

Iran's Deputy Roads and Urban Development Minister Said That the Vacancy Tax Law Is in Its Final Stages for Being Enforced as The Majlis Had Approved the Double-Urgency Plan of the Bill

IRAN NEWS

The Police Force of Iran's Sistan And Baluchestan Have Successfully Busted 1,674 Kilograms of Illicit Drugs Through In a Single Operation in the Southeastern Province

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Tehran Outperforms Doha In South Pars Joint Field

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Baijan Zanganeh said yesterday that 17 phases of South Pars Oil and Gas Field have been finalized at sea, adding that Iran with 700 mcm has outperformed Qatar in the joint gas field.

Speaking in Majlis formal session on Tuesday, Zanganeh said Iran has so far invested \$150b in South Pars.

He added that various projects started two years ago and 23 contracts were also sign in engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) format. He noted that Goureh-Jask Crude Oil Pipeline construction will be finalized by the end of the current Iranian year (started on March 20, 2020) and one million cubic meter oil will be transferred from Goureh to Jask for exports.

Zanganeh said that in line with economy of resistance policies, Iranian Petroleum Ministry has implemented eight principles including increase in production capacity in joint oil and gas fields, avoiding selling raw materials, finalizing petrochemical chains, developing gas fueling, increasing petrochemical exports, supporting knowledge-based companies and domestic production, collecting gas, paving the way for future of the oil industry and fighting sanctions.

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140 More Iranians Killed by Coronavirus

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on Tuesday that some 140 more Iranians have died from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours.

The health ministry spokeswoman said that with the 140 new deaths the country's total COVID-19 death toll mounted to 23,453.

Some 2,705 new cases of infection with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, some 1,299 of whom have been hospitalized, Sadat Lari said.

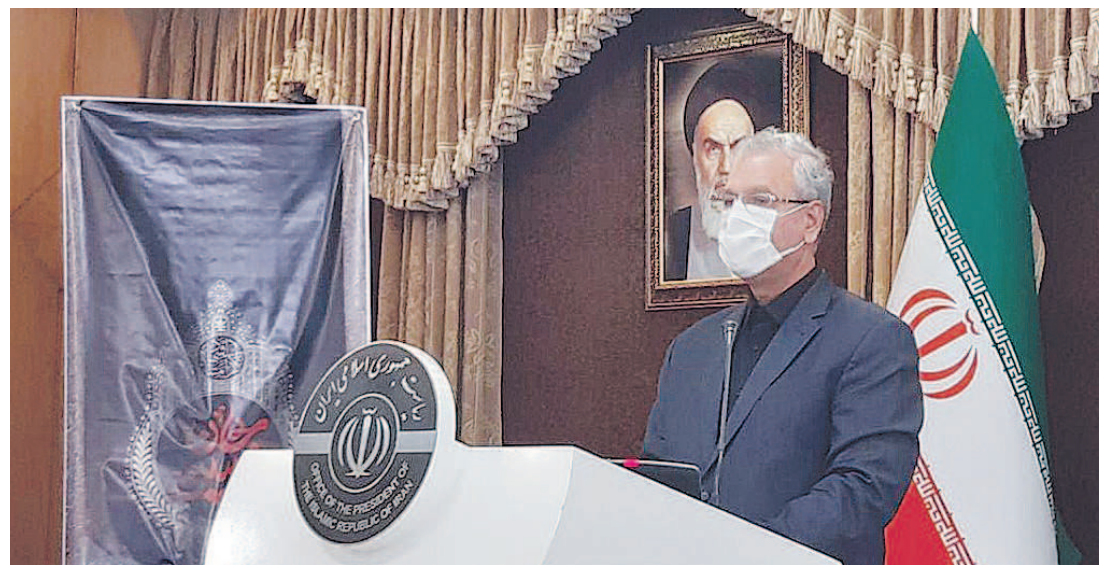
She said that a total of 407,353 Iranians have been confirmed infected with the COVID-19, some 349,984 of whom have been recovered or discharged from the hospitals.

Some 3,811 other COVID-19 patients are in critical conditions and are being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman said.

Sadat Lari added that 3,613,891 coronavirus tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

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Iran Will Give Appropriate Response to Any U.S. Mistake



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Government Spokesman Ali Rabiei reacted to the U.S. president's tweet regarding Iran's efforts to plot against a U.S. diplomat and noted that Trump's remarks are based on false reports.

He made the remarks on Tuesday, noting that the U.S. president made his remarks not based on the information provided by the intelligence of foreign policy organizations but according to false reports.

"We are sorry to see that U.S. officials make their remarks based on distorted reports that even led to Iraq and Afghanistan war in the past," he added.

According to Rabiei, U.S. authorities, especially the current president, seek to disrupt regional peace.

U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to strike Iran "1000 times greater in magnitude" following a false report of a U.S. media on alleged Iran plan to assassinate a U.S. diplomat.

"We hope that U.S. would not commit another strategic mistake and certainly, if that happens, Iran will give an appropriate response," Rabiei highlighted

Rabiei also called more interaction among the 3 branches of government as the best mechanism to be used at the time of fighting against today's hardships faced by Iran.

The government spokesman said that the government's authority to make some decisions in critical situations is low, adding that the combination of Iran's branches of government and mutual understanding in decisions will help shorten the decision-making and implementation process.

"Coordination of the three branches of government can be effective in solving problems namely as COVID-19 which has created many problems for the world, Iran is the only country that also deals with it as well as sanctions simultaneously," Rabiei added.

"A number of important issues require decisions that are not all in the hands of the executive power and the government, the full authority of the government in some decisions in crisis situations is in the lowest degree," Rabiei said, adding: "Thus, the presence of two forces alongside the government and understanding in decisions both helps to shorten the decision-making process and leads to cooperation in implementation. This kind of cooperation in the current situation is one of the inevitable necessities of this historical period that the Iranian nation is experiencing."

Referring to the 3 branches of government meeting on Sunday, Rabiei stated: "In this meeting, various issues were raised by the heads of the three branches of government, the most important issue was how to increase investment. Investment security and investment problems in the country were also discussed."

"The other part of the meeting was devoted to discussing the expansion of exports with neighbors and the region, and the rapid return of currency to the wheel of production was discussed, and strong cooperation was envisaged," added the spokesman

Rabiei noted: "Currency market and stock market issues, policies to reduce liquidity and reduce inflation, and plans and proposals that require the cooperation of the three powers were discussed in this meeting. Discussions were also held on how to coordinate legislative, regulatory, and judicial enforcement in various cases and the mechanisms that can quickly form such coordination."

He reminded, "One of the topics of the meeting was regional issues. The sensitivities of our region today regarding the U.S. presence in the region and the conspiracies of the Zionist regime in the region were discussed."

US Asks ICJ to Dismiss Sanctions Case by Iran

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - Lawyers for the United States asked judges at the United Nations' highest court to dismiss a case brought by Iran seeking to lift sanctions.

Lawyer Marik String said Iran had wrongly introduced a subject uncovered by a 1955 bilateral pact, the Treaty of Amity, which Tehran cites as the basis for going to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court.

It was "an inescapable reality", he added, that the real aim of Iran's legal suit is to restore a 2015 nuclear pact opposed by the administration of President Donald Trump. "The measures Iran challenges remain critical to the United States' efforts to address national security threats posed by Iran including the current threat posed by its nuclear program," String added.

Washington imposed the measures when it abandoned the 2015 pact aimed preventing Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. Hearings this week in The Hague will only deal with the preliminary matter of whether the court has jurisdiction. The Iranian side is to argue its case today and a decision is expected by the end of the year.

In an earlier case involving frozen assets, the World Court ruled in 2019 that the friendship treaty could provide a legal basis for its involvement in an Iranian-U.S. dispute. In October 2018, the court ordered the U.S. to ensure that sanctions against Iran did not affect humanitarian aid or civil aviation safety. String said Washington was abiding by earlier orders. The ICJ's rulings are binding, but it has no power to enforce them, and the U.S. and Iran are both among a handful of countries to have ignored its decisions.

The Amity Treaty was signed before Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution and the sharp deterioration in ties with Washington.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



September 21, the Grand Maneuver of Asia

September 31 coincides with the anniversary of the Sacred Defense in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in this year's anniversary, Iran is to partake in a joint military exercises, code-named Caucus 2020, with a number of other countries in southern Russia.

According to the statement of China's Defense Ministry, troops from Armenia, Belarus, Myanmar and Pakistan along with troops from China, Russia and Iran and probably some more neighboring states are to take part in the military drill, code-named Caucus 2020" which will be held from September 21 to 26.

Holding Asian military maneuvers are worrisome for the Western bloc because in a military drill which was earlier held in cooperation and coordination of Russia, China and Iran in the Sea of Oman and some part of the Indian Ocean, Americans and Europeans in their confidential bulletins that small part of it has been revealed in the media have totally expressed their concerns. Although some experts evaluated Sea of Oman drill as an action for saving the NATO from the collapse, the grandeur of the drill and its initiative had brought along great evaluations, too.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in a press conference announced that the Caucus 2020 would be conducted in southern Russia and nine countries would be involved in the drill. The importance of this maneuver or better to say military drill lies in this point that the process of strategic unity in protecting the joint borders is fully provided in this correlation and it will wipe out the ground for any sinister plot in this region.

