

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani Emphasized That the Basis of the U.S. Policy Is to Create Chaos and Insecurity, No matter Whether It is Afghanistan or Iraq

IRAN NEWS

Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf Condemned the U.S.' Continued Economic Terrorism Against the Iranian Nation, Calling on Muslim Leaders Not to Follow Such Sanctions

VOL. XXVI, No. 7071 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY OCTOBER 20, 2020 - MEHR 29, 1399

2 DOMESTIC

President Accuses U.S of Trying to Abuse Afghan Peace Talks



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Tehran, Kabul To Bolster Energy, Transportation Cooperation



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Churches Burnt as Chile Anniversary Rallies Turn Violent



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Spurs Rocked On Bale's Return



> SEE PAGE 8

Tehran Has Nothing To Hide About Ukrainian Plane Incident

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Baharvand said that Iran has nothing to hide about Ukrainian plane incident and is ready to honestly inform the Ukrainian delegation about the details.

The second round of the related talks over the flight 752 tragedy started at the place of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran on Monday.

During the meeting, head of Iranian delegation Mohsen Baharvand expressed sympathy with the families of the victims in the Ukrainian plane incident, saying, "The Ukrainian plane had been downed due to human error and the Islamic Republic of Iran will try to reassure the Ukrainian side."

Stating that the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on transparency, he added, "Iran has nothing to hide about Ukrainian plane incident and is ready to honestly inform the Ukrainian delegation and people about the details of the incident."

Baharvand called the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ukraine two friendly countries that unfortunately witnessed this incident and now have to reach an agreement at the negotiating table.

See Page 7

Navy Sees Iran Arms Embargo as Only a Joke

TEHRAN (MNA) – Referring to the end of Iran arms embargo, Commander of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said that Iran Navy has no need to buy weapons today, and arms embargo is considered a joke for the Navy.

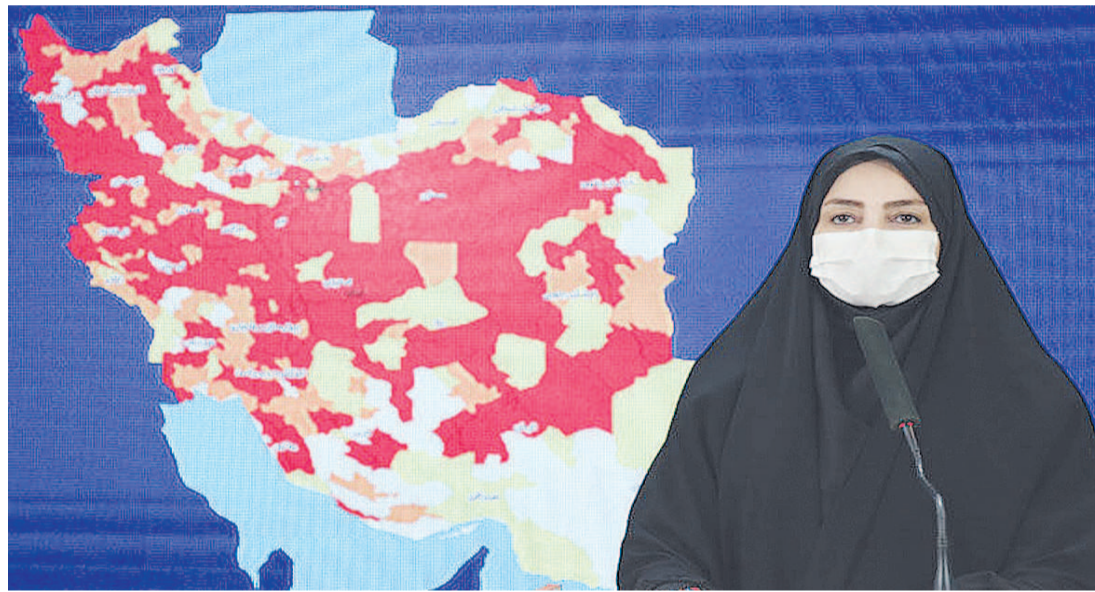
Stating that at one time Iran was in dire need of spare parts and weapons and it was looking for a country to give it torpedoes, cannons and weapons or the teach the technology of building a float, Khanzadi said, "But today, I dare say that the lifting or continuation of the arms embargo is not effective for Iran Navy because we made everything we wanted from all kinds of cannons, torpedoes and floats."

Referring to the torpedoes issue in naval weapons, he added, "Until a few years ago, we had to buy torpedoes from some countries, but with the arrival of native torpedoes and their successful testing, this need has been also completely met."

"The native Iranian torpedo, which was tested for the first time in 2017, has made considerable progress both in its range and the ability to destroy and accuracy," Khanzadi said, adding, "We even designed the caliber of the torpedoes to be tactical rather than cost-effective."

See Page 7

Iran Sets New Single-Day Record For COVID-19 Deaths



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran recorded its worst day of new deaths since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, with 337 confirmed dead on Monday.

The grim milestone represents a significant spike from the previous single-day death toll record of 279. The Health Ministry also announced 4,251 new infections, pushing the total count to 534,630.

Fatalities have soared in recent weeks, as authorities struggle to contain the virus's spread months into the pandemic. Health officials say the capital, Tehran, has run out of intensive care beds.

Yesterday the Spokeswoman for Iran's Ministry of Health, Sima Sadat Lari, announced in her presser that 534,631 people in the country have been infected with the coronavirus, and 431,360 of the total infected people have recovered. According to definitive laboratory findings from yesterday to October 19, 2020, newly diagnosed patients with COVID-19 reached to 4,251 cases out of whom 1,948 of patients were hospitalized, Lari stated.

She added that in the past 24 hours, 337 COVID-19 patients had lost their lives, bringing the total death toll to 30,712. 4,771 COVID-19 patients are in critical condition.

"So far, 4,540,455 COVID-19 diagnosis tests have been conducted across the country," the Health Ministry Spokeswoman noted. She pointed out that Provinces of Tehran, Isfahan, Qom, East Azarbaijan, South Khorasan, Semnan, Qazvin, Lorestan, Ardabil, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, Bushehr, Zanzan, Ilam, Khorasan Razavi, Mazandaran, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Alborz, West Azarbaijan, Markazi, Kerman, North Khorasan, Hamadan, Yazd, and Kordestan are regarded as red zones.

According to the Health Ministry Spokeswoman, provinces of Hormozgan, Fars, and Golestan are on alert. Meanwhile yesterday, Director-General of Drugs and Controlled Substances of Iran's Ministry of Health Heidar Mohammadi said on Monday that Iran has joined the World Health Organization's initiative for fair and equitable distribution of vaccine doses.

Mohammadi said that the Ministry of Health has signed the letter of Iran's joining the COVAX initiative and has officially become a part of it.

He added Iran will have its share of the vaccine doses whenever the vaccine is produced. The initiative plans to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available worldwide to both higher-income and lower-income countries.

Earlier, Deputy Minister of Health Ali-Reza Raeesi had said that the WHO had given sufficient time to Iran to pay the pre-purchase of the vaccine.

The goal of COVAX is by the end of 2021 to deliver two billion doses of safe, effective vaccines that have passed regulatory approval and/or WHO prequalification.

More than 160 countries have joined the program. China and the U.S. have not joined yet. More than 140 medicine companies are trying to make the vaccine, some of which in the U.S., Europe, and China have had some achievements and have entered the phase of trials on humans.

Iran's Minister of Health Saeed Namaki has said that Iran is trying to make the vaccine as well, adding that the trials in animals, such as monkeys, have been successful and that the vaccine will be tested on humans in the near future.

Nearly all Mideast Economies Hit by Pandemic Recession

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The coronavirus pandemic has pushed nearly all Mideast nations into the throes of an economic recession this year, yet some rebound is expected as all but two — Lebanon and Oman — are expected to see some level of economic growth next year, according to a report published Monday by the International Monetary Fund.

This comes as the IMF estimates that the global economy will shrink 4.4% this year, marking the worst annual plunge since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Well before the coronavirus swept across the globe, several Mideast countries had been struggling with issues ranging from lower oil prices and sluggish economic growth to corruption and high unemployment.

The IMF projects the Lebanese economy will see one of the region's sharpest economic contractions this year at 25%. The pandemic has only pushed the country further to the brink after a wave of anti-government anger before the virus struck. Lebanese demonstrators were protesting government corruption, foreign exchange shortages, hyperinflation, constant electricity cuts and increasing poverty. The currency has dropped by 70% compared to the end of last year, with people struggling to afford basic goods. A devastating explosion at Beirut's main port in August killed at least 180 people, injured more than 6,000 and destroyed entire neighborhoods. The blast left hundreds of thousands of people homeless.

While Mideast nations have seen fewer confirmed cases and deaths from the virus than countries in Europe and the U.S., the region still faces challenges in containing the disease.

See Page 7

No Iranian Assets Frozen in China

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh denied reports of blocked Iranian assets in China.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Khatibzadeh rejected the "untrue" reports about the relations between Tehran and Beijing, saying, "No (Iranian) money is blocked in China."

"Many (such) reports (about Iran-China ties) are incorrect. We are in constant talks with the Chinese," he stated.

There are resources in China that are being used for Iran's economic cycle, the spokesman said, adding that those resources are different from the frozen Iranian assets in Japan, Iraq and elsewhere.

Last week, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran has stepped up efforts to use its foreign currency reserve assets frozen in other countries despite the U.S. pressures.

Reacting to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's remarks, Khatibzadeh said that unilateral sanctions have not been successful.

