

**IRAN NEWS Expresses Its Condolences to Its Shiite Readers On Occasion of the Martyrdom Anniversary of Imam Hassan Askari (A). The Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands on Monday**

# IRAN NEWS

**Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday That Some 335 More Iranians Have Died From COVID-19 Over the Past 24 Hours as Some 6,134 New Cases Of Infection Have Been Found**

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## Exports to EU Up by 8% At \$500m in August

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's exports to the EU rise by 8 percent despite the spread of the pandemic and US sanctions.

A study of trade exchanges this year between Iran and members of the European Union shows exports to the bloc surged in July to compensate for the losses suffered during the initial months of the pandemic although the total size and value of shipments remained largely low because of US sanctions on Tehran.

An excerpt of the study conducted by Tehran's chamber of commerce (TCCIM) published on Thursday showed that total exports from Iran to the EU countries in eight months to August had increased by eight percent to reach nearly \$500 million. The report, covered by ILNA news agency, said that exports thrived especially in July when the monthly value of Iranian shipments topped \$92 million.

It said imports into Iran from the EU declined by 15 percent year on year in August to stand at 2.5 billion euros (\$2.95 billion). Germany remained Iran's top trading partner in the EU as the country took delivery of 184 million euros (\$217.48 million) worth of Iranian shipments while exporting nearly \$1 billion worth of cargoes to Iran, said the TCCIM.

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## Iran Can Be Among World Top Ten Defense Equipment Suppliers

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy Ministry of Defense for International Affairs said that Iran enjoys high capacity to be among top 10 supplying countries of defense products.

Brigadier General Amir Mohammad Ahadi pointed to the significance of lifting Iran's arms embargoes, saying, "End of these sanctions will create a new opportunity for the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of armaments and diplomacy."

Referring to the importance of lifting Iran's arms embargoes at the UN Security Council (UNSC), he stated, "Islamic Republic of Iran has been put under sanctions in terms of weapons since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and eight years of Iraqi imposed war against Iran (19 excuse for the East and the West against Iran and 80-1988) became an intensification of arms sanctions."

In clarifying the importance of lifting Iran's arms embargoes, the brigadier general added, "One of the main reasons that today, defense industry is so proud of its ability in the world in terms of capability, knowledge, technology and industry is related to sanctions. Sanctions paved suitable ways for the country to turn threats into opportunities to defend the security of the country."

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## Iran Can Counter U.S. Unilateral Sanctions



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) called bartering one of the classic methods for countering U.S. unilateral sanctions.

In a joint meeting with Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, Minister of Oil and Minister of Agriculture Jihad, Abdul Nasser Hemmati said: "In the current situation that the U.S. has considered a variety of decisions to prevent Iran from monetary and banking exchanges, bartering oil for commodities can counter Washington's sanctions."

The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran added that bartering is one of the ways to develop countries' foreign trade. Hemmati went on to say: "Considering the history of bartering in Iran, the existing program will be implemented in a wider dimension and in two stages, the first stage of which will include the supply of basic commodities, and the second stage will include essential goods and raw materials needed by production units."

Earlier on Wednesday, he also called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to grant Iran the emergency loans it needs to fight the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The CBI governor made the remarks while addressing the governors of the central banks of the member-states of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) via video conference.

"It is expected from the IMF to quickly and without any discrimination and without being influenced by political lobbying or pressures from other countries, including the U.S.," Hemmati said while referring to Iran's request for receiving emergency loans from the IMF.

He emphasized that the COVID-19 disease has harmed many countries and Iran has suffered more than many countries, and said, "Despite the severe sanctions of the US and the difficult situation that the country is facing, Iran has managed to contain this issue and make progress with its economic policies." Hemmati said the present situation has made many world countries face budget and liquidity problems and Iran is not an exception.

"Iran managed to take suitable measures by relying on its legal sources, but the problem is that the illegal U.S. sanctions have deprived Iran of gaining access to its resources in the absence of any acceptable logic," he added.

Hemmati had earlier said that Iran had requested a \$5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund in the corona campaign package of Rapid Financial Instrument.

In the meantime, an IMF spokesman told IRNA on the condition of anonymity that "We have had discussions with the Iranian authorities to better understand their request for emergency financing from the Fund."

## Iran Ambassador Welcomes U.S. Sanctions on Him

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (MNA) - In reaction to the U.S. sanction on him, Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad said, "The US move made me more determined."

"I was very happy to hear this news. Of course, the terrorist and criminal regime of the United States has once again put me on its criminal sanctions list along with 80 million Iranians. Iranian people and patients amid the coronavirus outbreak are facing difficulties in receiving medicine and food," Iraj Masjedi said.

"This action of the United States made me more determined to materialize the holy goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the people of my country and confirmed legitimacy of my goal and actions," he added.

"The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Quds Force are an honorary document for all freedom-seekers," Masjedi said, adding, "Undoubtedly, the Axis of Islamic Resistance, with the firm support of the Islamic Republic of Iran, will continue the path of freedom and relentless struggle against the terrorist regime of the United States and the occupying Israel." In a statement on Thursday, the US Department of the Treasury announced that the country has imposed sanctions on Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi and two other high-ranking Lebanese Hezbollah officials. The statement claimed that Masjedi, a close adviser to former IRGC Commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani, played a formative role in the IRGC Quds Forces's Iraq policy.

The United States slapped new sanctions on five Iranian entities for what it called "brazen attempts" to interfere with the US election. The Treasury Department accused the Iranian groups of seeking to spread disinformation and division ahead of the November 3 vote. The Treasury imposed the fresh sanctions against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the IRGC-Qods Force, the Bayan Rasaneh Gostar Institute, the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union and International Union of Virtual Media. The groups have worked to "sow discord among the voting populace by spreading disinformation online and executing malign influence operations aimed at misleading U.S. voters," the Treasury said. Bayan Gostar, which the Treasury called an IRGC-Qods Force "front company" for propaganda, took the lead in the activities, it said. The two media groups were part of that operation, it said.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## How Bavar-373 Became a "Belief"

Among the news stuff in just a couple of days ago, there was some reporting the successful test of strategic and domestically-developed "Bavar-373" (Bavar means belief in Persian) air defense missile system and its tracing and destroying of an electro-optic-guided target during the joint specialized air defense maneuver codenamed 'Modafe'an-e Aseman-e Velayat 99' (Guardians of Velayat's Sky-99), and for the first time in a drill, the missile system successfully stopped a predetermined target.

What is evident and seen in the interviews of the commanders during this drill is that this was the first presence of the Bavar-373 system in an all-out drill rehearsal of a genuine air defense combat which registered a very successful performance in the framework of Iran's integrated air defense network.

The state-of-the-art surface-to-air Bavar 373 missile defense system is Iran's the first altitude air defense with high range which was designed and manufactured by the country's experts and first was unveiled in August 2019.

While congratulating this great success, Spokesman of 'Modafe'an Aseman Velayat' (The Defenders of Velayat Skies) Military Drill Second Brigadier General Amir Abbas Farajpour said, "Our country's indigenous defense systems have a lot to demonstrate in the world and today we have appeared in this field on a global level. Of course, we have never been satisfied with the current situation and we are always updating and upgrading our systems and equipment to protect and defend the country's sky from enemies' threats."

The spokesman of the drill has emphasized that during the drill, some air defense tactics were adopted by weighing the realities of a genuine combat with considering enemies' capabilities, adding that for any visible and hidden angle in different layers of the air defense, necessary measures had been taken. He then said, "Our commanders in the air defense, with reviewing and weighing all weak and strong points of defensive plans and taking smart measures and actions, have been able to secure a safe sky under upgrading the defensive power. All designed hypothetical unmanned aircrafts and drones of enemies in the mid-altitude and their intrusion into the drill area were to be traced and destroyed by the Iranian Air Defense Force's Mersad and the IRGC Aerospace Force's Tabas defense systems which had been assigned by the integrated air defense network. Fire operations and rapid movement of defense systems from one location to other locations were among the measures taken in this stage of the drills, which were successfully carried out with the aim of preventing the hypothetical enemies to find the location of defense systems."

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## U.S. Unilateralism Threatens Int'l Rule of Law

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations called the U.S. unilateralist approach a threat to the rule of international law and criticized the dual and dishonest approach of some countries in the fight against corruption.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks at a national and international rule of law meeting on Thursday hosted by the UN General Assembly sixth committee.

He called multilateralism one of the most important achievements of the United Nations, which is now under serious violation as a result of US unilateralist approaches.

Iran's envoy added that the manifestations of this unilateralism can be seen in the withdrawal of the United States from international agreements, treaties and international organizations, the start of trade wars with countries and the practice of economic and medical terrorism through unilateral coercive actions against countries for political gain.

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Sokhan Gostar Institute

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## Tehran Condolences With Hanoi Over Deadly Flooding, Landslides

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has expressed condolences with the Vietnamese government and people following the recent flooding and landslide in that country, which left dozens dead or missing and left behind massive material damage.

Severe floods and landslides triggered by weeks of heavy rains have killed at least 105 people in central Vietnam and "swamped" five million, according to media reports and an aid agency.

About a third of the dead included soldiers whose barracks were buried under deadly mudslides last week, Reuters news agency reported on Tuesday.

## Rouhani, Erdogan Discuss Enhancement of Trade Ties

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

**TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has called for the promotion of economic and trade cooperation with neighboring Turkey to mitigate the negative effects of the US sanctions and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.**

In a telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday, President Rouhani hailed the bilateral relations between Iran and Turkey as a model for the other neighbors.

