

The 34th Int'l Conference on Islamic Unity on the Topic of "Islamic Cooperation in the Face Of Disasters" Will Begin Virtually In Tehran With Presence of 167 Foreign Lecturers From 47 States

# IRAN NEWS

Ali Akbar Velayati, Senior advisor To the Leader of Islamic Revolution Said That the Iraqi People Will Defend Their Country's Integrity With Deep National Solidarity While Disappointing the Enemies

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## Zarif Denies Report of Spy Swap With U.S.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif dismissed reports about the exchange of spies between Tehran and Washington.

In an interview with ICANA on Wednesday, Zarif said the stories about an exchange of spies between Iran and the United States are totally false.

He said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran has already proposed the idea of exchange of all Iranian and American prisoners in all parts of the world.

However, Zarif added, "the issue of bargain over two arrested spies with the U.S. is a complete lie."

"We have put forward a suggestion for the comprehensive exchange of prisoners of the two sides. We have inmates held in various countries on the U.S.' orders, and have prisoners inside the U.S. as well. We have people in the United States of America that have even served their illegal sentences, but the Americans prevent their return to Iran," he deplored.

## IAEA Hails Good Level of Cooperation With Iran

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has expressed satisfaction with the level of cooperation with Iran regarding the inspection of two sites sought by the UN nuclear watchdog.

In an interview with the Associated Press on Tuesday, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said that the agency's inspectors have now taken samples from both locations, which are still undergoing lab analysis.

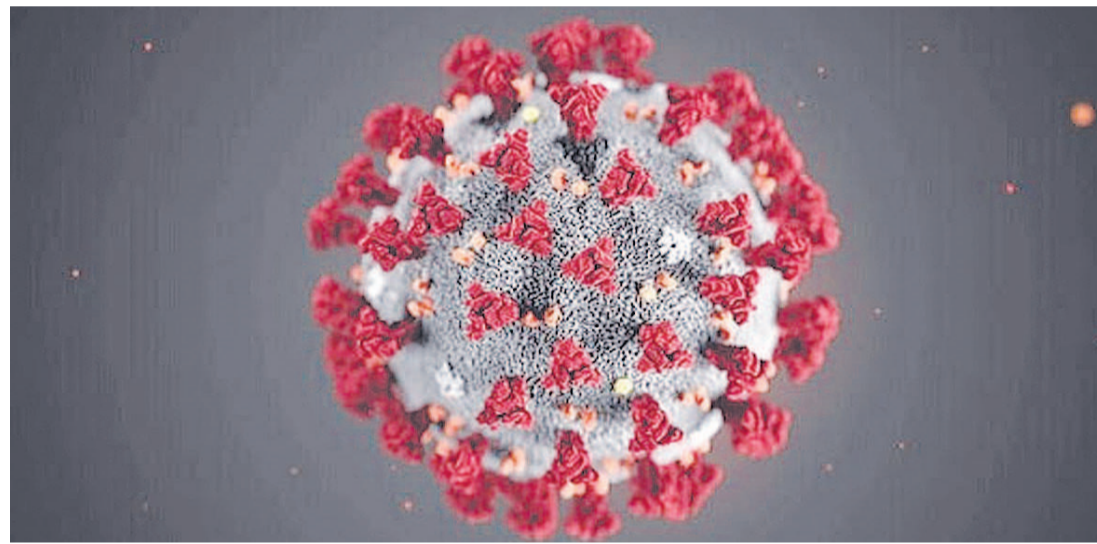
In late August, Grossi visited Tehran, where he held talks with Iranian officials over safeguards implementation issues.

The two sides then issued a joint statement and said they had agreed "to further reinforce their cooperation and enhance mutual trust to facilitate" the full implementation of Iran's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) and the Additional Protocol (AP) thereto, which has been provisionally applied by Iran since 16 January 2016.

To help facilitate the resolution of the issues raised by the Agency, the statement said, Iran agreed to voluntarily provide the IAEA's inspectors with access to the two locations specified by the nuclear watchdog.

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## Iran Sets New Daily Record For Coronavirus Deaths



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran reported 415 coronavirus deaths yesterday, its highest one-day total, health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari told state TV, pushing total deaths in the Middle Eastern country hit hardest by the pandemic to 33,714.

Lari said 6,824 new coronavirus infections had been identified in the previous 24 hours, pushing the total number of cases in Iran to 558,648.

"According to definitive laboratory findings from yesterday to October 26, 2020, newly diagnosed patients with COVID-19 reached to 6824 cases out of whom 2,490 of patients, were hospitalized," Lari stated.

She added that so far 558,648 people in the country have been infected with the coronavirus, 5,012 COVID-19 patients are in critical condition.

"So far, 4,821,681 COVID-19 diagnosis tests have been conducted across the country," the Health Ministry spokeswoman noted.

She pointed out that Provinces of Tehran, Isfahan, Qom, East Azerbaijan, South Khorasan, Semnan, Qazvin, Lorestan, Ardabil, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, Bushehr, Zanzan, Ilam, Khorasan Razavi, Mazandaran, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Alborz, West Azerbaijan, Markazi, Kerman, North Khorasan, Hamadan, Yazd, and Kordestan are regarded as red zones.

Hormozgan, Fars, Golestan, and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces are also regarded as orange and yellow zones.

Meanwhile Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced yesterday that the country's scientists have succeeded in production of rapid coronavirus-diagnosis tests which will enter the market soon.

"We are importing 3mln rapid test kits from South Korea with test results appearing in 20 to 25 minutes, which do not need (PCR) system. Of course, production of the home-made version of the tests has fortunately ended too and we will supply them to the market to carry out 100,000 tests on a daily basis as the most successful method to diagnose coronavirus rapidly," Namaki said.

He also underlined the Iranian researchers' successful studies on domestically developed coronavirus vaccine, saying that the vaccine's clinical tests on humans will start in the next few weeks.

Earlier this month, Namaki said that the country had successfully tested its coronavirus vaccine on animals, adding that the human test phase would begin in mid-November.

"The COVID-19 vaccine has been tested successfully on animals and we will start its human test phase in mid-November," Namaki said, adding, "We have discussed how to make the coronavirus vaccine with the World Health Organization (WHO), and you will hear good news in the near future."

## U.S. Military Tankers Smuggle Crude Oil From Syria to Iraq

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - The U.S. military has reportedly used dozens of tanker trucks to smuggle crude oil from Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah to western Iraq.

Syria's official news agency SANA, citing local sources, reported that a convoy of 37 tankers left Syria through al-Walid border crossing near al-Ya'rubiya town on Tuesday evening, and headed towards Iraqi territories.

The sources added that several armored vehicles belonging to the US military and militants affiliated with the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) escorted the convoy until it arrived at the border crossing.

The looting of Syrian oil by the US was first confirmed during a Senate hearing exchange between South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsey Graham and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in late July.

During his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 30, Pompeo confirmed for the first time that an American oil company would begin work in the northeastern Syria, which is controlled by SDF militants.

The SDF, a U.S.-backed alliance of Kurdish militants operating against Damascus, currently controls areas in northern and eastern Syria. The Syrian government has denounced in the strongest terms the agreement inked to plunder the country's natural resources, including Syrian oil and gas, with the sponsorship of the administration of US President Donald Trump.

The U.S. president has more than once acknowledged that American military forces are in Syria for the country's oil.

Also on Tuesday, foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants shelled the positions of government forces in the northern provinces of Aleppo, Hama, Idlib and Latakia.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the attacks were carried out by several terrorist groups, including Hay'at al-Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Turkish-backed Faylaq al-Sham (Sham Legion).

The war monitor said a number of Syrian soldiers and allied fighters from popular defense groups were killed in the process.

## President Scolds Macron, Praises Muslim World for Its Decisive Reaction

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has lashed out at French President Emmanuel Macron for his anti-Islam stances, and praised the Muslim world for its "decisive and timely" reaction to the European leader's insult.

Speaking in a weekly cabinet session on Wednesday, President Rouhani said disrespecting a prophet is not only not a skill, but also an immoral act, encouraging violence and hurting the feelings of billions of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The president called the great Prophet of Islam (PBUH) the teacher of humanity and mercy for the entire mankind, calling on those who have made mistakes in this regard to make up for their mistakes as soon as possible and return to the path of justice, morality and respect for the beliefs of all the heavenly religions.

"It is surprising that those who claim to be rich in culture and democracy, in some way, albeit unintentionally, encourage others to violence and bloodshed," he noted, referring to Macron's recent anti-Islam stances and his support for an offensive caricature of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

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## Border Insecurity Totally Unacceptable to Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Ground Force warned the neighboring states engaged in a war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region that Iran would not tolerate any threat to the security of its border regions and residents.

During a visit to Iran's northwestern border areas in the province of Ardabil on Wednesday, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpoor underlined that Iran would not tolerate any threat to the security of border areas or any harm to the mental calm of Iranian residents.

Iran would not hesitate to act when it comes to the security of people, he added.

The commander also stressed that Iran would never accept any geopolitical change at the boundaries, describing it as a "red line" for the Islamic Republic.

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## Tehran Serious About Punishing Culprits of Flight 752 Crash

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs said that Iran is serious about the punishment of the culprits of flight PS752 incident.