We have not forgotten that it has not passed too long from the massive propagations of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf that it was to shape a military coalition in the region, but the bravery and wisdom and prudence of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army forces and its interaction with China and Russia through holding the biggest military drill in the Sea of Oman baffled the planner mind of enemies of this idea.

The policies of escape forward of enemy in creating unity between Zionist regime and Arabs and using these fragile countries as shields, inevitably make Iran show its regional power so that enemy fully knows that the process for making the region insecure for sinister goals will not be left unanswered.

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Iran Supports OPEC As Long as Its Interests Are Protected

LONDON (Reuters) - Iran supports the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as long as the group protects Iranian interests alongside other members, Iran's OPEC governor Amir Hossein Zamaninia said.

Sixty years after its formation, OPEC's founding members, Iran and Venezuela, have been sidelined by U.S. sanctions while its kingpin, Saudi Arabia, has shown it would rather appease Washington than risk losing U.S. support, according to current and former OPEC officials.

"All OPEC members should denounce, in words and in practice, use of oil as a political tool for imposition of sanctions and pressures on producing countries," Zamaninia was quoted as saying by the oil ministry's news agency SHANA. Iran's share of OPEC output has nearly halved to 7.5% since 2010 while Venezuela's has collapsed to 2.3% from almost 10%, according to Reuters calculations based on OPEC data. Saudi Arabia's share, meanwhile, has risen 7 percentage points to 35%.

"We support OPEC as long as the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran are served in a balanced way with other members. Otherwise, membership of no international organization is mandatory," Zamaninia said.

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Trump's Son-in-Law Blackmails Regional Clients for Campaign Photo

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a Twitter message said Trump needs a campaign photo, adding that his son-in-law blackmailed regional clients for it.

"@realDonaldTrump desperately needed a campaign photo. His son-in-law blackmailed their regional clients into giving him one," Zarif wrote in his Twitter account.

"The only problem: 'Peace agreements' being signed are NOT between foes but longstanding allies," he added. "What a diplomatic coup! Stay tuned for more," he noted.

Iran Must Turn Enemies' Threat Into an Opportunity

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said that the country must turn the enemies' threat into an opportunity especially in the current situation that the country is grappling with sanctions.

He made the remarks in the open session of Parliament after hearing the Iranian oil minister's report on the performance and activities of his ministry and added, "In the current situation that the country is under tough and unjust U.S. sanctions, we cannot settle existing problems with the previously-adopted objectives and plans, so that these plans should be updated according to the current requirements."

All corridors of power in the country, ranging from government, Parliament to research centers, industrial sectors, etc., should take effective steps in order to turn the enemies' threats into an opportunity, he said, adding, "The country needs to modernize and update its approach and method of using modern technical parts and equipment in oil industry."

The Ministry of Oil enjoys high potentials and capabilities and can take giant strides in this way, Qalibaf emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the crude-selling of oil products and



added, "Effective measures should be taken in this respect in order to remove crude-selling of products."

He then pointed to the important issue of consumption pattern of oil products in the country and added, "Statistics show that Iran is among highly-consumption countries in the field of oil products and this issue should be taken into serious consideration in line with correcting consumption patterns of oil products."

Parliament speaker called on all responsible organizations and officials to establish unity and amity with each other in line with resolving problems facing the economic sector of the country.

West Asia Under Influence of Iran-Iraq Brotherly Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) –The top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said that the West Asian region is under the influence of the fraternal, close, and good neighborly relations between Iran and Iraq.

On Tuesday morning, Nouri al-Maliki, the former Prime Minister of Iraq and the secretary-general of the Islamic Dawa Party met and held talks with Ali Akbar Velayati, the top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran.

In the sidelines of this meeting and among reporters, Velayati called Nouri al-Maliki as a friend who worked



hard to advance the interests of the Iraqi people, and described his meeting with this Iraqi official as "very positive".

Velayati also expressed hope that under the leadership of the new government led by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, Iraqi politicians will be able to take great steps in resolving the problems of Iraq and West Asia.

During the meeting, the Leader's adviser on international affairs and Nouri al-Maliki stressed the need to further expanding the two countries' interactions in the light of the 4,000-year-old intertwined historical relations and the many cultural commonalities between the two countries.

Iran Supports Republicanism in Afghanistan

KABUL (IRNA) - Iran's ambassador in Kabul said on Tuesday that Tehran supports republicanism in Afghanistan, calling for the democratic achievements of the country over the past 19 years be protected by the Afghan political parties.

Bahador Aminian made the remarks in the meeting with Afghan Acting Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar. According to Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan, Atmar appreciated Iran's support for the peace talks in his country and Iranian full cooperation with Afghanistan, especially with the emigrants residing in Iran, as well as for identity registration, distribution of electronic birth certificates, and printed passports for them.

IRNA reporter in Kabul said that the two politicians also discussed the most recent developments and negotiations between the government of Afghanistan and Taliban to reinforce peace in Afghanistan.

They also discussed the importance of regional consensus on the issue, reduction of violence, and immediate ceasefire.

Leader to Honor War Veterans on Occasion of Sacred Defense Week

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei will honor one million war veterans and defenders of holy shrines in a ceremony to mark Sacred Defense Week, an Iranian official said on Tuesday.



Head of foundation for preservation of Sacred Defense works and values, Brigadier Bahman Kargar said the event will take place via a video conference on the occasion of Sacred Defense Week to start on September 21.

Sacred Defense Week is annually held across Iran in remembrance of those who sacrificed their lives during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran in 1980-88.

About plans to celebrate the Sacred Defense Week, Kargar said that parades will not be staged this year, but eight related defense museums will be inaugurated in eight provinces.

Since its outbreak in December 2019 worldwide, the deadly coronavirus pandemic has postponed many world events and meetings.

Karag said that 54 big projects related to Sacred Defense will open during the Week.

2020 Arba'een Rituals Canceled to Contain COVID-19 Outbreak

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of cultural and educational section of Arba'een said on Tuesday that thanks to the outbreak of coronavirus, 2020 Arba'een rituals was cancelled in Iran and Iraq.

Speaking in a press conference, Hamid Ahmadi said Arba'een rituals will be replaced by other cultural and religious ceremonies in Iran.

He noted that these ceremonies will be held by observing health protocols.

Meanwhile earlier, Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi in a message expressed regret over cancellation of Arba'een rituals due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

Iran's ambassador to Baghdad emphasized that the Central Government of Iraq has informed him that it will not allow Arba'een pilgrims from Iran and other foreign countries to contain coronavirus pandemic.

The Iraqi government has announced the decision for a long time and it will not allow foreign pilgrims to enter the country in any way, he noted.

Arba'een marks the 40th day of martyrdom of Imam Hossein (AS), the third Imam of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) Infallible Household and 72 of his companions in 680 AD in a land in modern Iraq after they refused to pledge allegiance to the tyrant Yazid.

Every year, Muslim pilgrims from across the world flock to Iraq in the weeks leading to Arba'een and walk toward Karbala on foot.

Iran Urges IAEA's Verification Activities in Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An Iranian deputy foreign minister complained about Saudi Arabia's non-transparent nuclear practices, calling on the IAEA to carry out verification activities in the kingdom.

Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand held a meeting with Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi on the sidelines of an IAEA Board of Governors meeting in Vienna.

The Iranian diplomat said while all IAEA Member States are entitled to enjoy nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the situation in Saudi Arabia, its non-transparent activities, and its refusal to allow IAEA inspectors entry are a source of concern.

The IAEA must be able to practice verification activities in Saudi Arabia, he added. Baharvand also highlighted Iran's close cooperation with the UN nuclear agency, stressing that the IAEA should not be influenced by political pressures from certain countries that are aimed at disrupting the interaction between the IAEA and Tehran.

Cooperation in a constructive atmosphere without the influence of third parties would benefit both sides, the Iranian deputy minister told Grossi. The IAEA chief, for his part, described Iran as a major partner of the UN nuclear agency and hailed the country's positive cooperation and the level of verification activities inside Iran.

Grossi visited Iran in late August. At the conclusion of the two-day trip, Iran and the UN agency issued a joint statement on agreements and the results of high-level talks between the two sides. Iran has agreed to voluntarily grant the IAEA access to two sites specified by the agency.

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Regional States Urged to Act Unanimously to Thwart U.S. Plots

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani said that the regional states must act unanimously to thwart the US' plots in creating division in the region.

He made the remarks in a meeting with the Chairman of the Iraqi Rule of Law Coalition Nuri al-Maliki, noting that the enemies of Iraq's unity and development seek to turn the upcoming elections into a ground for conflict and insecurity.

Shamkhani urged maintaining the vigilance and unity of the Iraqi people, particularly Shiite parties and groups, as well as figures.

Nuri al-Maliki, for his part, said that as "we removed terrorism from Iraq and the region, we will be able to neutralize the threats that target Palestine through the cooperation of the Islamic countries".

Iraq's former prime minister and Chairman of the Iraqi Rule of Law Coalition Nuri al-Maliki arrived in Tehran late on Sunday for talks with the Iranian officials.