Pointing to the negative impacts of the illegal US sanctions and the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic on the economic and trade interaction between Tehran and Ankara, President Rouhani expressed hope for growing trade ties in full compliance with the health protocols and with a rise in the transit of trucks and number of flights.

The president also stressed the need for the immediate implementation of the previous bilateral deals between the two countries, particularly the trade and banking agreements, considering the most recent meeting of Iran-Turkey High Council of Economic Cooperation, held in Tehran via videoconferencing.

President Rouhani further emphasized the necessity of joint action against terrorism, saying, "The terrorist groups could be a great threat to the region."

The president also voiced Iran's readiness to cooperate with Turkey in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic and share its experiences in tackling the pandemic.

President Rouhani then stressed the importance of protecting security of Iran's border cities amid the escalation of fighting between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, adding, "Our stance on this issue is quite clear. We believe that war is not the solution, and the conflict needs to be resolved through dialogue and negotiations."



"I believe that Iran and Turkey, as two powerful countries in the region, as well as Russia, can contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the region, so that we'd see the establishment of peace and calm in the region with the implementation of the international law and territorial integrity," the Iranian president stated.

Lauding the cooperation among Iran, Turkey and Russia for the settlement of crisis in Syria within the framework of the Astana Process, President Rouhani hoped that the trilateral interaction would resolve the problems in Syria, put an end to terrorism in the region, and protect Syria's territorial integrity.

President Erdogan, for his part, hailed Iran as a friend and good neighbor of Turkey, and called for the expansion of bilateral ties under the agreements reached in the meetings of the High Council of Cooperation.

He also gave an assurance that Turkey will continue to support Iran against the US' unilateral sanctions, saying Ankara would do its utmost, like before, to broaden the economic and trade ties with Tehran.

The Turkish president further described the cooperation with Iran in the war on terrorism as a major factor in ensuring regional peace and security, calling for continued interaction in the fight against terrorism.

President Erdogan finally expressed hope that the coordination between Turkey and Iran amid the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute would help settle the crisis through negotiations and restore calm and peace to the region.

## Iran, Kazakhstan Agree to Ease Visa Requirements

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran and Kazakhstan have agreed to ease their visa requirements following a meeting of the two sides' foreign ministry officials.

Mahmoud Adib, the director-general for consular affairs at the Iranian Foreign Ministry and his Kazakh counterpart Akataev Bauyrzhan, co-chaired the ninth meeting of the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Consular Committee.

In the meeting, the two sides agreed to ease requirements for business, tourist and diplomatic visas, offer consular support to the nationals of the two countries, fight drug trafficking and organized crimes, and exchange mutual cooperation agreements on judicial issues. As announced by the Iranian official, the Kazakh government has officially put Iran on its list of electronic visa issuance, and once the coronavirus restrictions imposed on Iranian nationals are lifted, they can obtain visas electronically at entry points to Kazakhstan.

## Iranian, Russian Diplomats Discuss Syria Developments

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ranking diplomats from Iran and Russia met in Tehran for talks on the latest developments in Syria.

Russian president's special envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, who is heading a high-ranking political and military delegation in a visit to Tehran, held a meeting with Ali-Asghar Khaji, a senior assistant to Iran's Foreign Minister in special political affairs.

In the gathering, the two sides discussed the latest developments in Syria, including the political process, the Constitutional Committee, the on-the-ground situation, particularly the situation in Idlib, and the initiatives developed by Iran and Russia for helping improve the economic and humanitarian situation in Syria.

Highlighting the positive results of cooperation between Russia and Iran in Syria – such as bilateral interaction and the cooperation within the framework of the Astana Process – Lavrentiev stressed the need to continue and strengthen consultations and cooperation between the two countries at various political and on-the-field levels.

The Russian envoy also welcomed the progress achieved in the meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, expressing hope that that committee would be able to press on with its activities until the achievement of a final result.

Describing the return of Syrian refugees as a humanitarian issue, Lavrentiev deplored the obstructive measures of certain countries in carrying out the humanitarian plan.

For his part, Khaji pointed to the Iranian and Russian efforts to help advance the activities of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, highlighted the leading role of the Astana Process in the formation of the committee, and described the Astana Process as the most important format for the political settlement of the Syrian crisis.

The Iranian official also emphasized that the Islamic Republic's principled policy is based on supporting the progress of activities of the Constitutional Committee without foreign interference and building trust among the committee members. Khaji finally touched on the strategic cooperation between Iran and Russia in Syria at the field and political levels, and welcomed the promotion of cooperation, particularly in the humanitarian issues and the restoration of peace and calm to Syria.

## U.S. in No Position to Lecture Yemenis, Iranians on Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry spokesman reacts to interventionist remarks by a U.S. official commenting on Iran's relations with Yemen, saying Washington had better end its now-years-long atrocities against the impoverished nation than advise it on its ties with the outside world.

"The U.S. has underwritten 5yrs of Saudi-led slaughter in Yemen," Saeed Khatibzadeh tweeted on Thursday.

He was referring to the United States' unreserved military, logistical, and political support for the 2015 war that Saudi Arabia and its allies have waged against Yemen to restore the country's Riyadh-allied officials. The war has killed tens of thousands of Yemenis and forced the Arab world's already poorest country close to the edge of outright famine. The overall situation has, according to the United Nations, turned Yemen into the scene of the world's "worst" humanitarian crisis.

"Its (the U.S.) abuse of diplo (diplomatic) cover is also notorious: just ask ex-spy-master @SecPompeo (US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo)," Khatibzadeh added, referring to Washington's political patronage for the conflagration that has been facilitated by former CIA chief and current top diplomat Pompeo among other senior American officials. "U.S. is thus in NO position to lecture Yemenis & Iranians abt (about) their bilat (bilateral) ties," the Iranian official added, declaring, "Better to end your crimes & malign presence in our region."

Khatibzadeh's comments came a day after U.S. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortogus issued a raft of meddlesome remarks on Iran-Yemen bilateral relations.

## Resistance of Iranian Nation Thwarted All Enemies' Plots



TEHRAN (MNA) - Judiciary Chief said that resistance of the noble nation of Iran foiled all conspiracies orchestrated by enemies against the country.

Speaking among senior deputies and directors of IRGC's Intelligence Organization, Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raeisi said that enemy left no stone unturned to carry out psychological operations against the country and weaken the Establishment with political, cultural and economic sanctions but Iranian nation resisted against all these conspiracies and thwarted enemies' malicious plots.

The judiciary chief pointed to the effectiveness of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in producing power, bringing about dignity and authority for the Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic world and added, "Key role of soldiers and security forces of the Organization, who are responsible for protecting and safeguarding this great source of honor and power, is doubly important and more sensitive."

Safeguarding and preserving the Establishment is the main mission of IRGC, he emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the clarification of plots and conspiracies waged by enemies against the Islamic Revolution and stated, "Today, enemy seeks to create despair and hopelessness within the Establishment but whenever enemies have taken action against the Islamic Republic of Iran, they (enemies) have failed in achieving their malicious objectives."

Benefited from very rich resources and potentials, Islamic Republic of Iran can overcome its problems in economic, agricultural, industrial and production fields, Raeisi underscored.

## U.S. Seeking New Global Arms Race

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the U.S.' reluctance to extend the New START nuclear treaty is proof that Washington is seeking to begin a new arms race across the world.

"The lack of desire on the part of the United States to renew the START-3 Treaty on the Limitation of Offensive Strategic Arms, which is one of the most important treaties in ensuring international security and arms control and ends in February 2021, is another vivid example of the lack of interest in the United States in global stability and testifies to the great desire of this country to start an arms race in the world," Zarif said in a tweet late on Thursday.

The so-called NEW START, or the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was designed to curb the nuclear arms held by both nations. But a proposal to extend the deal by Russia has been rejected by the United States.

Zarif's tweet came after the administration of US President Donald Trump rejected an offer by Russian President Vladimir Putin for a one-year extension of the crucial nuclear treaty with Washington, describing it as a "non-starter."

The offer to extend New Start, a 10-year bilateral accord that limits US and Russian nuclear warheads, was made by Putin at a meeting of his security council, when he said it would be "exceedingly sad" if New Start expired on February 5 and offered to "extend the existing agreement without preconditions for a year at least."

## Iran's Weapons Strategy Based on Defense Strategy

TEHRAN (MNA) - Government Spokesman said that weapons strategy of the country is based on its defense strategy.

Islamic Republic of Iran has not started any war in recent centuries, so that its weapons strategy is based on defense strategy.

He made the remarks and stated that Iran's arms embargo was lifted based on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The international community recognized the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and put an end to Trump's false Iranophobia.

No country in the international community followed Trump and the sanctions that were illegal from the beginning were lifted, Rabiei added.

U.S. policy is to turn the region into a weapons depot and to generate revenue for American arms companies, and their interests will always take precedence over human lives, he noted.

After failing to prevent the lifting of Iran's arms embargo, Trump has again made statements about Iran's weapons program, he said, adding, "But we have fortunately achieved a great deal of self-sufficiency and knowledge in the field of defense."

The government spokesman added, "If a country asks us for weapons, we have our own conditions, which means that our conditions are moral and responsible, non-provocative and defensive, and we will decide in full compliance with the international framework and rules."

## Normalization of Ties With Zionist Regime an American Project

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy Foreign Minister called the agreement to normalize ties between Bahrain and the UAE with the Zionist regime an American project doomed to failure.

The Deputy Minister and Head of the Institute for Political and International Studies of Iran's Foreign Ministry, Seyed Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour, in a webinar aimed at examining the compromise between Bahrain and the UAE with the Zionist regime hosted by Karachi, Pakistan, called the compromise as a result of U.S. internal problems and betrayal of the Palestinian people, saying it was an American presidential election project and a psychological ploy.