Regarding the latest situation of investigating the culprits of flight PS752 incident, Mohsen Baharvand said that there is no doubt about the punishment of the culprits of this incident and Iran is serious about it.

"All related institutions in the country are pursuing criminal discussions and punishing the culprits or those who were guilty in this incident," he said, adding, "In fact, a request for justice within the framework of the law and based on a fair trial is a public request, and it is not just a request from the families of the victims."

"Everything we do must be in accordance with the law," he stressed, saying, "We all want justice. Fortunately, the prosecution team is handling this case very carefully."

According to the law, as these culprits are related to the military field, the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces is responsible for this case, and this organization had meetings with the Ukrainian side too, Baharvand said.

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## Iran Felicitates Czech Republic on National Day

TEHRAN (IP) - The first vice president of the Islamic Republic of Iran congratulated the prime minister and the people of the Czech Republic on the occasion of National Day.

In a message to Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš on Tuesday night, Eshaq Jahangiri also stressed the need to expand relations between the two countries in all areas.

The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif also congratulated the Czech Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček in a separate message on the Czech National Day. October 28 is the National Day of the Czech Republic.

## Economic Terrorism Not to Hamper Iran, Syria Development

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Judiciary Chief Seyed Ebrahim Raesi says the economic and psychological war against the Syrian and Iranian nations will not prevent them from moving along the path of development.**

He made the remarks in a meeting with the departing Syrian ambassador to Tehran, Adnan Hassan Mahmoud, on Wednesday.

"Resistance and steadfastness are the key characteristics that have made Syria and its nation proud in the region and the world," Raesi said, noting that such resilience against the takfiri groups created by the United States and the Israeli regime will definitely lead to the Syrian nation's victory.

Noting that "today, the name of Syria is associated with the resistance," Raesi praised the role of the late Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad in promoting and preserving the spirit of resistance in the Syrian people.

He then pointed to the severe economic and psychological war waged by the enemy against the Syrian people and said, "Certainly, the cruelty of the enemy, which has boycotted even the much-needed goods of the Syrian people and the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a crime against humanity."

However, he asserted that the economic war has not been able to stop Iran and Syria from moving along the path of development.

"I am sure that the resistance of the Syrian people along with all the forces in the



region, including Hezbollah and Hamas, will lead to victory and also will increase the misery and eternal hatred for the United States and the Israeli regime."

In the end, Raesi hailed the efforts of the Syrian ambassador during his tenure in Tehran to strengthen relations between the two countries and wished him success in his new responsibility.

Adnan Mahmoud, for his part, praised Iran's support to Syria and said, "Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the government and people of Iran play an important role in supporting the Syrian government and nation in the fight against Takfiri terrorism and thwarting their imperialist plans in the region."

He added, "Our enemies are now focusing on economic warfare, which is a crime against all of humanity, and we must further strengthen our relationship to counter this war and achieve our common goals."

The Syrian ambassador in Tehran stressed that Iran has always been a model for the Syrian people. "Iran and Syria will definitely impede the enemy from achieving their hegemonic goals in the region and will take the path to victory despite all the problems and challenges."

## Majlis Speaker Contracts Coronavirus

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker has announced he tested positive for the novel coronavirus, weeks after he faced criticism from government officials for his visit to a hospital in the capital Tehran.

"One of my office colleagues had contracted coronavirus, and at midnight my test result also came positive," Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Twitter early Wednesday, adding that he has quarantined himself.

A few weeks ago, pictures of Qalibaf flanked by patients and medics inside the COVID-19 ward at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Hospital had sparked a controversy.

While supporters of Qalibaf praised him for his "bravery" in "boosting the morale" of healthcare workers, the president's office came down heavily on him for "not complying" with health protocol.

## Tehran Working for Peace in Region

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi referring to the Islamic Republic of Iran's proposed initiative to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict stated that Tehran is working to bring peace to the region.

Arriving in Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Araqchi said on Tuesday night that his is part of a periodic visit to those countries in the region that are influential in ending the recent conflicts between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

He added that the main purpose of this visit is to represent Iran's proposed initiative to resolve this conflict and achieve a lasting peace between the two countries of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and consequently the region.

Araqchi referred to the end of the occupation of the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan as an important element in Iran's initiative, noting that "Protection of minority rights and human rights is another basis for Iran's initiative to end the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

"The end of the conflict and the start of talks with the help of influential countries with the aim of ensuring peace are other key pillars of Iran's initiative," he said.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister also described Iran and Azerbaijan as two friendly and neighboring countries, adding that Iran always supports the efforts of Azerbaijan to liberate its cities and occupied territories.

After meeting with Azerbaijani officials, Araqchi will travel to Moscow and Yerevan and then to Ankara to explain Iran's proposed initiative to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The conflict between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which belongs to the Republic of Azerbaijan, began in 1988. It escalated into a military war in 1992.

## Enemy Reached Aimless Conditions in Economic War

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iran's Passive Defense Organization said that the enemy has reached 'aimless' conditions in economic war.

Stating that the bedrock of all threats is economic war, Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali said, "Ports play an important role in this economic war because they can be the source and gateway of the country's exports that help the country's economy and production, and be also effective in supplying the goods needed by the country."

"In the current situation, there is no doubt that we are facing serious threats and a full-blown economic war that has different aspects," he added.

"The enemy has imposed all its sanctions against Iran in the atmosphere of economic war, and today it has practically no sanctions to impose," Jalali noted, adding, "Today, the United States has reached an aimless situation in the field of economic warfare, and this means the end of maximum U.S. pressure in the near future."

## U.S. Forced To Obey by Language of Force

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Commander of IRGC noted that the U.S. does not understand any language other than force.

During a meeting with Hujjat al-Islam al-Kaabi, Brigadier General Fadavi, the deputy commander-in-chief of the IRGC, stressed that the United States does not understand any language other than force and if they see that they have no power to dominate, they will be forced to obey.

According to the Communication and Media Affairs Centre of al-Nujaba in Iran, Brigadier General Ali Fadavi, the deputy commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), met with Hujjat al-Islam Akram al-Kaabi, the secretary-general of al-Nujaba, on Tuesday, and stressed that the United States is absolute evil, saying, "The United States does not understand any language other than force and if they see that they have no power to dominate, they will be forced to obey."

Brigadier General Fadavi stated that if we consider ourselves a true example of "Hezbollah" as described in the Holy Quran, God promises victory and clarified, "The United States has not achieved a single victory in its 41 years of conflict with the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Relying on 35 years of experience in naval command, he noted, "Iran has had the most encounters with the Americans at sea. In the final years of the Sacred Defense [Iran-Iraq War], we hit their \$1 billion ship in the Persian Gulf and the United States cannot do a damned thing."

## Tehran, Baku Discuss Importance of Expanding Cooperation

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Azerbaijan and Iran discussed the importance of further expanding cooperation between the two countries' media outlets as newly appointed Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyed Abbas Mousavi visited Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC).

It was noted that thanks to the efforts of presidents of Azerbaijan and Iran, the bilateral relations between the two countries are developing. The sides also hailed the close cooperation between Azerbaijani and Iranian media outlets.

AZERTAC news agency is conducting exchange of information with Iran's IRNA and Mehr news agencies, as well as other media outlets. The 43rd Executive Board Meeting of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) was held in Tehran with the support of AZERTAC during its presidency of OANA.

During the meeting, the sides stressed the necessity of organizing reciprocal visits of journalists, joint events and trainings in order to expand cooperation between the two countries' media outlets.

## Iran Backing Peace, Stability in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (MNA) - Ali Akbar Velayati said, "Iran opposes the continuation of the war in Afghanistan and it supports the establishment of peace and stability in this neighbor country."

Top Adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for International Affairs met and held talks with Afghanistan Ambassador to Tehran Abdul Ghafoor Liwal.

Referring to the many religious, cultural, historical, and linguistic similarities between Iran and Afghanistan and expressing concern over the 40 years of conflict and war in this country, Velayati said that the Islamic Republic of Iran opposes the continuation of the war in Afghanistan and supports and contributes to the establishment of peace and stability in this neighbor country.

Expressing support for the establishment of peace in Afghanistan as well as the withdrawal of American troops from this country, he stressed the need to fight seriously against the dangerous presence of ISIL in this country.

The Afghan Ambassador, for his part, presented a report on recent developments of his country and appreciated the constructive role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in supporting peace and the legal structures of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Stressing the important role of Islamic scholars in inviting various groups in the Islamic world to peace and peaceful coexistence, Abdul Ghafoor Liwal expressed hope that the scholars of the Islamic world will strengthen peace and stability at this critical juncture in Afghanistan history via calling on Islamic communities to maintain brotherhood relations.

## Insulting Prophet of Islam an Act Far From Political Maturity

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian President's Chief of Staff said that supporting the insulting actions to the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) under the pretext of freedom of expression is undoubtedly an act far from political maturity and rationality.

"Respect for the opinions of others is one of the principles of democracy and one of the axioms of morality and humanity," wrote Vaezi in an Instagram post.

"Supporting the insulting actions to the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) under the pretext of freedom of expression is undoubtedly an act far from political maturity and rationality," he added.

