, and despite its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the US tried to invoke the ‘snapback mechanism’ for resuming sanctions, which legally is reserved only for participating members in the agreement, this is while the US is not considered as a member anymore.

Zionist Regime Annihilation Process Will Not Stop

TEHRAN (IP) - The Head of the International Diplomacy and National Interests Faction of the Iranian parliament Hossein Noushabadi stated that the agreement on the normalization of relations between the UAE and the Israeli regime will not help to prevent their collapse and the process of demise of the Zionist regime will not be stopped.

Noushabadi condemned the evil agreement between the United Arab Emirates and the occupying regime, calling it against the interests of Islamic countries and that of the people of the region.

He added that this shameful agreement will not only serve the sinister interests of the Zionist regime but also it will undermine the credibility and will bring humiliation to the US supporters in the region’s public opinion and will result in nothing but political scandal.

The Israel–United Arab Emirates peace agreement, or the Abraham Accord, was agreed to by Israel and the United Arab Emirates on August 13, 2020.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



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PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:02
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:41
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:16
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:42

4. And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, Take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.

Surah 4. Women (4)

Switzerland Keen on Promoting Scientific, Tourism Ties With Iran

IRAN NEW NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis said on Sunday that his visit to Iran is preparatory to develop cooperation with Iran in science and tourism.

Cassis arrived in Isfahan on Saturday and met with city officials and academics after having visited some of the tourist attractions of the historical city.

He is scheduled to meet with President Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif, and some other high ranking officials to discuss mutual, regional, and international issues, as well as the financial channel the Swiss Government provided for Iran.

He said that cooperation in tourism and science are the advantages for Iran and Switzerland after the coronavirus outbreak.

The Swiss foreign minister said that political experts believe that it is a chance for Iran to take steps for and also a chance for hostile foreign countries to change their approach toward Iran.

Referring to the difficult economic situation created by the US sanctions, Cassis said that scientific diplomacy is a way for further interaction among the countries to advance peace and understanding.

Thanking the hospitality of the officials and people of Isfahan, he said that he would commemorate the 100 years of mutual relations between Iran and Isfahan in an official meeting in Tehran.

He said that relations between the two countries started with signing a peace and trade agreement in late 19th century and have been going on so far, adding that Switzerland has always been seeking peace and tranquility in the region.



Referring to the mediation role of Switzerland between Iran and the U.S., he said that Switzerland tries to establish the minimums of dialog between the two countries.

He said that he intended to visit the Iranian historical city of Isfahan, birthplace of Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, adding that the city is famous as "half of the world" and that Isfahan is a wonderful exceptional city, which has a huge civilization.

Addressing a meeting of officials of Isfahan University of Technology on Saturday, he stressed the need for promoting scientific cooperation with Iran.

Head of the Switzerland Desk and Director of the Center for International Scientific Cooperation of Isfahan University of Technology Sima Fakheran, for her part, citing to the history of scientific cooperation between Iran and Switzerland, presented a report on the establishment of the Swiss Desk as a national reference for international scientific cooperation.

Isfahan University of Technology is the coordinator between Iranian universities with Switzerland.

Governor General of Isfahan Province, Abbas Rezaee, said that with naming a day as Isfahan and Switzerland Day, the tourist attraction of Iran and Isfahan and be introduced simultaneously, adding that Swiss mediation efforts with some countries to help peace and calm is a positive approach, with roots in Iran's religious attitude as well.

He also said that different religions of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism have been living in Iran peacefully with no problems whatsoever.

Facilitating Role of Majlis for Maximum Efficiency of Developmental Organizations

TEHRAN – THE CEO of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mr. Amir Bayat says IDRO as the first and most experienced developmental organization in the country beside Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO), National Petrochemical Company (NPC) and Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) form the line-up of pioneer team in national development and all of them are facing common challenges ahead of their activities.

Mr. Bayat said that a set of challenges which these organizations are facing have been determined and resolving most of them are possible through support

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



and facilitation of Majlis by reviewing some restrictive laws and supervision of some less paid attention laws.

He also pointed to the needs of the country in actions for eradicating poverty and fundamental investments in the developing scenes that private sector by itself has no capability and justification in those fields and called for necessity of reinforcing developmental organizations in the year of surge in production more than ever.

In the meeting, managers of NPC, IMIDRO and ISIPO were also present and explained their views on reinforcing developmental organizations.

NIDC Wins Tender to Develop Lali Bangestan Oil Field

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

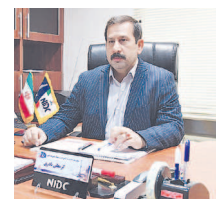
TEHRAN - Head of the marketing and international cooperation administration of National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) says the company along with Jahan Pars Company has won the tender package related to the project for developing Lali Bangestan Oil Field in the north of Khuzestan Province.

According to reports, Karamali Naderi yesterday said that the project is one of several projects which have been defined in the project dubbed developing 28 reservoirs in the South Oil Company which have been drawn up by the National Iranian Oil Company in line with retain and increase of production. Naderi added that the project should be carried out in a 2-year span with deploying two heavy rig which five wells are to be drilled and completed.

He noted that Jahan Pars Company is in charge of earth surface operation of the project which will be carried on the base of EPD/EPC.

Naderi also pointed to winning other tenders related to the developmental projects of NIOC which are underway in Gachsaran and Naft Shahr.

He added that NIDC will also cooperate in two more packages related to developing project in Ramin and Balaroud fields in cooperation with Persia Oil and Gas Industry Development Company and Jahan Pars Company.



Iran Among World's Top 5 Military Speedboat Producers

TEHRAN (IFP) - A Defense Ministry official says Iran's advances in the naval industries have placed the country among the world's top five manufacturers of military speedboats capable of launching missiles.

In a televised interview on Saturday, Managing Director of Iranian defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization Rear Admiral Amir Rastegari said Iran is capable of designing and manufacturing missile-launching speedboats with a velocity of over 130 km/hr.

Iran is one of the world's top five countries in the speedboat industry and is also in the list of the top 13 powers designing and producing submarines, he added.

Highlighting Iran's capability to manufacture a broad range of destroyers and corvettes, the general said many foreign countries have become interested in the Iranian naval products because of Iran's special approach to naval combat.

Many customers demand to purchase the naval equipment made in Iran, Rastegari added, expressing hope that the termination of a UN arms embargo under the 2015 nuclear deal would allow the start of negotiations.

The Marine Industries Organization is capable of manufacturing various military and civilian maritime platforms, he concluded.

Meanwhile Managing Director of Iran Aviation Industries Organization (IAIO) General Afshin Khajefard highlighted the country's advances in the aviation industry under the pressure of cruel sanctions.

Describing the assistance provided by the domestic knowledge-based companies for the aviation industries as a unique model acknowledged by the international research centers, the general said, "Today, we can supply the other countries with the (aviation) systems they may need."

MSC Hailed for Investment in Wastewater Network of Mobarakeh and Lenjan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company hailed the performance of Mobarakeh Steel Company and termed the company's investment in towns of Mobarakeh and Lenjan as "jihadi work".

The construction of Mobarakeh wastewater started in 1985 and it progressed by 30 percent through the government credit till 2015. But after the contract between Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company and Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) and involvement of MSC in the project, the speed of progress of the project became 14-fold and a project which had progressed only 30 percent in 30 years, today has progressed 95 percent due to the MSC investment and water and wastewater company's cooperation and regional officials' support.