Iran Masters Science of Enriching Stable Isotopes

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi announced that said that Iran has joined the club of the few countries which has the ability to produce stable isotopes.

"Enrichment is not just uranium enrichment, and with the uranium enrichment project, we can enrich other elements," Salehi said while attending a ceremony on Monday.

Certain elements in the table of elements have about 256 stable isotopes, and these isotopes have wide applications, including in industry, health, agriculture, cultural heritage, and archeology.

Salehi attended a ceremony during the infrastructure construction of the second phase of the stable isotope gas centrifuge project kicked off at the presence of a group of AEOI deputies and managers at Shahid Ali Mohammadi site in Fordow.

The first phase of this project, entitled Feasibility Study of Stable Isotopes with Tellurium and Xenon with IR-1 Centrifuge Machine, was successfully implemented in collaboration with Russia in the past.

Referring to the cooperation of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran with the Russians in the field of production of stable isotopes at the laboratory level, he said: "We have entered a new field, and fortunately we have taken great steps. In this regard, the basic infrastructure for the production of required software has also been provided."

He noted that Iran is using IR-1 centrifuges to enrich stable isotopes such as tellurium and xenon on a pilot basis, and said, "We intend to take this issue to the industrial level.

Iranian, Russian Diplomats Discuss Syria's Developments

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali and special representative of the Russian president for the Middle East and Africa Mikhail Bogdanov held talks about the latest developments in the region, especially Syria.

In a meeting in Moscow, Jalali and Bogdanov discussed the ongoing developments in the region as well as the

bilateral relations between Iran and Russia.

They also exchanged views on the Astana Peace Process on Syria, as well as the developments regarding Palestine, and Iran's nuclear deal.

Jalali and Bogdanov stressed the need for continued cooperation and consultations between Iran and Russia

over regional issues, calling for constant contacts and meetings in the future.

Iran and Russia have formed a strong alliance in recent years, with both supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's legitimate government against foreign-backed militancy.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

12:59

19:28

05:24

06:48

15. If any of your women are guilty of lewdness, Take the evidence of four (Reliable) witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them, or Allah ordain for them some (other) way.

16. If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, Leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

Surah 4. Women (15 - 16)

Tehran, Baku To Boost Transportation, Rail Cooperation

TEHRAN - Iran and the Azerbaijan Republic are to work together closely to further enhance mutual trade, transportation and rail cooperation.

That was discussed in a videoconference meeting between Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Ahmad Eslami and Minister of Roads, Communications and Advanced Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ramin Gholizadeh.

During the discussions, the two sides underlined the need to further develop infrastructure and rail links in the region.

The two sides recalled the determination of both presidents to increase transit and transportation cooperation, expressing hope the two countries will expand their cooperation by implementing joint ventures.

In this online meeting, Eslami noted that the serious and firm will of the leaders of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan is aimed at expanding friendly and fraternal relations between the two nations and two countries.

“We must work together to strengthen relations between the two countries furthering closer cooperation,” he said.

Emphasizing that the increase in cooperation between Tehran and Baku will definitely benefit the two countries, Eslami expressed hope that the two sides will further cooperate in the economic and trade development of the two countries, especially in the field of transportation including the north-south corridor which provides the ground for increasing trade relations between the two countries.

Eslami added: “In line with the will of our leaders, we must strive to strengthen good, brotherly and friendly relations between the people and the government of the two countries of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Iran.”

Gholizadeh also expressed confidence that the joint projects of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran in various fields will further strengthen relations between the two countries.

At the end of the online meeting, the two sides discussed some remaining issues and details regarding the construction of a bridge over the Astarachay River, the Astara Railway Terminal and the Rasht-Astara Railway. They also decided to prepare for the groundbreaking ceremony of the bridge in the near future, after making the necessary amendments to the draft memorandum of understanding.

An agreement was reached to speed up the work to coordinate the draft Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding to create a legal basis for the construction of the bridge.

The volume of bilateral and transit cargo transportation by vehicles between Azerbaijan and Iran has recently increased.

Tehran, Ankara Convene Transportation Commission

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ministry officials have held the ninth meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Transportation Commission via videoconference in an effort to promote cooperation in the international transport industry.

The online meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Transportation Commission was co-chaired by Iran’s Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Shahram Adamnejad and Turkey’s Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Selim Dursun.

Iranian and Turkish ministerial officials in charge of air, rail, road and sea transport also took part in the videoconference.

In the online conference, which followed the negotiations that Iran’s Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Turkey’s Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure held earlier this year, the two sides discussed the ways to enhance cooperation between the two neighbors in the transport sector.

The videoconference was held in a friendly atmosphere with mutual understanding and involved negotiations on air, rail, road and sea transport, as well as combined transport.

Participants in the webinar also agreed to convene the tenth meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Transportation Commission in 2021. Iranian and Turkish diplomatic channels are going to decide how and when the next meeting will be held.

Foreign Passing Flights From Iran’s Sky Hits 13% Growth

TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign passing flights from Iranian sky in the 5th Iranian month in the current year (from July 21 to August 22) registered a 13.4 percent growth as compared to a month earlier.

Statistics put the number of foreign flights passed from Iranian sky in the current Iranian month of Mordad (from July 21 to August 22) at 8,431.

Although the number of foreign flights passed from Iranian sky in the said period recorded a 64.8 percent decline as compared to the last year’s corresponding period, this figure showed a 13.4 percent growth as compared to a month earlier.

Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company on Monday announced the statistics of sortie flights passed from Iranian skies from July 21 to August 22, based on which 8,431 foreign flights passed from the Iranian sky in the same period.

The company put the number of foreign sortie flights passed from Iranian sky from June 21 to July 22 at 7,295, showing a 13.4 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

Accordingly, 30,649 sortie foreign flights have been registered in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (from July 21 to August 22), showing a 77.6 percent decline as compared to the same period of last year.

The Company put the number of sortie foreign flights passed from Iranian skies in the first five months of the previous Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to August 22, 2019) at 137,382.

MSC Produces Hot-Rolled Steel Sheet With Thickness of 12 and 124mm

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN- For the first time in the country, Mobarakeh Steel Company produced hot-rolled steel sheet with thickness of 12 and 14 millimeters of grade ASTM A204Gr.B.

Head of Through-Process Unit of Mobarakeh Steel Company Mr. Alireza Molavizadeh said that due to efforts of his colleagues at the metallurgy and production methods (through-processing), steel-making, hot rolling, laboratory and quality control planning units as well as sales department, the company succeeded in producing hot-rolled steel sheet with thickness of 12 and 14 millimeters with grade ASTM A204GR.B.

He added that this type of alloy sheet contains 0.45 to 0.6 percent of molybdenum, adding that molybdenum increases the strength of steel in the high temperatures and increases the resistance of the sheet to corrosion and creep.

Molavizadeh also said production of this type of sheet in Mobarakeh Steel Company will stop imports and save significant amount of forex. He reiterated the company can also export in case it receives offers.

Meanwhile an expert in the through-processing unit of the company Mr. Hassan Sharafat gave more details on this achievement, saying that the amount of yield strength in this type of sheet is at least 275 Mpa and its tensile strength is in the range of 485 to 620 Mpa. He added the amount of final tensile of the sheet is at least 21 percent.

CBI Put Economic Growth at -0.6% in Q1

TEHRAN (MNA) – Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) put the economic growth of country in the first three months of the current year (from March 21 to June 22) at -0.6 percent without oil included.

Abdolnaser Hemmati broke the news on Mon. and put the country’s economic growth with oil included at -2.8 percent.

Statistics showed that the economic growth of the country in agricultural and industrial-mineral sectors hit +3.8 and +2.5 percent respectively.

In this period, the services sector registered a 1.6 percent decline, he added.

He pointed to the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and added, “Iranian economy is recovering after the coronavirus shock hit all countries of the world.”

As compared with countries that did not face any sanctions and their economies were only affected by the coronavirus, Iran’s economic growth performance is promising, Hemmati emphasized.

Iran’s negative economic growth in the oil sector in the first three months of the current year is due to the sanctions imposed against the country and also reduced global demand caused by the coronavirus, CBI governor added.



Iran Ranks Top for Oil and Gas Exploration

TEHRAN (IRNA) - National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) by exploring 4.9 billion barrels liquid hydrocarbon in 2019, is standing on top of oil giants in the world.

Managing director of National Iranian Oil Company for explorations affairs Saleh Hendi said that based on ‘Wood Mackenzie’ reports with regard to exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the world in 2019, NIOC is ranking first.

Based on the report, NIOC’s exploration is equal to 31% of the entire hydrocarbon discovery in the world.

‘Wood Mackenzie’ added that discovering Eram field with 2.7b barrels (20% of the total gas discovered in the world) and Namavaran Field with 2.3 billion barrels (10.5% of the total oil discovered in the world) are ranking first and third respectively.

The total amount of exploration in 2019 was 21.2 billion barrels which was twice as much as that of 2018.

NIOC (4.97 billion barrels), Gazprom (3.18b barrels), BP (1.4b barrels) and ExxonMobil (0.9b barrels) are ranking 1st – 4th with regard to liquid hydrocarbon discovery.

