

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday That Some 365 More Iranians Have Lost Their Lives Due to Contracting COVID-19 Over the Past 24 Hours as the Death Toll Increased to 34,478**

# IRAN NEWS

**President Hassan Rouhani Inaugurated Five Water and Electricity Projects Worth Over 33.4 Trillion Rials (About \$795.2m) in Two Provinces During the 30th Week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran Program**

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## Sanctions Have Failed To Break Iranians

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani says the United States' sanctions have failed to break down Iran's resistance, expressing certainty that the Iranian nation will successfully weather the current situation.

"The sanctions have failed to break us," only managing to bring the people under pressure and cause them hardship, Rouhani said on Thursday. The president was speaking during a ceremony held in Tehran to mark operationalization of the Ministry of Energy's developmental plans throughout the country.

The U.S. returned the sanctions in 2018 after leaving a historic and internationally-lauded nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers.

Departure from the deal -- that is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action -- and restoration of the bans both constituted illegal actions because they came in absolute disregard for the fact that the JCPOA has been ratified by the United Nations Security Council. The illegal measures were also marked by sheer unilateralism as they violated the international nature of the deal that has the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany as its other parties.

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## Some Regional Leaders Slammed Over Dividing Muslim World



TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker says a handful of Islamic heads of state have set the precedent of sowing discord in the Muslim world by turning their back on the principle of unity among Muslims.

Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf said currently some entities in the Muslims world are targeting Muslims' unity. He added the issue of Palestine remains the number-one issue of the Islamic world.

"Support for the cause of Palestine and holy Quds will bring Muslims together worldwide," he said in a recorded message broadcast as a webinar at the 34th International Conference on Islamic Unity held in Malaysia.

In part of the message, he lashed out at the countries which have normalized their ties with the Israeli regime. "The rulers of these countries should know that normalization of relations with the Zionist regime [of Israel] will not last long and will go down in history as a disgraceful blot in their name," he said.

Qalibaf said that certain Arab countries' normalization of relations with the Zionist regime will not last long and that its disgrace will stay with them in the history.

"The issue of Palestine is still the first priority of Islam; however, the rulers of a few Muslim countries have turned their backs toward Islam and have started to normalize relations with the 'fake and terrorist' Zionist regime," Qalibaf said.

Saying that the Islamic Unity Week is a symbol of solidarity and fraternity, he said that commitment to the Sunnah and the Holy Quran has always been the biggest reason of Islamic unity throughout history.

Any form of impertinence to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the Holy Quran is actually insult to all the prophets, and anyone who does that lacks the minimum understanding of religion, ethics, spirituality, and humanity, he said.

Qalibaf said the commonalities of the Islamic Umma are so many that there can be no excuses for dispute and disunity.

As Takfiris lied and created clash in the region, there are some certain people in both Shias and Sunnis that are focusing on disagreements to create a rift among Muslims, both of which should be condemned, he said, adding that if hands of disputes are off from the Islamic World, the more than 1.5 billion Muslims will have no problem with each other and will support one another as well.

Qalibaf said that Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei considers unity as an eternal strategy and not a short-term tactic.

He also urged the Muslim nations to support each other in the time of coronavirus epidemic.

The parliament speaker underlined that unity in the main and principal current of Islam does not contradict differences of opinion.

## Ditching Dollar To Help Iran to Nullify U.S. Economic Pressure

TEHRAN (PressTV) – A high-ranking military commander says Iran can overcome the economic pressures of the United States by distancing itself from the dollar system.

Brigadier Gholamreza Jalali, who chairs Iran's Passive Defense Organization, said that Iran should adopt measures to reduce its vulnerability to any exclusion from the US-led dollar system in future.

"The dollar is the largest strength of the U.S. and we should determine our position on the dollar," Jalali was quoted by an Iranian state TV channel.

He suggested that using local currencies for mutual trade with other countries should remain an option for Iran even under normal circumstances when it uses the dollar for international exchanges.

Jalali said Iran should also diversify its reserves of hard currencies to become less vulnerable to US bans.

The comments come amid speculations that Iran could find a respite from sweeping American sanctions after the upcoming presidential elections in the US where incumbent Donald Trump is believed to have a low chance of reelection.

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## ViewPoint China and the U.S., Encounter of Two Strategies

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

There is a Persian proverb whose English equivalent is "fighting like cat and dog" which has today become universal and it is mostly and properly applicable to the condition of the U.S. and China after the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

Jonathan E. Hillman in an article published at the website of the U.S. Center for Strategic and International Studies has said when China's President Xi Jinping was unveiling his foreign policy flagship said, "The goal behind the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is to make the economic ties closer, mutual cooperation deeper, and space of development broader. Instead, it has made developing countries' debt unsustainable, mutual suspicion deeper, and the space of development more polluted."

That Hillman through what glasses is looking at China's strategy and President Xi's remarks, of course is his own business, and perhaps it lays the ground for the spread of hostility for escaping forward of the White House in the current economic condition of the U.S. because Washington has tried to slow the BRI juggernaut by highlighting its dangers, but on environmental issues.

The United States has put forward its vision for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," which waxes poetic about improving the "environment" for business, investment, and procurement. Although this plan is progressing with lower pace to be materialized and operationalized, it has improved the process of trade encounter and lays the ground better for the convergence of the countries at the edge of this geography with the U.S. and mainly with the West.