Sajjadpour added that in the past 70 years, 60 American-European plans have been proposed to resolve the Palestinian issue, but all of them have failed.

He noted that some countries in the region, unlike Iran, do not trust their security and seek to conclude such agreements, while this agreement will not solve the fundamental problem of Palestine.

Sajjadpour also stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran has provided strong and impenetrable security in the past four decades in accordance with its domestic policies, and at the same time has never attacked a country but has been in a defensive position.

The UAE and Bahrain signed an agreement on normalization of ties on September 15 in the White House with US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after announcing a compromise agreement with the occupying regime.

## Iran, Azerbaijan Discuss Expansion of Bilateral Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Baku and the Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan conferred on the economic relations between the two countries.

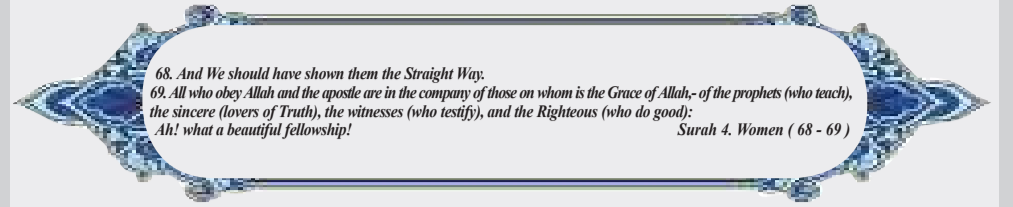
Iran's Ambassador to Baku Seyed Abbas Mousavi met and held talks with the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mikayil Jabbarov on Wednesday.

Both sides reviewed the latest status of economic relations and ongoing projects as well as barriers to trade and investment between the two countries. The officials further discussed facilitating the travel of traders and investors in the current situation, supporting Iranian companies, the latest developments related to the signing of a preferential trade agreement and the joint industrial town and the transshipment of Iranian goods during the meeting.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:48
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:36
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:56
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:20



## Iran, Self-Sufficient In Housing Sector

**TEHRAN (IP) – President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday said that the Islamic Republic is self-sufficient in the housing sector in terms of building materials and the factors leading to building houses.**

Rouhani's words came during his participation in the virtual inauguration of Mehr housing National Projects across Iran together with the Iranian Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami on Thursday.

Rouhani said: "Housing is a very important driving force in most industries, in the manufacturing sector, and in the job creation process."

The President added: "In the housing sector, we are completely self-sufficient in terms of building materials."

Rouhani went on to explain further that Engineering operations for housing services are carried out in the country, and the production of building material materials from iron and metal, tiles, ceramics, and everything needed for construction is produced and the surplus would be exported.

Rouhani said: "Housing in the year of "surge in production "is effective for the country's manufacturing sector and can create a great change in production and employment."

Meanwhile in Wednesday President said the country's non-oil exports have roughly doubled in the 11th and 12th administrations.

President Hassan Rouhani said the enemy intended to hinder Iran's non-oil exports, but to no avail.

"Enemies tried to prevent the exports of oil, gas condensate, oil products and other



items which were considered part of our staple exports in the past, but they failed to succeed because of the diversity of our products," he said.

The president added enemy's plots against Iran have failed.

"The enemy will definitely not be able to continue its plots," he said.

President Rouhani added whoever is elected to the White House should submit to the Iranian nation.

"It makes no difference to us which person or which party will win in the US presidential election. Whoever comes to power in the US will have no choice but to submit to the Iranian nation. He has no other option," he said.

"It is pretty obvious that they chose the wrong path. They wanted to bring the Iranian nation to its knees. They wanted to make our establishment give in to their demands. But we didn't succumb to them, nor will we do so," he said.

He said non-oil exports have been a lever in Iran's hands to counter the enemy.

"Our non-oil exports have been a bulwark against the enemy," he noted.

## Special Group Formed to Remove Obstacles to Manufacturing Sector



**TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri said on Thursday that special group has undertaken to remove obstacles in the way of manufacturing sector.**

Jahangiri said that the task group will work to help materialize guidelines of the Supreme Leader to create "Production Leap" to bolster national economy and thwart impacts of the U.S. arbitrary sanctions.

Jahangiri said that regulating the procedure for the manufacturing sector will help boost national output.

He said that the integrated regulations for the manufacturing sector will be useful to remove the obstacles to boost national output and the shortage of manufacturing outputs will end. The Production Leap will serve to supply enough goods to the market bringing better conditions for the people giving preference to domestic production.

Referring to exports as one of the main sectors of the economy, he said that exports are very useful to national economy and create jobs in addition to bringing foreign currencies under the current circumstances.

Jahangiri hoped that the decisions of the task group which is formed upon order of the Supreme Leader and approved by the heads of the three branches of Government, would be effective.

## U.S. Sanctions, More Psychological And Political Show-Off

**TEHRAN (IP) - Head of the Majlis Economic Commission said that U.S. sanctions against 18 Iranian banks are more psychological and political show off rather than being practical.**

Mohammadreza Pourebrahimi in an interview said, "As the United States tries to impose sanctions on Iran, we know how to use various methods."

The MP added that public and private banks have been blacklisted for a long time and Iran tries to use other capacities like bilateral and multilateral contracts.

Pourebrahimi noted, "Using the common currency in economic transactions like Swift is also another possible way as we started with Russia and China. Although using these ways is time and money consuming, we can still continue common cooperation with other countries in economic issues."

Pourebrahimi also told journalists that Majlis has reached an agreement with the minister of industry, mine, and trade so that government-prescribed prices will be eliminated since it has nothing except corruption.

"If an item entered the stock market, it should be taken out of the government-prescribed cycle," he highlighted.

Restrictions for companies which are active in both export and stock market will be lifted by the central bank, the MP concluded.

## Persian Gulf Star Refinery Top Iran Refining Exporter

**TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company said his company is the leading exports of petroleum products in Iran, announcing a 120-percent increase in the plant's exports in the first half of the current calendar year, which began on March 21.**

According to Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, Mohammad Ali Dadvar said: "The Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, as the main supplier of the country's fuel mix, plays a key role in the region's energy balance."

Dadvar said that the export achievements of his company had made the effects of the sanctions less visible, and added: "In the first six months of this year, the refinery managed to export more than 800,000 metric tons of light naphtha products, medium naphtha, heavy cut and 402 solvent, which shows a growth of 120% year-on-year."



## Iran, Pakistan Ink MoU in Joint Border Trading



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - The Memorandum of Understanding on the development of cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan was signed at the end of the eighth meeting of the Joint Border Trade Committee after two days of talks between the delegations of the two countries in Quetta.**

The heads of the Iranian and Pakistani delegations signed a memorandum of understanding at the end of the eighth meeting of the Joint Border Trade Committee at the Iranian Consulate General in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan Province in southwestern Pakistan.

Mandana Zanganeh, Deputy Governor of Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province for economic affairs as the head of the Iranian delegation, and Abdul Waheed Marwat, Head of Pakistan's Balochistan Customs, signed a memorandum of understanding between the two countries' Joint Border Trade Committee.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides stressed the facilitation of customs measures, coordination to remove barriers to trade, development of border markets, fight against human and drug trafficking.

Governor Balochistan Amanullah Khan Yasinzai expressing his views said that Pakistan Government is paying special attention to maintaining cordial economic relations with its neighbors.

He said that at present Pakistan and Iran enjoy cordial relations not only on government level but also tied in amity and friendship at the grassroots level.

"The Pakistani government is committed to expanding its interactions with its neighbors, especially its friendly and brotherly country Iran," he said.

President of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abdul Samad Musakhail and President of the Zahedan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abdul Rahim Regi also spoke at the meeting and suggested various steps for increasing barter trade.

The ninth meeting of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Border Trade Committee will be held in Zahedan in September next year.

## Tehran, Moscow Waive Visa Requirements For Group Tourist Trips

**TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Russia have finalized an agreement to cancel visa requirements for group tourist visits between the two countries.**

Russia's Sputnik news agency said that the decision was finalized following a visit by an Iranian delegation to Moscow earlier this week.

The news agency also quoted Iranian tourism minister Ali Asqghar Mounessan as saying that visa-free travels would cover tourist visits for groups of 5 to 50.

There has been no official announcement either from Russia or Iran on when the trips would be able to start. Russian authorities had said earlier this month that a final decision on the issue was due as they expressed hope that an easing of the coronavirus situation in both Russia and Iran would allow the

two sides to start implementing an agreement signed on the issue in March 2017.

Mounessan told the Sputnik that Iran and Russia have no plans to expand the visa waiver program to include personal trips. However, the tourism minister said the implementation of the current agreement would lead to a huge boom in tourism relations between the two countries.

"Both Iran and Russia are viewed as two major tourism markets in the world .... But the bilateral share is not a significant figure," the minister said in an interview given to the Sputnik in Tehran.

Iran has used tourism as a major source of earning hard currency at the time of increased American pressure on its crude sales. Authorities say arrivals have decreased to 8.5 million this year from a 10-million peak seen in 2018.

Tehran has eased visa requirements for nationals of certain countries including China to further boost the arrivals.



## Jury Urges Children Worldwide to Stay at Home, Watch Movies and Dream

**TEHRAN - The 33rd Film Festival hosts children and youth juries, like previous years. Judges who are the festival's guests through their cameras.**

Narc Avtisian, from Armenia: "I hope you are aware of what is going on in my country these days. Today, my country is fighting for peace and justice for all the world and the world's little heart, Armenia, my friends, my brothers, and our heroes are fighting for your freedom. They are fighting so that I would still be able to create, make art, live, love, and to be a part of this festival. As a jury member of the festival, I vote for a literary work which my heart and soul choose and I wish for peace."