Iran, Azerbaijan to Develop Maritime Transportation Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – The director general of Tariffs Office at Iran’s PMO, Khosro Saraei, and Head of Maritime Safety Department at the State Maritime Administration of Azerbaijan Vamik Rahimov discussed development of mutual cooperation.

In an online meeting between the two sides, the two sides exchanged views on the latest state of bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime transport and stressed the need to further increase the flow of goods between the two countries’ ports in the Caspian Sea.

They also conferred on the ongoing issues between the two neighboring countries in the field of ports as well as preparation of drafts of some documents for the expansion of future maritime cooperation.

Also during the opening ceremony of this meeting, Abbas Mousavi, Iran’s Ambassador to Baku made some remarks.

He named the Caspian Sea as the sea of peace, good neighborliness, friendship and cooperation.

He noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as two coastal states of the Caspian Sea, have many religious, cultural and historical commonalities, and the Caspian Sea has provided countless capacities and opportunities for cooperation between the two countries.

To achieve the desired result, the two countries’ efforts and cooperation in the sectors of energy, economy, shipping, fishing, tourism and marine sciences must be multiplied, he added.

Iran Ranks First in World In Trout Production


TEHRAN (IRNA) - The head of the Iran Fisheries Organization Nabiullah Khoonmirzaei stated that Iran ranks first in the world in trout production, fifth in carp, second in caviar, and third in sturgeon meat production.

At the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding on cooperation with the Iranian Institute of Nutrition Sciences and Food Technology on Tuesday, the head of the Iran Fisheries Organization added: “Production of fish and aquatic products has increased significantly in recent years, and Iran now ranks almost tenth in the world in shrimp production; in fishing from the Indian Ocean, Iran ranks second in the world and first in the region.”

“Last year, the amount of aquaculture production in Iran exceeded 1,280,000 tons, of which about 525,000 tons is farmed fish,” according to Khoonmirzaei.

“This year the amount of production reaches 1,370,000 tons and the year 1400 (AH) will cross 1,500,000 tons,” he added.

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT



PERMIT NO : 1399.3118

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY - AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9150036

ITEMS	MATERIAL DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
18	PARTS FOR “ AIRPACK” RECIPROCATING AIR COMPRESSOR TYPE HA-550-LT SER. NOS. T-1995-00449-1 TO 00449/3 AIRPACK REFERENCE: 7356-COM REF. AIRPACK NEDERLAND B . V . CYLINDER SET 1ST STAGE	413 Nos

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their “INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE ” letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to qualitative assessment Form no.1 , available at www.nisoc.ir not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for Participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 4,932,900,000 RIAI in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed vie:

www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC’S WAREHOUSE , AGHAJARI, IRAN.

PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. , SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC’S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

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Venezuela Charges Detained U.S. Spy With Terrorism

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela's chief prosecutor Tarek Saab on Monday announced charges of terrorism and weapons trafficking against an alleged U.S. "spy" who was detained last week in the South American country.

Saab said the U.S. citizen, Matthew John Heath, was plotting attacks against Venezuela's oil industry and electricity system. The OPEC member country, mired in a six-year economic crisis, is currently experiencing fuel shortages due to a collapse in output from its oil refineries as well as U.S. sanctions.

The U.S. State Department had no immediate comment.



Russia Completes Volunteer Recruitment for COVID-19 Vaccine Trial

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia has recruited sufficient participants for its large-scale COVID-19 vaccine trial, known as a Phase III trial, the head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, which is backing the vaccine, said on Monday.

"In just two weeks, 55,000 volunteers have already been recruited in Moscow," Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund Said.

Russia began recruiting for what was billed as a 40,000-strong Phase III trial on Aug. 26. Initial results are expected in October or November this year, officials have said.



Putin Throws \$1.5b Lifeline to Belarus Leader



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin bestowed a \$1.5 billion (1.16 billion pounds) loan on Belarus on Monday in a gesture of support for its leader Alexander Lukashenko, who flew to entreat his patron for help after five weeks of mass protests demanding his resignation.

A day after more than 100,000 protesters took to the streets of Minsk with chants of "You're a rat", Lukashenko met Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in urgent need of help to maintain his 26-year grip on power. "First of all, I want to thank you... personally thank you and all Russians, all those, and I will not list them, who were involved in supporting us during this post-election time," Lukashenko said.

The Kremlin said some of the new money would be used to refinance earlier loans.

Putin backed plans Lukashenko has previously announced for constitutional reform, which the opposition has dismissed as a stunt to retain power after a disputed Aug. 9 presidential election. But his spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would stand down a reserve of law enforcement officers and national guards that Putin had placed near the border late last month, ready to intervene in case the situation got out of control.

The move signalled Moscow's keenness to emphasise financial support, not force - and possibly its belief that a violent crackdown by Lukashenko's security forces has been effective enough to keep him in power in the former Soviet republic.

"We want Belarusians themselves, without prompting and pressure from outside, to sort out this situation in a calm manner and through dialogue and to find a common solution," Putin said.

Putin said, however, that defence cooperation would continue. Hours earlier, Russian news agencies reported Moscow was sending paratroopers for joint exercises. It was an uncomfortable encounter for the 66-year-old Lukashenko, who had antagonised Moscow shortly before the election by rounding up 32 Russian nationals that Belarus accused of being mercenaries sent to destabilise the country.

Lukashenko said he was "very grateful" for Moscow's support, adding that he had learned "a very serious lesson" from recent events. At one point, TV footage showed him mopping sweat from his brow with a handkerchief. Since the election, which Lukashenko denies rigging in order to defeat opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, thousands of people have been arrested and nearly all opposition leaders jailed, deported or forced into exile. Police said they detained 774 people on Sunday.

Reacting to news of the Russian loan, Tsikhanouskaya wrote on social media platform Telegram: "Dear Russians! Your taxes will pay for our beatings. We are sure that you would not want that. 'This may prolong the death throes of Lukashenko but it cannot prevent the victory of the people,'" she said. The loan amount slightly exceeds the \$1.4 billion that Belarus burned through in gold and foreign exchange reserves last month in order to support its rouble currency.

EU Says After Summit With China's Xi

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European Union leaders told Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday to open up markets, respect minorities and step back from a crackdown in Hong Kong, also asserting that Europe would no longer be taken advantage of in trade.

Anxious to show that the EU will not take sides in a global standoff between China and the United States, German Chancellor Angela Merkel joined the bloc's chief executive and chairman to deliver a tough-talking message to Beijing.

"Europe is a player, not a playing field," European Council President Charles Michel, who chaired the video summit, told reporters in reference to a growing sense in Europe that China has not met its promises to engage in fair and free trade.

With more than a billion euros a day in bilateral trade, the EU is China's top trading partner, while China is second only to the United States as a market for EU goods and services.

China's Xi was not part of the post-summit news conference and there was no joint statement, but the state-owned Xinhua News Agency reported that Xi rejected any interference in Chinese affairs, particularly on human rights.

"Chinese people will not accept 'an instructor' on human rights and oppose 'double standards'," Xinhua reported Xi as saying during the video summit. "China is willing to strengthen exchanges with the European side based on the principle of mutual respect so that the two sides can both make progress."

The European Union accuses China of breaking a host of global trade rules, from overproduction of steel to stealing Western intellectual property, which Beijing denies.

European attitudes have also hardened towards Beijing because of the novel coronavirus, which many scientists believe originated in China, and because of a new security law on Hong Kong that the West says curtails basic rights.



Suga Wins Party Leadership Race, Headed for Premiership

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, a loyal aide to outgoing prime minister Shinzo Abe, won a landslide victory in a ruling party leadership election on Monday, paving the way for Japan's first change of leader in nearly eight years.

Suga, 71, who has promised to continue Abe's main policies, said his big win would give him the backing to pursue his reform goals - including deregulation and breaking down bureaucratic silos - and that containing the novel coronavirus and reviving the economy were conditions for calling a snap general election.

"As I got big support in numbers today, the environment in which I can pursue my policy agenda in a stable manner has been secured," Suga told a news conference.

Suga won 377 votes out of 534 votes cast, and 535 possible votes, in the leadership election by Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members of parliament and representatives of its 47 local chapters.

Rival Shigeru Ishiba, a former defence minister, won 68 votes and ex-foreign minister Fumio Kishida got 89.

Suga is virtually certain to be elected prime minister in a parliamentary vote on Wednesday because of the LDP's lower-house majority. He will serve out Abe's term as party leader through September 2021.

Suga had emerged as frontrunner after Abe, Japan's longest-serving premier, said last month he would resign because of ill health, ending nearly eight years in office.

There is speculation Suga will call an election for the lower house of parliament as soon as next month to boost his chances of winning a full three-year term as LDP chief next year. A vote for the chamber must be held by late October 2021.

Haiti Capital Brought to Standstill by Protesting Police

PORT AU PRINCE (Dispatches) - Hundreds of protesting Haitian police officers and their supporters, many of them armed and wearing masks, sparked panic in the capital Port-au-Prince on Monday, setting cars on fire as they voiced their anger at the ruling party.

The cops have demanded higher salaries and the release of a colleague -- a member of the narcotics squad has been held since early May on suspicion of murder, arson and destruction of public property.

"What we're asking for is a better life," said one member of the national police force, wearing a mask and sunglasses so he could not be identified.