See Page 7

Trade With Saudi Arabia "Zeroed"

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The Director General of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Office of Arabian and African Countries Farzad Piltan announced that Iran's trade with Saudi Arabia has reached "zero" in the last six months.

The Iranian official said that \$8.16 of Iran total export was exported to 15 neighboring countries in the six months of the current Iranian calendar year beginning March 20, 2020.

"Among this group of countries, Iraq and the UAE are ranked first and second, and Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar are ranked eighth to tenth after Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, Russia, and Azerbaijan."

He continued "In this list, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are ranked 14th and 15th, after Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan", adding that Iran's exports to Bahrain were \$ 3 million and exports to Saudi Arabia were zero during this period.

"Also, in the field of imports, 16.78 billion dollars in the amount of 16 million and 524 thousand tons of goods have been imported into the country during this period, he said.

See Page 7

Russian Diplomat Urges Pompeo to Stop Provoking Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Russian diplomat says U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo must stop provoking Iran and pumping weapons in the region if he wants a peaceful Middle East.

Dmitry Polyanskiy, the first deputy permanent representative of Russia to the UN, said Pompeo is expected to contribute to [a] peaceful Middle East by stopping to provoke Iran and to pump region with arms."

"And please change [the] words 'sanctions' and 'punishment' in your vocabulary to 'dialogue' and 'engagement'. That would help a lot! Make US respected again!" he added.

He made the comments in a post on his Twitter account, in which he quoted a tweet by Pompeo threatening those who may trade weapons with Iran.

"No nation that desires a peaceful Middle East should contemplate arms sales with Iran," Pompeo said. "We are prepared to use domestic authorities to sanction individuals or entities contributing to these arms sales."

Earlier in the day, Pompeo had released a statement in this regard, in which he threatened to impose sanctions on any individuals and entities that get engaged in arms transfer to and from Iran.

See Page 7

Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

Dubai-Lengeh Port Ferry Route Resumes Operation

TEHRNA (MNA) – The ferry route between Lengeh Port in Iran's Hormozgan province and Dubai has resumed operation, after eight months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) Group, following negotiations between the Iranian and Emirati sides, the marine line will transport passengers between the two port cities on a weekly basis with all health protocols in place. Passengers are required to have a printed negative COVID-19 PCR test certificate to be accepted on board.

Prior to the coronavirus spread, ferry boats were operating regularly between Iran's Shahid Bahonar Port in Bandar Abbas and the UAE's Sharjah as well as between Hormozgan's Bandar Lengeh and Dubai.

President Accuses U.S of Trying to Abuse Afghan Peace Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) – President Hassan Rouhani warned that U.S. President Donald Trump is trying to abuse the Intra-Afghan peace talks to reach his presidential election goals.

Rouhani made the remarks on Monday in a meeting with Abdullah Abdullah, the head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), who is in Tehran to hold talks with senior Iranian officials during an official three-day visit.

He stressed that the U.S. intervention and presence as an aggressor country in Afghanistan was not in line with the will and the public opinion of this country, adding that the U.S. government, which has failed several times in its policies in the region and the world, seeks its own political and electoral goals in the country.

The Iranian president added that the Islamic Republic supports the Intra-Afghan peace talks as the key to solve the country's political problems.

Expressing hope for the success of the efforts to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan, the Iranian president added, "It is important that the people of Afghanistan achieve a real peace after years of war and conflict."

He added, "Sustainable peace, stability and security in Afghanistan as a neighbor and brother country is of special importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Referring to the good relations between Iran and Afghanistan as two friendly and neighboring countries, Rouhani stressed the development and deepening of Tehran-Kabul relations.

He pointed to the Khaf-Herat railway, saying that project will come on stream in the coming days.



The connection between the Iranian and Afghan railways would strengthen economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, Rouhani said.

"Iran is ready to connect gas and oil pipelines to Afghanistan to provide our neighboring nation with energy products," he added. Rouhani stressed, "We have always stood along with the people of Afghanistan, and we will continue to support this country and all aspects."

Abdullah Abdullah appreciated the supports of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding developments and efforts to establish lasting peace and security in this country and said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is a good friend and neighbor of Afghanistan."

Abdullah Abdullah thanked Iran for hosting Afghan refugees during the years of war and conflict in this country and said, "During my visit to Tehran, I had good meetings with the officials of the Islamic Republic and I will take the message of Iranian support to Kabul and follow up the agreements between the two countries."

He expressed hope that with the support of the Islamic Republic, he will witness the conclusion of the Afghan peace talks and the establishment of lasting security and peace in his country.

Iran Invests in Women's Health

TEHRAN (IP) - Masuomeh Ebtekar, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, said that fortunately, the Islamic Republic of Iran has invested in women's health, which is the government's main priority.



Speaking on the occasion of 'International Day of Rural Women' (which was on October 15) via videoconferencing, Masuomeh Ebtekar added that Iranian women's health has increased in 31 provinces. Women's Health Document had been approved and finalized in cooperation with the Health Ministry.

Speaking on the occasion of 'International Day of Rural Women' via videoconferencing, Masuomeh Ebtekar added Iranian women's health has increased, and in 31 provinces, Women Health Document has been approved and finalized in cooperation with the Health Ministry. Vice President for Women and Family Affairs stated during the COVID-19 outbreak training of women is essential due to obesity, passivity, and mental challenges.

She noted that developing family interaction is the government's priority. She stressed implementing all health protocols, including wearing face masks, washing hands, keeping social distancing is more important than vaccines that are supposed to produce.

Lifting Arms Embargo Glorious Moment in Iran's Diplomacy

TEHRAN (ILNA) - A spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Behrouz Kamalvandi on Sunday described the removal of arms sanctions as a brilliant point in Iran's diplomacy.

Referring to the lifting of arms embargo against Iran at 3:30 a.m. on Sunday, he called it a turning point for Iran, saying that the Iranian people's resistance ultimately bore fruit after 5 years since JCPOA was clinched and Iran's righteousness and diplomacy shone significantly after the world voted negatively to Trump's unilateralism and bullying.

The world knows that Iran has never sought non-peaceful use of nuclear energy and that the so-called maximum U.S. pressure, which is inhumane and vicious, especially on children, women and the sick, will result in the U.S. further isolation and breakdown of its satanic hegemony, he said.

Kamalvandi further noted that the international community's big 'no' to the Iranian arms embargo is a good start to the international community's response to Trump's anomalies. Countries around the world will henceforth resolutely confront the US' violation of international norms.

Baku, Yerevan Return to Negotiating Table to Resolve Tensions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the parliamentary friendship group of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Armenia expressed satisfaction with the establishment of a ceasefire with the Republic of Azerbaijan and said: "We hope that the ceasefire will be stabilized with the intelligence of the officials of the two countries and that the two sides will return to the negotiating table to resolve this issue."

Mehdi Farshadan, during a meeting with Armenian Ambassador to Tehran Artashes Tumanian, called Iran-Armenia relations friendly and based on mutual respect and said: There are deep and longstanding ties between the people of the two countries that pave the way for the use of existing opportunities for economic and social development.

Farshadan added, "Dialogue and exchange of views between the representatives of the two countries' parliaments can lead to mutual understanding and recognition of each other's capacities."

Referring to the capacities of the two countries to increase the level of economic cooperation, he said, "Considering the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the process of economic relations between the two countries is satisfactory and we hope to see further strengthening of this cooperation." Expressing concern over the recent conflict between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and expressing satisfaction with the establishment of a ceasefire between the two countries, he said: "We hope the ceasefire will be established with the intelligence of the officials of the two countries and the parties will return to the negotiating table to resolve this issue."

The Ambassador of Armenia in Tehran Artashes Tumanian also welcomed the talks with the members of Iran's parliament members and said: "Considering that I have 9 years of experience in the Armenian Parliament, I am aware of the position of the parliaments and I welcome the development of parliamentary relations between the two countries."

In another part of his remarks, Artashes Tumanian noted: "Considering the situation caused by the outbreak of the Coronavirus, we would like the representatives of the Armenian and Iranian parliaments to be in virtual contact and exchange views to strengthen bilateral relations." Referring to the ceasefire in his country's conflict with the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Armenian Ambassador to Tehran said: "We welcome the approach of impartial countries in resolving this conflict."

Envoy Hails Iran as China's Strategic Partner



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – China's Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua praised the Islamic Republic as a strategic partner of his country, stressing the need for closer cooperation in various fields and in countering the U.S.' unilateralism.

Chang Hua said China and Iran are "comprehensive strategic partners", expressing his country's willingness to promote cooperation and links with Iran in all arenas, including the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

China believes that positive interaction among all countries could safeguard multilateralism and counter unilateralism and hegemony, he said.

Collective cooperation would also protect international justice and equality for the fulfillment of common interests of the developing nations, the envoy added.

The ambassador also pointed to the growing political, economic and cultural interaction between China and Iran on the basis of mutual respect and interests, saying the two states have also joined hands in the efforts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

Asked about the U.S.' failure to trigger the snapback mechanism of the JCPOA and its intensified sanctions against Iran, the Chinese ambassador said Washington has disregarded the UN Charter and violated the international law by imposing economic and financial sanctions or resorting to unilateral and punitive measures against other nations.

Such American policies amount to an onslaught on the international political and economic system, Chang Hua said, adding that the US sanctions have impaired the improvement of livelihood of people in the sanctioned states and have ignored the basic rights of innocent people, including children, women and the elderly.