Aineesh Dutt, 17 years old, from India, is glad to be a jury member of the festival and says, "The two sentences I want to tell the youth would be: Never stop questioning, always be curious and always be inquisitive."

Tamara is 14 years old and is from Armenia, she says that she plays the piano professionally and she suggests you follow your dreams and never give up.

Carminie is 19 years old and from Italy. He graduated from high school a few months earlier and now he is a university student, he is excited that he has been chosen as a jury member. He says, "I'm looking for sharing ideas with others and I try to look at movies and other things from different aspects because it helps us grow to evaluate as human beings."

Leona Jarikj is from Macedonia and talks about the coronavirus outbreak and says, "My advice to you in this crazy time is to keep in touch with your friends and family, just listen to people, talk to people, read books and watch a movie. Everything is in movies. So, don't forget to let your imagination run wild."

### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Mohammed Tufekdje from Northern Macedonia also wishes for all children from all around the world to stay healthy and safe and to follow their dreams through cinema.

Fatemeh Saad lives in Pakistan and she is excited to be a part of the jury member and says, "Hope you and all children stay home and entertain yourselves with something useful."

Ruhani from India is a 19-year-old theater actor and says, "I would like to say to teenagers my age that always believe in yourself, be ready to discover new ideas and use what you have in the best way and look for happiness in what you create, this is the most important thing."

Ahoora Aboli wishes that coronavirus was gone before the festival so that they could watch the movies and judge them together. He says, "Although coronavirus has pushed us apart, I'm sure our souls are closer than before and we are here for our interests and talents and the 33rd ICFF is like an open window to our wishes and dreams"

Asal Bahador another jury member also wishes that the 33rd film festival that is being held virtually this year, due to the coronavirus outbreak would be an amazing festival and full of flowers and butterflies that are flying on our amazing earth. She says, "As you may know, living without cinema, art and children is meaningless for everyone and cinema makes our days colorful."

Yeganeh Mohammadi another member of the jury, expresses her happiness to be a part of this festival and says, "I hope children from all around the world spend their time in the best possible way and this is exactly the festival's purpose to spend your time in happiness. Stay cool and try to watch all the festival's movies if you can."

## U.S. Senate Panel Approves Barrett While Democrats Boycott

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Republican-led U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday approved President Donald Trump's nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to a lifetime Supreme Court seat despite a Democratic boycott, clearing the way for a final Senate confirmation vote planned for Monday.

By a 12-0 vote, the panel approved Barrett with all Republican members voting yes and the 10 committee Democrats boycotting the meeting after calling the confirmation process a sham. With Trump's fellow Republicans holding a 53-47 Senate majority, Barrett's confirmation appears certain.



## Germany Issues Travel Warnings as COVID Surges

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany warned on Thursday against travel to neighbouring countries, Belgium's foreign minister went into intensive care and Spain said COVID-19 was "out of control" in many areas, as governments across Europe took action to fight the pandemic.

As German authorities reported more than 10,000 daily cases for the first time, Berlin issued travel warnings for Switzerland, Ireland, Poland, most of Austria and many Italian regions, including the capital Rome. "The situation overall has become very serious," Lothar Wieler, of the Robert Koch Institute, Germany's infectious diseases agency, said in Berlin, adding: "We still have a chance to slow a further spread of the virus."



## Final Trump-Biden Showdown, Less Chaos But Plenty of Clashes



NASHVILLE (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden offered sharply contrasting views on the still-raging coronavirus pandemic at Thursday's final presidential debate, seeking to persuade the few remaining undecided voters 12 days before their Nov. 3 contest.

Trump, a Republican, adopted a more restrained tone than he did during a chaotic first debate in September, when he repeatedly interrupted Biden. But Thursday's clash still featured plenty of personal attacks between two men who evince little respect for each other, and Trump kept fact-checkers busy by leveling unfounded corruption accusations at Biden and his family. The absence of disruptions yielded a more substantive debate over a range of topics including the economy, race, climate change, healthcare and immigration. But the coronavirus, which has killed more than 221,000 people in the United States, loomed over the proceedings as it has throughout the campaign. The televised encounter in Nashville, Tennessee, represented one of Trump's last remaining opportunities to reshape a race that national opinion polls show he has been losing for months, though the contest is much tighter in some battleground states likely to decide the election.

"Anyone who's responsible for that many deaths should not remain president of the United States of America," Biden said. Trump, who has put his stewardship of the economy at the center of his campaign, defended his approach to the outbreak and said the country could not afford to close businesses again despite fresh surges.

"We're learning to live with it," said Trump, who has played down the virus for months. "We have no choice." "Learning to live with it?" Biden retorted. "Come on. We're dying with it."

Trump asserted that the virus was "going away," several U.S. states reported record single-day increases in COVID-19 infections on Thursday, evidence the pandemic is accelerating anew. Trump, whose instinct remains to run as an outsider, portrayed Biden as a career politician whose nearly 50-year record was insubstantial. But he did not lay out a clear agenda for a second term, while Biden returned again and again to Trump's four years as president, pointing to the economic damage the virus has done to people's lives.

After an opening segment on the pandemic, Thursday's clash pivoted to rapid-fire exchanges over whether either candidate had improper foreign entanglements. Trump repeated his accusations that Biden and his son Hunter engaged in unethical practices in China and Ukraine. No evidence has been verified to support the allegations, and Biden called them false and discredited.

Trump's effort to uncover dirt on Hunter Biden's Ukraine business ties led to the president's impeachment.

The president and his children have been accused of conflicts of interest of their own since he entered the White House in 2017, most involving the family's international real estate and hotel businesses.

Biden defended his family and said unequivocally that he had never made "a single penny" from a foreign country, before pivoting to accuse Trump of trying to distract Americans.

"There's a reason why he's bringing up all this malarkey," Biden said, looking directly into the camera. "It's not about his family and my family. It's about your family, and your family's hurting badly." He accused Trump of avoiding paying taxes, citing a New York Times investigation that reported Trump's tax returns show he paid almost no federal income tax over more than 20 years. "Release your tax returns or stop talking about corruption," Biden said.

Trump, who has broken with decades of presidential precedents in refusing to release his tax returns, said he had paid "millions." He again said he would release his returns only once a longstanding audit was completed.

The candidates argued over foreign policy, immigration and - after months of anti-racism protests - race relations, with Biden saying Trump was "one of the most racist presidents" in history. "He pours fuel on every single racist fire," Biden said. "This guy has a dog whistle as big as a foghorn."

Trump responded by criticizing Biden's authorship of a 1994 crime bill that increased incarceration of minority defendants while asserting that he had done more for Black Americans than any president with the "possible" exception of Abraham Lincoln during the U.S. Civil War in the 1860s.

## Thailand Revokes Protest Ban That Backfired

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Thailand revoked an emergency decree on Thursday aimed at ending months of protests against Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's government and the monarchy, after it inflamed anger and brought tens of thousands of people onto Bangkok's streets.

In one of the biggest shows of support by royalists since demonstrations began in July, hundreds of people gathered wearing yellow shirts - the colour of King Maha Vajiralongkorn - at a government office on the outskirts of the city.

Emergency measures imposed a week ago included bans on political gatherings of five or more people and publishing news that could affect security.

"The current violent situation that led to the announcement of the severe situation has eased," said the statement revoking the decree.

The only specific incident given for the ban was one in which Queen Suthida's convoy was jeered by protesters, but it followed mass protests that pose the greatest challenge in years to the prime minister and the king.

The opposition Move Forward party said it planned a parliamentary motion to look into the handling of last week's royal motorcade.

A special session of parliament will be held on Monday and Tuesday to discuss the overall situation. It has the backing of Prayuth, whose supporters hold a parliamentary majority. Protesters, who gave Prayuth a three-day deadline to quit on Wednesday, said withdrawing emergency measures was not enough.

"He's still seeking to stay in power while ignoring all the people's demands. The emergency decree shouldn't have been issued in the first place," said Sirawit "Ja New" Seritawat, one of the protest leaders.

Dozens of demonstrators, including many of the most high profile protest leaders, were arrested during the crackdown. Among them was Patsaravalee "Mind" Tanakitvibulpon, who was released on Thursday after being arrested a day earlier. Patsaravalee, 25, told reporters after being freed that the court showed there is some justice in Thailand.

"The court deemed that I'm still a student and also, I think that we all have the rights to freedom of expression," she said. The court made no comment. Protesters say Prayuth rigged an election last year to keep hold of power he seized in a 2014 coup. He says the election was fair. Protesters accuse the monarchy of enabling years of military domination and want to curb the king's powers.



## Hariri Named New Lebanon PM, Promises Reform Cabinet

BEIRUT (AFP) - Three-time Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri was renamed to the post Thursday to create a reform-orientated cabinet that can lift the country out of its worst economic crisis in decades.

Hariri, 50, made his comeback to take on the difficult task almost a year after stepping down under pressure from an unprecedented protest movement demanding a complete overhaul of Lebanon's political system.

The country is under huge international pressure to form a crisis cabinet of independents to address a plummeting economy made worse by the coronavirus pandemic and the devastating blast at the Beirut port on August 4.

Immediately after President Michel Aoun named him, the returning premier vowed to form a cabinet of experts, in line with conditions set by French President Emmanuel Macron to help rescue the corruption-ridden country from crisis.

Hariri said he would "form a cabinet of non politically aligned experts with the mission of economic, financial and administrative reforms contained in the French initiative roadmap".