During a meeting for studying problems of the town of Mobarakeh, the CEO of

Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company Eng. Hashem Amini hailed MSC for its investment for construction of wastewater network in towns of Lenjan and Mobarakeh and called it a clear example for a jihadi work.

He expressed his satisfaction for handing over the project to MSC, adding that drilling well based on the traditional system and method had a great deal of problems and it was not good from the aspect of health and hygiene and it created headache for all infrastructures like underground installations and houses of the citizens.

Amini added that the project was a big event and so far it has cost between 300 to 400 billion tomans whose implementation was actually an impossible job for the government but it had a good ending in five years and this is exactly the victory in the war front.

He also announced investment of Water and Wastewater Company in several towns of Isfahan Province like Shahinshahr, Dolatabad, Najafabad, Borkhar, Isfahan, Fooladshahr and Baharestan for collecting and treatment of the wastewater.

Panel Mahdi to Display Its Latest Achievements at Construction Expo

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC NEWS



TEHRAN – The most complete prefabricated products and modern production line in the construction sector in the Middle East will be put on display by Panel Mahdi Industrial Group at the 20th International Exhibition of Building and Construction Industry which will be held at Tehran International Permanent Fairground on August 9-12.

According to the public relations of Panel Mahdi Industrial Group, the researcher of construction industry and the managing director of Panel Mahdi Industrial Group Mr. Hamid Reza Banikarim said that the industrial group with 50 years of brilliant experience has improved quality of its products in line with the Supreme Leader's recommendation for surge in production and improving the quality of the Iranian goods, and the company by using one hundred percent Iranian material without importing any part will put on display its prefabricated products in the international level at the exhibition despite all restrictions due to the Coronavirus and sanctions as it has increased its production capacity by 400 percent.

Banikarim further said that Panel Mahdi Holding with its most perfect basket of production line Sandwich Panel types Pu, Rw, Eps, Xps, different types of shelter house, prefabricated houses and fixed and mobile fridges is to attend this year's exhibition and it will be stationed on an outdoor area opposite Hall 38. He added that the group is trying to call on over 1000 people for direct or indirect cooperation by the yearend.

He added that the group's share of the domestic market is 25 percent and it uses domestic producers' products and sanctions have had no effect on the amount of its productions because its products are indigenized and used for construction and it has no dependence on imports.

Banikarim also added that 30 percent of the products are exported, and Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon and Djibouti are the major export destinations, adding that in the upcoming years, the group is to export its products to North African and European countries. The four-day exhibition is aimed at putting on display the latest achievements in the construction industry.

Golgohar, Pioneer in National Steel Industry

TEHRAN – The CEO of Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company (GMIC) Eng. Jamshid Mollarahman has been recently honored as a successful manager during the recession era in the applied symposium of successful managers and leading of brand in the post-Coronavirus era which was held in Tehran.



Iran's steel industry by focusing on completing steel chain has played a great deal in the country's gross domestic product and job creation and its exports and forex revenues have grown significantly.

Actually the considerable performance of mining companies in recent years has boosted the growth in the national industry and Golgohar district as the biggest producer of raw material for steel industry accounts for 43 percent of total supply of raw materials for different sections of steel chain in the country and it is actually the pioneer in steel industry and earning in the country.

Mr. Mollarahman says Golgohar Co. produced over 16m tons of concentrate last year which indicates 3 percent growth comparing the preceding year. It also produced over 12m tons of pellets in the same period which indicates 4 percent growth comparing to its preceding year, he added, noting Golgohar Co. is currently the biggest producer of concentrate and pellet in the country.

He further said that while the country is challenging with maximum pressure of sanctions, surge in production in the national steel industry and sustainability in exports can help the economic growth a great deal, adding accordingly, Golgohar Company has had plans in recent years regarding the growth in production in order that it can double its role in enhancing the domestic gross domestic product by supplying raw materials of steel chain.

He also pointed to some projects and programs of the company which are to be pursued this year. He said the project for transfer of the Persian Gulf water is one of them which will come on stream this year.

Amini then pointed to the amount of progress of the project, saying that the project, as the biggest desalination and water transfer, has progressed 95 percent in the first part, 88 percent in the second part and 85 percent in the third part.

He further said that this year the biggest concentrate production unit of the company with production capacity of one million tons will come on stream through Golgohar Company's support and through the framework of attracting investment.

The company was the first complex which launched an anti-Coronavirus committee after the announcement of the pandemic, he noted.

Belarusian Opposition Activist Kovalkova Leaves Country

WARSAW (Reuters) - Belarusian opposition activist Olga Kovalkova arrived in the Polish capital Warsaw on Saturday, saying she had been forced by authorities in her homeland to leave the country.

Kovalkova, a senior figure in the Belarusian opposition Coordination Council, was sentenced to 10 days in jail on Aug. 25.

She said on Saturday that authorities had told her she would face further arrests if she did not leave the country. "Representatives of the militia and the interior ministry of Belarus came to me and said that if I did not agree to leave, I would face long arrests ... it was said that there would be more (arrests) to infinity," she told a news conference in Warsaw.



Mexico Rejects Calderon's Bid To Register New Political Party

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE) has denied former President Felipe Calderon's bid to register his Free Mexico movement as a new political party, saying some of its funding was questionable.

Calderon ruled Mexico from 2006-2012. He has been trying to convert the Freedom and Democratic Responsibility group that he runs with his wife, Margarita Zavala, into a political party to contest the 2021 mid-term congressional elections.

INE's general council rejected the party in a seven-to-four vote, saying late on Friday that its decision was due to Free Mexico "having more than 5% of contributions from unidentified people."



Merkel Ally Dodges Question on Gas Sanctions on Russia Over Navalny Case



BERLIN (Reuters) - A senior member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives declined to say on Saturday whether the party should reconsider a major gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, in protest against the suspected poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Navalny was airlifted to Germany after falling ill. The German government says he was poisoned with a nerve agent similar to the one used in an attempt to kill a former Russian spy in England. Moscow says it has seen no evidence he was poisoned.

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that a failure by Moscow to help to clear up the circumstances of Navalny's poisoning would add to suspicions that Russia's government was involved.

The affair has led to calls from several leading conservatives for Merkel to suspend the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, a huge, nearly complete project to bring Russian gas to Germany under the sea. Merkel, a supporter of the pipeline, has said it should not be linked to the Navalny case. Asked whether the Navalny case meant the government should reconsider the pipeline, Armin Laschet, governor of the most populous German state and a leading contender to succeed Merkel as Conservative candidate for chancellor, said Germany should seek a common response with its EU partners.

"We need a European answer - no go it alone - that allows Europe to make its position clear to Russia," said Laschet.

"It is good if we reach a common solution that's as cohesive as possible."

Led by Russia's Gazprom with Western partners, Nord Stream 2 is more than 90% completed and scheduled to operate from early 2021. The project has divided opinion within the European Union, with some members saying it undermines traditional gas transit state Ukraine and increases the bloc's reliance on Russia.

Student Demonstrators Demand School Reform in Thailand

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Hundreds of high school students have demonstrated in Bangkok to demand reform of an education system they say is outdated in the latest of more than a month of anti-authority protests.