On the prospect of the U.S. presidential election, the Chinese ambassador said it is a domestic issue of the U.S., adding, "China's policy on the United States is a fixed policy."

"As regards the U.S., we are committed to the principles of non-conflict and non-confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation. At the same time, we will defend our country's national sovereignty, security, and interests in the process of development."

Iran Can Meet 90% of Defense Needs Domestically

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's defense minister says the country is capable of producing 90 percent of its defense needs domestically, and that is a bitter pill to swallow for Washington.

Brigadier General Amir Hatami said Iran has developed such capability on the back of self-sufficiency.

"When we came under sanctions during the Holy Defense era (the eight years of the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran in the 1980s), we adopted a strategy and realized the importance of self-reliance given [other countries'] refusal to sell arms to us," said the defense chief in a televised interview on Sunday night.

"We need to rely on ourselves in order to safeguard the country's territorial integrity," he said.

The top general underlined that U.S. sanctions turned out to be an opportunity for Iran to stand on its own feet.

"The pressure and sanctions imposed on us by the U.S. for years led us to move, so much so that we can now produce and provide 90 percent of our defense needs inside the country," he said.

General Hatami said Iran's defense capabilities are a bitter pill to swallow for Washington.

"It is very hard for the Americans to see Iran has developed such a capability," he said.

The senior commander said the White House has tried its utmost to strip Iran of its legitimate rights.

He underscored the U.S. had been trying over the past year to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran, which expired on October 18, 2020.

"The Americans asked the UN Security Council repeatedly to keep the restrictions in place or impose new restrictions, but they were discredited," said the defense chief.

"Today, all bans on weapons sales were lifted and



we are authorized to procure whatever we need in the world legally and in accordance with the UN Security Council's approval, and we can also provide other countries with what they need," he noted.

Hatami said despite the U.S. and its arms-producing allies

which only think about profit, Iran will sell weapons only to those who do not abuse it, and those who are despised by the U.S.

"Many countries have already talked to us; we have held negotiations with some countries, and the grounds are totally prepared for exchanges [of weapons], both for selling [arms to other countries] and for supplying certain needs [buying weapons]," he noted.

"Of course our sales will be much more extensive [than our purchases]," he added.

General Hatami said all nations have the right to defend their territorial integrity, and Iran will be a good and successful actor in this regard as it seeks to preserve peace.

He said Iran's goal is first to become self-sufficient and powerful in terms of defensive capabilities, and second to support the countries that seek to defend their existence.

Meanwhile, he gave an assurance to regional countries that the Islamic Republic wants peace, stability and security for the region and the world. "This is the clear defense policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"You can't find any move against this policy in the past four decades Wherever we took action, it was meant to create peace, help establish security and stability in the region. We honestly showed it to the entire world in the course of fight against the terrorists trained by the Americans," Hatami said.

Iran Stands by Afghanistan's Independence, Security

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Iran is standing by Afghanistan with regard to its independence and security, and hoped for maintaining sustainable peace in Afghanistan during tenure of its new government, Trend reports citing IRNA.

Speaking in a meeting with chairman of the Afghan Peace Council Abdullah Abdullah, Qalibaf said Islamic countries in South Western Asia and subcontinent are in their most sensitive era.

This region has always faced foreigners' interventions which have caused insecurity.

He noted that many of the problems between Iran and Afghanistan are intertwined and two countries have deep historical and cultural relations.

Qalibaf stated that Afghanistan constitution is the fruit of decade-old fights.

Iranian Parliament believes that Afghan government, constitution and Loya Jirga should stand by their principles to establish stability and security in this country. Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to Hamoun and Hirmand Water right as important in maintaining security at borders.

Meanwhile, Abdullah appreciated Iran's support for peace in Afghanistan, saying over the last four decades Iran has stood by Afghan people. He noted that 42 years war has imposed heavy burden on Afghanistan and many economic opportunities have been destroyed.

Referring to preparation of Iran-Afghanistan comprehensive cooperation document, Abdullah expressed happiness over broadening of both countries' relations.

He vowed for following up issues related to border markets and water, saying joint commission of Iran and Afghanistan will be formed soon. He reiterated that relations between Iranian parliament and Loya Jirga will promote Iranian and Afghan people's objectives.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:49
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:42
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:52
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:15

62. How then, when they are seized by misfortune, because of the deeds which they hands have sent forth? Then their come to thee, swearing by Allah. "We meant no more than good-will and conciliation!"

63. Those men, (Allah) knows what is in their hearts; so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls.

Surah 4. Women (62 - 63)

Tehran, Kabul To Bolster Energy, Transportation Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said on Monday that Tehran and Kabul will explore ways to boost cooperation in the energy and transportation sectors in the upcoming joint economic commission meeting.

Iran and Afghanistan are due to hold their 6th Joint Economic Committee meeting in Kabul on October 25-27.

Ardakanian said, "The cooperation in the projects such as Herat-Khaf railroad, customs cooperation and border markets as well as energy ties will be addressed during the upcoming meeting."

Since the chairmanship of the meeting has been assigned to the Energy Ministry, he added, issues such as cooperation in the field of renewable energies will also be discussed during the session.

He said that Iran and Afghanistan can also cooperate on renewable energies which require a joint investment scheme.

The minister said that officials from the two countries will do their best to give a boost to Herat-khaf railway project and reach the final point.

Afghan officials say that the railway project will be inaugurated within the next few months which they say will be a breakthrough in trade relations between the



two neighboring countries.

Construction of Harat-Khaf railway, which is underway in four parts and is 193 km, began in 2007.

Meanwhile Chairman of Afghanistan's Peace Council Abdullah Abdullah, for his part, said that if peace is restored in Afghanistan, the country can take advantage more of these cooperation opportunities.

He added that both countries can cooperate on wind energies and both countries are studying the grounds for cooperation in this field.

He expressed hope Afghanistan's internal and financial problems would be resolved soon.

Earlier in October, Ardakanian held talks with Afghan Acting Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanef Atmar through video conference on the development of cooperation in various energy sectors while considering issues that could be raised in the joint committee meeting.

Steel Ingot Production Increases by 10% in Iran



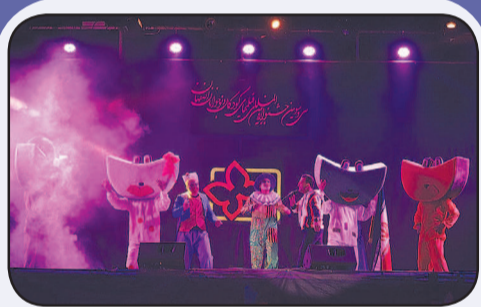
IRAN (IP) - The production of Iranian steel ingots in the last six months increased by 10%, exceeding 14 million tons.

In the last six months, Iranian steel companies produced 14 million and 392,000 tons of steel ingots (billets, blooms, and slabs), which shows a 10% increase compared to the same period last year (13 million and 89,000 tons).

Also, the production of steel products (beams, rebars, angles, studs, and sheets) in the last six months has been 11 million and 3,000 tons, which indicates an 8% increase of this product compared to the figure in the same period last year (10 million and 173,000 tons).

According to the report, the production of sponge iron in the last six months has been 15 million and 562,000 tons, which shows a 10% increase compared to the figure produced in the same period last year (14 million 185 thousand tons).

33rd Int'l Film Festival For Children and Youth Officially Kicks Off



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The 33rd opening ceremony of the 33rd ICFF was held in an open-air space in one of the cultural centers in Isfahan.

According to the 33rd Public Relations Office, after playing the national anthem and a music video in memory of Quasem Soleimani, the opening ceremony of the 33rd ICFF started.

Dr. Ghodrattollah Norouzi, the mayor of Isfahan was invited to the stage at this ceremony. He said, "I hope the 33rd festival in the city of Si-o-Se bridge, would fulfill its standards. (Every home is a cinema; every child is a jury member.) In this difficult time, children spend most of their time on social media, so this is a good opportunity for us and this way every home would be a cultural center and every child would be a jury member."

He added, "The message of the festival is to show that life still goes on."

At the end of his speech he said, "I greet all the children from all around the world and I thank you all."

Following the ceremony, messages sent by Isfahan's sister countries in video form were shown to congratulate the 33rd festival opening. The presenter emphasized that the ceremony is being broadcasted on Omid channel, Tva interactive television, and the festival's official website.

Alireza Tabesh the director of the festival, in a video format message, said, "In the name of God, we will start the 33rd ICFF. The festival's motto for this year is, 'Every home a cinema, every child a jury member.'"

He continued: Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's festival will open a new door to Iranian cinema and the digital age.

Tabesh said, "As the director of the festival, I believe we can create happy and different moments for children for six days, from October 18 to 23."

He added: Holding this festival is the reason for our motto "Every home a cinema, every child a jury member." So, children from 5 to 15 can make comments on movies and send them to us, every day during the festival. "

The director of the festival specified, "This edition of the festival is completely different from previous years. Due to the pandemic, movies are not screened at movie theaters, this year. But children are able to watch movies on a different platform, with their families."

Iran, Syria Mull Signing Free Trade Agreement

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) met Syrian Ambassador to Tehran Adnan Hassan Mahmoud on Sunday where he stressed the significance of signing a free trade agreement between the two sides.

"With the signing of a free trade agreement between Iran and Syria, there will be good days in trade between the two countries," Gholam-Hossein Shafei said in the meeting.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, the meeting was also attended by the Chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce Keyvan Kashefi.

Speaking in the meeting, Shafei noted that Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture has not invested as much in any country as Syria.