"I will work on forming a government quickly because time is running out," he said, calling it the country's "only and last chance". Cabinet formation is often a drawn-out process in Lebanon, where a complex governing system seeks to maintain a precarious balance between its various political and religious communities.



## Kyrgyzstan Delays Election for Reform, Helping Japarov

BISHKEK (Reuters) - Kyrgyzstan's parliament voted on Thursday to delay an election to await a constitutional reform promoted by acting president Sadyr Japarov, a move that boosts his chances of staying on as full-time leader.

The Central Asian nation, which borders China and is closely allied with Russia, was rocked by protests this month against the results of an Oct. 4 parliamentary election, which awarded most seats to two establishment parties.

Protesters seized government buildings and forced the cabinet and President Sooronbai Jeenbekov to resign and the vote to be annulled. They also released nationalist politician Japarov from prison, allowing him first to be elected prime minister then to take over as acting president.

Japarov has sought to change the national charter, which bars him from becoming full-time president, but it had been unclear how he would manage to call a constitutional referendum while also overseeing a re-run of the parliamentary election.

However, parliament agreed on Thursday to delay the new parliamentary election - scheduled for Dec. 20 - until after the proposed constitutional reform.

Thursday's vote showed Japarov had enough supporters in the legislature to trigger a referendum that could delay or change the rules for the presidential poll due by mid-January.

The exact contents of the proposed reform package are yet to be made public. Parliament also voted on Thursday to make the next parliamentary election more open by lowering the threshold for parties to gain seats to 3% of the vote from 7%.

As one of his first moves after assuming the interim presidency, Japarov reassured Moscow this month that it would remain Bishkek's No.1 partner and there would be no changes to the terms on which Russia maintains a military base in the former Soviet republic of 6.5 million people.

## China Threatens Retaliation Over New U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan

BEIJING (Reuters) - China threatened on Thursday to retaliate against the latest U.S. arms sale to Chinese-claimed Taiwan, as the island welcomed the weapons package but said it was not looking to get into an arms race with Beijing.

The Trump administration has ramped up support for Taiwan through arms sales and visits by senior U.S. officials, adding to tensions between Beijing and Washington, already heightened by disagreements over the South China Sea, Hong Kong, human rights and trade.

Beijing has applied increasing pressure on democratically-ruled Taiwan to accept China's sovereignty, including by flying fighter jets across the sensitive mid-line of the Taiwan Strait, which normally serves as an unofficial buffer.

Responding the U.S. approval of a potential \$1.8 billion arms sale to Taiwan, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said during a daily news briefing that such sales should stop.

The sales "seriously interfere with China's internal affairs, seriously damage China's sovereignty and security interests, send a seriously wrong signal to Taiwan independence forces, and severely damage China-U.S. relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," he said.

"China will make a legitimate and necessary response according to how the situation develops," Zhao added.

He did not give details, but China has sanctioned U.S. companies in the past for selling weapons to Taiwan, though it is unclear what form they have taken.

China says Taiwan arms sales will have major impact on ties with U.S. The latest U.S. arms package includes sensors, missiles and artillery, and further congressional notifications are expected for drones made by General Atomics and land-based Harpoon anti-ship missiles, made by Boeing Co, to serve as coastal defence cruise missiles.

In Taipei, Taiwan Defence Minister Yen De-fa thanked the United States and said the weapons were to help Taiwan improve their defensive capabilities to deal with the "enemy threat and new situation".

"This includes a credible combat capability and asymmetric warfare capabilities to strengthen our determination to defend ourselves," he added.



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## UK Manufacturing Decline Abates in October

LONDON (Reuters) - British manufacturing orders fell in October but by the smallest amount since March, according to a survey on Thursday that showed an improvement in expectations despite a resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Confederation of British Industry's (CBI) monthly order book balance - the difference between factories reporting a rise and a fall in orders - became less negative in October at -34, compared with -48 in September. While still historically low, it was the best reading since March and above the median forecast in a Reuters poll of economists that had pointed to a figure of -45.



## IMF Cuts Asia's Growth Forecast, Warns of Pandemic-Driven Risks

TOKYO (Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund slashed this year's economic forecast for Asia, reflecting a sharper-than-expected contraction in countries like India, a sign the coronavirus pandemic continues to take a heavy toll on the region.

While the IMF upgraded next year's growth forecast, it warned the recovery will be sluggish and patchy with countries dependent on tourism seen taking a particularly hard hit.

"Fear of infection and social distancing measures are dimming consumer confidence and will keep economic activity below capacity until a vaccine is developed," the IMF said in a report on the Asia-Pacific region released on Wednesday.

"Although China's recovery can boost regional trade, weak global growth, closed borders, and festering tensions around trade, technology, and security have worsened the prospects for a trade-led recovery in the region."

The IMF said it expects Asia's economy to contract 2.2% this year. That decline is 0.6 of a percentage point larger than its forecast in June, due to sharp slumps in countries like India, the Philippines and Malaysia.

India's economy is likely to shrink 10.3% this year in stark contrast to China, which is set to expand 1.9%, the IMF said.

Asia's economy is likely to grow 6.9% in 2021 thanks to the boost from expected stronger recoveries in China, the United States and the euro area, it said.

But the IMF said there were "considerable" risks such as the chance of a second wave of infections, escalating U.S. tensions and a potential return to tighter financial conditions. "With the pandemic seemingly far from over, policy support should be sustained and, in some cases, increased," it said.

"A full arsenal of policy support is needed" that includes steps to help households and businesses cope with structural changes caused by COVID-19 such as permanent job losses in industries like tourism, it said.

"Policymakers need to redouble efforts to keep workers connected to the labor force and solvent firms in business while allowing non-viable firms to exit," the report said.

## British Airways Warns of Deepening Travel Slump as Losses Mount

LONDON (Reuters) - British Airways owner IAG ICAG.L warned the travel slump from the coronavirus pandemic had deepened, forcing it to axe even more of its winter flying schedule after it reported on Thursday a quarterly loss of 1.3 billion euros (\$1.54 billion).

The loss was far larger than the 920 million euros forecast by analysts, as passenger numbers plunged and it struggled to even half-fill its planes, illustrating the scale of the challenge faced by IAG's new boss, Luis Gallego, who took over in September.

As a second wave of COVID-19 infections spreads across Europe, airlines are facing a bleak winter and IAG joins Lufthansa, Ryanair RYA.I and easyJet in cutting back already anaemic schedules.

IAG, which also operates Iberia and Vueling in Spain and Aer Lingus in Ireland, said that for the fourth quarter - which includes the normally busy Christmas period - it would fly no more than 30% of the capacity it flew a year earlier, lower than previous guidance of 40%.

With less flying ahead, the group warned it no longer expected to reach breakeven in terms of net cash flow from operations in the fourth quarter, but said that liquidity was strong.



The company has raised 2.74 billion euros from shareholders via a rights issue and received the funds in early October, raising its total liquidity to 9.3 billion euros. Bernstein analyst Daniel Roeska said even with that buffer IAG needed to focus on reducing costs.

"Management will need to significantly lower monthly cash burn to avoid significantly depleting resources by next summer," he said. But Goodbody analysts said that total liquidity was positive and IAG would be ready for a recovery in demand next spring.

IAG said it was operating in an environment of "high uncertainty". It has been calling for COVID-19 tests at airports to replace quarantine requirements and said that governments had been slower than it expected to adopt such measures.

IAG said it would provide more detailed results on Oct. 30.

## Mideast Share of India's September Oil Imports Falls to Four-Month Low

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Middle East producers' share of India's market fell to a four-month low in September while that of Africa rose to one year high, according to data obtained from industry sources.

Last month, India's oil imports from its top oil supplier Iraq declined by about 18% from August, the data showed, as OPEC's second biggest producer deepened output cuts to compensate for overproduction.

Lower purchases from Iraq and other regional producers squeezed Middle East producers' share of India's September market to about 61%, according to the data.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies including Russia, a group known as OPEC+ are cutting output by about 7.7 million barrels per day (bpd) until end-2020 to support global prices. The group had asked Iraq to make additional compensation cuts until December.

"Middle Eastern exports were reduced in September due to OPEC+ cuts," said Ehsan Ul Haq, analyst with Refinitiv.

"Iraq was under pressure to reduce supplies further due to higher exports in the past."

India's overall imports in September totalled 3.48 million bpd, a decline of about 9% from a year earlier and 12% from August, the data showed.

African oil accounted for 21% of India's imports last month, the highest monthly share since September 2019.

Low freight rates and a more competitive Brent benchmark compared with Middle East's Dubai supported India's African oil purchases, Haq said.

India skipped oil imports from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries in September for the first time in 3-1/2 years, the data showed. Latin American crude's share also fell to 8% from about 10% in August.

Lower imports from Middle East pulled down OPEC's overall share in India's September oil imports to record low of about 74% in April-September, the first six months of this fiscal year, the data shows.

## German Consumer Morale Darkens as Coronavirus Cases Soar

BERLIN (Reuters) - German consumer morale fell heading into November as fears about a second coronavirus wave that is hitting Europe's biggest economy made Germans less willing to open their wallets, a survey showed on Thursday.

The GfK institute said its consumer sentiment index, based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, fell to -3.1 heading into November from a revised -1.7 in the previous month.

The reading missed a Reuters forecast for a narrower drop to -2.8.

GfK consumer expert Rolf Buerkl said optimism among German consumers faded in October with coronavirus cases soaring in Germany, fuelling fears of another lockdown to contain the outbreak.