Protests that began on Thai university campuses have taken place almost daily since mid-July in an increasing challenge to the government in the Southeast Asian country, with some protesters also demanding change to the powerful monarchy. Over 600 students rallied outside the education ministry in Bangkok on Saturday. They called for the freedom to be able to speak their minds at school and the relaxation of rigid rules on uniforms and behavior.

"Thai education has made us puppets," 18-year-old Supicha "Menu" Chailom said. "We are not robots of the system, we are the youth and have the right to express ourselves."

Protests spread to some high schools last month, with students raising the "Hunger Games" three-finger salute during morning assemblies, a symbol of the pro-democracy movement.

Education Minister Nataphol Teepsuwan told reporters that he respected students' rights.

Erdogan Raises Rhetoric in Greece Standoff in Mediterranean

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Greece to enter talks over disputed eastern Mediterranean territorial claims or face the consequences.

"They're either going to understand the language of politics and diplomacy, or in the field with painful experiences," he said on Saturday at a hospital's opening ceremony in Istanbul.

The two NATO allies have been locked for weeks in a tense standoff in the eastern Mediterranean, where Turkey is prospecting the seabed for energy reserves in an area Greece claims as its own continental shelf.

Cyprus has also accused Turkey of breaching its sovereignty by drilling in their waters. All sides have deployed naval and air forces to assert their competing claims in the region.

"They are going to understand that Turkey has the political, economic and military power to tear up the immoral maps and documents imposed," Erdogan added, referring to areas marked by Greece and Cyprus as their economic maritime zones.

He said Turkey was "ready for every eventuality and result".

NATO said this week Greek and Turkish leaders had agreed to take part in technical talks to avoid accidents between their navies. But Greece later said it had not agreed to the talks, leading to accusations from Turkey that the European Union country was shunning dialogue.

On Saturday, a Turkish news report said Ankara redeployed armoured personnel carriers from the Syrian border to the one it shares with Greece.

The Cumhuriyet newspaper said 40 tanks were being transported from the Syrian border to Edirne in northwest Turkey and carried photographs of armoured vehicles loaded on trucks.

A military official speaking on condition of anonymity in line with government regulations said the deployment was a regular movement of forces and unconnected to tension with Greece. Al Jazeera's Stefanie Dekker, reporting from Istanbul, said officials have only said, "This is within the planned activity, the responsibility of the second army, [which is] responsible for the areas of Syria, Iraq and Iran."



Trump Orders Crackdown on Federal Anti-Racism Training

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump has directed the executive branch's budget office to crack down on federal agency training programs that are meant to support diversity and combat racism, calling them "divisive, anti-American propaganda".

In a letter, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Russell Vought, told all executive branch agencies to identify any spending related to training on "critical race theory", "white privilege", or any theory that posits that the US, as well as any race or ethnicity, "is inherently racist or evil".

"The divisive, false, and demeaning propaganda of the critical race theory movement is contrary to all we stand for as Americans and should have no place in the federal government," the letter reads.

"Critical race theory" refers broadly to a school of thought that argues that systemic racism exists in US law and institutions and that race is a social construct created for the benefit of white citizens.

"White privilege" is the concept that white citizens inherently benefit from the systemic racism in US society.

The U.S. president's advisory comes amid months of racial justice demonstrations following the police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, in May in Minnesota.

Trump has rejected the idea that there is systemic racism in the US, particularly in law enforcement.

He argued during a trip to Kenosha, Wisconsin, on Tuesday that high-profile incidents of police killing Black people are the result of "bad apples" in the police force or good cops who "choke".

The U.S. president spent Saturday morning retweeting conservative supporters of his decision to end the training, which he called "a sickness that cannot be allowed to continue". "Please report any sightings so we can quickly extinguish!" Trump tweeted.

Thousands Rally in Croatia Against Coronavirus Measures

ZAGREB (Dispatches) - Several thousand people rallied on Saturday in the Croatian capital to protest measures imposed by the authorities due to the coronavirus pandemic, which they say endanger human rights and freedoms.

"Covid is a lie, we are not all covidiot" and "Take off the mask, turn off the TV, live a full life", read some of the banners carried by the protestors who gathered at Zagreb's main square.

The rally, dubbed Festival of Freedom, was aimed at warning against the coronavirus-related restrictive measures which, the organisers say, "limited citizens' basic rights and freedoms" without a "valid medical or legal basis".

"We insist on safeguarding human rights, freedoms, knowledge, solidarity and mutual respect," the group that organised the event said in a statement.

It warned notably against limiting of "socialisation, imposing of psychical distance and deprivation of physical contact".

During the event, whose participants arrived from across Croatia, a popular local pop singer known as a

coronavirus anti-vaxxer was playing music while several people addressed the crowd.

On Facebook, Health Minister Vili Beros said of the rally that he could not support a "non-scientific approach to COVID-19".

"All temporary restrictions had only one goal -- to protect the health and lives of Croatian citizens. We succeeded in that."

The nation of 4.2 million braved the first few months of the pandemic recording less than 100 cases daily for several months and then almost no new infections by mid-May.

But new cases have spiked since the country opened its borders to tourists for the summer season, hitting more than 200 daily in late August and a record 369 on Thursday.

Since mid-July, wearing of face masks is mandatory on public transport, and in shops and all services involving close contact with clients. Restrictions on the number of people attending public gatherings vary depending on the region.

Croatia has so far reported nearly 12,000 infections and 197 deaths from the respiratory disease.



Suspected Gas Blast Kills 17 Worshipers in Bangladesh Mosque

DHAKA (Reuters) - A suspected gas pipeline explosion at a mosque in Bangladesh killed 17 people and injured dozens as worshippers were about to end their prayers, officials said on Saturday.

The blast, which fire service officials suspect was caused by a leak from a gas pipeline, occurred on Friday night at a mosque in Narayanganj district, just outside the capital Dhaka.

At least 37 people were rushed to Dhaka's specialist burn and plastic-surgery hospital, most of them with severe burns, doctors said.

Seventeen people, including a child, died after they sustained burn injuries, said Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the burn unit. The death toll could rise further as many of them were in critical condition, he said.

"I saw smoke was belching out of the mosque after the sudden explosion with a big bang and people were screaming. Some were rolling on the street as they tried to put out the flames on their bodies," said local resident Mohammad Ratan.

Fire officials said gas that accumulated from a leak in a pipeline running underneath the mosque likely triggered the explosion.

"We primarily suspect that gas leaked from the pipeline and accumulated inside since the windows were closed. The explosion was probably triggered due to sparks when the air conditioners were turned on," said Abdullah Al Arefin, a senior fire service official.

Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident. Lax regulations and poor enforcement are often blamed for domestic and industrial fires in Bangladesh.

In February last year, an inferno in a centuries-old neighbourhood of Dhaka killed 71 people. A month later, 25 people were killed when fire broke out in a 22-storey commercial building in an upscale area of the capital.





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

Shanon (adviser)

Niavaran Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

||| Parsian |||

Kamranieh (\$2700) 300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden
Gheitarieh (\$2000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden
Zaferanieh (\$2500) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden
Ajoudanieh (\$2200) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & roof garden

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Jordan (\$1600) 3bdrs, F.F
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Turkey's Annual Inflation at 11.77% in August

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey saw an annual hike of 11.77% in consumer prices in August, the country's statistical authority announced.