Referring to the Iranian Trade Center in Damascus, he said: "This trade center is one of the largest centers of Iranian trade abroad, which can play an important role in the development



of trade between the two countries."

Mahmoud for his part praised the efforts of the heads of the Iran chamber of commerce and the Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce to improve the level of trade relations between the two countries.

The official pointed to the two countries' strong will for strengthening economic and industrial relations, both in public and private sectors and said: "We make every effort to neutralize the impact of sanctions on the economies of the two countries and we will strengthen trade relations between the two sides."

Earlier on Sunday, Kashefi had announced the official inauguration of the Iranian trade center in Damascus.

The two countries have been exchanging numerous trade delegations in the past few months and Iranian private companies are investing in different areas like providing construction materials especially cement and working on several reconstruction projects in Syria.

Complying With FATF to Expose Iran's Efforts to Evade Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An economic expert says complying with FATF rules would harm Iran's efforts to get round U.S. sanctions.

Iran would enjoy almost no benefit if it fully complies with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international bloc to fight money laundering and terrorism financing, says a senior expert who believes such a move would even harm Iran's efforts to evade illegal and inhumane sanctions imposed by the United States.

Behzad Khosravi told the IRIB News on Sunday that complying with the FATF would require the countries to reveal all their financial and transactions data, a move which could prove fatal for Iran as the country struggles to get round sanctions on its banking and financial sectors.

"If our country wants to join the FATF in normal circumstances it would not be problematic and there would be no negative implications," said Khosravi.

"This comes as we are circumventing the sanctions and it (complying with the FATF rules)

would earn us nothing but giving out the data," he said.

The comments came after some source close to the Iranian administrative government renewed calls that Iran should finally ratify remaining FATF conventions to end its blacklist position in the group. Those supporting Iran's compliance with the FATF believe the country would face problems in trade with allied countries like Russia and China in future if it fails to accept the requirements of the group.

However, critics say Iran's financial sector in its entirety has come under US sanctions and remaining in the FATF's blacklist, an status that began in February, would pile no additional burden on the country's banks and financial institutions.

"I'm concerned that by giving out this information, eventually to the US government, we will be no longer able to evade sanctions that we have managed to circumvent until today," said Khosravi.

MSC Wins EFQM Golden Award

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Mobarakeh Steel Company won another accolade and this time it got the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Award because of the excellence in quality of its management.

Director of Quality Guarantee of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) Mohammad Nazemi Harandi says the company celebrates more achievements and accolades and it is reaching the summit of national and international honors and it has recently achieved another success by getting EFQM Award.

He said the world is constantly changing and these changes happen in science and technology, economy and trade, culture and life style, communications and management and in other areas but the most important point beside these changes is the constant move in direction

of sustainability in values and excellence of goals.

He added that MSC since its establishment has employed the latest management methods in the form of standards and international patterns, and it has moved in the direction of growth and excellence and has used everything to develop its performance and business in order to meet the demands.

Nazemi Harandi noted that it is very important for organizations in order to create organizational discipline, they should harmonize all of their behaviors and actions in accordance with the devised standards, regulations and existing laws.

He added that with the launch of assessment process of Iranian organizations based on the organizational excellence model, MSC, in 1382 and after joining the process for national organizational excellence award and implementation of the related patterns, has taken a big step towards an

achievement for sustainable and balanced results in all sectors.

He noted that of the most important lessons learned in this process is the design and implementation of comprehensive development system in direction of alignment with all components of Mobarakeh Management System with concentration on participation of the staff of the company for materialization of goals and outlooks of the organization.

He further said that after successful presence of MSC in Europe's Excellence Award in 2015, the company as the first Iranian company won the EFQM Golden Award in 2018 and this honor is because of the company's competitiveness and its organizational capabilities in presenting management patterns in the international level.



Saudi Arabia Restarts Prayers in Mecca

MECCA (AFP) - Saudi Arabia opened Sunday Islam's holiest site for prayers for the first time in seven months, and expanded the umrah pilgrimage to accommodate 15,000 worshippers as it relaxed coronavirus curbs.

Mask-clad Saudi citizens and residents of the kingdom were allowed to pray inside the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca, amid what authorities called extensive health precautions.

"Citizens and residents have performed Salat Al-Fajr (dawn prayers) at the Grand Mosque today as (authorities) start implementing the second phase of the gradual resumption of umrah," the official Saudi Press Agency reported.



Global Coronavirus Cases Surpass the 40 Million Milestone

LONDON (Reuters) - Worldwide coronavirus cases crossed 40 million on Monday, according to a Reuters tally, as the onset of winter in the northern hemisphere fuelled a resurgence in the spread of the disease.

The Reuters tally is based on official reporting by individual countries. Experts believe the true numbers of both cases and deaths are likely much higher, given deficiencies in testing and potential under-reporting by some countries. The Reuters data shows the pace of the pandemic continues to pick up. It took just 32 days to go from 30 million global cases to 40 million, compared with the 38 days it took to get from 20 to 30 million, the 44 days between 10 and 20 million, and the three months it took to reach 10 million cases from when the first cases were reported in Wuhan, China, in early January.



Churches Burnt as Chile Anniversary Rallies Turn Violent



SANTIAGO (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of Chileans gathered in the central square of Santiago to mark the one-year anniversary of mass protests that left over 30 dead and thousands injured, with peaceful rallies on Sunday devolving by nightfall into riots and looting.

People gathered early in the day in demonstrations downtown and in cities throughout Chile that gained size and fervor through the evening. Many touted signs and rainbow colored homemade banners calling for a "yes" vote next Sunday in a referendum over whether to scrap the country's dictatorship-era Constitution, a key demand of the 2019 protests.

The demonstrations, while largely peaceful early on, were marred by increasing incidents of violence, looting of supermarkets and clashes with police across the capital later in the day. Fire truck sirens, burning barricades on roadways and fireworks on downtown streets added to a sense of chaos in some neighborhoods.

Interior Minister Victor Perez spoke late in the evening, praising the early, peaceful rallies while blasting the late-night mayhem. He called on Chileans to settle their differences by voting in the upcoming Oct. 25 constitutional referendum.

"Those who carry out these acts of violence do not want Chileans to solve our problems through democratic means," Perez told reporters, vowing to punish those who crossed the line Sunday.

Early in the day, an angry mob jeered and threatened a Communist Party mayor. Later, masked individuals firebombed a police headquarters and church. Vandals attacked another Santiago church in the early evening, setting its spire aflame and choking side streets with smoke.

More than 15 metro stations were temporarily closed amid the unrest. Police fired tear gas and water cannons in skirmishes with sometimes violent, hooded and masked people.

Last year's protests, which began Oct. 18, raged until mid-December as Chileans gathered nationwide to call for reforms to the pension, healthcare and education systems.

Rioting and looting resulted in billions of dollars in damage and losses to the country's businesses and infrastructure. The unrest saw the military take to the streets for the first time since the rule of dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Police estimated that Sunday's rally in Santiago attracted around 25,000 people by 6 p.m., far smaller than the largest protests of 2019.

In the past few days, small-scale demonstrations and isolated incidents of violence have nonetheless resurfaced in Chile, as the capital's 6 million citizens emerge from months of confinement following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most demonstrators on Sunday wore masks, but many could be seen in tight groups, raising concerns about a potential health risk.

Thai Democracy Protesters Defy Ban for Fourth Day

BANGKOK (AFP) - Tens of thousands of protesters defied a ban on gatherings of more than four people to mass at a major Bangkok landmark Sunday, carrying posters portraying activists detained in four straight days of strident anti-government rallies.

The youth-led movement has suffered several blows this week, with scores arrested after demonstrators surrounded a royal motorcade and flashed "democracy salutes" at Queen Suthida.

The government reacted with emergency measures -- including banning gatherings of more than four people in Bangkok -- and the arrest of protest leaders who have called for the removal of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former military chief brought to power in a 2014 coup. Police also used water cannon on demonstrators in Bangkok's central shopping district Friday in an escalation of tactics that sparked outrage across Thai society.

But the crackdown has served only to embolden the movement's mostly young supporters, who have turned up in large numbers to rallying points announced at short notice in a bid to outwit authorities.

"I cannot let the students fight alone," said 24-year-old Phat, a first-time rallygoer at Bangkok's Victory Monument.

National Police spokesman Yingyos Thepjumpom warned protesters earlier Sunday that no rallies "causing unrest and disorder" would be allowed. "If they defy it, police will do whatever is necessary to enforce the law," he said.

But police kept a low-key presence Sunday as local media said more than 20,000 people descended on the landmark from late afternoon shouting "Free our friends" while carrying posters of those arrested.

Those portrayed included human rights lawyer Anon Nump, Parit "Penguin" Chivarak, and Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul -- three of the most recognizable faces in the movement and who have consistently called for reforms to the monarchy. Among their demands is the abolition of a draconian royal defamation law -- which shields King Maha Vajiralongkorn from criticism -- and a call for the monarch to stay out of the country's turbulent politics.

The TRNC is recognized as an independent state only by Turkey. Other countries consider it part of Cyprus. The island's internationally-recognized government has its seat in the Greek Cypriot south and is a member of the European Union. Cyprus has effectively been partitioned since 1974 when Turkish troops seized its northern third in the wake of an Athens-backed coup by Greek Cypriots seeking union with Greece.

Akinci, 72, supports the long-standing, United Nations-backed efforts to reunite the island as a "bizonal, bicommunal federation" after the successful conclusion of negotiations, while Tatar, 60, backs separate sovereign administrations.