"The recovery in sentiment from early summer this year has come to a standstill, leaving the consumer climate to slide again," Buerkl said.

Germany's infection rates have been accelerating and rose by more than 10,000 in a single day for the first time on Thursday, as the federal and state governments struggle to agree on ways to contain a second wave of coronavirus infection.

Buerkl said another weekly GfK survey showed that three quarters of Germans saw COVID-19 pandemic as a "big or very big threat", with more than half worried about the pandemic's impact on their personal future. He said consumers' prospect have never been so dim since that survey started in April.

The drop in consumer sentiment was mainly driven by falling economic and income expectations and a rising propensity to save.

"Consumers apparently assume that the much more active infection process in Germany will slow down the previously hoped for rapid recovery of the German economy," Buerkl said.

The German government currently expects gross domestic product to shrink in 2020 by 5.8% before rebounding by 4.4% next year, assuming that the pandemic will remain under control.

The country's leading economic research institutes last week forecast a slower recovery than originally predicted, with a rebound being held back by sectors particularly hard hit by social distancing restrictions such as restaurants, tourism, events and air travel.

Buerkl said a stabilization in consumer sentiment in the coming months would depend on infection rates.

## China to Balance Stable Growth and Risk Prevention

BEIJING (Reuters) - China will strike a balance between stabilising economic growth and preventing risks, even as debt was allowed to temporarily rise this year to support the coronavirus-hit economy, the head of the central bank Yi Gang said.

Yi, the governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC), told a financial forum in Beijing that he expected China's macro leverage ratio to stabilise next year as the economy expands, after the debt gauge rose in 2020. Bank lending in the first nine months totalled 16.26 trillion yuan (\$2.44 trillion) as policymakers looked to reboot economic activity, beating a previous peak of 13.63 trillion yuan in the same period last year.

"Monetary policy needs to guard the 'gates' of money supply, and properly smooth out fluctuations in the macro leverage ratio, and keep it on a reasonable track in the long run," Yi said. In July, Ruan Jianhong, head of the PBOC's statistics department, said that the country's macro leverage ratio jumped 14.5 percentage points in the first quarter and climbed further in the second quarter.

The macro leverage ratio is a measurement of the debt held by Chinese governments, households and companies divided by total gross domestic product (GDP).

The central bank has not given further details on the figure. The Institute for International Finance (IIF) said in July that China's debt-to-GDP ratio was on track to hit 335%, from nearly 318% in the first quarter. At the same forum, PBOC Vice Governor Pan Gongsheng said that the central bank had prepared a draft to improve macro prudential assessments, which measure weaknesses in financial systems, for the property finance sector.

PBOC will look into indicators including the concentration ratio of property loans, the ratio of household debt to total income, and the risk-weighting of property loans, said Pan. A list of China's systemically important banks, and detailed regulations for them, will be revealed in the near term, he added.

Also at the forum, Vice Premier Liu He said the economy will very likely grow this year, adding that prudent monetary policy should be kept appropriate and flexible, and liquidity reasonably ample. On Monday, China reported its GDP grew 0.7% in January to September from a year earlier, versus a contraction of 1.6% in the first half following the coronavirus outbreak. Speaking on a separate panel at Wednesday's forum, Yi warned that financial technology, while making services more convenient, has created data gaps and faces problems when it comes to protecting business secrets and personal privacy.

Public and government information "must be more transparent... (but) what must be protected must be protected," he said.

## U.S. Economy's Rebound Sets Up Test of Fed's New Pledge

### Test of Fed's New Pledge



NEW YORK (Reuters) - The stronger-than-expected U.S. economic rebound from coronavirus lows could set up an early test for the Federal Reserve's new pledge to keep interest rates near zero and its increased tolerance for inflation.

A compilation of surveys and interviews conducted in September and early October by the Fed's 12 regional banks shows the economy recovering at a "slight to modest pace" as consumers bought homes and increased spending.

Indeed the U.S. economy probably grew by more than 30% on an annualized basis last quarter, economists say, making up most of the 31.4% drop in the second quarter. The increase has been fueled by a \$2.3 trillion pandemic relief package and trillions more injected into financial markets by the Fed.

"Traditional ideas about inflation would suggest that this is actually a time when you may see some inflation," St. Louis Fed President James Bullard said at an event hosted by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines. He said increased government spending to combat the virus and "bottlenecks" in an economy not designed to grow as fast as it is are setting the stage for a rise in prices. "On top of that you've got a Federal Reserve that's saying, if we do get inflation, we'd welcome it," he said.

With businesses adapting to the virus and daily deaths much lower than in the pandemic's early stages, he said, U.S. economic growth will likely be above trend for quite a while. "so this might be an era where you might see somewhat more inflation."

The Fed last month pledged not to raise interest rates until the economy returns to full employment and inflation reaches the Fed's 2% goal.

But policymakers' tolerance above that 2% mark varies. Chicago Fed President Charles Evans said this week he'd be okay with a year of 2.5% to 2.75% inflation, while Dallas Fed President Robert Kaplan has signaled anything more than 2.25% could raise concern.

## Accusation of Iran's Meddling In U.S. Election Absurd

TEHRAN (MNA) – Rejecting the accusation of Iran's meddling in US election, Spokesperson for the Iranian Mission to the UN said that these accusations are absurd.

In a tweet on Thursday, Alireza Miryousefi wrote, "Unlike the U.S., Iran does not interfere in other country's elections. The world has been witnessing U.S.' own desperate attempts to

question the outcome of its own elections at the highest level." "These accusations are nothing more than another scenario to undermine voter confidence, & are absurd," he added.

"Iran has no interest in interfering in the US election and no preference for the outcome. U.S. must end its malign and dangerous accusations against Iran, Miryousefi noted.



## World Trade Rebounding Slowly, Outlook Uncertain

GENEVA (Reuters) - The value of global trade is set to fall by 7% to 9% in 2020 from the previous year, despite signs of a fragile rebound led by China in the third quarter, a United Nations report said on Wednesday.

No region was spared by an estimated 19% year-on-year plunge in world trade in the second quarter, as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economies, the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said.

Global trade recovered somewhat in the third quarter, when it was estimated at about 4.5% less than in the same period a year ago, the agency said in its latest update.

"Trade in home office equipment and medical supplies has increased in Q3, while it further weakened in the automotive and energy sectors," UNCTAD said. Growth in the textiles sector was also strong.

Its preliminary forecast put year-on-year growth for Q4 2020 at 3% less, but the report said that uncertainties persisted due to how the pandemic would evolve.

If the pandemic resurges in coming months, that could lead to a deteriorating environment for policy-makers and sudden increase in trade restrictive policies, it said.

China's exports rebounded strongly in the third quarter after falling in the early months of the pandemic, and have posted year-on-year growth rates of nearly 10%, UNCTAD said.

"Overall, the level of Chinese exports for the first nine months of 2020 was comparable to that of 2019 over the same period," it said.

Chinese demand for imported products recovered following a decline in Q2 2020, contrary to other major economies, it said.



Earlier this month the World Trade Organization (WTO) upgraded its forecast for trade in goods due to improvements from June and predicted a drop of 9.2% for 2020. But it saw a more muted rebound in 2021, with further lockdowns from a second wave of COVID-19 infections posing clear risks.

## IMF Urges BOJ to Review Inflation Goal

TOKYO (Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund gave a thumbs-up on Wednesday to plans by new Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to maintain the thrust of his predecessor's "Abenomics" stimulus programmes, while pushing through reforms to revitalise the economy.

Odd Per Brekk, deputy director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific department, also urged the Bank of Japan (BOJ) to consider reviewing its 2% inflation target to make it more flexible -- repeating a recommendation made earlier this year.

"Such a review would provide the BOJ with an opportunity both to reconfirm its commitment to the target and to increase policy flexibility as needed," he told Reuters in a written interview.

In succeeding Shinzo Abe as prime minister last month, Suga pledged to maintain the first two "arrows" of Abenomics - huge fiscal and monetary stimulus measures to prop up growth.

He also vowed to pursue a re-modeled version of structural reforms, such as steps to boost smaller firms' productivity, promote digitalisation and consolidate regional banks.

"Giving renewed momentum to the 'third arrow' of structural reform would help in the recovery and in putting the economy on a longer-term growth path," Brekk said.

"In this regard, reforms to promote the digital economy, revive regional economies, and deal with regional bank issues should be given high priority," he said.

Labour market reforms, such as opening up more career opportunities for women and encouraging more telework, must also remain a priority, Brekk said.

Japan's economy suffered its biggest postwar slump in the second quarter as the coronavirus pandemic slammed domestic and global demand, and analysts expect any rebound to be modest as uncertainty over the outlook weighs on consumption and capital spending.

The economy was already in recession before the health crisis due to the blow from last year's sales tax hike. Regional banks are reeling from sluggish credit demand, a rapidly ageing population and narrowing margins from years of ultra-low interest rates.

## Turkey's Consumer Confidence Drops Slightly in October

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Consumer confidence in the Turkish economy posted a slight decline in October, the country's statistical authority announced on Oct. 22.

The consumer confidence index stood at 81.9 this month, down by 0.1% from 82 in September, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) said.

The index value is jointly calculated by TurkStat and the Central Bank of Turkey through the measurement of consumer tendencies.

Among sub-indices, the financial situation of household index at present compared to the last 12 months dropped by 3.3% to 69.4 in October, versus 71.8 in September.

The financial situation expectation of household index in the next 12 months reached 79.5, up 0.6% month-on-month. The general economic situation expectation index in the next 12 months stood at 81.4 in October, falling 2.3% on a monthly basis.