Vaezi highlighted, "Freedom of expression does not mean permission to violate civil rights and moral principles, and if not accompanied by responsibility, it can lead to hatred, violation of the rights of others, and

even, ultimately, to an element against oneself."

"The French President's questionable and unjustified support for the insulting actions to the Prophet of Islam, which was probably done to overshadow some major problems in the country's domestic politics, is not acceptable at all," he added.

"One of the consequences of this action is the spread of hatred and the intensification of Islamophobia," he stressed.

"The French government is expected to act responsibly by understanding the situation and to prevent the continuation of the cycle of insults, incitement and hatred that has hurt the feelings of millions of Muslims around the world," Vaezi noted.

Recently, French President Emmanuel Macron had openly supported anti-Muslim acts in France against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

## U.S. Has No Choice But to Leave West Asia

TEHRAN (IP) - President of the Supreme National Defense University Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi said that the U.S. presence in West Asia is over.

Delivering a speech in the closing ceremony of a conference on 'Decline of the US', General Vahidi stated that the U.S. cannot impose its decisions on other countries and that it must leave the region.

Referring to the U.S. internal problems such as racism, he noted that based on the latest polls, 75% of American citizens do not consider the country a proper place to live.

Even the American elite are talking about the U.S. decline, a belief which is not limited to specific countries, he highlighted.

The U.S. lost its political power and cannot even affect its European allies, General Vahidi noted and added that the example of such a fact was seen in Iran's arms embargo which European countries did not follow the U.S.

"49% of the American families have problems with supporting their daily costs, and we can see that the U.S. economic power has lessened, being considered as a country with the largest amount of debt," he stated.

The Iranian military official also pointed to the military presence of the U.S. in the western Asian region and noted that the U.S. military cannot win in Iraq, Yemen, and Syria.

At the end of the conference, a series of books were unveiled with the US decline theme, which is available both in paper and electronic.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:48
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:30
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:00
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:25

76. Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject Faith Fight in the cause of Evil: So fight ye against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.

Surah 4. Women (76)

## Iran, India Explore Ways to Launch Barter Mechanism for Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Tehran Chamber of Commerce and India's PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) in a webinar on Tuesday explored ways to develop bilateral trade between both states especially for improving banking cooperation.**

The webinar which was held at Tehran Chamber of Commerce under banner of "Developing Economic Cooperation between Iran and India: Challenges and Opportunities" in presence of Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Masoud Khansari and Indian Ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra.

During the webinar, officials from the state and private sectors of both countries in their speeches called for reinforcing the trade relation and raised some solutions for developing the ties, and later managers of companies and economic activists participating in the webinar exchanged their views for reaching trade agreements.

Indian Ambassador to Tehran Mr. Dharmendra, for his part, invited Indian companies and producers to visit Chabahar Port for getting familiar with the trade opportunities of this area, adding that Chabahar Port is very important for economic cooperation between both states and Indians can have access to the markets in northern Caspian Sea and Eastern Europe.

He also noted that Iranian exporters can have access to Indian ports via Chabahar Port to expand their economic activities.

Dharmendra also welcomed the proposal of Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce for setting up joint companies, saying that with cooperation between chambers of commerce of both states and cooperation of their governments, both sides should launch a sustainable provision chain between both states.

Meanwhile President of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sanjay Aggarwal,



addressing the webinar, referred to Iran as the second biggest energy supplier to India and announced the readiness of the chamber for finding developmental solutions for exchanges and economic cooperation between both states.

Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Khansari, addressing the webinar, called for the launch of a branch of India's UCO Bank in Chabahar Port for continuation of the trade cooperation between both states.

He added that Chabahar can be a gateway for Iran and India's exports to Eurasia, Afghanistan and other countries' markets. He noted that using national currencies in trade, avoiding implementation of double tax law and acceleration in restoring preferential agreements between both states are of the major solutions for reinforcing economic cooperation between Iran and India.

Khansari blamed lack of a financial and banking channel between Iran and India as the main reason for slowdown in trade relations of both states, reiterating that using the bartering mechanism is a good way for developing commercial relation between both states. He also announced readiness of Tehran Chamber of Commerce for continuing talks with its counterpart in New Delhi and finding developmental ways in economic cooperation between Iran and India.

Iran's Ambassador to New Delhi Ali Chegini, for his part, in this virtual event called the efforts of both countries for implementing the bilateral preferential trade agreement a big stride towards developing cooperation and noted that to this end, embassies of both countries will do their best.

He also said launching the mechanism for bartering goods between Iran and India is necessary, adding that economic ties will revive by launching branches of banks.

## Tehran, Minsk Confer on Holding Joint Economic Committee Meeting

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and Belarusian deputy industry minister, as representatives of the two countries' joint economic committee, held online talks to discuss preparation for the 15th meeting of the committee in near future.

In the meeting, Hamid Zadboum and Dmitry Kharitonchik discussed issues related to the agreements reached in the 14th joint economic committee meeting of the two countries held three years ago and followed up on their implementation, TPO portal reported.

The two sides further stressed the development of cooperation in the fields of investment, trade, and industry and welcomed the holding of a trade meeting between the two countries' businessmen.

Kharitonchik also expressed his support for the expansion of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the forthcoming additional negotiations on a preferential trade agreement with the union.

It was also decided in the meeting that the parties take the necessary measures, considering health and safety protocols regarding the coronavirus, to develop relations between the two countries and to prepare the conditions for holding the 15th meeting of the two countries' joint economic committee as soon as possible.

Back in April, Iran's former Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said Iran's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with EAEU has created a great opportunity for Iran and Belarus to deepen their trade ties.

## Housing Price in Tehran Soars 10% in a Month

TEHRAN (MNA) - Housing price in Tehran city has risen 10 percent in the seventh Iranian calendar month (September 22-October 21), from its previous month, according to the latest report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The CBI's report put the average price for one square meter of a residential unit at 267.2 million rials (about \$6,361) in the capital city in the seventh month of this year, up 110 percent from the figure for the same month in the past year.

Meanwhile, the number of real estate deals has risen 2.3 percent in Tehran in the seventh month of this year

compared to the sixth month, while rising 154.5 percent compared to the same month of the past year.

Last month, a member of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) Civil Committee said that the drastic and unprecedented rise in housing prices in recent months is going to lead the housing market to a recession in the coming months.

"With the dramatic and unprecedented rise in housing prices, the market is expected to enter a recession for at least three to four years in the coming months, but naturally, as the recession intensifies, housing prices will fall by about 10 to 20 percent", Mojtaba Yousefi stated.

## Iran Denies Alleged Export of Medicine to Iraq

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Trucks, which carried medicine to Iraq, were not Iranian by no means, Head of Food and Drug Administration of Iran Mohammadreza Shanesaz said on Wednesday ruling out the alleged export of medical supplies to Iraq.

Shanesaz said that the medicine consignments for Iraq were originally from other countries and it was "an international plot" by the hostile countries to attribute it consignments to Iranian Government.

He expressed surprise that some Iranian people believe such false speculations broadcast by certain foreign-based hostile TV channel which do not even say one word about the international sanctions on the imports of medicine and pharmaceuticals to Iran.

These consignments were originally from other countries and were only transited to Iraq via Iranian soil, he said, adding that a report by Iran Custom Administration also confirms this argument. Iraqi officials announced last week that 19 trucks carrying medical items were found in the country.

Speculation about export of Iranian medicines to Iraq had raised public concern in Iran over the past few days as Iran itself is under tough sanctions and has difficulty in importing medical supplies.

## Budget Resources Shift From Oil to Taxes



TEHRAN (IP) - Vice President and Head of Plan and Budget Organization Mohammad Bagher Nobakht stated that by reforming the budget structure, the resources shift from oil to taxes.

Speaking on the reform of Iran's whole budget structure, Mohammad Bagher Nobakht stated that "Budget structure reform consists of 4 bases, the first one is resources and the next is related to expenditures. The third base of the budget is related to stabilization and the administration of justice until the budget is stable."

Explaining how these four bases can be implemented to improve the overall budget structure of the country, Bagher Nobakht said that in the past, most of the country's total budget resources were focused on oil, but by reforming the budget structure, this significant share will be compensated by receiving taxes.

On the sidelines of the cabinet session, Vice President and Head of Plan and Budget Organization outlined the fourth base which is the budgeting process and system, and various institutions such as the government, parliament, and even the Judiciary System that is effective in discussing the budget.

The government has properties and assets that can be used in the form of budgets, said the Vice President and Head of Plan and Budget Organization Mohammad Bagher Nobakht.

## Exports Via Sistan and Baluchestan Top 700k Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) – A total of 705,483 tons of goods were exported from Sistan and Baluchestan province's customs terminals and border markets in the seven months of the current calendar year.

Head of Road and Transportation Department of Sistan and Baluchestan Ayoub Kord said Milak border terminal had the lion's share of the southeastern province's exports with 427,782 tons, followed by Mirjaveh border crossing with 277,701 tons.

He noted that exports mainly included edibles, cement, fuels, liquid natural gas, tar, and chemical products. According to Kord, a total of 125,804 passengers also were transported through the two major border crossings during the seven-month period.

The imports through Milak and Mirjaveh crossings amounted to 327,608 and 39,831 tons respectively during the period, he noted.