Ersin Tatar Elected New Turkish Cypriot Leader

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Right-wing nationalist Ersin Tatar has won a leadership runoff vote in the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

With all of the ballots counted, the Ankara-backed Tatar secured 51.74 percent of the vote on Sunday, ahead of the incumbent Mustafa Akinci, at 48.26 percent, according to official media.

Tatar, who favors stronger ties with Turkey, had won 32.5 percent of the vote in last week's first round, with Akinci closely following with 29.84 percent.

Tatar appears to have benefited from a higher turnout in the runoff. He managed to rally supporters from the approximately 200,000-strong electorate who may not have voted in the first round.

Akinci conceded his defeat. Ahmet Sozen, the chairman of the department of political science and international relations at the Eastern Mediterranean University, told Al Jazeera from Famagusta that the close results point to a split in the society.

"There will be a split, a polarization in the society between those who supported a federal solution and those who are saying that we shouldn't lose time on federal solution, we should look for alternative solutions," he said.

The TRNC is recognized as an independent state only by Turkey. Other countries consider it part of Cyprus.

The island's internationally-recognized government has its seat in the Greek Cypriot south and is a member of the European Union.

Cyprus has effectively been partitioned since 1974 when Turkish troops seized its northern third in the wake of an Athens-backed coup by Greek Cypriots seeking union with Greece.

Akinci, 72, supports the long-standing, United Nations-backed efforts to reunite the island as a "bizonal, bicommunal federation" after the successful conclusion of negotiations, while Tatar, 60, backs separate sovereign administrations.

Tens of Thousands Rally to Demand Pakistan PM Khan Resign

KARACHI (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of opposition supporters rallied on Sunday in the city of Karachi as part of a campaign to oust Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, who they accuse of being installed by the military in a rigged 2018 election.

Nine major opposition parties formed a joint platform called the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) last month to begin a nationwide agitation against the government. "You've snatched jobs from people. You have snatched two-time a day food from the people," said opposition leader Maryam Nawaz about Khan while addressing the rally, which drew growing crowds in the second such gathering in three days.

She is the daughter and political heir of the former three-time premier Nawaz Sharif.

"Our farmers have hunger in their homes... our youth is disappointed," said another opposition leader, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

The protests come as the country's economy - which had already tanked before the global pandemic - struggles with double digit inflation and negative growth, which Khan's opponents blame on his government.

Khan's two-year tenure has also seen mounting

censorship and a crackdown on dissent, critics and opposition leaders. "Inflation has broken the back of poor citizens forcing many to beg to feed their children," said Faqeer Baloch, 63, at the Karachi rally.

"It is high time that this government should go now," he said as the crowd chanted, "Go Imran go!"

The next general election is scheduled for 2023. The rally in Karachi followed a protest by the alliance in eastern Gujranwala city on Friday, which was the biggest demonstration against Khan since he took office.

Speaking via video link from London to the Gujranwala gathering, Sharif accused army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa of rigging the 2018 elections and orchestrating his ouster in 2017 in what he said were trumped up charges aided by judiciary.

Maryam said her party was not anti-military, but, "If you say that we will respect those who would crush the ballots under their boots, that's not going to happen."

The military, which denies meddling in politics or electoral wrongdoing, has yet to respond specifically to Sharif's accusations.

Khan, who came to power on an anti-graft platform and denies the army helped him win, has defended the military.



Bolivia on Edge as Election Night Rolls On Without Results

LA PAZ (Reuters) - Hours after polling began to end on Sunday Bolivians waited anxiously for results in an election that many hope can restore stability after a voided ballot last year plunged the Andean nation into crisis and ended the long rule of Evo Morales.

After governing Bolivia for nearly 14 years, Morales eventually quit in the wake of the fraught 2019 election, which sparked bloody protests.

Voting during the day appeared to go smoothly, but five hours after polls began to close, Bolivians were still guessing about where the election was headed.

The official count had tallied just over 2% of votes by around 11pm (0300 GMT) and expected exit polls had failed to materialize.

The election is likely to set Bolivia's political course beyond Morales, the socialist indigenous leader whose shadow still looms large over the country, despite him living in exile in Argentina since the fraught vote last year.

"This is a fundamental moment in the history of our country," one of the main candidates, centrist former president Carlo Mesa, said as he cast his vote in La Paz on Sunday.

In pre-election polls Mesa had been in second place behind Luis Arce from Morales' socialist party, though polls then had suggested a second round run-off would be needed.

Jose Luis Galvez, who heads pollster Ciesmori, said on local TV station Unitel that more Bolivians than usual had declined to disclose their vote, making their exit poll unreliable. He added getting a quick-count poll out -- which involves tallying votes at the voting stations themselves -- would take time.

Bolivia's conservative interim president Jeanine Añez implored citizens to be patient. "We should all be patient to wait for the election results without engaging in any type of violence," said Añez, who took over in a power vacuum last year after Morales resigned.

"I assure you that we will have credible results."

Arce, who earlier this week suggested the only way his rivals could win was "through fraud," also moved to calm rhetoric that has led some to worry about a return of violence that rocked the country last year and left scores dead.



Shanon
(adviser)

Zaferanieh Apt (\$2800)
260sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Fereshteh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

(\$4000) Farmanieh
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
gym, roof garden
L.balcony, & F.F

Pasdaran (\$1800)
140sq.m, 2bdrs
S/p, roof garden
yard, gym, & F.F

(\$6000) Niavaran bldg
3storey, 10bdrs
yard, fireplace
enough pkg lots
recently renovated

Jordan (\$1200) 2bdrs, F.F
Jordan (\$1600) 3bdrs, F.F
Jordan (\$2200) 4bdrs, F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Farmanieh bldg (\$10000)
3storey, 15bdrs, nice yard
enough pkg lots, renovated



Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate
Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865



Thai CB Extends \$16b Soft Loans For Smaller Firms by Six Months

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Thailand's central bank extended its 500 billion baht (12.41 billion pounds) soft loan program by six months to help small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a statement on its website.

The Bank of Thailand (BOT) also allowed listed SMEs to participate in the programme, which started in April as part of a

larger 1.9 trillion baht coronavirus response package.

The BOT has approved about 119 billion baht of loans so far and has twice said it planned to extend the program by six months.

Southeast Asia's second-largest economy suffered its deepest contraction in 22 years in the second quarter as the pandemic battered tourism and domestic activity.

The BOT predicts a record economic contraction of 7.8% this year.



Italy Approves New Stimulus Package To Help Virus-Hit Economy

MILAN (Reuters) - Italy has approved a new stimulus package in its 2021 budget to foster an economic rebound from the recession caused by the coronavirus crisis, a government statement said on Sunday after a late-night cabinet meeting.

The ruling coalition, led by the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and centre-left PD party, agreed a preliminary version of the stimulus package, a government source said, leaving final details to be hammered out.

Among measures to support the health and education system, the government will set up a 4 billion euro (\$4.7 billion) fund to compensate companies worst hit by coronavirus lockdowns.

The budget also extends temporary lay-off schemes for companies with workers on furlough and offers tax breaks to support employment in the poor south of the country.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is expected on Sunday to also announce new measures to curb the steady spike in COVID-19 cases over recent weeks.

One of the European countries worst hit by the pandemic, Italy has forecast a 9% economic contraction for 2020 and a budget deficit equating to 10.8% of gross domestic product.

The expansionary package is expected to keep Italy's deficit next year to 7% of economic output, up from a 5.7% forecast in April, reflecting the additional spending. Italy has forecast economic growth of 6% in 2021.

Expansionary measures next year will total 40 billion euros, including cheap loans and grants from the European Union's Recovery Fund, Gualtieri told lawmakers this month.

China Passes Export-Control Law Following U.S. Moves

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China passed a law restricting exports of controlled items, allowing the government to act against countries that abuse export controls in a way that harm's China's interests, state media said.

The Xinhua news report late on Saturday did not name any target countries, but the United States last month angered Beijing with curbs on exports to Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp, China's biggest chipmaker, and it has taken various steps against Huawei Technologies Co and other companies.

China and the United States have clashed over issues including trade, human rights, technology and the new coronavirus, which was first detected in China.

The new Chinese law, passed on Saturday by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the country's top legislative body, will take effect on Dec. 1, Xinhua said.

Controlled items include military and nuclear products, as well as other goods, technologies and services and relevant data, according to a statement on the National People's Congress website.

It said the law was "formulated for the purpose of safeguarding national security and interests."

In August, China's commerce ministry issued a revised list of technologies that are banned or restricted for export.



South Korea's Trade Dependency Slips in 2019 Amid Sluggish Reports

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea saw its trade dependency level slip for the first time in three years in 2019, as its export volume dropped amid global factors, data showed Sunday.

The country's trade dependency index -- the total trade volume proportion out of the gross domestic product -- came to 63.51 percent, according to the Korean Statistical Information

Service run by Statistics Korea.

This was down 2.57 percent from a year earlier and the lowest since the 60.11 percent observed in 2016.

The export dependency marked a 12-year low at 32.94 percent, while the import dependency came to 30.57 percent, the lowest in three years.

Due to the limited size of the domestic market and industrial structure, Asia's fourth-largest economy has always seen a relatively higher trade dependency than other major economies.

As of last year, Korea's trade dependency was the second-highest among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, next to Germany's 70.82 percent.

In contrast, the United States and Japan -- both marked with high populations and large domestic markets -- saw their corresponding figures stand at 19.34 percent and 28.08 percent, respectively.

As a high trade dependency level includes higher volatility to external variables, the Korean government has for years made balancing efforts to increase household income and to boost domestic consumption.