The protesters fired their service weapons into the air, and rode around town on motorcycles, demanding that authorities release their colleague in a matter of hours.

Several vehicles were set on fire, and an office was partially set ablaze. A similar protest took

place on Friday, and protesters won the release of five imprisoned colleagues.

"The situation is becoming more and more alarming," Renan Hedouville, who runs Haiti's office of citizen protection, told AFP.

"We risk losing Haiti's national police like we lost the armed forces," he said.

Against a backdrop of spiralling gang violence in Haiti in recent months, protesters are angry at the interim director of the national police.

They accuse the director, Normil Rameau, of not doing enough to protect officers.

"Cops are dying and taking bullets, and he says nothing," said one officer taking part in the demonstration.

Haiti's national police has 16,000 among its ranks, and is tasked with ensuring the safety of the impoverished country's 11 million people. It was created in 1994 following the dismantling of the armed forces, implicated in several coups.



Trump Dismisses Climate Concerns

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump, who flew into Sacramento in central California on the third day of a reelection campaign swing, pushed back against state leaders who said climate change underlies ever-stronger wildfires in the region.

President Donald Trump on Monday suggested global warming will reverse itself and dismissed climate change as a cause of ferocious fires engulfing swaths of the US West, during a briefing in California on the deadly blazes.

Trump, who flew into Sacramento on the third day of a reelection campaign swing, pushed back against state officials arguing that a heating climate underlies the ever-stronger blazes, which have killed at least 35 people since the start of summer and forced hundreds of thousands of people out of their homes.

"It will start getting cooler. You just watch," Trump said.

"I wish science agreed with you," responded Wade Crowfoot, the head of the California Natural Resources Agency, to which Trump replied: "I don't think science knows, actually." Trump on his arrival also repeated his argument that the wildfires are due to poor maintenance of forest areas, making them more combustible.

"There has to be strong forest management," he said.

"With regard to the forests, when trees fall down after a short period of time, about 18 months, they become very dry. They become really like a match stick," he added. "They just explode." Minutes earlier, Democratic challenger Joe Biden assailed Trump from the opposite coast as a "climate arsonist" whose reelection would be catastrophic for the environment.

"If you give a climate arsonist four more years in the White House, why would anyone be surprised if we have more of America ablaze?" Biden said, savaging Trump for failing to "take responsibility" for the ongoing wildfire crisis. "We need a president who respects science, who understands that the damage from climate change is already here," added Biden, who was speaking in Delaware.

Climate change amplifies droughts, which dry out regions, creating ideal conditions for wildfires to spread out-of-control and inflict unprecedented damage.

The blazes across California, Oregon and Washington state have burned more than five million acres (two million hectares), torching an area roughly the size of the state of New Jersey, with fears the death toll may rise.



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J, L.balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Tajrish Villa (\$4000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
marble floor
Fully Furn

Elahieh Apt
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S/p, S, J, pkg
(\$1800)

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200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

Sa'adat abad (\$1500)
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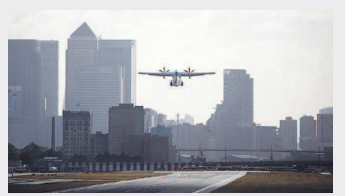
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London City Airport Could Cut 35% of Staff

LONDON (Reuters) - London City Airport said it needed to cut up to 239 jobs or 35% of its staff as part of a restructuring plan as the coronavirus pandemic pushed down passenger numbers to much lower levels than previously.

The airport, the British capital's fifth-biggest and most central, said in a statement on Monday that it had opened consultation with its staff over the potential job losses as part of its preparations for the traditionally weaker winter season. Britain's airports and airlines have warned the government to expect many more thousands of job cuts if it does not allow testing at airports as an alternative to quarantine rules, which deter travel and are preventing the sector from recovering.



OPEC Sees Steeper Oil Demand Drop As Virus Remains Challenging

LONDON (Reuters) - World oil demand will fall more steeply in 2020 than previously forecast due to the coronavirus and recover more slowly than expected next year, OPEC said on Monday, potentially making it harder for the group and its allies to support the market.

World oil demand will tumble by 9.46 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a monthly report, more than the 9.06 million bpd decline expected a month ago.

Oil prices have collapsed as the coronavirus crisis has curtailed travel and economic activity. While some countries have eased lockdowns, allowing demand to recover, a rising number of new cases and higher oil output have weighed on prices.

"Risks remain elevated and tilted to the downside, particularly related to the development of COVID-19 infection cases as well as possible cures," OPEC said of the 2021 outlook.

"Increased usage of teleworking and distance conferencing is estimated to limit transportation fuels from fully recovering to 2019 levels."

That means demand will rebound more slowly than expected next year. OPEC sees consumption rising in 2021 by 6.62 million bpd, 370,000 bpd less than expected last month.

Oil stocks have built up due to the demand collapse. OPEC said inventories in developed nations fell by 4.5 million barrels in July but stood 260.6 million barrels above the five-year average, a yardstick that OPEC before the pandemic saw as a desirable level.

Crude LCOc1 was trading below \$40 a barrel on Monday after the report was released, below levels that many OPEC members need to balance their budgets. Prices have fallen by almost 15% so far this month.

To tackle the drop in demand, OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, agreed to a record supply cut of 9.7 million bpd that started on May 1, while the United States and other nations said they would pump less.

In the report, OPEC said its output rose by 760,000 bpd to 24.05 million bpd in August, as the 9.7 million bpd cut tapered to a reduction of 7.7 million bpd from Aug. 1.

That amounted to 103% compliance with the pledges, according to a Reuters calculation - up from July's figure of 97%.

A monitoring panel of OPEC+ ministers meets on Thursday to discuss the market. Some delegates have voiced concern about the drop in prices this month although there are, as yet, no signs that the group is planning to tweak the supply pact.

The report also forecast demand for OPEC crude will be lower than expected this year and next, as supply increases outside the group and because of the reduced global demand outlook.

OPEC said demand for its crude this year will average 22.6 million bpd, down 700,000 bpd from the previous forecast. That suggests the market will be in surplus should OPEC keep pumping at August's rate. Next year's forecast was cut by 1.1 million bpd.

Fossil Fuel Demand to Take Historic Knock Amid COVID-19 Scars

LONDON (Reuters) - Fossil fuel consumption is set to shrink for the first time in modern history as climate policies boost renewable energy while the coronavirus epidemic leaves a lasting effect on global energy demand, BP said in a forecast.

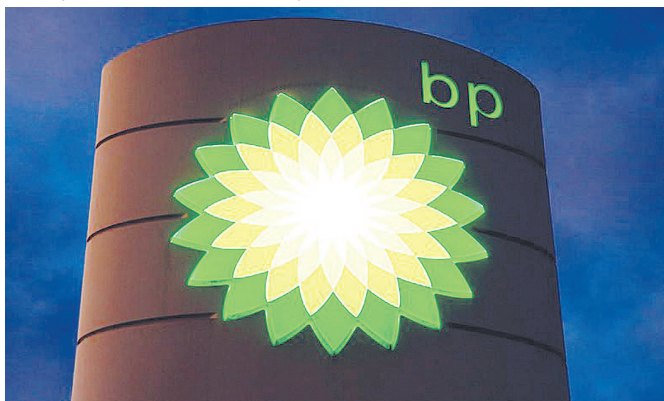
BP's 2020 benchmark Energy Outlook underpins Chief Executive Bernard Looney's new strategy to "reinvent" the 111-year old oil and gas company by shifting renewables and power.

London-based BP expects global economic activity to only partially recover from the epidemic over the next few years as travel restrictions ease. But some "scarring effects" such as work from home will lead to slower growth in energy consumption.

BP this year extended its outlook into 2050 to align it with the company's strategy to slash the carbon emissions from its operations to net zero by the middle of the century. It includes three scenarios that assume different levels of government policies aimed at meeting the 2015 Paris climate agreement to limit global warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

Under its central scenario, BP forecasts COVID-19 will knock around 3 million barrels per day (bpd) off by 2025 and 2 million bpd by 2050. In its two aggressive scenarios, COVID-19 accelerates the slowdown in oil consumption, leading to it peaking last year. In the third scenario, oil demand peaks at around 2030.

In the longer term, demand for coal, oil and natural gas is set to slow dramatically. While the share of fuels has shrunk in the past as a percentage of the total energy pie, their consumption has never contracted in absolute terms, BP chief economist Spencer Dale told reporters. "(The energy transition) would be an unprecedented event," Dale said. "Never in modern history has the demand for any traded fuel declined in absolute terms."



French Recession Seen Less Dire Than Expected at -8.7% in 2020

PARIS (Reuters) - France's economy will contract in 2020 by less than expected only a few months ago as business activity and consumer spending bounced back after the country emerged from one of Europe's strictest coronavirus lockdowns, the central bank said on Monday.

The forced closure of most shops, offices and cafes for nearly two months until May 11 plunged the economy into one of the deepest recessions in Europe with an unprecedented 13.8% slump in the second quarter from the previous three months.

The central bank estimated in its quarterly outlook that activity was now back to running 5% below normal levels, which translated into a 16% surge in third quarter gross domestic product from the previous quarter.