## EORC Produces Successfully Two New Environmental Products

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Deputy of CEO on Production of Esfahan Oil Refining Company Alireza Jafarpour announced implementation and exploitation of two new projects with production



capacity of 1,000 bpd at the company, adding that the idea for project of producing normal hexane had been raised since 2018 that after thorough study, the project entered the implementation phase and now it has come on stream.

Jafarpour also pointed to the production of new project of solvent AW-406++, and said the new solvent AW-406++, which has less environmental pollution and also pro-environment, will replace the company's previous product solvent AW-406.

He added that the normal hexane produced at EORC is free of any aromatic and sulfur compound; therefore it needs no processing and secondary refining. Jafarpour noted that this product is a green and pro-environment one and it has very positive effect in line with protecting the environment.

He then said the normal hexane consumption in the country is around 50,000 tons annually and with developing chemical and petrochemical industries, the consumption of this product will increase significantly in the future.

Jafarpour added that the project was carried out without any investment and cost and only through adopting an expertise project by using vacant capacities and processing units of EORC. He reiterated that EORC not only produced new product of hexane but also improved the quality of its gasoline.

Meanwhile head of gasoline-producing complex of EORC who had proposed this initiative project said that the new product is richer than normal hexane which can be used in petrochemical, food and pharmaceutical industries.

Ehsan Mirmohammadi referred to this point that the company used to produce solvent AW-406 in the past, saying that based on the principles of the solvent AW-406, the new solvent has been produced which is free of any aromatic and sulfur compounds comparing to the previous product, and benzene has been totally eliminated from the new product.

## Synergy of All Bodies of ESCO On Course of Value-Creation



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – A member of board of directors and head of committee of value-creating projects of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) Mr. Morteza Yazdkhasti says ESCO as the first steel producer in the company after half a century of its activities with reliance on specialized human resources, facilities, equipment, knowledge and experience has had an irreplaceable role in construction of different industries which is not a secret to anybody.

Addressing the first meeting of committee on value-creation projects of the company, he said this gigantic factory has abundant capabilities that it can be pushed towards more value-creation by defining different projects and then prioritizing them which has been created by its manpower in different sections through synergy.

Yazdkhasti noted that such meetings are held in different sectors of the company, adding that he wants all managers of different sectors of the company to prioritize the projects which can boost value-creation in the shortest time for the organization.

Meanwhile head of exploitation department of ESCO Mr. Mehrdad Tavalaeian, for his part, expressed his gratitude to all different sectors of the company who strive for materialization of the goals of the company especially in the current sanction era, adding that the nature of activity and performance in the exploitation sector is different from other sectors and it has led to defining diverse projects in this department in different periods which have had considerable results.

## Nigeria Launches Inquiry Into Protest Shootings

LAGOS (Dispatches) - A judicial panel in Nigeria's biggest city Lagos on Tuesday began an inquiry into the shooting of peaceful protesters last week and broader police brutality that had sparked demonstrations and unrest.

Africa's most populous nation has been rocked by violence since demonstrators were gunned down in the economic hub on October 20, sparking international outrage and rioting.

Amnesty International says 12 people were shot dead by the police and army at two locations, in assaults shared widely on social media.



## Tanzania to Hold Election Marred by Violence

STONE TOWN (AFP) - Tanzanians will vote Wednesday amid rising concern for democracy under President John Magufuli, who is seeking a second term, and with tensions high in volatile Zanzibar, where violence erupted ahead of the vote.

Long deemed a haven of stability in East Africa, observers say Tanzania has seen a worrying crackdown on the opposition and freedom of speech under the 60-year-old Magufuli and his Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, which has been in power since 1961. Magufuli is counting on his ambitious programme of infrastructure development and fiery anti-corruption stance to secure him a second mandate and called for a peaceful vote.



## France Tightens Security, Facing Very High Terror Risk



PARIS (Dispatches) - France is increasing security at religious sites as the interior minister said Tuesday that the country faces a "very high" risk of terrorist threats, amid growing geopolitical tensions following the beheading of a teacher who showed his class caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

French diplomats are trying to quell anger in Turkey and Arab nations amid anti-France protests and calls for boycotts of French goods in response to President Emmanuel Macron's firm stance against Islamism in the wake of the Oct. 16 beheading. European allies have supported Macron, while Muslim-majority countries are angered by his defense of prophet cartoons they consider sacrilegious.

France's national police have called for increased security at religious sites around the All Saint's holiday this coming weekend, particularly noting online threats from extremists against Christians and moderate French Muslims.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on France-Inter radio that the terrorist threat remains "very high, because we have a lot of enemies from within and outside the country." He reiterated plans to try to disband Muslim groups

seen as peddling dangerous radical views or with too much foreign financing. He accused Turkey and Pakistan in particular of "meddling in France's internal business."

"There is a battle against an Islamist ideology. We must not back down," he said. But he insisted that "the Muslim faith has all its place in the republic." Some members of France's largely moderate Muslim community are calling for calm, and defending the freedom of expression that the beheaded teacher was seeking to demonstrate.

The Prophet cartoons deeply upset many Muslims around the world. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has led the charge against France, questioning Macron's mental state, and France recalled its ambassador to Turkey for consultations, a first in French-Turkish diplomatic relations.

Tensions between the two countries have mounted in recent months over Turkish actions in Syria, Libya and the Caucasus Mountains region of Nagorno-Karabakh. But this new spat has quickly spread to other countries in Europe and the Muslim world.

Anti-France protests have been held from Bangladesh to the Gaza Strip, Kuwaiti stores pulled French yogurt and bottles of sparkling water from their shelves, Qatar University canceled a French culture week, and Pakistan's parliament passed a resolution condemning the publication of cartoons of the prophet.

EU officials warn that Turkey's stance could further damage its relations with key trading partners and its long-stalled efforts to join the EU.

"A boycott will only move Turkey even further away from the EU," European Commission spokesman Balazs Ujvaris said Tuesday, insisting that Turkey needs to respect the terms of its trade deal on merchandise and goods with the EU.

## China Accuses U.S. of Deflecting Blame



BEIJING (Reuters) - A senior Chinese official accused the United States on Wednesday of deflecting blame and breaking its word when it comes to fighting climate change, as the simmering diplomatic row between the world's two biggest economies shifts to the environment.

The U.S. State Department said last month that China had showed "willful disregard" for air, land and water quality, and was putting global health at risk, with its climate-warming greenhouse gases the highest in the world and still rising.

But Washington cannot make other countries take responsibility for its own environmental failures, said Li Gao, head of the climate change department at China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment, during a news briefing.

"The United States is the country with the most accumulated greenhouse gases, and at the start of next month will formally withdraw from the Paris Agreement," he said.

The row is part of a wider dispute between the two sides, with Beijing repeatedly accusing Washington of "unilateralism", bullying and failing to meet its global obligations while emphasizing its own multilateralist credentials.

The United States began the three-year process to pull out of the Paris accord in 2017, with President Donald Trump saying the deal favored China's firms and undermined the U.S. economy.

But China's foreign ministry said last week that the United States was a "consensus-breaker" and "troublemaker" and had failed to honour its commitments to the international community.

After Trump accused Beijing of "rampant pollution" during a United Nations General Assembly meeting in late September, his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping vowed to steer his country towards "carbon neutrality" by 2060 and play a bigger role in combating climate change.

Experts have said that the country's carbon neutral pledge is part of an effort to build its reputation as a responsible global leader.

"Xi Jinping's announcement ... is a high level political decision. It is a very significant geopolitical consideration," said Li Shuo, climate advisor with environmental group Greenpeace.

## Five Dead, Dozens Wounded in Attack on Afghan Police Base

KABUL (Dispatches) - An hours-long attack on an Afghan police special forces base involving car bombs and a firefight killed five policemen and wounded dozens of people, officials said Tuesday, as a top US negotiator called for an end to Afghanistan's bloodshed.

Three suicide bombers detonated their explosives-loaded vehicles targeting the base in the city of Khost near the Pakistan border, Khost police chief Ghulam Daud Tarakhil told AFP, before other gunmen tried to storm the compound.

One suicide bomber detonated his vehicle at the gates of the base early in the morning, while two others blew up their vehicles later during the gun battle between security forces and gunmen, he said.

A fierce firefight that lasted for almost nine hours between the militants and security forces ended with the killing of seven other militants, Tarakhil said.

Afghanistan's interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian confirmed that the gun battle had ended. The assault left five policemen dead and wounded 33 other people, including nine civilians, Tarakhil added.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

Restive Khost province is home to active Taliban insurgents and also Al-Qaeda fighters, officials say.

Further north, three civilians were killed and 10 others were wounded in a separate attack Tuesday when a "sticky bomb" attached to a car exploded near Kabul airport, police said. Violence has raged across Afghanistan in recent weeks even as the Taliban and Afghan government remain engaged in peace talks to end the country's long-running conflict.

Afghan and U.S. officials have repeatedly warned that the rising bloodshed is threatening the talks being held in Qatar since last month.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. official who negotiated a deal with the Taliban in February to withdraw American forces from Afghanistan by May next year, was again travelling to Qatar to push the two sides to rein in violence.

## UNSC Ratifies Libya Ceasefire Deal

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - The UN Security Council on Tuesday ratified the ceasefire hammered out between Libya's warring parties on October 23, calling on both sides to "implement the agreement in full," diplomats said.