The problem is that last year's decreased trade reliance was mostly due to sluggish exports, which felt the impact of U.S.-China tensions, a chip business slump and low oil prices.

According to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, Korea's exports totaled \$542.41 billion last year, down 10.3 percent on-year, marking the first double-digit dip since the global financial crisis.

"(Korea's) economic structure should be improved in a way to both expand export and to increase resilience," said Kim Kyung-hoon, researcher at the Korea International Trade Association.

Greek Central Bank Chief Warns of 9.4% Economic Slump

ATHENS (Reuters) - Greece's recession-hit economy could shrink at a rate closer to its central bank's worst-case scenario if the coronavirus pandemic deepens, the head of the Bank of Greece said.

The central bank has forecast the economy to contract by 7.5% this year under a baseline scenario, faring worse than a previous forecast of a 5.8% decline in gross domestic product.

The bank's adverse scenario predicts the economy to shrink by 9.4%.

"A possible worsening of the pandemic, coupled with more restrictive measures in the fourth quarter, could bring the economy closer to the central bank's adverse scenario," bank Governor Yannis Stournaras told Ta Nea newspaper.

That would mean a 9.4% decline in economic activity this year and a weaker rebound in 2021, he said.

Under the adverse scenario, additional targeted fiscal measures need to be considered without risking fiscal stability, Stournaras said.

"In economies with high public debt, the combination of large fiscal deficits and slow recovery leads inevitably to higher risks as regards debt sustainability, with negative effects on long-term growth prospects," he told the paper.

Greece's economy shrank at an annual 0.5% in the first quarter and by 15.2% in the next three months to June 30.

Greece has seen a steady rise in infections since August but is still faring better than other European countries where infections have climbed more rapidly. Still, authorities have warned the relative stability is "especially fragile."

Greece reported 508 new confirmed infections on Friday, topping the 500 daily mark for the first time, with health authorities worried that a drop in temperatures may intensify epidemiological trends as winter months approach.



Moody's Downgrades UK

LONDON (Reuters) - Ratings agency Moody's cut the United Kingdom's debt rating on Friday over the huge economic hit from the coronavirus crisis, Brexit and the lack of clear budget plans from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government.

Moody's lowered the rating to "Aa3" from "Aa2," putting Britain on the same level as Belgium and the Czech Republic.

The world's sixth-biggest economy shrank by the most among Group of Seven nations in the second quarter and its public debt has topped 2 trillion pounds (\$2.6 trillion), surpassing 100% of gross domestic product.

Moody's said Britain's growth had been "meaningfully weaker than expected and is likely to remain so in the future."

Britain faced a sharper peak-to-trough contraction than any other Group of 20 economy due to the severity of its COVID-19 outbreak, the size of its services sector, hammered by social-distancing rules, and the risk of further outbreaks, it said.

The downgrade was another blow for Johnson who is under fire from opposition parties and lawmakers in his Conservative Party for his handling of the pandemic, which has killed more people in Britain than anywhere in Europe.

Moody's said Britain's failure to reach a broad trade deal with the EU would compound the damage caused by COVID-19.

Johnson said earlier on Friday there was currently no point in continuing the trade negotiations. "Even if there is a trade deal between the UK and EU by the end of 2020, it will likely be narrow in scope," Moody's said.

It also said Britain has lost budgetary discipline and its high debt levels were unlikely to come down quickly.

"The UK effectively has no fiscal policy anchor," it said.

Spending cuts were likely to be politically difficult and tax increases could choke off the economic recovery.

Britain's government responded by saying it had no choice other than to ramp up spending to soften the pandemic's impact.

"Over time and as the economy recovers, the government will take the necessary steps to ensure the long-term health of the public finances," a finance ministry spokesman said.

Moody's revised the outlook on the country's sovereign debt to "stable" from "negative." The downgrade puts the Moody's rating on the same level as Fitch's while Standard & Poor's rates the country one notch higher.

Pandemic Wave Risks Delaying Euro Zone Recovery



FRANKFURT (Reuters) - The risk that the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic could derail the euro zone's recovery from deep recession makes ultra-easy monetary policy all the more necessary, European Central Bank board member Fabio Panetta has told a Greek newspaper.

The ECB expects the bloc's economy to return to its pre-crisis level by the end of 2022 - but Panetta said this projection was now at risk, a comment likely to reinforce expectations that the ECB will expand its stimulus efforts in December.

"The return to more stringent containment measures that we are observing in a number of euro area countries may push this horizon even further away," Saturday's daily Kathimerini quoted Panetta as saying. "This reinforces the need for prolonged economic support from macroeconomic policies."

Having already agreed to buy up to 1.35 trillion euros of debt through mid-2021 under an emergency purchase scheme, the ECB is not under pressure to act quickly - but investors are still looking for a commitment to bigger and longer debt buys.

"In view of the sheer size of the downside risks, there should not be any doubt about our determination to preserve price stability," Panetta added.

He said the slowness of the recovery risked exacerbating the recent divergence between the weaker and stronger members of the 19-country single currency zone, and so widening inequality.

The ECB next meets on Oct. 29, but policy action is more likely at the following meeting on Dec. 10, where new economic projections are due to be unveiled.

Arvand FTZ Attracts \$48.5m of Foreign Investment in 6 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Arvand Free Trade Zone in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan attracted \$48.5 million of foreign investment during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21), a local official announced.

Seyed Ali Mousavi, the deputy head of Arvand Free Zone Organization for investment and economic affairs, underscored

that the zone managed to attract this amount of foreign investment despite all existing limitations due to the U.S. sanctions and also coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier this month, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand announced that Iran attracted over \$3.8 billion of foreign investment during the first half of the current year.



Persian Gulf Currency Pegs Offer Silver Lining in Era of Weaker Dollar

DUBAI (Dispatches) - With oil and gas priced in dollars, the pegs have helped shield the countries from the volatility of energy markets and allowed central banks to accumulate foreign-currency reserves in the good times.

More than a decade ago, Persian Gulf Arab nations struggled to preserve their currency pegs as the dollar went into retreat. This time, the link to a sliding greenback may give reassurance.

Back in 2007 and 2008, the weak dollar sent the cost of imports spiralling and allowed inflation to take hold. Now, the sluggish domestic demand has put a lid on price growth, while the dollar declines could give a boost to non-oil industries like tourism once the pandemic eases.

Also out of the picture are the inflationary hot-money flows to the region when Brent crude was near \$150 12 years ago.

"The decline in the dollar will be positive for the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) once the impact from the Covid-19 pandemic softens," said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank in the United Arab Emirates. "The dollar pegs still remain an important anchor to the economy and for capital inflows."

The six PGCC members have been running managed foreign-exchange regimes since the early 1970s. The system has survived successive years of low oil prices in the 1990s, a period of dollar weakness before the financial crisis in 2008 and another crude crash in 2014. Only Kuwait decided in May 2007 to link the dinar to a basket of currencies as inflation accelerated.

Earlier this year, devaluation bets mounted in forwards markets as the price of oil dropped to near 18-year lows, battering the regions' economies and raising questions about their foreign-currency reserves. Traders have since pared those wagers as Persian Gulf states cut spending and subsidies, and turned to debt markets to fund their budget deficits.



With oil and gas priced in dollars, the pegs have helped shield the countries from the volatility of energy markets and allowed central banks to accumulate foreign-currency reserves in the good times. "The more important consideration for PGCC countries' exchange rate pegs is not short-term fluctuations in the value of the US dollar but rather access to adequate foreign-currency assets over the medium term," said Robert Mogielnicki, a resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

China Beefs Up Laws To Handle Epidemics



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has passed a new law to improve its handling of disease outbreaks -- including protecting whistleblowers -- following a cascade of criticism over its coronavirus response and accusations of an early cover-up.

The new biosecurity law, approved by lawmakers on Saturday, flags the right to report "acts that endanger biosecurity" and calls for risk prevention systems, ranging from active monitoring to emergency plans.

It takes effect from April 15 next year.

"Any work unit or individual has the right to report acts that endanger biosecurity," the regulation said.

"When a report is required according to the law, no work unit or individual shall conceal (it)... or hinder others from making a report," it added on infectious diseases and epidemics.

China's approval of the law comes in the face of Western criticism on the coronavirus, over accusations that it covered up the initial outbreak and silenced early whistleblowers.

But China has been trying to reshape this narrative, with authorities seeking instead to model the country as a vanguard in the pandemic fight.

Although doctor Li Wenliang who alerted colleagues to the new coronavirus in late December was at first reprimanded, a national outpouring of grief and anger over his death prompted Beijing to redirect criticism to local officials and subsequently paint him as a hero.

President Xi Jinping in February raised the need to speed up establishing the biosecurity law, urging for reforms of mechanisms to prevent major outbreaks.

Under the new law, those who conceal information, omit making reports or prevent others from reporting infectious diseases could be given warnings or suspended.

The new law also calls for systems including to regularly monitor biosafety risks, and to trace the origins of incidents.

Disease prevention agencies are also to help predict the occurrence and prevalence of emerging diseases.

Based on these predictions, authorities should announce warnings and adopt prevention measures.

Although Beijing established an information system after the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak that allowed for real-time reports of outbreaks, provincial authorities came under fire during the coronavirus outbreak for perceived incompetence, including delays in announcing the public health emergency.

The new biosecurity law also takes aim at the management of research facilities, flagging the need for emergency plans for biosafety incidents.