That left euro zone's second-biggest economy on course to shrink 8.7% for this year as a whole, by far France's worst post-war recession but less than the 10.3% slump that had been expected in June, the Bank of France said.

The economy would rebound in 2021 with growth of 7.4% and 3.0% in 2022, which would mean activity would have recovered all lost ground since the outbreak by the first quarter of 2022.

In July, the central bank had expected the economy to rebound 6.9% in 2021 and 3.9% in 2022.

Consumer spending, traditionally the motor of the French economy, would recover close to pre-crisis levels in the second half of this year and the savings rate would return to normal level after peaking in the second quarter at 27.4% of disposable income as households could not spend extra cash during the lockdown.

The central bank estimated that the economy would shed 825,000 jobs this year, before creating 125,000 next year and 600,000 in 2022. The unemployment rate was seen peaking at 11.1% next year.



German Economic Recovery to Continue in Second-Half, Third-Quarter

BERLIN (Reuters) - Europe's largest economy is set to continue recovering from the coronavirus crisis in the remainder of

2020 and will likely grow strongly in the third quarter but it probably will not reach its pre-crisis level until 2022, the German Economy Ministry said.

The trough of the recession was reached in the second quarter and the easing of lockdown measures since May led to a rapid recovery in industry and in some service sectors, the ministry said in its monthly report on Monday, adding that the revival has lost some steam lately though.

"The German economy is continuing to pick up, albeit at a more moderate pace," the ministry said.

Economists expect Europe's biggest economy to show a return to growth in the third quarter after a record 9.7% contraction in the second quarter as consumer spending, company investment and exports all collapsed.

The ministry said significant economic growth was likely in the third quarter thanks to impetus from May and June, when there were signs of a rebound.

It said exports remained far from their pre-coronavirus levels and while industrial production had returned to almost 90% of its pre-coronavirus level and was continuing to rise, it had lost some momentum.

Earlier this month, the German government revised upward its economic forecast for this year to a decline of 5.8% from a previously expected slump of 6.3%.

A temporary cut in Germany's value-added tax (VAT) as part of the government's stimulus package and a child bonus are also expected to boost domestic demand in the second half of the year, it added.

EU to Delay Euro Clearing Decision on Brexit Divorce Threat

LONDON (Reuters) - The European Union is set to delay a decision on allowing clearing houses in London to continue clearing euro transactions for EU-based clients due to Britain's plan to breach part of the Brexit divorce settlement, a derivatives industry source said.

The delay is one of the first warning shots from the EU as UK lawmakers vote later on Monday on a bill that would breach parts of Britain's Withdrawal Agreement from the bloc. Brussels had said it would grant Britain "time-limited" access to euro derivatives clearing from January to avoid huge disruption to markets as a unit of the London Stock Exchange (LSE) LSE.L clears over 90% euro-denominated swaps that are widely used by companies.

The European Commission was due to formally take that decision later this week, but is now expected to delay it until around the end of the month, the source said, citing an industry meeting late last week with a European Commission official.

The Commission had no immediate comment.

The delay was linked to Britain's perceived unpicking of the Withdrawal Agreement it signed with the bloc, the source added.

Britain left the EU in January and transition arrangements that still allow unfettered access to the bloc end on Dec. 31.

Without legal certainty of access to the EU, the LSE's clearing unit LCH must give its clients in the bloc three-months' notice to move billions of euros worth of swaps positions out of Britain.

Euro clearing has long been a battleground between Britain, too keen to preserve London's clout as a global finance hub, and EU policymakers, who believe the bulk of activity should reside in the euro zone under the eye of the European Central Bank.

But moving large swaps positions from LCH to rivals such as Deutsche Boerse's Eurex in Frankfurt in a short time would be costly for banks and unnerve markets.

Brussels had therefore opted to allow more time for this to happen, although it had not said how much time.

If Britain's bill to override parts of its Brexit divorce settlement becomes law it could sour its attempts to have access to other financial activities in the bloc such as trading shares.

S&P Expects India's Economy To Contract 9% in Fiscal 2021



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - S&P Global Ratings on Monday slashed its FY21 growth forecast for India to (-) 9 per cent, from (-) 5 per cent estimated earlier, saying that rising COVID-19 cases would keep private spending and investment lower for longer. "One factor holding back private economic activity is the continued escalation of the COVID-19," S&P Global Ratings Asia-Pacific Economist Vishrut Rana said.

Rising COVID-19 cases in India will keep private spending and investment lower for longer. S&P Global Ratings now expects the country's economy to contract by 9 per cent in the current fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2021, the US-based rating agency said in a statement.

For 2021-22 fiscal, it expects economic growth at 10 per cent. S&P had earlier forecast India's economic contraction at 5 per cent.

It said risks to the growth outlook include a weaker recovery in informal sectors of the economy and deeper economic losses for micro and small enterprises.

"In addition, if credit quality worsens materially following the expiration of loan moratoriums, the recovery will slow. One factor that presents potential upside to growth is the availability of a widely-distributed COVID vaccine earlier than our current estimate around mid-2021," S&P added. It said the 23.9 per cent contraction in the April-June quarter was larger than expected.

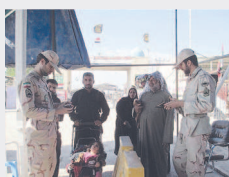
"While India eased lockdowns in June, we believe the pandemic will continue to restrain economic activity. New cases per day in India averaged nearly 90,000 in the week ending September 11, according to data from the World Health Organization. "This is up from an average of about 70,000 per day in August. As long as the virus spread remains uncontained, consumers will be cautious in going out and spending and firms will be under strain," S&P said.

Last week, two other global rating agencies Moody's and Fitch projected Indian economy to contract 11.5 per cent and 10.5 per cent respectively in the current fiscal. However, Goldman Sachs has estimated the contraction at 14.8 per cent.

Khuzestan Border With Iraq Reopens for Border Trade

AHVAZ (IRNA) - Managing director of Roads and Transport Department of Khuzestan province said on Tuesday that Shalamcheh and Chazabeh borders with Iraq reopened for border trade ending lockdown for coronavirus pandemic.

Gholam Abbas Bahraminia said the two borders are only open for business affairs and no passenger is allowed to commute. Earlier on Sunday, Iranian Customs Administration spokesman Roohollah Latifi said that upon the agreement of Iraqi officials, Mehran border had increased its working days from two days a week to four days.



Libya Calls for Turkish Energy Firms to Take Larger Share of Natural Gas Reserves

TRIPOLI (Dispatches) - Libyan authorities have invited Turkish companies to assist in production by taking a larger share of oil and gas reserves in the country, a senior business leader said.

"Libyan authorities have invited Turkish gas and oil companies to Libya, stressing that Turkish energy companies have not been able to not get the necessary share of oil and gas reserves in the country and should receive a higher share," said Murtaza Karanfil, head of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) Turkey-Libya Business Council.

Karanfil noted that they had gathered 35 Turkish firms together with officials from the Libyan Council for Oil and Gas, with an agreement looking to be signed in the near future.

"We hope that the negotiations we initiated with the Libyan Oil and Gas Council at their request will be the beginning of a process that will result in the increased interest of the two countries," he told Andolu Agency (AA). "In the coming periods, we plan to sign an agreement on this issue, and we believe that this will create an unbreakable corridor between us and Libya."

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on the extracting and processing of gas and oil, he added. "We hope that in the future, Turkish companies will have the opportunity to extract and process gas and oil from Libya."

Turkey has on many occasions expressed its ambitions for lasting cooperation with the North African nation in many areas, including on oil and gas explorations, particularly after the two countries in late 2019 signed a pact on maritime borders in the Eastern Mediterranean.

A senior Turkish energy ministry official last week told reporters that Turkey was in talks for oil and gas exploration in Libya.

"We are in talks with some potential new agreements and new fields, but mainly the areas we're looking at are the oil production areas. We are also discussing some potential offshore blocks," he said.

The cost of extracting gas and oil in Libya is more convenient than other countries in the region, Karanfil said, expressing the expectations that Turkish companies would take steps in the name of extracting oil and natural gas in the country in the future.

He recalled the Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Dönmez's statement in June that Ankara had determined seven licensed areas in the Eastern Mediterranean for oil exploration and drilling under the pact with Libya, adding that drilling could start within three to four months.

National energy firm Turkish Petroleum (TPAO) has already applied to drill in the seven chosen licensed areas as part of the deal.



Libya calls for Turkish energy firms to take larger share of natural gas reserves -Off shore platforms at bouri feild - oilandgas360

Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) is involved in the talks, which include topics such as power generation and pipeline operations, the senior official said.

With Turkey's help, Libya's United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) halted an assault on Tripoli and in recent months pushed back putschist Gen. Khalifa Haftar's forces, which are supported by Russia, France, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt.

Karanfil said the economic loss suffered by Libya due to conflicts it has been experiencing for nine years has reached the level of half a trillion dollars.

"Libya's oil revenue of about \$90 billion, has fallen all the way down to 20 percents and there have even been periods when they had almost no income in this area," he added.

The maritime pact with Libya asserted Turkey's rights in the region in the face of unilateral drilling by the Greek Cypriot administration, clarifying that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) also has rights to the resources of the region.