Last month, annual inflation went up 0.01 percentage points from 11.76% in July.

The highest price increase on a yearly basis was recorded in miscellaneous goods and

services with 26.99% in August, according to TurkStat data.

It was followed by health at 14.68% and food and non-alcoholic beverages at 13.51%.

Last week, an Anadolu Agency survey showed that a group of 18 economists forecast an average annual climb of 11.88% in consumer prices.



Suga Signals Ultra-Easy Monetary Policy to Continue

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, a frontrunner to be the next prime minister, said he would like the central bank to continue its ultra-loose monetary policy as the economy is still struggling with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In an interview that ran on Saturday in the Nikkei newspaper, Suga also said he would consider compiling another economic stimulus package by the end of this year to "put the pandemic to an end and shift the economy to a new stage."

"I highly approve of his handling of monetary policy," Suga said of BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda, who undertook bold easing steps that were part of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics" stimulus strategy.

"I want to carry over (the bold easing steps)," he was quoted as saying by the paper.

The remarks reinforce expectations that Suga will continue with many of Abe's pro-growth economic policies as the pandemic adds to the pain of an economy already in deep recession.

Suga told Nikkei he would take steps to revitalise smaller firms by promoting consolidation and boosting competitiveness.

He also expressed hope of creating a new government agency to promote digitalisation of government services and various industries such as healthcare, as delays on this front have slowed payouts to companies and households hit by COVID-19.

"I know there could be resistance, but we should move forward on this," Suga said of his plan to allow clinics to permanently offer medical treatment online.

Japan currently allows online treatment only as a temporary step to accommodate patients having difficulty visiting hospitals due to COVID-19.

Suga is widely expected to win the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) leadership election on Sept. 14, set after Abe's decision to step down. The winner is virtually assured of becoming premier due to the LDP's parliamentary majority.

Markets have been rife with speculation that Suga, upon becoming prime minister, may call a snap election in coming months to solidify his political grip.

"What people want most from the government is to deal with the pandemic and create a safe environment to live," Suga told a television programme, when asked whether he would call an early snap election if he becomes Japan's new leader.

Serbia, Kosovo Agree to Normalize Economic Ties

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Former foes Kosovo and Serbia agreed Friday to normalize economic relations in a US-brokered deal that the administration of President Donald Trump touted as a major diplomatic success — but which leaves political normalization on hold.

The two sides signed a statement in the White House Oval Office committing to a raft of measures to improve transport infrastructure and border crossings, cut trade tariffs and share energy and water resources, and to implement earlier agreements on opening highway and rail links.

They also agreed, as part of their commitments, to improve their relations with Israel. Serbia will move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem while Kosovo, a majority-Muslim country, will formally recognize the Jewish state. In turn, Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008, gained formal recognition from Israel.

"A truly historic day," Trump said, with Kosovo Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic sitting beside him in the Oval Office.

"By focusing on job creation and economic growth, the two countries were able to reach a real breakthrough on economic cooperation across a broad range of issues," Trump praised his special emissary Richard Grenell for bringing the two sides together, two decades after they fought a war that left 13,000 dead.

"It took decades because you didn't have anybody trying to get it done," Trump said of the agreement.

"There was a lot of fighting and now there's a lot of love," he said. "Economics can bring people together."

Apparently because they do not formally recognize each other, the two sides appeared to sign parallel statements of intent rather than a formal bilateral agreement.

But a Trump administration official stressed it was a pact between the two sides.

"They have normalized their economic relations," said White House national Security Advisor Robert O'Brien.

"The Serbia-Kosovo conflict has gone on for decades. They have been stuck, unable to move forward for many, many years."

Fitch Affirms Ukraine at 'B' With Stable Outlook

KIEV (Dispatches) - The agency expects Ukraine's international reserves may reach US\$27.4 billion at the end of 2020 against US\$29 billion in early September.

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Ukraine's Long-Term Foreign-Currency (LTFC) Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'B' with a Stable Outlook.

"The ratings of Ukraine reflect its credible macroeconomic policy framework that had lowered inflation and narrowed fiscal deficits prior to the coronavirus shock, and a record of multilateral support," Fitch Ratings said on September 4.

Read also Ukraine's Economy Ministry publishes revised forecast, predicts 4.6% GDP growth in 2021 According to the agency, "these strengths are set against low external liquidity relative to high financing needs associated with large sovereign debt repayments, a vulnerable, albeit improving, banking sector, and weak governance indicators."

"The coronavirus shock has at least temporarily reversed Ukraine's improvements made in recent years in terms of a declining debt burden, normalization of growth prospects after the 2014-2015 geopolitical and economic crises, and reduced growth volatility," the report said.

Fitch expects Ukraine's international reserves may reach US\$27.4 billion at the end of 2020 against US\$29 billion in early September.

"Fitch considers that continued engagement with the IMF is key for Ukraine to maintain access to external financing. However, the IMF SBA implementation risks are significant given Ukraine's poor record from previous programs and potential judicial rulings and legislative initiatives that lead to reform reversals," it said.

"Inflationary pressures remain subdued (2.4% y-o-y in July; core 3%), but inflation is expected to approach the 5% NBU target by end-2020 due to higher energy and food prices as well as recovering domestic demand. Fitch expects inflation to average 5.3% in 2021 and 5.7% in 2022, above the forecast 4.4% and 4.8% 'B' medians," the agency added.

Argentina's GDP To Fall 12% In 2020

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Argentina's economy is likely to contract 12% in 2020 due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a central bank survey of economists showed on Friday, a slightly more positive outlook than a month earlier.

The forecast compares to the 12.5% estimated the previous month in a survey of specialists published on Friday by the Argentine central bank (BCRA).

The economists saw the economy contracting 16.6% in the second quarter, from the 17% previously calculated, while in the third quarter they saw it growing 8.7%, compared to a previously anticipated 8%. "The growth expectation for the remaining quarters of 2020 suggests that the effect of the coronavirus pandemic is perceived as transitory," the bank said of the survey.

As of Friday, Argentina had registered 451,198 cases of coronavirus and 9,468 deaths. The second largest economy in South America has a population of about 45 million inhabitants.

The economists polled by the central bank saw inflation for 2020 at 37.8%, and inflation in August at 2.7%.

They saw the average nominal exchange rate in Argentina reaching 84.3 pesos to the dollar in December 2020 and 122 pesos in the same month of 2021.

The survey was carried out among consulting firms, research centers, financial entities and analysts between Aug. 27 and 31.

Greece's GDP Posts Record Slump



ATHENS (Dispatches) - Greece's GDP shrank 14% between April and June, marking the steepest quarterly contraction in at least 25 years and threatening to undermine a decade of hard-won gains for the recently bailed-out economy.

The record slump, announced by statistics service ELSTAT, confirmed expectations for a sharp contraction over the second and third quarters, induced by the lockdown that authorities imposed in March to contain the coronavirus.

The data showed tourism, the economy's main driver, had taken a severe hit from COVID-related travel restrictions, and among eurozone countries only Spain's economy, with an 18.5% drop in gross domestic product, performed worse in the second quarter.