The declaration is to be followed up soon by a UN resolution, diplomatic sources said.

"The members of the Security Council welcomed the permanent ceasefire agreement" signed in Geneva under the aegis of the UN, and called on "the Libyan parties to abide by their commitments."

The Security Council also called on the two sides "to show the same determination in reaching a political solution" when they meet to discuss the issue further on November 9 in Tunisia, the declaration added.

It also cited the need for countries and parties to respect the arms embargo slapped on Libya in 2011 and to end any outside intervention in the country's internal affairs.

The warring factions in Libya signed a ceasefire accord last Friday, effective immediately, after five days of talks in Geneva facilitated by the United Nations, which called the agreement a "turning point" for the war-ravaged North African country.

Libya descended into revolution and a complex civil war after the overthrow of the longtime strongman Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, eventually being split between two main factions -- the National Unity Government in Tripoli, backed by Turkey and Qatar, and the forces of military strongman Khalifa Haftar in the east of the country, backed by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia.



## Iraq Reopens Green Zone Bridge Year After Revolt



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraqi authorities Tuesday reopened a bridge in central Baghdad leading to the high-security Green Zone, in a sign of easing tensions a year after the launch of an anti-government protest movement.

The fragility of the return to normal, however, was underlined by the killing of a prominent activist in Amarah, 400 kilometers (250 miles) south of Baghdad.

Al-Sinak bridge was partially closed for security reasons after it turned into the site of fierce clashes between protesters and police in October 2019, when the nationwide revolt erupted.

Massive concrete barriers and metal fences were removed using cranes and workers swept up debris, as riot police looked on.

The bridge over the Tigris connects the Iranian embassy area and the fortified Green Zone -- where government office, parliament and the US embassy are housed -- to Tahrir Square, the epicentre of protests.

"We are now studying reopening Al-Jumhuriyah bridge," Mohamed al-Bayati, a military advisor to Prime Minister Mustafa Kadhemi, told reporters.

Jumhuriyah, parallel to Sinak, leads directly to the Green Zone -- a restricted zone for ordinary Iraqis.

On Sunday, police fired stun grenades and tear gas at protesters who were burning tyres and hurling rocks on Al-Jumhuriyah bridge.

The bridge has been barricaded by towering concrete walls.

The Green Zone district was also the seat of power of dictator Saddam Hussein.

After his fall in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, it turned into a symbol of disenfranchisement, corruption and official negligence in the oil-rich Arab country.

Protests demanding a total overhaul of the ruling class lost momentum then ground to a halt in the spring due to the coronavirus crisis and rising U.S.-Iran tensions.

Around 600 people were killed and 30,000 wounded in clashes with security forces.

A campaign of targeted assassinations of leading figures of the October 2019 revolt followed, with the United Nations pinning responsibility on militias.

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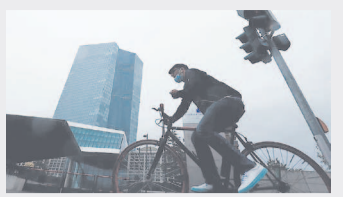
## Euro Zone Banks Curtail Credit Access

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Euro zone banks are tightening access to corporate credit amid a resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic, fresh data showed on Tuesday, adding to already numerous arguments for the European Central Bank to add to stimulus.

With governments once again restricting economic activity, banks are growing worried about rising credit risk, potential

damage to economic growth as emergency credit lines are keeping a range of companies afloat, particularly in services.

Banks had already curtailed access to corporate credit in the third quarter and expected to tighten further in the last three months of the year, reflecting concerns about the stalling recovery and governments' ability to maintain fiscal support measures amid a lingering downturn, the ECB said.



## Spain to Hike Taxes on Large Companies, High Earners in 2021 Budget

MADRID (Reuters) - Spain's left-wing government announced plans on Tuesday to raise taxes on large companies and high earners to fund increased spending on social care and infrastructure as part of its progressive agenda.

With the coronavirus-battered economy expected to shrink an unprecedented 11.2% this year and tax revenues due to ebb 7.6%, the government aims to boost 2021 budget revenues by 6.8 billion euros (\$8.04 billion), giving it more firepower to spend its way out of the crisis.

"This budget cannot be postponed. This budget is essential for the modernization and recovery of our economy," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said in a televised statement.

Governments around the world have so far said very little about how they plan to pay for the cost of unprecedented levels of state support to virus-hit economies. Even the International Monetary Fund last week said the priority for now was to control the pandemic and then foster economic recovery.

Spain's 2021 budget is due to reduce tax exemptions for dividends from subsidiaries earned by big corporations to 95% from 100%, while real-estate investment trusts will face a minimum tax rate of 15% of earnings, Sanchez said. Previously, such companies benefited from several reductions.

But some of the more radical measures agreed when Sanchez's Socialists formed a coalition with the far-left Podemos party last year have been watered down.

Higher corporate taxes will affect just 0.12% of Spain's companies and yield 1.52 billion euros.

Meanwhile, a two percentage point increase on income tax for high-earners will only apply to those making more than 300,000 euros a year, up from an initial threshold of 130,000 euros.

It is estimated to apply to 0.17% of taxpayers, but deputy premier and Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias presented the hike as a first step to deeper reforms.

"Those who have more will contribute more", he said. "Today we enter a new era in Spain's economic policy and definitively leave behind the neo-liberal age of austerity."

The measures follow previously approved moves such as a so-called Google tax on revenues booked locally by large tech firms, which other European countries are also considering.

With the revenue boost, the government wants to double infrastructure spending to 11.5 billion euros and increase civil servants' wages and pensions by 0.9%, in line with projected inflation.

If the minority government can muster sufficient support in parliament, it could pass Spain's first budget since 2018, and the first full-year budget since 2016. In other years, budgets got rolled over from year to year, for lack of a majority.

Barring any delays, the bill could come into force by the end of January.

## Brazil Eyes GDP Per Capita Growth of 37% Over Next Decade

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil's government on Tuesday outlined a long-term roadmap for the economy, based on three scenarios of economic and fiscal reforms that could lift gross domestic product per capita by as much as 37% over the next decade.

According to the "Federal Development Strategy" in the Official Gazette, that is the upper end of the scale resulting from a series of "transformative" reforms and educational advances over 2021-2031 that would deliver average annual GDP growth of 3.5%.

This would lift Brazil's GDP per capita in U.S. dollars above that of other emerging nations such as Argentina, Poland and Croatia by 2031, and closer to Chile and Hungary, countries ranked highly in the Human Development Index.

Brazil will go into next year with a record debt and deficit around 95% and 12% of GDP, respectively, due to huge emergency expenditure this year to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Macroeconomic stability, continuing the long-term fiscal adjustment agenda and monetary policy balance, are necessary conditions for a return to sustained growth," the government said in the decree.

According to the strategy plan, signed off by President Jair Bolsonaro and Economy Minister Paulo Guedes, the base case is for an accumulated rise in GDP per capita of 19.1% over the next decade, on annual average GDP growth of 2.2%.

After the financial damage wrought by COVID-19, "If the necessary reforms are not implemented, the likelihood of a fiscal crisis and economic growth crisis in the coming years will increase significantly," the plan said.

The third and most bearish scenario of no fiscal adjustment or market-friendly reforms would crash the economy and public finances. "For obvious reasons, it serves no purpose to include forecasts in this scenario," the plan said.

## Global Foreign Direct Investment Halved in First Six Months of 2020

GENEVA (Reuters) - Global foreign direct investment (FDI) plunged by 49% in the first half of 2020 from the same period a year ago and is on course to fall as much as 40% for the year, driven by fears of a deep recession, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

FDI flows to European economies turned negative for the first time ever, falling to -\$7 billion from \$202 billion. Flows to the United States fell by 61% to \$51 billion, the U.N. Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in a report.

Global FDI fell to \$399 billion as multinationals postponed investments to preserve cash, it said.

"Global FDI flows for the first half of this year went down by close to half... It was more drastic than we expected for the whole year," James Zhan, director of UNCTAD's investment and enterprise division, told a news conference. The flows are expected to decline by 30% to 40% this year and "moderately" in 2021, by 5% to 10%, Zhan said.

The figures cover cross-border mergers and acquisitions, new greenfield investment projects and project finance deals. Industrialised countries, which normally account for some 80% of global transactions, were hardest hit, with flows falling to \$98 billion, a level last seen in 1994, the report said.

Among major FDI recipients in 2019, flows declined most strongly in Italy, the United States, Brazil and Australia. China was bucking the trend, Zhan said. "Their FDI flows remain relatively stable. For the first half of the year the decline was really modest and in fact according to the latest data, for the first nine months altogether this year FDI into China increased by 2.5%," he said.

## U.S. Core Capital Good Orders Hit Six-Year High

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - New orders for key U.S.-made capital goods increased to six-year high in September, wrapping up a quarter of potentially record growth in business spending and the economy, thanks to fiscal stimulus aimed at softening the blow from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the report from the Commerce Department on Tuesday also showed shipments of these goods rising modestly last month, supporting expectations of slower economic activity heading into the fourth quarter. That was reinforced by a dip in consumer confidence this month. The reports came ahead of next Tuesday's fiercely contested presidential election.