China Warns U.S. Over U.S.-Taiwan Economic Talks

TAIPEI (AP) — China warned the United States on Monday of potential "serious damage" to their relations if it does not withdraw from an upcoming economic meeting with Taiwan that is expected to be attended by a senior American official.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin urged the U.S. at a daily briefing to "stop all forms of official exchanges with Taiwan, so as to avoid serious damage to China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

Taiwanese media reported that U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Keith Krach is planning to visit the island later this week for an economic and commercial dialogue with Taiwan's government.

The visit would follow one by U.S. Health Secretary Alex Azar last month. Azar was the highest-level U.S. Cabinet official to visit since a break in formal ties between the U.S. and Taiwanese government in 1979, when the U.S. accepted a "one-China policy" with Beijing as its government.

A visit by Krach is likely to inspire further anger from China. China considers self-ruled Taiwan part of its own territory, and strongly opposes any official contacts between other nations and the island. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed last week that it was in negotiations with the U.S. on such talks, but did not comment on a specific date or who might attend from Washington.

Tensions are high between the U.S. and China over issues including trade, cybersecurity, technology and Hong Kong's new national security law. Relations have deteriorated further since the coronavirus outbreak. Trump blames China for the pandemic, and he and his administration have repeatedly accused the country of hiding crucial information about the virus from the global community.

Persian Gulf's Fiscal Diet Risks Deeper Pain Amid Oil Price Uncertainty

DUBAI (Reuters) - Oil-rich Persian Gulf nations are relying on a well-worn playbook of spending less and borrowing more to get through the coronavirus crisis but with the outlook for oil clouded by uncertainty the strategy is riskier than before.

Previous bouts of belt-tightening have relied on rebounding oil prices to replenish state coffers but Persian Gulf states have bigger funding needs and lower foreign assets than in previous crises, while the pandemic risks keeping energy demand subdued for longer.

Brent prices have rebounded since plunging to a more than 20-year low in April, but at just over \$40 per barrel, they are significantly below what most Persian Gulf states would need to balance their budgets.

In the meantime, the shift to austerity in a region where government spending is the main engine of economic growth, along with a move in some countries to protect citizens' jobs at the expense of foreign workers, is already hurting growth prospects.

"The problem faced by the PGCC (Persian Gulf Cooperation Council) is that domestic demand is driven by government spending and this would need significantly higher oil prices," said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank.

"Fiscal buffers have deteriorated over the past few years limiting the space to support growth and requiring fiscal reforms."

The consolidation measures, which contrast with



trillions of dollars in stimulus packages introduced by governments outside the region, reflect the Gulf's limited room for maneuver.

Budget deficits there currently range from an expected 11.4% of GDP for Saudi Arabia to 16.9% for Oman, according to the International Monetary Fund, with only Qatar

expected to stay in surplus.

Current policy responses are largely in line with how regional authorities reacted to previous crises. The Persian Gulf saw debt levels spiking after the 2014-2015 oil price crash, and several countries enacted labor policies that favored locals over migrant workers after the 2011 Arab Spring.

This time, however, the risks are greater because the outlook for oil demand is more uncertain.

Goldman Sachs GS.N expects Brent prices to rally in 2021, reaching \$65 per barrel by the third quarter next year. But a recent Reuters survey forecast a modest uptick in 2021, with Brent averaging \$50.45 per barrel.

That would still be far from covering most Persian Gulf countries' deficits. The International Monetary Fund in April estimated Saudi Arabia's breakeven oil price at \$76.1 per barrel this year and \$66 next year.

"We expect the modernization of PGCC economies and their diversification away from oil to take time," said Moody's, which estimates non-oil economic growth to remain weak in the coming two years when compared to historical averages.

A Saudi finance ministry spokesman said that the crisis will have a negative effect on non-oil economic growth this year, but less than what was estimated at the beginning of the downturn.

There are some differences of approach between the six PGCC countries.

Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy, has said that it is not in austerity mode, and that it will likely stick to the budget announced in December.

It has nonetheless tripled a value-added tax, suspended a cost of living allowance, and announced spending cuts in non-priority areas.

"There is a strong view dictating fiscal policy in Saudi that oil prices should be recovering this year and next year to a point that it would justify maintaining spending unchanged," said John Sfakianakis, a Persian Gulf expert at the University of Cambridge.

"It's a more aggressive approach than other Persian Gulf countries, who are just cutting down spending and borrowing, as they brace for a slower oil price recovery and an even slower pick up in spending."

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The Islamic Republic of Iran for years has always reiterated that, for the security of north of the Indian Ocean, Sea of Oman, the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf and today Caucasian region and Caspian Sea region as one of the most important international security issues, it attaches great importance, and in the past years the country's approach has been so in the region that countries in the region in cooperation with one another can provide security for the region, and presence of countries like the U.S. or Zionist Regime instead of restoring peace and security will be the source of insecurity.

During the previous joint drill with Russia and China, U.S. Defense Department (Pentagon) Spokesman Sean Robertson in reaction to the drill said, "We are aware of the multilateral exercise being conducted between Iran, China and Russia in the Arabian Sea. We are monitoring it and will continue to work with our partners and allies to ensure freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in international waterways," while the drill was being conducted for safety and security of vessels and the Pentagon Spokesman, whether knowingly or unknowingly, aligned with the goal of the drill.

It is predicted during the upcoming military drill which is to be conducted by the aligned powerful forces on the ground, the sea and in the air, NATO would show more worrisome reactions, and it would lay the ground for their withdrawal from their policies of interference because economies of the Western countries have been and are so involved with resolving the consequence of the Coronavirus that any tension, either psychological or else, would mess up their balance and mind.

That the hegemony and power of the regional states lays the ground for restoring security in the region is an indisputable and obvious fact. We should wait and watch the preparation of the groundwork for emergence of a tremendous unity in the West Asia in order to see how this new-found military drill extends this authority to the territorial integrity and internal security of countries from Lebanon to the borders of Korea and Japan.



Tehran Outperforms...

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Referring to development of joint fields as a priority, he said West Karoun oilfields production has reached 400,000 barrels per day seven years ago.

He reiterated that Iran's petrochemical production capacity will reach to 100 million tons worth \$25b by next year.

He stated that Iran's oil products exports experienced four-fold growth compared with eight years ago.

Gas production also reached 107 million liter last year, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zanganeh expressed readiness for providing license, feed and market for downstream sector.

He referred to record of 80 million cubic meters gas exports during the current Iranian year, saying Iran is now one of the biggest exporters of oil derivatives through stock market.

Zanganeh also said that the Iranian government and the parliament should stand up against economic war.

He referred to the all-out economic war imposed on the Iranian nation by the U.S. and the Zionist Regime through having MEK's back, stressed that the Iranian government and the parliament should stand up to this ever-increasing all-out war through integration and unison.

The topics of discussions include the increase of Iran's oil production capacity, an increase of investment in the South Pars Gas-Condensate field.

Iran's senior official then went on to explain some of Iran's oil industry achievements in terms of resistance in recent years.

Among other topics raised by Zanganeh, one can refer to an increase in the capacity of the crude oil refineries as well as crude oil refineries and Gas condensate, Gas supply development in the rural areas, supporting the knowledge-based companies in the oil field studies.

He also reacted to criticisms over lifting gasoline sanctions, saying that it was the government decision which did not face any opposition from the then Majlis.

Zanganeh also answered a question on why the ministry does not start export to Pakistan, saying that it is in the hands of Iran and blamed sanctions.

140 More Iranians Killed...

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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.

Iran Supports OPEC...

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He added that he believed remaining in OPEC and strengthening the organization was currently in Iran's interests.

To tackle a drop in demand, OPEC and its allies - a grouping known as known as OPEC+ - agreed to a record supply cut of 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) that started on May 1, while the United States and other nations said they would pump less. In August, OPEC+ eased its cuts to 7.7 million bpd as demand partially recovered. The OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) will meet on Thursday to discuss the performance of the deal so far.

OPEC said on Monday world oil demand will fall more steeply in 2020 than previously forecast due to the coronavirus and recover more slowly than expected next year, potentially making it harder for the group and its allies to support the market. Zamaninia said "As long as the world economy has not returned to pre-coronavirus state, it would be impossible to offer a realistic outlook about the future of global oil demand."

Jumbo-Visma Riders Tested Negative for COVID-19

PARIS (Reuters) - Jumbo-Visma rider and yellow jersey holder Primož Roglič said on Monday he and his team have tested negative for COVID-19 after the second round of tests on Sunday and Monday, ahead of stage 16 of the Tour de France. The rules in place this year state that should a team have two positive cases, the whole outfit will be thrown out of the race. "They said that we were negative so I'm happy that we have one more week of racing," Roglič said. However, a team spokesman remained cautious as he said the results of the staff members were not out yet.

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Cink Wins Safeway Open

LONDON (Reuters) - Stewart Cink made eight birdies in the final round of the PGA Tour's season-opening Safeway Open on Sunday to claim a two-shot victory over Harry Higgs for his first title since winning the British Open in 2009. The 47-year-old American fired a final-round 65 to finish on 21-under for the tournament. Higgs, who began the round one shot behind overnight leaders Brian Stuard, James Hahn and Cameron Percy, found himself three behind Cink in the closing stages.