Russia and Saudi Arabia Step Up Oil Diplomacy

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Russia and Saudi Arabia held a second, and unusual, phone call this week to discuss the OPEC+ agreement after officials from the group warned on Friday of the potential for a weaker oil market in 2021.

President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman spoke in what the Kremlin said was a continuation of an October 13 conversation. The two discussed the OPEC+ cooperation "extensively", the Kremlin said in an emailed statement.

"Both sides reiterated their readiness for further close coordination in this area in the interest of maintaining stability in the world energy market," the Kremlin said. The latest call came two days before several OPEC+ ministers are set to discuss the implementation of production cuts during a meeting of the so-called Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee. The steering group meets monthly to analyse the market, with their recommendation later reviewed by the whole group. The next full OPEC+ ministerial meeting is scheduled for November 30 and December 1.

Russian Diplomat...

FROM PAGE 1

In the statement, he claimed that arms sales to Iran would violate UN resolutions and result in sanctions, hours after Tehran announced that the longstanding UN embargo on arms trade with the Islamic republic had expired.

"The United States is prepared to use its domestic authorities to sanction any individual or entity that materially contributes to the supply, sale, or transfer of conventional arms to or from Iran," Pompeo said in a statement.

The U.S. secretary of state also claimed that, "Every nation that seeks peace and stability in the Middle East... should refrain from any arms transactions with Iran."

Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian ambassador to international organizations in Vienna, said his country's defense sector has already got "all imaginable U.S. sanctions" and there is nothing left to be worried about.

"Do you really think that we will take care about U.S. decisions?" he asked.

"Our policy will be guided by other factors in their entirety, not by threats from you, guys," he tweeted, reacting to the threat of sanctions in case of selling arms to Iran.

Nearly all Mideast...

FROM PAGE 1

"Risks of a worse-than-projected scenario loom large, particularly given recent surges in COVID-19 infections in many countries around the world that have reopened," the IMF warned.

Iran, for example, recorded its highest daily death tolls from the virus last week. Its economy shrank by 6.5% last year and is projected to contract by another 5% this year. The IMF, however, expects Iran's economy to rebound with 3.2% growth next year, based in part on the government's future capacity to manage the virus, which it thus far has struggled to do.

"Iran was among the first countries to become an epicenter of COVID-19 and we are now in the third wave of the pandemic, and this was on top of an economy that has been underperforming because of (U.S.) sanctions," Jihad Azour, director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the IMF, told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, wealthy Mideast oil exporters are expected to see their economies contract by 6.6% in 2020, the IMF said. Persian Gulf Arab states, however, are expected to see average economic growth of 2.3% next year. The IMF says its projections are based on assumptions that the price of oil averages \$41.69 a barrel in 2020 and will rise to \$46.70 a barrel in 2021. The IMF revised its gloomy estimate of Saudi Arabia's economic contraction down from 6.8% to 5.4%. As one of the world's largest oil producers and top 20 largest economies, the kingdom took the bold step this year of trying to shore up more revenue by tripling value-added tax to 15% and increasing customs duties.

Egypt was the sole outlier in the region, experiencing modest growth of 3.5% this year after more than 5% growth annually for past two years as lower energy prices help it as an oil importer. Still, Egypt faces challenges with its massive population and as tourism revenues remain sluggish.

The IMF, known for its bullish stance on taxes and subsidy cuts, has largely suspended its calls for belt-tightening austerity measures as people struggle under the weight of lockdowns and job losses. The IMF said "in general, tax increases would be more effective after the crisis" as such measures "will likely be a drag on the recovery and invite larger fiscal costs in the future."

The international lender is calling on countries to focus their immediate priorities on ensuring adequate resources for health care and correctly targeting support programs to the most-vulnerable people.

Meanwhile, other Mideast oil exporters like the United Arab Emirates, home to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, will see an economic contraction of more than 6% this year, while Oman's economy is projected to shrink by 10%. Iraq faces a recession of 12%, the IMF said. The World Bank estimates the pandemic has thrown between 88 million and 114 million people into extreme poverty, which is defined as living on less than \$1.90 a day.

According to the International Labor Organization, working hours in Arab states declined by 1.8% during the first quarter of 2020, equivalent to about 1 million full-time jobs. That number jumped to 10.3% in the second quarter, equivalent to about 6 million full-time jobs. While Mideast states have rushed to provide various forms of support to their own citizens amid the pandemic, the impact from the virus has been acutely felt by many of the millions of low-wage laborers who hail mostly from South Asia and reside in the region. Their families back home rely on their salaries for survival.

Azour said Persian Gulf Arab states alone provide 18% of global remittances. He said these countries should use the moment "to modernize labor laws" by providing support to all laborers in their countries.

Iran Has Nothing...

FROM PAGE 1

He also stressed the determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to prosecute and punish the perpetrators, establish justice, as well as compensate the survivors.

Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Yenin, for his part, thanked Iran for its warm welcome despite the coronavirus outbreak. He appreciated the cooperation and efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran to administer justice. The Ukrainian delegation arrived in Tehran on Sunday and the mutual talks will wrap up on Wednesday.

The first round of the Iranian delegation's talks about the flight 752 incident in Ukraine ended in early August 2020. On Jan 8, a Boeing 737 belonging to Ukraine International Airlines crashed in Tehran shortly after taking off from Iran's Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) with at least 170 passengers and crew, mostly Iranians, onboard.

Navy...

FROM PAGE 1

"When a prototype of a product is made in Iran Navy, it is given to the Ministry of Defense for mass production to sell if needed," Navy Commander said.

He added, "Our products are at a high level of quality and price attractiveness, and there is a very high possibility that they will be successful in competing with foreign samples." The longstanding UN ban on the sale of arms from Iran was terminated early on Sunday under the terms of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that blessed the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic Republic and world powers.

No Iranian Assets...

FROM PAGE 1

In response to a question about the lifting of Iran's arms embargo, he said: "It was a great victory for the resistance and the Iranian nation. What happened yesterday was the repeal of resolutions that our friends Russia and China also voted in favor of lifting the arms embargo on Iran. The Western and U.S. sides were basically reluctant to talk about arms embargoes, and it was the first step that Iran said it would not negotiate regarding the arms embargo."

Regarding foreign policy developments over the past week, he stated: "On October 13th, Zarif had a telephone call with his Japanese counterpart regarding bilateral, regional, and international issues. The issue of Iran's access to its financial resources in Japan was one of the serious issues in this consultation, and we hope that the Japanese side will fulfill its obligations in the international legal system." Asked about the bullets fired from the clashes between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the official said: "Our red line is the security of the citizens. Some explanations from the other side have been heard and have not been accepted, and we have said that any attack on Iran will be answered."

Khatibzadeh noted that Iran is following developments on its borders with the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia with concern. Referring to the coronavirus outbreak in different parts of the world, he said: "Once again, COVID-19 has taken over the world from east to west, from Europe to America, and we hope to overcome the disease and its wave with the cooperation, empathy, and gratitude of the services of the medical staff."

The spokesman also said about Zarif's trip to Europe: "Zarif's trips to foreign countries are subject to a certain criterion in the current situation."

He described Governor of Central Bank of Iran Abdol-Naser Hemmati's visit to Iraq in line with the agreements reached between the Central Bank of Iran and Iraq and described the visit as successful.

Referring to the talks of the Ukrainian delegation with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, he said: "A very unfortunate incident happened and it is Iran's duty to realize the rights of the victims and compensate for this issue. Canada is not part of it."

Trade With...

FROM PAGE 1

Farzad Piltan stressed "In addition to unilateral US sanctions, tensions in political relations with some of these countries, such as Saudi Arabia, and unrest in countries such as Iraq and Yemen, the current outbreak of coronavirus, and the several-month suspension of trade with neighboring countries have negatively affected our trade relations."

Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Saeed Zarandi also said Iran is currently focusing on exports to 15 neighboring countries. The official stated that in order to focus on export promotion to 15 neighboring countries, especially non-oil exports, Iran has already begun briefings with the border provinces. "For many years, the Iranian economy is familiar with the sanctions, but despite this, sanctions last year created a strong impetus in the country's economy, especially in the industry, which has now fallen sharply", Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade made the remark.

Almeida Retains Pink Jersey

ROME (Dispatches) - Team Ineos' British rider Tao Geoghegan Hart soloed to victory in the 15th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Sunday after a tough climb to the summit of Piancavallo.
With a week left to race, Portugal's Joao Almeida holds the overall leader's pink jersey which had been under threat after Dutch rival Wilco Kelderman finished the stage in second position.
Kelderman closed to 15seconds behind Deceuninck-Quick Step's Almeida with the race finishing in Milan on October 25.

Caviezel Surprises in First Run Of Skiing World Cup Season

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Swiss skier Gino Caviezel created a surprise on the first run of the men's World Cup season with the fastest run in the opening leg of the giant slalom in Soelden.
In a race held on sunny but deserted slopes, Caviezel completed his run in 1min 08.13sec narrowly ahead of a bunch of event favourites with 14 of the top 35 starters within one second.
Slovenian Zan Kranjec was second 0.06sec behind followed by Norwegian Henrik Kristoffersen and Frenchman Alexis Pinturault, who won last year at Soelden.

Spurs Rocked On Bale's Return

LONDON (Dispatches) - West Ham ruined Gareth Bale's Tottenham return with a stunning late fightback from three goals down to rescue a thrilling 3-3 draw, while Fulham's Aleksandar Mitrovic endured a penalty nightmare in a 1-1 draw at Sheffield United on Sunday.