A more than \$3 trillion government rescue package early this year provided a lifeline for many businesses and the unemployed, helping to boost consumer spending and the housing market. But funding has dried up and new coronavirus infections are surging across the country.

"The recovery is now entering a more challenging phase, in which it will face the pandemic crisis without meaningful fiscal support," said Oren Klachkin, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics in New York.

Orders for non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft, a closely watched proxy for business spending plans, increased 1.0% last month to the highest level since September 2014. These so-called core capital goods orders rose 2.1% in August.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast core capital goods orders increasing 0.5%. Though core capital goods orders have pulled above their pre-pandemic level, they were down 0.5% year-on-year in September.

Orders last month were lifted by increased demand for primary metals, fabricated metal products and computers and electronic products. But orders for machinery and electrical equipment, appliances and components fell.

Caterpillar Inc, a bellwether for economic activity, on Tuesday reported lower quarterly earnings, but said the pace of decline in sales of its yellow bulldozers, mining trucks and other equipment was moderating.

Separately, the Conference Board said its consumer confidence index fell to a reading of 100.9 this month from 101.3 in September amid concerns about the future. The Conference Board said "there is little to suggest that consumers foresee the economy gaining momentum in the final months of 2020, especially with COVID-19 cases on the rise and unemployment still high."

Consumer confidence is now at levels seen in October 2016. There are fears that the outcome of next Tuesday's vote could weigh on business and consumer sentiment, and undercut the recovery from the worst recession in at least 73 years.

## Turks Divided Over Erdogan Call to Boycott French Goods

ISTANBUL (AFP) - Some Turks were happy this week

to see President Recep Tayyip Erdogan teach France a "good lesson" with a "long overdue" call for a boycott, but others said the move was "irrational" and "impossible to apply".

Masked customers were coming and going as usual at one branch of French supermarket chain Carrefour in Istanbul's Sisli district on Tuesday. Daim Kara, 51, proclaimed himself a boycott supporter even as he left the store with his arms full of goods.

"I buy at Carrefour, but they're Turkish products," he told AFP, showing his purchases.

"I support the boycott call because they are threatening Turkey. They despise Muslims," he said. Kara added that he also supported banning goods from Israel, one of the many countries with which Turkey has uneasy relations.

Ties between NATO allies Paris and Ankara were already tense, especially because of France's support to a Syrian Kurdish militia viewed by Ankara as "terrorists", and disagreement over Libya and the eastern Mediterranean.

But the relationship has rarely deteriorated to this extent, with Erdogan at the weekend calling for French President Emmanuel Macron to get "mental health checks" and Paris responding by recalling its ambassador to Ankara.

The Turkish leader renewed his personal attack against Macron on Monday, accusing him of leading a "hate campaign" against Muslims by supporting cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

Caricatures of Mohammed are strictly forbidden by Islam. For Mahmut Atilla, 70, the call by Erdogan will not change anything.

"I already boycott anyway, I always lean towards Turkish products. For instance I don't drink Coca Cola, I boycott American products. Why wouldn't I? I have local fruit juices, orange juice, I'd rather drink that," the retired man grumbled. Murat, a square-jawed 30-year-old sitting at a cafe, said it was "long overdue", adding: "We have to teach Macron a good lesson!"

Supporters of Erdogan on Twitter published a list of French labels to avoid, but some users pointed out they appeared to overlook the Turkish First Lady's penchant for the French luxury brand Hermes. The effect of Erdogan's move on trade between Turkey and France -- which was worth around \$17 billion last year -- is difficult to predict.

But it has not stirred the same enthusiasm as his call in 2018 to boycott American electronic goods during tensions between Ankara and Washington.

## South Korea Economy Returns to Growth in Q3



SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea's economy returned to growth in the third quarter, recovering from its sharpest contraction in more than a decade, as the government pushed through stimulus measures and major trading partners eased coronavirus restrictions.

Asia's fourth-largest economy grew a seasonally adjusted 1.9% in the September quarter from the June quarter, the Bank of Korea said on Tuesday, logging its fastest expansion since the first quarter of 2010.

That reverses a 3.2% decline in the second quarter, which was the sharpest since 2008, and beats a Reuters poll forecast of a 1.7% expansion.

Alex Holmes, an economist at Capital Economics, forecast a 1% contraction in GDP this year, noting ongoing risks from the severity of the pandemic in the United States and Europe. "While this would be the worst performance since 1998, it would still make Korea one of the best performing economies in the world this year," he said.

The BOK, which has cut interest rates to a record low of 0.5%, has forecast a 1.3% contraction for the year, potentially the biggest contraction in more than two decades. Finance Minister Hong Nam-ki said the GDP data confirmed the growth trajectory was beginning "to normalize, which is important in that it encourages we can overcome the crisis."

The government last month began rolling out the final of four extra budgets to inject a total of about 310 trillion won (\$274.83 billion) of fiscal stimulus.

Exports soared 15.6% in the third quarter in sequential terms, rebounding the fastest since 1986 and reversing a 16.1% contraction in the second quarter. The construction sector was not as buoyant, though there were some signs that factory production is improving with manufacturing sector output up 7.6% from the second quarter.

Construction investment was a drag, declining 7.8% on-quarter, while private consumption fell 0.1%.

On a year-on-year basis, the economy shrank 1.3% in the third quarter, after declining a revised 2.7% in the second quarter.



## “Family Relations” Goes To German Film Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian documentary ‘Family Relations’ has made its way to the competition lineup of 2020 Exground Film Festival in Germany.

Directed by Nasser Zamiri, ‘Family Relations’ is about Haji BABA with his children and their strange relations. All the members of the large Iranian family are against the father and the

director tries to stay on top of the jungle of different statements. The Iranian documentary has previously participated in Helsinki Documentary Film Festival in Finland. It is also vying at the 62nd DOK Leipzig which is underway in Germany. The 2020 edition of Exground, the festival of independent and experimental cinema will be held Wiesbaden from November 13-22.



## Persian Gulf Economies Set for Steep Contractions This Year

DUBAI (Reuters) - The six-member Persian Gulf Cooperation Council faces a steep economic contraction this year before partially rebounding in 2021, with most countries facing sharper declines than previously estimated, a quarterly Reuters poll showed.

Analysts in the Oct. 13-25 poll maintained their view that the region’s heavy dependence on hydrocarbons left it particularly hard-hit by the coronavirus crisis because of its effect on oil demand and prices.

New lockdown measures as infections continue to soar in the United States, Europe and elsewhere, could exacerbate already depressed economic activity.

Saudi Arabia, the region’s largest economy, is expected to face a GDP contraction of 5.1% this year and rebound to 3.1% growth next year and 2.7% growth in 2022. A poll conducted three months ago saw the world’s largest oil exporter contracting 5.2% in 2020.

“The region is now facing tough policy choices. Fiscal support is still needed to fight persistent and rising infections, already showing up in Europe and the U.S.,” noted analysts at NBK.

“But from a medium-term perspective, governments should aim to achieve fiscal and external sector sustainability in the likely scenario of low oil prices.”

The United Arab Emirates, which has seen a surge in new COVID-19 cases in the past month or so, is expected to see GDP decline 6.0% this year, grow 2.7% next year and expand 3.8% in 2022. In July, analysts expected a 5.1% decline in 2020 and 2.6% growth in 2021.

“The UAE economy will suffer a deeper contraction this year than we anticipated in May,” the Institute of International Finance said in a research note.

“Dubai’s economy may contract by at least 8%, more than Abu Dhabi, as its large exposure to tourism, aviation, and other services makes it more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic,” the IIF said, adding that output declined 9% in the first half of the year and employment dropped by 10%.

Median forecasts for Kuwait expected a 6.3% contraction this year, 2.6% growth next year and 3.3% growth in 2022. Three months ago it was seen shrinking 6.1% in 2020 and expanding 2.5% in 2021.

Qatar’s forecast for this year was unchanged at a 4.0% contraction,



while expectations for growth next year improved to 3.0% from 2.8% and it was seen expanding 3.4% in 2022.

Oman and Bahrain’s forecasts were weaker, seen shrinking 4.9% and 4.8% this year respectively from contractions of 4.7% and 4.4% seen in July. Oman is expected to grow 2.5% next year, versus a July estimate of 3.0%, and 2.7% in 2022. Bahrain’s 2.6% growth forecast for 2021 was unchanged and it was expected to grow 2.1% in 2022.

“Things are looking less favourable, particularly for leisure and tourism,” Maya Senussi, senior economist at Oxford Economics, said on Oman.

“Non-residents are still barred from visiting as we head into the peak season,” she said, adding analysts generally have a clearer view of how the dual shock has influenced activity.

## Child Malnutrition Surges In War-Torn Yemen



SANAA (AFP) - Malnutrition among young children has soared to the highest levels ever recorded in parts of war-torn Yemen, the UN said Tuesday, as coronavirus and shortfalls in aid funding worsen a humanitarian crisis.

More than half a million cases of acute malnutrition among children under five were recorded in the south, and the results of a survey of the north currently under way are expected to be “equally concerning”, it said.