Tourists from Britain started arriving in Athens from July after pandemic-related restrictions were lifted. Greece is a popular destination for UK vacationers and around 3.5 million Britons visited last year, the second highest per country after Germany.

Greece lost about a quarter of its output during its 2010-18 debt crisis, which rocked the eurozone and forced it into bailouts in exchange for unpopular austerity-focused reforms.

However, during that period the economy's worst quarterly contraction, in the first three months of 2009, was a comparatively modest 4.7%, according to ELSTAT. Greece emerged from its third bailout in August 2018.

It still has the highest debt to GDP ratio and was looking forward to a strong recovery this year, but with the impact of the pandemic the economy is now expected to shrink up to 10% in 2020. On an annual basis, it contracted 15.2% in the second quarter.

Last year, tourism revenues totalled 19 billion euros. The sector accounts for about 18 per cent of GDP and one in five jobs.

Greece did not start easing travel restrictions until May, just before its peak tourism season kicked in, and in the second quarter exports of services - which include tourism receipts - fell 48.3% from the first.

"Mediterranean countries have suffered a huge blow. In the main European cities, including Athens, there are no tourists at all," Grigoris Tassios, president of the Greek hotels association told Reuters.

"There were zero tourism revenues in the second quarter," he added, forecasting 3 billion euros in 2020 as a whole.

The data also showed that consumer spending dropped 11.3% as business activity came to a standstill, while bank deposits rose.

Data from electronic transactions and tax receipts would help offset the impact on tourism, the government said, reaffirming its estimate for an 8% GDP contraction this year. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has forecast a strong economic rebound next year.

India Open to Raising Duties on Auto Imports to Boost Local Production

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India is open to raising duties on auto imports in a phased manner in a bid to boost domestic production, a minister said on Friday, as the country's car industry set a target to halve imports of components within five years.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said raising duties was "not a bad idea" to discourage automakers from importing car kits, comprised of partially or completely knocked down vehicles, and using India only as an assembly base to get market share there.

"We may look at something like a phased manufacturing plan. I will be open to suggestions," he said during an event organised by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government wants companies to reduce imports, increase domestic production and play a bigger role in the global supply chain in an effort to make the country more self-reliant.

India's auto sector imports \$13.7 billion worth of components annually.

Pawan Goenka, managing director of Mahindra & Mahindra, one of India's biggest automakers, told the same event that SIAM and the Auto Component Manufacturers Association of India had agreed to set a target reduce the total value of imported components by half in the next four to five years.

The focus will be to reduce imports of electronic auto components, which are sourced mainly from China and other

Asian countries, as well as steel, Goenka said, adding these two together account for around \$5 billion of total auto parts imports.

India's auto sector, which was already reeling from a slowdown in demand last year, has been further hit by the pandemic and carmakers are seeking government support to push sales.

Automakers want the government to defer the introduction of stricter fuel efficiency and emission norms and are seeking a temporary 10% cut in taxes on vehicles.

India's heavy industries minister Prakash Javadekar told the event that while the government may not agree immediately to a tax cut he would take up the request with other ministers. He also reiterated that a long-due vehicle scrappage policy would be out "very soon".



Iran's Annual Tea Output Expected to Reach 130m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) - Tea production in Iran is expected to reach 130 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), Head of Iran's Tea Organization (ITO) Habib Jahansaz said.

According to the official, so far 103,395 tons of fresh tea leaves worth four trillion rials (about \$95.23 million) have been purchased from the country's farmers in the northern Gilan and Mazandaran provinces.

Noting that over 85 percent of the government dues to the farmers have been paid, Jahansaz said: "so far 3.4 trillion rials (about \$80.95 million) has been paid to the farmers and the rest will be paid gradually."

Some 75 percent of the payment to the tea farmers will be made by the tea factories and the other 25 percent is paid by the government, he said.



U.S. Debt Will Soon Exceed Size of Entire Economy

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. government's war against the coronavirus is imposing the heaviest strain on the Treasury since America's drive to defeat Nazi Germany and imperial Japan three-quarters of a century ago.

The Congressional Budget Office has warned that the government this year will run the largest budget deficit, as a share of the economy, since 1945, when World War II ended. Next year, the federal debt — the sum of the year-after-year gush of annual deficits — is forecast to exceed the size of the entire American economy for the first time since 1946. Within a few years, it's on track to set a new high.

It might be surprising to hear that most economists consider the money well-spent — or at least necessary. Few think it's wise to quibble with the amount of borrowing deemed necessary to sustain American households and businesses through the gravest public health crisis in more than 100 years. That's especially true, economists say, when the government's borrowing costs are super-low and investors still seem eager to buy its debt as fast as the Treasury issues it.

Here's a closer look at the federal debt and the government's use of it to combat the pandemic and the economic pain it's inflicted.

The annual deficit — the gap between what the government spends and what it collects in taxes — will hit \$3.3 trillion in the budget year that ends Sept. 30, the CBO projects. That amounts to 16% of America's gross domestic product, which is the broadest measure of economic output. Not in 75 years has a deficit been that wide.

The federal debt, reflecting the accumulated deficits and the occasion surplus, is forecast to reach 100% of GDP next year. Then it is predicted to keep climbing to \$24.5 trillion — 107% of GDP — in 2023. That would snap the record of 106% of GDP set in 1946. (The percentage does not include debts that the government agencies owe one another, including the Social Security trust fund.)

The U.S. government was already deeply in debt even before the virus struck in March. The budget had absorbed the expenses of the 2007-2009 Great Recession, the federal benefits for the retirements of the vast baby boom generation and the cost of President Donald Trump's 2017 tax cut. Last year, the debt burden reached 79% of GDP, the highest share since 1948.

Then came the pandemic. The economy tumbled into a sickening free-fall as businesses shut down and millions of Americans hunkered down at home to avoid infection. GDP collapsed at a 31.7% annual rate from April through June, the worst three months on records dating to 1947. In March and April combined, employers slashed a record 22 million jobs.

To help Americans to endure the crisis, Congress passed a \$2 trillion relief bill in March. Among other things, the package sent Americans one-time checks of up to \$1,200 and temporarily offered the unemployed \$600 a week on top of their state jobless benefits.

Economists say that the rescue probably helped keep the economy from sinking into a depression but also that much more assistance is needed.

After World War II, the United States paid down the federal debt with surprising speed. By 1961, the debt had dropped to 44% of GDP, the same level as in the prewar year of 1940.

Behind that success was a fast-growing economy that delivered rising revenue to the government and erased the debt. From 1947 through 1961 the economy grew at a 3.3%



annual rate. The financial system was tightly regulated by the government. This allowed policymakers to keep interest rates artificially low and minimize the cost of repaying the debt.

Circumstances are somewhat different now. The economy doesn't grow as fast as it did in the postwar boom years. Since 2010, GDP growth has averaged just 2.3%, even excluding this year's economic implosion. And the government doesn't control interest rates as it used to, not after the financial deregulation of the 1980's.

Still, the Federal Reserve is helping keep government borrowing rates ultra-low by buying up huge volumes of Treasury debt.

Economists have long warned that too much government borrowing risks hobbling the economy. When the government takes on excessive debt, the argument goes, it competes with businesses and consumers for loans, thereby forcing borrowing rates prohibitively high and imperiling growth.