Assessment on spending money on durable goods index over the next 12 months compared to the past 12 months increased by 3.9% to reach 97.4 in October, up from 93.8 in September.

Consumers' assessments and expectations in nearly 20 economic and financial categories are measured in monthly tendency surveys.

The consumer confidence index, calculated from the survey results, is evaluated within a range of 0-200, indicating an optimistic outlook when the index is above 100, and a pessimistic one when it is below.

## 63% of Americans Have Concerns About a Coronavirus Vaccine

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - According to a new Yahoo Finance-Harris Poll, nearly two-thirds of Americans have concerns about the fast-tracked COVID-19 vaccine, the product of "Operation Warp Speed."

In response to the survey prompt, "I feel more concerned about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine than I do about other vaccines (e.g., flu, measles, chickenpox)," 63% of respondents agreed, with 35% agreeing with the statement "somewhat" and 28% agreeing "strongly." (Because of the comparison to other vaccines, this is a distinct issue from the anti-vaccine movement — which medical professionals and evidence strongly rejects — and is a product of the unique circumstances.)

The U.S. government — along with other public health groups — has spent millions trying to fast-track a vaccine that can end a pandemic that has infected 40.9 million people worldwide, killing 1.13 million.

This ambivalence may also manifest in policies that emerge when the vaccine arrives. Respondents were split as to whether employers should mandate workers get vaccinated before returning to the office (59% said they should) and whether schools should require all students to get vaccinated (61% said they should).

The uncertainty about a vaccine is echoed elsewhere. According to a survey by STAT, 58% of Americans in October said they would get vaccinated as soon as a vaccine was available, down from 69% who said the same thing in August.

Local officials have also expressed skepticism in the vaccine development process. Last month New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said state health officials will review any federally approved vaccines. At a news conference, he said, "The first question is, is the vaccine safe? Frankly, I'm not going to trust the federal government's opinion." And just this week Cuomo told "Good Morning America" that Americans should be skeptical: "My opinion doesn't matter, but I don't believe the American people are that confident.

You are going to say to the American people now, 'Here's a vaccine, it was new, it was done quickly, but trust this federal administration, their health administration that it's safe, and we're not 100% sure of the consequences,'" he said.

## U.S. Unilateralism...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations continued: "Threatening the International Criminal Court and its prosecutors, abusing the international financial system, the punishment of countries for implementing Security Council resolutions, confiscation of countries' central bank assets and breach of their obligations to the United Nations by imposing travel restrictions on members of some UN agencies, are some aspects of American unilateralism that have significantly jeopardized the rule of law at the international level."

Referring to the opening of two legal cases by Iran before the International Court of Justice for the realization of Iran's legitimate rights, Takht-Ravanchi said that the issuance of a binding interim injunction by the International Court of Justice and its emphasis on the US commitment to remove trade barriers facing Iran in some areas is further evidence of the illegality of US sanctions against Iran and our people, yet the US response to the binding ruling of the UN judiciary has been the increase in sanctions. He referred to the fight against corruption, which was chosen as the topic of discussion at the summit, and referred to Iran's internal measures, including the amendment of the anti-money laundering law.

He emphasized the Islamic Republic's commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Convention against corruption, as well as the provisions of this convention on the return of funds withdrawn as a result of corruption, as one of the basic principles of the Convention. Takht-Ravanchi called the non-observance of these regulations by some countries a dual and dishonest approach in the fight against corruption, which will let the activities of corrupt individuals continue and will weaken the rule of law at the

## How Bavar-373...

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According to the media center of the drill, during this joint specialized air defense of Guardians of Sky of Velayat's Sky 99, besides Bavar-373 system, Mersad System of Air Force as well as Tabas System of IRGC targeted the hostile invading targets.



Meanwhile Qadir, Moraqeb and Bashir radars of the IRGC Aerospace Force and the Army Air Force detected flying targets over the general zone of the exercises, including manned and unmanned aircraft of the IRGC Aerospace Force and Army Air Force, which flew from various bases on the second day of massive aerial drills. After detection and tracing, the three powerful radars provided information on the discovered flying targets to the country's integrated air defense network.

That under sanction resolutions restricting the national defense system as well as restrictions resulted by the disgraceful JCPOA agreement which had been imposed by the enemies and all of them have never been able to surround our defense power in the framework of their expectation, it is very surprising, and endless thanks to Almighty God.

It is very surprising that our committed, expert and religious forces in the Armed forces with a gradual pace and an amazing trust on God has enabled the country, which used once to demand even its smallest military needs from the foreigners, to be safe, from every direction, against any invasion of ill-wishers either regional or trans-regional ones. In fact it is exemplary in the history.

And this means only this item is praised more than all power showing stages achieved during the Sacred Defense. May God bless the founders of these innovations.

## Iran Can Be Among...

FROM PAGE 1

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the identification of threat and restrictions of these sanctions and added, "According to the UN Security Council resolutions, arms embargo on Iran began in 2005 and continued until 2015, in which, countries' arms cooperation with Iran has been banned. In 2015, all sanctions were lifted under UNSC Resolution 2231, and new restrictions, that require UN Security Council's permission to buy or sell major countries' weapons to Iran for a period of five years, led to restrictions."

In response to a question on measures taken by the Ministry of Defense in the field of export of defense products, he stated, "In the field of weapons and military equipment in all areas of combat, ground combat, air missile, radar and naval, we have world-class products. Products that are attractive to the world. In the last few years, especially last year, we did not wait for the end of the sanctions, and strengthening of Iran's defense continued with strength."

On Thursday Iran's domestically-developed Bavar-373 air defense missile system was put to test for the first time on the second day of the country's large-scale aerial drills, successfully destroying the designated targets. Thursday marked the second day of the large-scale drills, codenamed Modafe'an-e Aseman-e Velayat 99 (Guardians of Velayat Sky 99), underway in an area covering more than half of the country.

Air defense divisions of Iran's Army and Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) are participating in the joint aerial maneuvers. During its first-ever presence in a military maneuver, the Bavar-373 air defense system fired surface-to-air missiles at standoff targets, successfully eliminating them.

## JCPOA Is Not a Unilateral Commitment

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's representative in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly considered Iran's missile program in accordance with international law and addressed the Europeans saying that JCPOA is not a unilateral commitment for Iran.

Heydar Ali Balouji raised this issue at the meeting of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in response to some allegations made by Britain and France about Iran's missile program.

The diplomat of the Islamic Republic of Iran added: "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is not a unilateral commitment that has been accepted only by Iran, but also defines individual commitments to its other participants, including three European countries (France, Britain and Germany)."

"Instead of putting pressure on Iran, the European parties should fulfill their obligations and also prevent the violation of JCPOA, UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the imposition of maximum illegal sanctions against Iran," he reiterated. He also denied the claims of the Zionist representative to the United Nations, saying: "Israel regime is an entity that continues to commit structural discrimination in the occupied territories."

Iran's representative to the UN General Assembly Disarmament Committee added: "In the case of human rights, in just one year at the UN Human Rights Council, Israel has received 70 percent of the Council's 50 convictions, it accounts for 60 percent of the 10 special sessions of the council and 100 percent of the five investigative missions of the human rights council."

"The Zionist regime has the capability of operating nuclear weapons by mass-producing nuclear warheads," Balouji said. He added: "Israel must be honest about non-proliferation treaty or non-compliance with international law, and refrain from lying and accusing other countries."

Iran's representative in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly stated: "The international community must force the Israeli regime to put aside any excuses over joining the negotiations of making the Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction under the auspices of the United Nations."

## Exports to EU...

FROM PAGE 1

The Netherlands was second top buyer of Iranian goods in the EU with an eight-fold increase in imports from Iran, it said, adding that Italy, Spain, Belgium, Romania and Bulgaria were Iran's other major export destinations in the first eight months of 2018.

The growing trend in Iran's trade ties with the EU come despite sanctions imposed by the US which hamper normal banking transactions involving Iranian businesses.

The eight-percent increase in exports this year also comes despite closures that took place across the borders from February onwards due to the spread of the coronavirus both in Iran and in Europe.

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## Pinot Abandons Vuelta Before Stage Three

MADRID (Reuters) - French rider Thibaut Pinot has abandoned the Vuelta a Espana after only two stages, his team said on Thursday.

Pinot has not recovered from the back injury that scuppered his chances at the Tour de France last month.

"Despite the rest period he observed, the two first stages of the Vuelta have shown Thibaut Pinot continues to suffer from the back pain he experienced after his crash on the first day of the Tour de France in Nice," Groupama-FDJ said in a statement.

## Benitez Escapes Relegation in China After Only Three Wins

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Rafael Benitez's Dalian Pro avoided relegation from the Chinese Super League on Thursday, despite winning just three times in 16 games this season.

The Champions League-winning coach breathed a sigh of relief after Dalian overturned a 2-1 first-leg deficit to beat Shijiazhuang Ever Bright 3-2 on aggregate.

The former Liverpool and Real Madrid boss saw his side win 2-0 on the evening, just their third victory in the coronavirus-disrupted campaign.

# Bayern Begin Title Defense in Style, Real Madrid Stunned

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich began their defence of the Champions League title in ominous fashion by crushing Atletico Madrid 4-0, while Liverpool and Manchester City also won but Real Madrid suffered a shock defeat.

Madrid, the record 13-time European champions, went down to a 3-2 home loss against Shakhtar Donetsk, showing how far Zinedine Zidane's side are just now from the standards being set by Bayern. Two months after scoring the winner in the final against Paris Saint-Germain in Lisbon, Kingsley Coman put Bayern ahead against Atletico in Group A and later scored a stunning individual effort to wrap up the victory at an empty Allianz Arena.