A 15.5 percent increase in severe malnutrition in the age group has left at least 98,000 at “high risk of dying” unless they receive urgent treatment, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme and the UN children’s fund UNICEF said in a statement.

“The data we are releasing today confirms that acute malnutrition among children is hitting the highest levels we have seen since the war started,” said Lise Grande, the UN’s humanitarian coordinator for Yemen.

Yemen, which since 2014 has been gripped by a war between Huthis and a beleaguered government which is supported by a Saudi-led military coalition, has sunk into the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

More than 24 million people, nearly 80 percent of the population, depend on some form of aid for survival, and this year the situation has deteriorated sharply.

“Escalating conflict and economic decline, plus the overwhelming impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has pushed an already exhausted population to the brink,” the UN said, adding that aid programmes including emergency food assistance have been disrupted as funds dry up.

The UN warned in July that nearly one in nine people in the world are going hungry, with the coronavirus pandemic and climate-related shocks exacerbating already worsening trends this year.

In Yemen’s children’s wards, the evidence of the crisis is clear, with skeletal youngsters crying weakly as anxious families hover over them.

Many parents fear their youngsters are at risk of contracting coronavirus if they are hospitalized, and are becoming reluctant to send them to clinics for treatment.

“Malnutrition here and in Yemen has become catastrophic and there is a significant increase in the percentage of malnourished children,” said pediatrician Fahad Al-Qudsi, who works at Sanaa’s Joumhour hospital.

“There is a rising shortage of medicines, as well as proper nutrition for pregnant mothers,” he told AFP Tuesday.

Only \$1.43 billion of the \$3.2 billion needed to fund Yemen aid projects had been received by mid-October.

## China’s Economic Growth Seen Hitting 44-Year Low in 2020

BEIJING (Reuters) - China’s economy is expected to grow at its weakest pace in over four decades even as it steadily recovers from a coronavirus-induced dive earlier this year, but overall output could rebound sharply in 2021, a Reuters poll showed.

The world’s second-biggest economy is now expected to expand by 2.1% in 2020, according to the median of 37 analysts surveyed by Reuters, down slightly from the 2.2% growth projected in the last poll in July.

That would make China the only major economy to grow in 2020, albeit at the slowest annual pace since 1976, the final year of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution.

China’s economic recovery accelerated in the third quarter as consumers shook off their coronavirus caution, although the weaker-than-expected headline growth highlighted some persistent risks including from resurgent COVID-19 cases globally and ongoing tensions with the United States over a range of issues.

The poll forecast fourth-quarter GDP to rise 5.8% year-on-year, quickening from 4.9% in July-September.

Growth is projected to pick up to 8.4% in 2021, as the global economy is set to recover from the health crisis, according to the poll.

“With exports strong and domestic consumption and investment both improving, Q4 could be one of the best quarters for overall growth in a few years,” analysts at research firm Gavekal Dragonomics said in a note.

“Growth momentum should peak in the first half of 2021, though base effects will confuse the data readings.”

The economy has been recovering steadily from a steep 6.8% slump in the first quarter, when it was jolted



by the pandemic.

But China faces long-term obstacles to maintain its ascent, analysts say. Its top leaders are holding a key meeting to chart the country’s economic course for 2021-2025, amid rising tensions with the United States on trade, technology and other fronts, threatening a decoupling of the world’s two largest economies.

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, central bank chief Yi Gang said last week.

The government has rolled out a raft of measures including more fiscal spending, tax relief and cuts in lending rates and banks’ reserve requirements to revive growth and support employment.

While the central bank stepped up policy support after widespread travel restrictions choked economic activity, it has more recently held off on further easing.

Analysts expect China will keep its one-year loan prime rate (LPR) steady at 3.85% until the end of 2021. The central bank kept the LPR unchanged for the sixth straight month at its October fixing, after cutting it by a total of 46 bps since last August.

The poll also predicted no change to the benchmark deposit rate until the end of 2021. The PBOC has kept it untouched at 1.5% since October 2015.

China’s consumer price index (CPI) in 2020 will likely rise 2.7% from the previous year, slowing from a 2.9% rise in 2019, according to the poll.

CPI is expected to rise 2.1% in 2021, according to the poll.

## President Scolds Macron...

FROM PAGE 1

Freedom does not mean closing down the lessons of morality, the president said, adding, “On the contrary, freedom can be useful to society when all values are respected, not insulting a person to whom everyone is indebted.”

“Each and every European and all those who live in the East and the West are indebted to the Prophet of Islam.” Rouhani said “Westerners should understand that the great Prophet of Islam is loved by all Muslims and freedom seekers in the world. Insulting the Prophet means undermining morality and insulting all Muslims, all divine prophets and human values.”

“If the West, Europe and France really seek peace, brotherhood and security in the human society as they claim, they should stop interfering in the internal affairs of Muslims because all the problems and grudges held in their hearts are because of the oppression, persecution and inappropriate interference of the West in the affairs of Muslims throughout history.”

He said “a clear example of this is Yemen today, where you see the poor, innocent people of Yemen are being killed under various Western-made bombs and the planes that the Westerners gave to the invading countries.”

“The lesson of the Prophet is the lesson of respect for others, morality, and freedom... Obscenity, insulting, swearing and drawing caricatures are not part of morality, democracy and humanity.”

Expressing satisfaction with the very timely and decisive reaction of the Islamic world to the inappropriate words of some Western officials, the president said, “This very timely and decisive reaction shows that the Islamic world will always follow the great Prophet of Islam.”

## IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

“It was a constructive solution to a problem what we were having,” Grossi said. “And I would say since then we have kept the good level of cooperation in the sense that our inspectors are regularly present and visiting the sites.”

Iran showed the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia China — in 2015. The nuclear deal was also ratified in the form of a UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The U.S., however, unilaterally pulled out of the deal and re-imposed unilateral sanctions against Tehran over objections from the other signatories and the entire world community.

Tehran remained fully compliant with the JCPOA for an entire year, waiting for the co-signatories to fulfill their end of the bargain by offsetting the impacts of Washington’s bans on the Iranian economy.

As the European parties failed to do so, Tehran moved in May 2019 to suspend parts of its JCPOA commitments under Articles 26 and 36 of the deal covering Tehran’s legal rights.

Commenting on Tehran’s retaliatory measures, Grossi said that although Iran has been scaling back its commitments, it has continued to allow IAEA inspectors full access to its nuclear facilities, including Natanz.

In the latest IAEA quarterly report, the agency reported that Iran as of August 25 had stockpiled 2,105.4 kilograms of low-enriched uranium, well above the 202.8 kilograms allowed under the nuclear deal. It was also enriching uranium to a purity of 4.5 percent, beyond the JCPOA limit of 3.76 percent.

“We continue to see the same trend that we have seen so far” in the next IAEA report due in coming weeks, Grossi said.

He, however, stressed the IAEA’s current assessment is that Iran does not at the moment possess a “significant quantity” of uranium.

“At the moment, I’m not in contact with my inspectors, but by memory, I wouldn’t say so,” he said.

“All of these are projections and the IAEA is not into speculation” he added. “What may happen? What could happen? We are inspectors, we say the amounts that we see.”

The IAEA defines “significant quantity” as the approximate amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded.

“The idea of a ‘significant quantity’ is a technical parameter ... that applies in the context of the safeguards agreement to indicate amounts which could be theoretically used for the development of a nuclear weapon,” Grossi underlined.

“The fact that there could be such an amount would not indicate automatically that a nuclear weapon is being fabricated, so I think we have to be very careful when we use these terms.”

Additionally, Grossi said the IAEA inspectors have confirmed Iran has started building an underground centrifuge assembly plant after the July act of sabotage at the Natanz nuclear facility.

## Border...

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He went on to say that the IRGC may deploy more units to Iran’s northwestern border areas amid the fighting between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia to ensure security in the region.

Last week, Iran’s Foreign Ministry warned the warring parties in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that Tehran will not remain indifferent if the shells fired in the fighting continue to hit Iranian territories.

Tens of mortar shells fired by the warring sides in the latest round of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan have hit border rural areas of Iran in recent weeks.

## Tehran Serious...

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“This is an issue that we are all serious about it. The prosecutor and the judge themselves are serious about the fact that those who are guilty must be punished. There is no ambiguity about the punishment of the culprits of the incident,” he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he announced Iran’s readiness to speed up negotiations on the incident, saying, “Iran is ready for these talks to be concluded and summed up much faster.”

He also said that the next round of talks will take place in about 35 days in Kiev.

## Aguero Out for Up to a Month

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero will be out for perhaps as much as a month, coach Pep Guardiola told a press conference in Marseille on Monday.

City was without the Argentine on Tuesday against Marseille in the Champions League.

Aguero, who had just returned from injury, suffered a muscle problem in the Premier League draw at West Ham on Saturday.

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## Woods Takes Vuelta Stage Seven

MADRID (Reuters) - Canadian Michael Woods claimed a second career win on the Vuelta when he prevailed in the seventh stage, a 159.7-km hilly ride between Vitoria-Gasteiz and Villanueva de Valdegovia on Tuesday.

The EF-Education First rider attacked from a five-man leading group, 1.5km from the finish, to beat Spaniards Omar Fraile and Alejandro Valverde, who were second and third, respectively.