Another concern is that investors will demand ever-higher interest rates for accepting the risk that governments could default on their debts.

Some economists and budget watchers still warn that a day of reckoning will come and that the United States will have to curb spending, raise taxes or both.

But after the Great Recession, many economists began to rethink their view of debt. The recovery in the United States and especially in Europe was sluggish in part because policymakers were too reluctant to stimulate growth with debt.

In the United States, rates didn't rise even though government debts were high. Investors, it turned out, had a near-insatiable appetite for U.S. Treasuries, still considered the world's safest investment. Their rush to buy federal debt helped keep rates low and limited the government's borrowing costs. So did persistently low inflation.

In such a low-rate, low-inflation environment, the risk of piling on more debt seems more manageable, at least for countries like the United States and Japan that borrow in their own currencies.

Russia's Energy Minister Calls Oil at \$50 To \$55 a Barrel in 2021



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian energy minister Alexander Novak made a call for only modest oil price recovery in 2021, based on a weak demand look and pandemic-induced changes in business and human behavior.

"My forecast for 2021 is a little more modest than that of Goldman Sachs. I predict the range of \$50-\$55 per barrel, as the average price for the year. But we can expect volatility in the market, with both highs and lows," he told CNBC's Hadley Gamble.

Goldman Sachs last week published a note predicting international benchmark Brent crude at \$65 per barrel by the third quarter of next year, "with additional upside through 2021 as inventories start to normalize and the oil market ends up in backwardation by next summer."

"The future recovery is going to be much slower," Novak contended, "not the fast trend we have observed in the first few months. Mostly due to the overall transformation and the changes in the energy balance and in the behavior pattern of consumers, first and foremost."

The minister noted the drop in business travel and the switch to digital conferencing and working from home, all of which reduce travel and therefore oil demand.

"This clearly transforms the energy balance and will impact demand recovery," he said. "We would like to produce more to assist economic recovery but we are constrained by the limited demand. And the rate of its growth is also limited." Novak added that the "growing share of non-carbon energy sources" in the energy mix will also contribute to a slower recovery for oil in the longer term.

Oil prices fell more than 3% Friday, with Brent crude trading at \$42.67 per barrel on Friday afternoon under pressure from falling equities and demand fears due to slow economic recovery amid the ongoing pandemic. The price fall also comes on the back of lower domestic gasoline demand and reports showing U.S. job growth slowing in August as government assistance funds dried up.

Italy to Lose 36b Euro Due to Pandemic

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy to lose 36 billion – €36.7 billion to be precise – due to the loss from the Italian economy because of the collapse of international travel during 2020. This is according to the latest research conducted by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

The organization said the massive decline in the number of international travelers and tourists visiting Italy due to the COVID-19 pandemic could result in international visitor spending dropping by a staggering 82%. This catastrophic loss to the Italian economy equates to a shortfall of €100 million a day, or €700 million a week, to the country's economy. Members of the WTTC recently called upon Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and the other leaders of the G7 countries to urge for a coordinated approach to be taken to lead the global recovery response to the crisis.

The harsh impact on Italian travel and tourism is laid bare by WTTC as the economic fallout from coronavirus continues to burn its way through the sector. Some 2.8 million jobs in Italy which are supported by travel and tourism are at risk of being lost in a worst-case scenario mapped out by economic modeling.

Across Europe, in the worst-case scenario, that figure rises to more than 29 m (29.5 m) travel and tourism jobs. According to WTTC's 2020 Economic Impact Report, during 2019, travel and tourism was responsible for almost 3.5 million jobs in Italy, or 14.9% of the country's total workforce. It also generated €232.9 billion GDP, or 13% to the Italian economy.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: "The economic pain and suffering caused to millions of households across Italy who are dependent upon a thriving travel and tourism for their livelihoods is evident from our latest shocking figures."

"The lack of international travel caused by the pandemic could wipe out more than €36 billion from the Italian economy alone – a loss of €100 million a day – from which it could take many years to recover. It could also threaten Milan's position as global financial powerhouse for business, and Rome as a major leisure destination."

"International coordination to re-establish transatlantic travel would provide a vital boost for the travel and tourism sector. It would benefit airlines and hotels, travel agents and tour operators, and revitalize the millions of



jobs in the supply chain which are dependent upon international travel.

"We must replace any stop-start quarantine measures with rapid, comprehensive, and cost-effective test and trace programs at departure points across the country. This investment will be significantly less than the impact of blunt quarantines which have devastating and

far-reaching socio-economic consequences.

"Targeted test and tracing will also rebuild the much-needed consumer confidence to travel. It will enable the restoration of vital 'air corridors' between countries and regions with similar COVID-19 case rates."

"A fast turnaround test and trace system in place for all departing passengers means the government could consider reinstating travel between Italy and major international hubs, a move which would help kick-start the economic global recovery." Analysis of international travel spending in Italy during 2019 reveals it reached almost €45 billion, accounting for 24% of the total tourism spend in the country. Domestic travel spending last year was responsible for the other 76%.

A further breakdown reveals how crucial spending from international travelers during 2019 was to the Italian economy. Every month it accounted for €3.74 billion or €861 million a week – and €123 million a day.

Between 2016 and 2018, the largest inbound source markets to Italy were travelers from Germany, accounting for one in five (20%) of all international arrivals, with the US and France both coming in second with 8%, and the UK in third place with 6%.

What Is the Response to...

FROM PAGE 1

Similarity of this normalization with Oslo Accords innately political bankruptcy of the UAE because 27 years after signing the Oslo Accords, the leadership of PLO still lives in isolation and under besiege and he feels more condemnation and suffocation than 1990 and after the occupation of Kuwait. Not only did the leader of PLO, by his wrong decision and mistake in signing the accord, not achieve an independent Palestine but also he did not get autonomous government.

Now with materialization of the deal of the Century, he will ultimately give in to annexation of 30 percent of the West Bank, all Jordan plain near the Holy Quds, expulsion of more Palestinians and relocation of them in Jordan rather than we think that Homeland Plan is to be carried out.

We should notice it now that today none of Arab leaders contacts with President of the State of Palestine and Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas whose private jet has stopped flying and dust has covered it at Amman Airport and should remain there indefinitely. And with this behavior they have isolated him and his strategy.

Bassam Abu Sharif is a former senior adviser to Yasser Arafat in his recent article which was published on Thursday in Rai al-Youm recounted that Israeli Premier Pees told him that Arafat thought that Oslo Accords would direct him to a Palestinian country but he was wrong because there was not even one Israeli to agree it, Bassam added, "Arafat thought what all he could gain might be an autonomous government under sovereignty of Israel and even it did not materialize."

Now that the UAE has taken similar action that almost all Palestinians, the resistance axis and freedom-seekers in the world consider it as a "betrayal", one should ask the Arab world whether they know what is the due response to this betrayal and what will be the fate of the UAE.



Perpetrators of Natanz...

FROM PAGE 1

"And what was mentioned in the IAEA's reports was what we expected, too," he added.

Kamalvandi noted when the IAEA's ambiguities about recent Safeguards Agreement issues are resolved, there will be no grounds any more for the agency to continue issuing reports. The spokesman was asked if this time, too, the agency has gone too far in its report with regards to revealing the technical details of Iran's nuclear program, and if the IAEA has failed to keep confidential information from leaking out.