Tottenham were leading 3-0 when Bale came on as a 72nd minute substitute for his first appearance since joining on a season-long loan from Real Madrid.

But Bale suffered a debut to forget as Tottenham capitulated in astonishing fashion.

The Wales star was one of the main Tottenham culprits as he missed a golden opportunity to wrap up the points before West Ham's Manuel Lanzini snatched a stoppage-time equaliser.

Tottenham took the lead with just 45 seconds gone when Son Heung-min and Harry Kane combined to create a goal for the seventh time this season.

Kane was the catalyst, dropping deep into midfield before unfurling a majestic long pass that found Son, who cut into the West Ham area and curled his shot into the far corner.

It was Kane's turn to get on the scoresheet in the eighth minute as he nutmegged Declan Rice and fired into the bottom corner from the edge of the area.

Tottenham's sizzling start featured a third goal in the 16th minute, with England captain Kane heading in from Sergio Reguilon's pin-point cross for his 10th goal of the season.

Having crushed Manchester United 6-1 in their last game before the international break, Jose Mourinho's side looked odds on for another emphatic victory.

Back at Tottenham seven years after leaving for Real in a then world record deal, Bale hopes to prove he is still a world-class talent despite a long spell out of favour with Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane.

But it was West Ham who were the dominant force after Bale's introduction to replace Steven Bergwijn.

Fabian Balbuena nodded in from Aaron Cresswell's cross after 82 minutes and Davinson Sanchez's headed own goal from Vladimir Coufal's delivery three minutes later left Tottenham panicking.



Bale should have scored in stoppage-time, but he shot wide after bursting into the area and Lanzini made him pay with a brilliant 25-yard blast into the top corner.

It was just the third time in Premier League history that a side has avoided defeat despite trailing by at least three goals going into the 80th minute.

At Bramall Lane, Fulham's Mitrovic fired over with his second half penalty after Jack Robinson handled.

On-loan Leipzig winger Ademola Lookman put Fulham ahead in the 77th minute with a superb solo effort, beating two men before firing into the roof of the net.

But Serbia international Mitrovic was penalised for a high foot on Robinson in the 85th minute following a VAR check and Billy Sharp made him pay as he drove his penalty down the middle.

Mitrovic is the first player to commit the unwanted penalty double in the same Premier League game since Mikel Arteta for Arsenal against Fulham in 2012.

Fulham at least moved off the bottom of the table after taking their first point at the fifth attempt, following last season's promotion from the Championship.

United also avoided defeat for the first time in five games this season.

Alexis Mac Allister's first Premier League goal gave Brighton a dramatic 1-1 draw at rivals Crystal Palace.

Palace took the lead in the 19th minute when Tariq Lamptey was harshly adjudged to have pulled down Michy Batshuayi in the penalty area.

Ivory Coast forward Wilfried Zaha sent Brighton keeper Mat Ryan the wrong way from the spot for his fourth goal of the season.

But, after a poor clearance from Palace defender Joel Ward, Argentine substitute Mac Allister fired home via a slight deflection from the edge of the area in the 90th minute.

Rublev Defeats Coric to win St Petersburg Open



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian third seed Andrey Rublev won his fourth ATP Tour title of the year when he beat Croatia's Borna Coric 7-6(5) 6-4 to lift the St Petersburg Open trophy on Sunday.

Having also won tournaments in Doha, Adelaide and Hamburg this year, Rublev is now tied with Novak Djokovic for most titles in 2020 and the 22-year-old is also three wins shy of the world number one's 37 victories.

It was deja vu for Coric as he finished runner-up in St Petersburg to a Russian again after a straight sets loss to Daniil Medvedev last year. Rublev was flawless on his serve and never gave Coric a break point opportunity. After the opening set went with serve, Rublev clinched it on the tiebreak despite being 2-5 down before converting a break point in the second to emerge victorious.

Victory also gave Rublev a big push in his quest to qualify for next month's season-ending ATP Finals for the first time and the Russian will move up to eighth in the world rankings. Two spots remain to be filled as Rublev leads Argentina's Diego Schwartzman, who currently occupies the final qualification position.

World number one Novak Djokovic, French Open champion Rafael Nadal, U.S. Open winner Dominic Thiem, Stefanos Tsitsipas, Daniil Medvedev and Alexander Zverev have already qualified for the ATP Finals.

Rins Wins Aragon MotoGP

MADRID (Dispatches) - Alex Rins held off compatriot Alex Marquez to win the Aragon MotoGP on Sunday with another Spaniard Joan Mir finishing third to take the championship lead from Fabio Quartararo.

Suzuki's Rins became the eighth winner in this season's ten races as the vacuum created by the early season injury to reigning champion Marc Marquez has created a volatile and unpredictable title race.

This is the third victory for the 24-year-old Rins who won twice last year but was injured at the beginning of this season.

He sliced through the field after starting 10th on the grid.

"I had a very good start," he said.

The other Suzuki factory rider Mir takes over the championship lead even though he has not won a MotoGP race.

He has 121 points in the championship ahead of Quartararo (115), Spaniard Maverick Vinales (109) and Italian Andrea Dovizioso (106).

"I'm trying to be as consistent as I can," Mir said. "I'm happy to be on the podium."

Frenchman Quartararo, who started from pole, struggled and finished down in 18th place. One of the riders attempting to fill the void left by Marquez is his younger brother and Honda teammate Alex Marquez who, after a slow start to his rookie season, has finished second in two straight races.

"It's a pleasure to be on podium with a second second place," said Marquez. "Next week we will try harder."

Six-time champion Marc Marquez was overjoyed.

Van der Poel Takes Tour of Flanders

BRUSSELS (AFP) - Mathieu van der Poel took the Tour of Flanders on Sunday for his first win in one of cycling's Monuments after a race marked by world champion Julian Alaphilippe's heavy fall after colliding with a motorbike.

Van der Poel had slipped away from the peloton with his great rival Wout van Aert and Alaphilippe in a powerful three-man breakaway.

Zverev Takes Cologne ATP



COLOGNE (AFP) - U.S. Open runner-up Alexander Zverev clinched the Cologne ATP title on Sunday beating Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 6-3.

The German world number seven claimed his third ATP Tour win on home soil as third seed Auger-Aliassime lost his sixth successive final.

"I had a very tough final in New York and the next final I played here I wanted to come out and obviously play my best tennis, finish the match," 23-year-old Zverev said.

"Felix, you're an unbelievable player. I know it doesn't mean much right now,

but I'm sure you are not only going to win one title, you're going to win multiple, multiple titles in your career, bigger titles than this," he added.

Auger-Aliassime, 20, overcame second seed Roberto Bautista Agut in the semi-final but failed to repeat his performance against Zverev.

His run of losses stretches back to his maiden ATP final in February 2019 at the Rio Open.

"I just played bad from start to finish," Auger-Aliassime said.

Zverev will also be top seed for next week's Cologne Championships tournament where he is joined in the draw by French Open semi-finalist Diego Schwartzman and Auger-Aliassime who will be fifth seed.

Murray Withdraws From Bett1HULKS Championships



LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray has pulled out of next week's ATP Tour event in Cologne because of a lingering pelvic problem.

The former world number one revealed ahead of the French Open last month that he had been forced to rest following a second-round loss at the US Open because of tendinitis in his left psoas muscle, which connects the spine to the femur.

Murray said he had felt good physically once he began training on clay but he suffered a chastening first-round loss to Stan Wawrinka in Paris and was then beaten by Fernando Verdasco in his opening match in Cologne.

The Scot had been due to stay on in the German city for this week's second tournament, the bett1HULKS Championships, where he had been drawn to face Serbia's Danilo Petrovic, but his body once again is not cooperating.

In a message on his Facebook page, Murray said: "I've been dealing with tendinitis in my left psoas, which has kind of been on and off since the US Open."

"I've been trying to deal with it in training and the matches. Unfortunately after my match here this week it's flared up again. I've been practising the last few days and trying to manage it but, after playing some points today, I decided that it was not going to be good enough to play."

"I'd like to thank the tournament for giving me the opportunity to come and play here, I'm sorry it hasn't worked out. See you on the court soon."

It now appears very unlikely that Murray will compete at the Erste Bank Open in Vienna starting on October 26 but the Paris Masters the following week is understood to be a possibility.

Liverpool Confirm Knee Ligament Damage for Van Dijk



LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool's Premier League title defense was rocked on Sunday with the news Virgil Van Dijk must undergo knee surgery amid reports the Dutch defender could miss the rest of the season.

Van Dijk hobbled off after a shocking challenge from Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford in a 2-2 draw in the Merseyside derby on Saturday.

"The centre-back damaged knee ligaments following an incident involving Blues goalkeeper Jordan Pickford after six minutes at Goodison Park," Liverpool said in a statement.

"Van Dijk was required to be substituted and further assessment on the injury has revealed an operation will be needed."

"No specific timescale is being placed upon his return to action at this stage."

Van Dijk has been pivotal to Liverpool's resurgence under Jurgen Klopp since making a then world record £75 million move for a defender from Southampton in January 2018.

The 29-year-old has started every league game for the past two seasons as the Reds won the Champions League in 2019 and ended a 30-year wait to win a league title earlier this year.

"Virgil played for us I don't know how many games in a row. He plays with pain, he plays with pretty much everything, but he couldn't play on. That's not good," said Klopp.

Prior to Van Dijk's arrival, Klopp's time at Anfield had been beset by defensive collapses.

Now the German must find a solution to the huge hole left in his defence without the chance to dip into the transfer market with the window not open again until January.