In between Leon Goretzka and Corentin Tolisso were also on target for the German champions, with the latter's strike a stunner from long-range.

"The winning goal in last season's final is a good motivator, but it's in the past now and we have fresh goals this season," Coman told Sky Sports. It was Bayern's 12th consecutive Champions League win while the result for Atletico equalled their worst defeat under Diego Simeone.

Bayern next go to Russia to play Lokomotiv Moscow, who battled back to draw 2-2 at Red Bull Salzburg on Wednesday.

Eder put Lokomotiv ahead in Austria, only for Dominik Szoboszlai to crash in a brilliant equaliser. A deflected Zlatko Junuzovic goal put the hosts in front, but Vitali Lisakovich headed in to earn the Russian side a point.

Real were 3-0 down at half-time against Shakhtar at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium and fell short with a second-half fightback to get their European campaign off to a disastrous start.

A depleted Shakhtar were without 10 first-team players and nine members of staff due to coronavirus infections and had seven starters aged 21 or under.

Strikes from Tete and Manor Solomon, either side of a Raphael Varane own-goal, gave the Ukrainian champions a three-goal half-time lead.



Luka Modric and Vinicius Junior pulled goals back and Fede Valverde thought he had grabbed an injury-time equaliser but his deflected shot was ruled out for an offside.

Missing the injured Sergio Ramos, Real have now won just one of their last seven Champions League home games. This was also a second defeat in five days as they prepare to go to Barcelona for the Clasico on Saturday.

Real are already up against it in Group B, even if rivals Inter Milan and Borussia Moenchengladbach cancelled each other out in a 2-2 draw at San Siro.

Romelu Lukaku scored twice for Inter, opening the scoring early in the second half and then turning in a late equaliser. In between Ramy Bensebaini netted a penalty for Gladbach and Jonas Hofmann scored what he thought was a late winner. Liverpool shook off the absence of Virgil van Dijk to edge Ajax 1-0 behind closed doors in Amsterdam in Group D.

Van Dijk is set to miss the rest of the season with a knee injury but Jurgen Klopp's side kept a clean sheet and took all three points after Nicolas Tagliafico turned a wayward Sadio Mane shot into his own net on 35 minutes.

Pep Guardiola's City made it three wins for English clubs this midweek as they came from behind at home to beat Porto 3-1.

Luis Diaz gave Porto the lead with a superb individual goal but Sergio Aguero's penalty soon brought City level and Ilkay Gundogan's free-kick put them ahead on 65 minutes. Substitute Ferran Torres then scored a superb goal to make sure of the win. Also in Group C, Egyptian substitute Ahmed Hassan headed in a stoppage-time winner as Olympiakos downed Marseille 1-0.

## Ronaldo Still Positive for Coronavirus

TURIN (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo has again tested positive for coronavirus as Juventus prepare for next week's Champions League clash against Barcelona, according to reports in Italy on Thursday.

Ronaldo is currently isolating at his home in Turin after testing positive for Covid-19 on October 13 while with the Portuguese national team for Nations League matches.

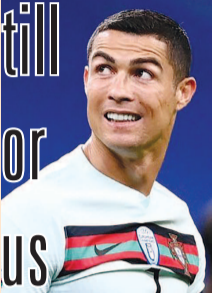
The 35-year-old again received a positive result after a test carried out on Wednesday, Sky Sport Italia and Gazzetta Dello Sport reported.

The Portuguese forward could still be available for Sunday's Serie A game against Hellas Verona, and the clash against great rival Lionel Messi's Barcelona on October 28.

Under UEFA rules the five-time Ballon d'Or winner needs to test negative 24 hours before the Barcelona game in Turin to be included in the squad.

Ronaldo, who has no symptoms of the virus, has continued training at home posting a video on social media of himself training in his high-tech gym, sporting a new shaved head look.

"Success in life is not measured by what you achieve, but by the obstacles you overcome," Ronaldo wrote, as he gave the thumbs up.



## Hamilton and Mercedes Can Break Records in Portugal

LISBON (Reuters) - Lewis Hamilton and his Mercedes team can make Formula One history on Sunday as Portugal returns for the first time in 24 years on a calendar reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The six times world champion equalled Ferrari great Michael Schumacher's record 91 grand prix victories in the previous race at the Nuerburgring and now has his first opportunity to go one better.

Mercedes meanwhile have their first chance to seal an unprecedented seventh successive constructors' title, although they may have to wait another weekend for the inevitable to be confirmed.

The champions will need to score 40 points more than closest rivals Red Bull for that to happen at Portimao's undulating Algarve International Circuit, which is hosting a grand prix for the first time.

Red Bull have drawn a blank twice in 11 races so far this season while Hamilton has won seven times and Finnish team mate Valtteri Bottas, now 69 points behind in the standings with six races to go, twice.

Mercedes have scored 40 points or more in six of the races, with three one-two finishes, but on all those occasions Red Bull managed to take at least 15.

Bottas retired with a power unit failure at the Nuerburgring, a major blow to his slim title hopes, but Mercedes are on top of the problem.

"We have identified a failed electrical component in the control electronics as the cause of the problem and the evidence suggests that swift action in retiring the car prevented mechanical damage to his power unit," said team boss Toto Wolff.

Hamilton has gone well at circuits new to the calendar in the past and has won twice this year at tracks that would not have featured but for the pandemic -- Italy's Mugello and Germany's Nuerburgring.

While the Portuguese track is a novelty for Formula One, some current drivers have raced or tested there on their way to the top.

Hamilton tested in the Algarve with McLaren in 2009 while Bottas raced there in Formula Three, as did Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

## Djokovic Pulls out of Paris Masters With No Points to Win



edition of Belgade daily Sportski Zurnal.

"I can win up to 500 points in Vienna as I didn't play there last year and there are also a lot of points available in London."

Djokovic clinched a record 36th ATP Masters crown when he won the Italian Open title in Rome last month, surpassing Rafael Nadal who confirmed he would enter the Paris

Masters after winning his 13th French Open title on Oct. 11. Nadal, who equalled Roger Federer's record haul of 20 Grand Slam titles when he blew Djokovic away in the French Open final, has not entered the Oct. 26 - Nov. 1 tournament in Vienna but is expected to take part in the ATP Finals in London, Nov. 15-22.

Djokovic, who won the Paris Masters last year, will not lose any points over skipping the event because the ATP Tour's revised ranking system due to the COVID-19 pandemic allows players to retain points from last year.

Asked if he was content to allow world number two Nadal to catch up with him in the Masters race, Djokovic said: "It's not my priority. My immediate task is to collect as many points as I can in a bid to put as much distance between myself and the chasing pack ahead of next season."

"I want to go down in history as the world number one with the most weeks at the top of the ATP Tour and I will do all I can to make it happen."

"Whether Nadal plays in Paris or not changes nothing because it's all in my hands."

## Rashford Urges MPs Not to Turn Blind Eye To Vulnerable Children

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United striker Marcus Rashford has warned MPs not to "turn a blind eye" to vulnerable families as the House of Commons prepared to vote on an opposition to extend free school meals over the holidays.

The 22-year-old Rashford, who has led a campaign on the issue, said Wednesday he would be "paying close attention" to the vote.

The British government has so far refused to extend the provision of free school meals in England over the half-term and Christmas breaks.

But Robert Halfon MP, the chairman of the Commons Education Select Committee and a member of the governing Conservative Party, has urged the Government to continue providing meals over the holidays while the Covid-19 crisis is ongoing.

But Prime Minister Boris Johnson told MPs on Wednesday: "We support kids on low incomes in school and we will continue to do so."

"We will continue to use the benefits system and all the systems of income to support children throughout the holidays as well."

Earlier Rashford, urged his 3.4 million Twitter followers to lobby MPs to back his campaign. He said: "Paying close attention to the Commons today and to those who are willing to turn a blind eye to the needs of our most vulnerable children, 2.2 million of them who currently qualify for free school meals."

Rashford said the pandemic had made the situation worse than it was at the start of the crisis.

"We aren't in the same position we were in in the summer, it's much worse," he said. "The number of children with little to no access to food has risen significantly."



## Money Could Influence Haas F1 Driver Lineup for 2021

LONDON (Reuters) - U.S.-owned Haas will have a new Formula One driver lineup for 2021 after announcing the departure of Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen, and money could play a part in deciding their replacements.

Team boss Guenther Steiner told reporters in a video conference at the Portuguese Grand Prix that the team had plenty of options but he did not want to talk about any names or numbers on the short list.

Frenchman Grosjean, 34, has been at Haas since 2016 with Danish driver Magnussen, 28, joining in 2017 but both are now looking likely to quit the scene with few openings elsewhere on the grid. Asked whether the Ferrari-powered team, ninth in the standings, might look for a driver with financial backing, Steiner said talent was more important.

"But some people have got sponsorship they bring with them so we are looking at all the options out there as well," he added.

Russian Formula Two driver Nikita Mazepin is the son of a billionaire who tried to buy the Force India team, now Racing Point, in 2018 before the eventual sale of assets to Canadian Lawrence Stroll.

Mexican Sergio Perez, who is leaving Racing Point at the end of the year, also has strong sponsorship and plenty of experience.

Ferrari are meanwhile looking to place some of their young drivers, with Michael Schumacher's 21-year-old son Mick leading the Formula Two championship and a strong candidate for Haas or Alfa Romeo. Britain's Callum Ilott, another Ferrari Academy driver and second in the F2 standings, had been due to take part in Friday practice with Haas at the Nuerburgring two weeks ago but that was prevented by bad weather.