"This will be detrimental for the IAEA's Secretariat as well as member states," he responded.

"Details of countries' nuclear activities and programs should not be released," he noted.

"Not everyone needs to be informed of technical specifics of a member state," he noted.

He criticized the publication of the agency's report in media, saying the report is regarded as confidential.

"Part of the agreement between the IAEA and member states is to keep this report confidential, and this is a legal and moral commitment of the agency," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kamalvandi touched upon the amount of enriched UF6 produced in the country.

"At the moment, we have more than 3 tons of enriched uranium available to us, and I can say that, at the current rate, we can produce between 250 to 300 kilograms a month, which equals the output capacity we had before the JCPOA was signed," he noted.

The spokesman underlined that Iran can quickly increase its production output thanks to the new-generation centrifuges it has. He further said that Iran is making good progress in the production of nuclear materials, research and development, exploration and construction of nuclear power stations. "For instance, during the time when the JCPOA was being implemented, we would produce 4 tons of yellow cake annually, but the figure has reached 10 tons now," he said. He also referred to the latest developments pertaining to the re-designing of the Arak nuclear reactor based on the agency's report.

"We will probably begin cold tests at Arak reactor next year, but the trend of the completion of this reactor is forecast to take two to three years," he said.

Haniyeh, Nasrallah Stress...

FROM PAGE 1

According to Al-Manar, Haniyeh and Nakhale discussed cooperation between the two Palestinian Resistance movements and ways to coordinate their actions in response to the ongoing blockade of the Gaza strip, U.S. President Donald Trump's so-called peace plan and the normalization agreement between the Zionist entity and the UAE.

The meeting was also attended by members of the two Resistance groups.

Hamas' senior representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan said Haniyeh will meet Sayyed Nasrallah during his visit to Beirut, stressing that ties between the Palestinian and Lebanese Resistance movements is 'strategic'.

On Thursday Haniyeh and al-Nakhale participated in a video conference called by Palestinian Authority Chief Mahmoud Abbas with the participation of all Palestinian factions to discuss the Israeli UAE deal.

4 Liverpool Players Nominated For Player of Year Award

LONDON (Dispatches) - Four players of Liverpool football club were among the 2020 nominees for the Player of the Year prize in England.

Professional Footballers' Association in England (PFA) said on Twitter that there are six nominees for the Player of the Year award, including Liverpool regulars, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Virgil van Dijk, Jordan Henderson, and Sadio Mane.

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Everton Sign Brazilian Midfielder Allan

LONDON (Dispatches) - English football club Everton Lacquired Brazilian midfielder Allan Marques Loureiro from Italy's Napoli on Saturday.

"Everton have completed the signing of Brazil international Allan, with the midfielder penning a three-year deal until the end of June 2023," the English Premier League side said.

Allan, 29, played for Napoli in 2015-2020. He produced 11 goals and 16 assists in 212 appearances for Napoli.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7, 2020

Heat Take 3-0 Lead Over Bucks, Rockets Stun Lakers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jimmy Butler scored a game-high 30 points as the fifth-seed Miami Heat took a 3-0 Eastern Conference semifinals series lead over the top-seed Milwaukee Bucks with a 115-100 win on Friday night in the NBA bubble near Orlando.

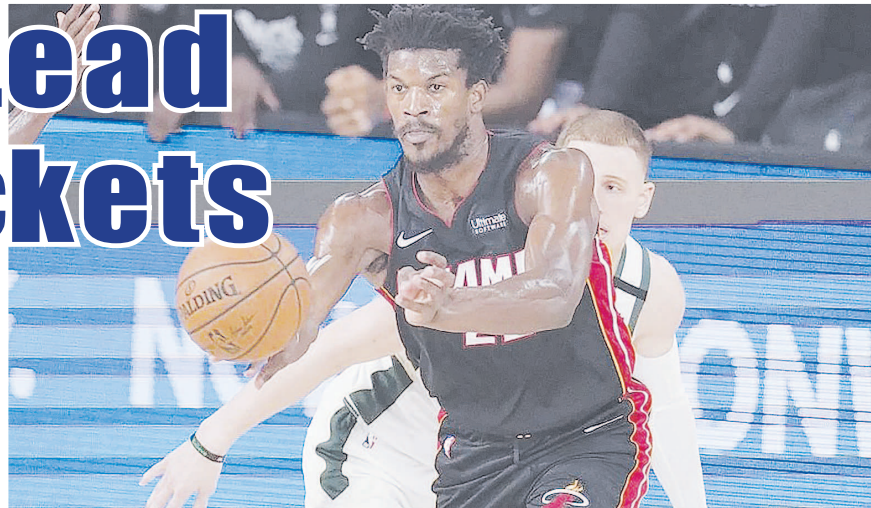
Giannis Antetokounmpo, the NBA's reigning MVP, had 21 points, 16 rebounds, nine assists and two blocks for Milwaukee. However, he shot just 7-for-21 from the floor, including 0-for-7 from three-point range. Game 4 in the series is set for Sunday afternoon. No NBA team has come back from a 3-0 series deficit.

Miami, which is 7-0 in the playoffs this year, also got 20 points and a team-high 16 rebounds from Bam Adebayo. Jae Crowder made a big contribution with 17 points, sinking 5 of 11 three-point attempts. Milwaukee got a team-high 22 points from Brook Lopez plus 18 points from Khris Middleton.

Milwaukee led 30-29 after the first quarter. The Bucks shot 54.5 percent from the floor in the period, including 4-for-6 on three-point tries. Miami shot 47.6 percent, including 7-for-15 from long distance. There were five lead changes and four tie scores in the period.

The Bucks used a 12-3 second-quarter run to lead by as many as 10 points, settling for a 57-50 advantage at halftime. Antetokounmpo was held to seven points in the half, missing all four of his three-point attempts. But Middleton (14 points) and Lopez (13 points) led Milwaukee's first-half charge. Meanwhile, no Heat player scored in double figures in the opening half.

Miami went on a 10-0 run to take a 67-66 lead with 5:53 left in the third, but Milwaukee responded with a 21-8 surge and took a 87-75 advantage into the fourth. The Heat trailed by 11 early in the fourth quarter before a 14-2 run gave them a



94-93 lead after two Butler free throws with 6:16 left in the fourth.

The Bucks last led at 99-98 after an Antetokounmpo dunk with 4:41 to go, but they managed just one point over the remainder of the game with the Heat outscoring them 17-1 down the stretch.

James Harden scored 36 points, and the Houston Rockets surprised the Los Angeles Lakers in a 112-97 victory in Game 1 of its Western Conference semifinal at the NBA bubble.

Harden converted 12 of 20 shots from the floor, including 3 of 6 three-point attempts. Russell Westbrook contributed 24 points, nine rebounds and six assists, and Eric Gordon had 23 points for the Rockets. Anthony Davis led the Lakers with 25 points and 14 rebounds while LeBron James had 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Alex Caruso added 14 points, and Danny Green chipped in 10 for Los Angeles.

Lakers guard Rajon Rondo, who underwent surgery on a broken thumb in July, made his playoff debut. Rondo finished with eight points and four assists in 25 minutes. The Rockets took a 101-82 lead after a bucket by Harden with 7:15 remaining. The Lakers got no closer than 13 the rest of the way.