# Real Madrid Scramble Draw in Champions League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Holders Bayern Munich continued their perfect start to their Champions League title defense on Tuesday as Real Madrid had Casemiro's late goal to thank for scrambling a 2-2 draw away to Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Liverpool and Manchester City also made it six points out of a possible six in Europe this season, after Bayern needed a late Joshua Kimmich strike to claim a 2-1 win at Lokomotiv Moscow in Group A.

Leon Goretzka put the Germans ahead early on in front of a limited crowd in the Russian capital, but Anton Miranchuk tucked in an equaliser for Lokomotiv in the second half -- Miranchuk's twin brother Aleksei scored for Atalanta in the Champions League last week.

But Bayern were not to be denied a record 13th straight win in the competition as Kimmich controlled a Javi Martinez pass and volleyed home low from outside the box 11 minutes from time. "We had to work hard for the victory," Kimmich admitted to broadcaster DAZN.

In the same group Atletico Madrid came from behind to beat Salzburg 3-2, with Joao Felix grabbing their late winner.

The Portuguese starlet had hit the bar with a stunning overhead kick before Marcos Llorente put Atletico ahead in the Spanish capital. Dominik Szoboszlai levelled before the break and then a Felipe own goal put Salzburg ahead just after half-time.

However, Joao Felix equalised on 52 minutes and then won it five minutes from the end.

In Germany, Real were heading for another defeat in Group B, six days after losing 3-2 at home to Shakhtar Donetsk, as Marcus Thuram netted twice for Gladbach, either side of half-time.

But Casemiro set up Karim Benzema to reduce the deficit in the 87th minute and the Brazilian midfielder then scored himself deep in injury time to salvage a point for Zinedine Zidane's team. "If we continue to play like that, we'll do



great things and we'll win matches, that's for sure," said Zidane.

It is Shakhtar who lead the section, though, by two points from Inter Milan and Gladbach, after a 0-0 draw with the Italians in Kiev.

Pep Guardiola's City eased to a second straight win in Group C with Kevin De Bruyne setting up Ferran Torres for the early opener against Marseille after the hosts had carelessly ceded possession.

Ilkay Gundogan and Raheem Sterling added late goals to make it 3-0, leaving Marseille without a point.

Guardiola was confident City could build on their victory after an indifferent start to the Premier League season which has seen them come in for criticism. In the same group Porto beat Olympiakos 2-0 in Portugal with Fabio Vieira and Sergio Oliveira on target.

Meanwhile, Liverpool built on their 1-0 victory at Ajax last week by defeating Danish champions Midtjylland 2-0 in a low-key game behind closed doors at Anfield in Group D. Diogo Jota finished off a fine move to give Jurgen Klopp's team the lead early in the second half, before Mohamed Salah made sure of the points with a late penalty.

Klopp rested Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino from his starting line-up but his defensive worries deepened as Fabinho went off with an apparent hamstring injury.

Liverpool now have a double-header against Atalanta, who came from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 at home to Ajax. A Dusan Tadic penalty put the visitors ahead on the half-hour and Lassina Traore made it two, only for Duvan Zapata to save Atalanta with two goals in the space of seven second-half minutes.

## FIFA Chief Infantino Positive For Covid-19



PARIS (AFP) - FIFA president Gianni Infantino has contracted coronavirus, the world's governing body announced on Tuesday.

The 50-year-old has mild symptoms and will remain in isolation for a further 10 days.

"All people who came into contact with the FIFA President during the last few days have been informed accordingly and they are being requested to take the necessary steps," the body said.

"FIFA sincerely wishes President Infantino a speedy recovery," it added.

Infantino's last public appearances was at FIFA's Compliance Summit which ended on October 16 when all attendees were present via video.

Cases, hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19 in the body's base, Switzerland, have doubled from one week to the next throughout October.

The country's government is expected to decide Wednesday on new measures to control the spread of the virus.

The spread of the illness has cast doubt over Wednesday's potential meeting between Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi in the Champions League after the Juventus attacker tested positive for the illness earlier this month.

## English FA Launches New Diversity Code

LONDON (Dispatches) - England's governing Football Association (FA) unveiled a new diversity code on Tuesday in the hope of ensuring more ethnic minority candidates land senior jobs within the sport.

The Football Leadership Diversity Code will ask clubs to achieve targets in both coaching positions and significant management roles.

Although the new code is currently voluntary, 42 clubs from across the Premier League, English Football League, Women's Super League and Women's Championship have signed up to its provisions.

Former Chelsea and Celtic defender Paul Elliott, head of the FA's inclusion advisory board, said: "Many clubs are already doing good work in this area and we have been pleased to see football stand together this year to challenge the injustice we are seeing in society.

"However, positive and tangible action is required to drive change and take the next step." Under the code, clubs will be expected to make 15 percent of new executive positions available to people from minority backgrounds.

Gender diversity is also part of the code, with 30 percent of new appointments in senior leadership positions to be female candidates.

Meanwhile women's football clubs will be expected to have at least 50 percent female coaching staffs.

In men's professional football, 25 percent of new hires will be of black, Asian or mixed heritage.

If applicants meeting the job specifications apply, interview shortlists will need to have at least one male and one female black, Asian or of mixed-heritage candidate.

The code aims to increase equality of opportunity for non-white and female candidates, amid concerns they are unfairly discriminated against within the game at the moment. But it aims to do so through hiring targets rather than by the imposition of strict quotas.

Players in the Premier League and Football League have been taking a knee before matches in support of the Black Lives Matter movement since the sport resumed amid the coronavirus pandemic.

# Worst Time to Resign



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Under-pressure Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu suggested Monday that "now would be the worst time" to leave his post.

Bartomeu faces a vote of no confidence after turbulent times at the Camp Nou, not least the standoff with club legend Lionel Messi who was blocked from leaving this summer.

Speaking after a board meeting Bartomeu said: "There are lots of issues. I believe that it would be the worst time to leave Barca to an interim management board".

A caretaker board would assume control until new elections should Bartomeu stand down.

A petition against him passed the required 16,250 signatures last month. In the referendum which Bartomeu wants to be held on November 15/16, his opponents will need two thirds of the votes cast to remove him.

Presidential elections would likely be held in January or February, slightly ahead of the scheduled date in March. Bartomeu is not running.

His departure could affect the future of Messi, who explained in September how the way the club is run had been a key reason for his attempt to leave.

Victor Font is one of the leading candidates to succeed Bartomeu and has linked his campaign to the arrival of Messi's former teammate Xavi Hernandez as coach, although Font suggested this week Ronald Koeman could also continue with Xavi taking up a different role.

## Djokovic Wins Vienna Opener to Close on Sampras Record

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic defeated Filip Krajinovic in the first round in Vienna on Tuesday to edge closer to Pete Sampras's all-time record of ending the year as world number one on six occasions.

Djokovic beat compatriot Krajinovic 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 and needs to win his next match in Austria against Borna Coric to ensure he equals the achievement of his childhood idol.

The 33-year-old Serb has been the top-ranked player at the end of a season five times: in 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2018.

He shares that mark with career rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. Sampras achieved the feat six years in succession between 1993 and 1998.

Djokovic was playing in Vienna for the first time since he won the title there in 2007, and dropped serve twice in a tricky opening set.

Krajinovic served for the first set at 5-4 and then held a set point in the tie-break but couldn't take advantage. A couple of breaks in the second set allowed Djokovic to clinch victory -- his 38th in 40 matches this year.

"First set, I think he was the better player. He was serving for the first set and I was lucky. He missed a smash at 6/6 in the tie-break," said Djokovic.

"A few points here and there can change the momentum of the match. In the second set, I stepped it up, I played better and I am just pleased with the way I finished the match."

The 17-time Grand Slam title winner is appearing at his first tournament since his heavy loss to Nadal in the Roland Garros final two weeks ago. Djokovic is also attempting to beat Federer's all-time best of 310 weeks spent on top of the rankings.



## Ustyugov to Lose Second Olympic Gold Over Orchestrated Doping

PARIS (Dispatches) - Russian biathlete Evgeny Ustyugov has been suspended for doping for a second time, this time following the analysis of his biological passport, the International Biathlon Federation (IBU) announced Tuesday.

Ustyugov, who was stripped earlier this year of the relay gold medal he won at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, now stands to lose the mass start gold medal and relay bronze he won in Vancouver in 2010 after being handed a four-year ban by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

The IBU, which has annulled all his results between 2010 and 2014, said that CAS had imposed the ban because it concluded Ustyugov, who retired in 2014, had received help in trying to conceal his doping.

"Ustyugov had the benefit of protection and support to artificially augment his performance through doping and to avoid detection, which could not have been achieved other than with a significant degree of orchestration or common enterprise," said an IBU statement, without saying who it suspected.

Alexei Panitch, the biathlete's lawyer quoted by the TASS agency on Tuesday, said the decision was "simply ridiculous".

"The anti-doping chamber of CAS has no jurisdiction to examine this case because Evgeny has never accepted the existence of the competences of this institution," Panitch said, adding that the IBU statute of limitations for doping cases was only extended from eight years to 10 years in 2019.

"The arbitrator considers that the statute of limitations can be infinitely increased retroactively," the lawyer said. "This decision contains numerous violations of legal standards."