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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

Nadal Returns, Djokovic Looking for Redemption in Rome

ROME (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal returns to competition after a six-month enforced break while Novak Djokovic is looking to make up for his US Open disqualification as the short clay-court season got underway in Rome on Monday without spectators.

The tournament at Rome's Foro Italico normally takes place in May but was pushed back after the coronavirus pandemic which turned the calendar upside down.

"Obviously, it's not the same thing. There is no public, we are in a bubble, we cannot enjoy the city," said Nadal, who will play his first competitive match since his win in Acapulco at the end of February.

"But at least we have a tennis tournament."

Nadal, 34, is the second seed behind world number one Djokovic in the tune-up for the final Grand Slam of the season at the French Open on September 27.

"Excited to be back. Circumstances have been, you know, heavy for everyone, tough ones," said Nadal who is targeting a tenth title in the Roman capital.

Professional tennis was shut down from March until early August.

And the world number two opted out of the U.S. hard court tour because of coronavirus concerns and citing the "madness" of the new calendar.

"Without regret," he insisted before his second round tie midweek against 27th-ranked compatriot Pablo Carreno Busta, who reached the semi-finals of the U.S. Open.

"I am similar to always, maybe a little bit worse because I didn't compete for the last six months.

"But here I am. I arrived with plenty of time to try to have the right practices. That's what I am doing. I know I have a tough match against Pablo. He's playing great." "It's going to be a good test. I'm excited about going back to the competition without big expectations."



But third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas does not believe the lack of competition will have an impact on two-time defending champion Nadal who has a 61-6 record in the tournament.

"I don't think Rafa will be struggling much playing here," said Tsitsipas.

"Regardless of how he feels, I'm sure he'll find a way. He always finds a way every single year."

Four-time Rome winner Djokovic, who has reached nine finals in the Italian capital, wants to turn the page on his dramatic disqualification in the round of 16 at the US Open, after throwing the ball involuntarily at a lines judge.

"It's great that I have a tournament right after that happened, because I feel like the earlier I get back in a competition mode, the faster I'll overcome that memory and kind of reprogramme it," the Serb told reporters in the Italian capital.

"When you hit a ball like I did, you have a chance to hit someone on the court. The rules are clear, I accepted that.

"I'm going to take this in, you know, as profound as possible for me as a big lesson."

Djokovic had been unbeaten this year before his US Open exit and is targeting a title he last won in 2015.

"Rafa obviously decided to stay on clay and practice, surely that gives him more advantage, but even if he didn't practice for that long on clay, he would still be the number one favourite in Roland Garros or any other clay tournament because he's Rafa, you know," he added.

"And playing on clay he's the ultimate challenge.

"It's going to be adjustment challenge, you know, how quickly can we adapt, how quickly can we adjust to this new surface."

Neymar's Fate To Be Known This Week



PARIS (Dispatches) - Neymar's punishment for being one of five players sent off following a brawl at the end of Paris Saint-Germain's defeat to Marseille will be revealed on Wednesday, the French Football League (LFP) said Monday.

The world's most expensive footballer was shown the red card in stoppage time of the 1-0 loss at the Parc des Princes alongside teammates Layvin Kurzawa and Leandro Paredes, as well as Marseille's Dario Benedetto and Jordan Amavi.

Neymar insisted Alvaro Gonzalez called him a "monkey" in a series of furious tweets late on Sunday after he was dismissed for slapping the Marseille defender on the back of the head.

"Look at the racism. That's why I hit him," Neymar, who was returning from coronavirus quarantine, said as he left the pitch. Gonzalez later denied making a racist comment.

"The only regret I have is not hitting this idiot in the face," Neymar then posted after the game, before replying to a Gonzalez tweet to call him a "racist".

Osaka Climbs To No.3

LONDON (Reuters) - U.S. Open champion Naomi Osaka has climbed six spots to third in the latest WTA rankings released on Monday while Victoria Azarenka's career revival gathered traction as the Flushing Meadows finalist returned to the top-15.

Australian Ash Barty and Simona Halep of Romania continued to occupy the number one and two spots in the rankings respectively despite opting against travelling to New York for the Grand Slam.

The 22-year-old Osaka, who beat Azarenka in a thrilling final on Saturday for her second Grand Slam title in New York and third overall, was the only player in the top-10 to gain places.

Osaka also reached the final of the Western & Southern Open, which was held at Flushing Meadows this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but had to withdraw against Azarenka due to an injury.

Azarenka, also a former world number one, arrived in New York having not won a match this year and ranked 59.

But the two-time Australian Open champion went on to win the U.S. Open warmup event and capped her spectacular comeback by reaching her first Grand Slam final in seven years.

It helped her climb to number 14 in the WTA rankings - her highest since January, 2017.

Ferrari Stuck In a Hole

ROME (Dispatches) - Ferrari chief Rexecutive Louis Camilleri says that the iconic Formula One team knows they are "stuck in a hole" after watching his drivers finish outside the podium places at the Tuscan Grand Prix.

Charles Leclerc and departing four-time F1 champion Sebastian Vettel were eighth and 10th respectively at Mugello on Sunday, encouraging results after two pointless races at Spa-Francorchamps and Monza but hardly inspiring on their 1000th GP.

"We're in a hole now, and we know we're in a hole," he said.

"It's a confluence of factors, but anything I say will come across as excuses. And we're not into excuses.



Lampard has invested around £200 million (\$257 million) on Timo Werner, Kai Havertz, Hakim Ziyech and Ben Chilwell, with Thiago Silva arriving on a free transfer and goalkeeper Edouard Mendy reportedly set to join from Rennes.

By contrast, Klopp has added only Greece left-back Kostas Tsimikas to his league-winning squad so far.

Lampard, whose side began their campaign away at Brighton, said any owner needed

Lampard Laughs Off Klopp's Chelsea Spending Jibe

LONDON (AFP) - Chelsea coach Frank Lampard says he is amused rather than annoyed by Jurgen Klopp's criticism of his summer spending, pointing out that Liverpool splashed the cash on the road to Premier League glory.

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Lampard, whose side began their campaign away at Brighton, said any owner needed

Lampard, whose side began their campaign away at Brighton, said any owner needed

huge resources to compete in the Premier League.

"I was less annoyed with it, I found it more, slightly amusing, I would say," he said, referring to Klopp's comments.

"Because I think when you talk about the owners of clubs I don't think it matters what line of business they come from, we're talking about some very wealthy owners of clubs in the Premier League."

Lampard, who last season warned Liverpool not to get "too arrogant" after they won the title, said the champions' owners, Fenway Sports Group, had spent a lot of money since Klopp had been in charge.

"Liverpool's story, it's a fantastic story of a club over four-and-a-half, five years that Jurgen Klopp's been there that have managed to get recruitment right to a really high level," said the Chelsea boss.

Big-Spending Chelsea Start With Win at Brighton

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 3-1 win at Brighton on Monday as Timo Werner made a confident debut following Frank Lampard's spending spree.

Blues boss Lampard has spent around £200 million (\$257 million) on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising.

Germany striker Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead.

Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward. Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was guilty of another mistake when Leandro Trossard equalised for Brighton.

But Reece James' superb strike put Chelsea back in front before Kurt Zouma's deflected effort sealed the points. It was an encouraging opening to the campaign for Lampard, who has accepted he is under pressure to deliver a title challenge after spending more than any other club so far in the summer transfer window.

Chelsea finished 33 points behind champions Liverpool in fourth last season before a disappointing FA Cup final defeat against Arsenal, but they are primed to improve if Lampard can gel his new signings.

Lampard's other expensive recruits, former Ajax playmaker Hakim Ziyech and ex-Leicester left-back Ben Chilwell, were both sidelined by injuries, while Thiago Silva wasn't available as he returns to training following his free transfer from Paris Saint-Germain.



Safety Car Re-Starts Putting Drivers at Risk

LONDON (Reuters) - Six-times Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton has called for a rethink on how races are re-started behind the safety car because he fears drivers are being put at risk.

Sunday's Tuscan Grand Prix at Mugello was stopped twice due to crashes, the first time after a four-car pile-up when backmarkers accelerated too soon.

Valtteri Bottas had been leading for Mercedes and controlling the pace, backing the pack up and delaying his getaway for maximum effect.

Hamilton, who took his 90th career win at the Italian circuit, told reporters the safety car lights were being turned off, effectively handing over control to the race leader, later and later.

"They're obviously trying to make it more exciting but ultimately today you've seen they've put people at risk, so perhaps they need to rethink that," said Hamilton, who felt Sunday was "a little bit over the limit."

Red Bull's Alex Albon agreed it had been dangerous.

"I think tracks like this are always going to be difficult as well, with long straights but definitely something could have been done better," he added.

Ferrari-owned Mugello was being used for the first time as a grand prix venue.

Bottas said Mercedes had expressed some concern before the race, but to no effect.

"They said basically they're going to keep doing it because it's better for the show. I think that was the reply," added the Finn. Asked whether safety was being compromised for the show, Hamilton said he did not want to overstep the mark. "They definitely need to take into account the safety aspect because today wasn't particularly safe with the restart," declared the Briton.