Kyle Kuzma's three-pointer cut the Rockets' lead to 78-76 with 2:06 left in the third quarter. However, a three-point play by Austin Rivers and a jumper by Westbrook put Houston up 83-76 with 39.1 seconds remaining in the quarter.

James hit a three-pointer with 31 seconds left to cut the gap to four, but another basket by Westbrook gave the Rockets an 85-79 edge heading in the fourth quarter. The Rockets took control early in the fourth and never looked back.

Hamilton Takes Record Pole for Italian GP

MONZA (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton claimed pole position with a new lap record at Monza for the Italian Grand Prix with Valtteri Bottas taking second place in qualifying for another Mercedes front row lock-out.

McLaren's Carlos Sainz posted the third fastest time and is joined on the second row by Sergio Perez for Racing Point.

The session proved another humbling experience for Ferrari with Sebastian Vettel going out in Q1 and Charles Leclerc, who won at the circuit last year, in Q2.

This means no Ferrari inside the top 10 at Monza for the first time since 1984.

Hamilton clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 18.887 seconds to beat Bottas by 0.069 seconds. In pure speed, Hamilton's track lap record performance produced an unconfirmed fastest lap in F1 history. It was Hamilton's record-increasing 94th career pole position, his sixth in seven races and his seventh in Italy. It also extended Mercedes run to eight consecutive pole positions this season. "It wasn't too bad," said Hamilton, with a hint of a smile.

"It was a fantastic performance from the team - in terms of timing, when they put us out on the track," said Hamilton, referring to Mercedes' avoidance of the jostling mass of cars seeking a slip-streaming tow from each other. "It was not the easiest as you saw how close it is between us all so it demanded a really clean lap - and I felt I got that, so I am very happy."

Navas Understudy Sergio

Rico in U-Turn to Stay at PSG

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain's Spain goalkeeper Sergio Rico, who is the understudy to Keylor Navas, has done a u-turn on his decision to quit the club, the French champions announced Saturday.

The 27-year-old, twice a Europa League winner with Sevilla who also spent a season on loan at Fulham, touched down in the French capital from the southern Spanish club on a temporary deal with an option to buy.

But he only played 10 matches for PSG, notably coming on as a replacement in the 2-1 Champions League quarter-final win over Atalanta and then starting the 3-0 semi-final victory over Leipzig which Navas sat out injured.



The 21-year-old, who can play as an attacking midfielder or as a forward, joins international teammate Timo Werner, Hakim Ziyech, Ben Chilwell and Thiago Silva in joining the club for Frank Lampard's second season in charge.

Chelsea finished fourth in the Premier League last season, 33 points behind champions Liverpool.

Chelsea Add Havertz to Near £200m Spending Spree

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea took their summer spending spree to nearly £200 million with the signing of German international Kai Havertz from Bayer Leverkusen on a five-year deal.

Havertz's arrival at Stamford Bridge for a reported £71 million (\$94 million) is the Blues' latest statement of intent as they seek to cut the gap on Liverpool and Manchester City at the top of the Premier League.

The 21-year-old, who can play as an attacking midfielder or as a forward, joins international teammate Timo Werner, Hakim Ziyech, Ben Chilwell and Thiago Silva in joining the club for Frank Lampard's second season in charge.

Chelsea finished fourth in the Premier League last season, 33 points behind champions Liverpool.

"I am very happy and proud to be here. For me it is a dream come true to play in a big club like Chelsea and I can't wait to meet all the players and the trainers," Havertz told the Chelsea website.

Havertz's move eclipses Werner's short-lived record as Germany's most expensive footballer after he joined Chelsea for 53 million euros in June.

That is not the only record Havertz has taken from Werner.

He succeeded the former RB Leipzig striker as the youngest player to make 50 and then 100 Bundesliga appearances since becoming Leverkusen's youngest ever player when he made his debut at 17.

He scored 46 goals in 150 competitive games for Leverkusen, including 18 last season, but that was not enough to lead them back into the Champions League as they finished fifth in the Bundesliga and went out in the quarter-finals of the Europa League.

Havertz was keen to make the move to a Champions League club and Chelsea moved quickly to secure his signature despite appearing to have more pressing concerns at the other end of the field.

Portugal Make Light Of Ronaldo's Absence To Thump Croatia

PORTO (Reuters) - Nations League holders Portugal made light of Cristiano Ronaldo's injury absence as they swept aside Croatia 4-1 in their opener in the competition on Saturday.

European champions Portugal, in impressive form on their return to action after a 10-month new coronavirus hiatus, hit the woodwork three times before Joao Cancelo fired them ahead four minutes before halftime in the League A Group Three match.

Diogo Jota and Joao Felix both scored their first international goals in the second half before Bruno Petkovic pulled one back and Andre Silva then added a fourth.

Ronaldo, who is on 99 international goals, was ruled out with a toe infection while Croatia were missing key midfielders Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic after their federation agreed not to pick them before the start of the European club season.

It was the first time Ronaldo had missed a Portugal game since November 2018.

Nikola Vlasic nearly gave Croatia a second-minute lead when his shot was tipped around the post by Anthony Lopes but after that it was all Portugal.

Joao Felix hit the bar, Diogo Jota headed against the post and Raphael Guerreiro's long-range shot struck the upright, rebounded onto goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic's back and flew wide as Croatia's goal lived a charmed life.

But their luck ran out when Cancelo scored before the break with a curling left-foot shot from the edge of the area. As Portugal continued to dominate after halftime, Guerreiro chipped the ball over the Croatia defence to Jota who controlled it on his chest and slotted his shot home almost on the hour.

Joao Felix, 20, also scored in the 71st minute with a powerful shot which Livakovic got a hand to but could not stop.



Medvedev Dismantles Third-Round Opponent Wolf

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Russian Daniil Medvedev rolled through the U.S. Open third round by demolishing American J.J. Wolf 6-3 6-3 6-2.

The third seed seized the early momentum, breaking Wolf's serve for a 3-2 lead in the first set in which he committed just two unforced errors in a show of near-flawless play.

The Russian, runner-up at Flushing Meadows last year, won the first break point in the second set after a pair of unforced errors from his opponent and appeared totally in control as he fired off eight aces, including one to close out the set.

Wolf matched the hard-hitting Russian's power but a flurry of unforced errors - 41 in the match compared to 10 from Medvedev - proved his undoing.

Back-to-back double faults in the first game of the third set saw a frustrated Wolf kick a tennis ball into the empty stands inside Arthur Ashe Stadium, with spectators barred from the facility due to the coronavirus pandemic. Medvedev closed out the campaign with four straight points, praising his opponent in an on-court interview.

"I'm sure he's going to be climbing up the rankings," Medvedev said of his Wolf. "I did everything I could for it to be tough (for him)."

Medvedev, who has not dropped a set so far, told reporters he was confident in his game heading into the second week of the tournament.

"I managed to, let's call it like this, make my opponents miss a lot, return a lot of balls in the court, served quite good," the 24-year-old said. "I didn't lose a serve before this match, and even this match I managed to keep it on the high level all the match." He next faces either Marton Fucsovics of Hungary or Frances Tiafoe of the United States in the fourth round.