But the Donald Trump administration's weakness on the environment is limiting cooperation with partners and allies to provide alternatives to Chinese projects.

In November 2019, the Trump administration announced the Blue Dot Network with Australia and Japan, an effort for certifying infrastructure projects that meet agreed quality standards. However, it is struggling to get other partners to join. European countries want the Blue Dot Network to be green. Partners and allies are waiting for the United States to catch up.

A year ago, the EU and Japan announced the "Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure" whose focus on sustainability wisely includes environmental issues but the U.S. plan has no appendix. Of course, not all countries have institutions that allow grassroots organizations (NGOs) to effectively push back and revise their decisions. Some governments are willing to sacrifice environmental protection for lower project costs. Perhaps the White House takes advantage of this option.

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## U.S. Sanctions Target 11 Entities, 5 People for Violating Iran Sanctions

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. Treasury and State departments on Thursday announced sanctions on 11 entities in Iran, China and Singapore for buying and selling Iranian petrochemicals.

In addition, the Justice Department announced two forfeiture complaints against Iran for the recent seizures of Iranian weapons bound for Yemen and refined petroleum bound for Venezuela.

"The two forfeiture complaints allege sophisticated schemes by the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] to secretly ship weapons to Yemen and fuel to Venezuela, countries that pose grave threats to the security and stability of their respective regions," John Demers, assistant attorney general for national security, said in a statement.

According to Demers, in November 2019 and February 2020, U.S. Navy ships interdicted flagless vessels carrying "large stocks of weapons, including 171 guided anti-tank missiles, eight surface-to-air missiles, and various other missile components." An investigation revealed the weapons to be manufactured in Iran and "consistent with known Iranian weapon systems."

On Aug. 20, 2020, the Justice Department filed a complaint in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, seeking to forfeit the seized weapons. The second forfeiture complaint was filed on July 20, 2020, by the department's National Security Division and the U.S. attorney's office for the District of Columbia. It sought the forfeiture of 1.1 million barrels of Iranian petroleum seized from four foreign-flagged vessels headed to Venezuela.

The seized petroleum has been subsequently sold by the United States.

"These actions demonstrate our commitment to working with all of our law enforcement partners to stem the flow of illicit weapons, oil, and money from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and other organizations that would do harm to the United States," U.S. Attorney Michael Sherwin said in a statement. "The U.S. attorney's office for the District of Columbia will use all available tools, including our jurisdiction to seize and forfeit assets located abroad, to counter terrorist funding and weapons proliferation." The United States also said Thursday that it had sold Iranian oil seized on its way to Venezuela for more than \$40 million.

Washington announced in August that it had confiscated 1.1 million barrels of petroleum from four tankers en route between the two countries, which are both under U.S. sanctions.

"We estimate that in excess of \$40 million will be recouped by the United States related to the sale of petroleum from those four vessels," Michael Sherwin, the acting U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, told reporters by telephone.

## Venezuela Entitled to Buy Arms From Any Country, Iran Included

CARACAS (Dispatches) - President Nicolas Maduro says his country reserves the right to buy weapons from any nation, including Iran and Russia.

Maduro made the remark during a press conference in the capital, Caracas, as he was responding to the allegation made by Colombian President Ivan Duque that Venezuela had bought missiles from Iran.

"Venezuela can buy bullets, weaponry, tanks, planes, and missiles from a country that wants to sell them, be it the United States, Colombia, Iran, Russia, China, India — any country", Maduro said. Stressing that Tehran and Caracas had had long-term relationships in many sectors, the Venezuelan president rejected Duque's allegations but welcomed the idea of arms purchases from Iran.

"Duque said that Venezuela had bought missiles from Iran. And I replied that this was not true, but it seemed to me a very good idea," Maduro said, adding that Venezuela would consider such purchases if need be. Relations between Venezuela and Iran go back around 70 years and have featured considerable alignment over the past two decades, in clear opposition to Washington's unilateralist and interventionist foreign policy.

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# Radicalism Only Breeds More Radicalism

TEHRAN (MNA) – Strongly condemning the terrorist attack in France's Nice, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that radicalism only breeds more radicalism.

In a tweet on Thursday, he wrote, "We strongly condemn today's terrorist attack in #Nice. This escalating vicious cycle—hate speech, provocations & violence—must be replaced by reason & sanity."

"We should recognize that radicalism only breeds more radicalism, and peace cannot be achieved with ugly provocations," he added. An attacker with a knife killed three people and wounded several others at a church in the French city of Nice on Thursday.

## Iran Proposal Can Open Path to Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi said that the initiative proposed by Iran will put an end to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by opening a path towards peace between Baku and Yerevan.**

Araqchi, a special envoy of President Hassan Rouhani, made the remarks while speaking to reporters upon arrival in Yerevan on Thursday night.

The Iranian envoy arrived in the Armenian capital after consultations with officials from Azerbaijan Republic and Russia over the border conflict between Baku and Yerevan.

Noting that his intensive negotiations in Baku and Moscow were useful, Araqchi said that he was also scheduled to negotiate with Armenian officials to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

He regretted that the death toll of the conflict is quickly rising and reiterated that Iran's proposal can prepare the ground for opening a peace path into the conflict.

Araqchi referred to nationals from both Azerbaijan and Armenia living in Iran in peace, saying that Iran has always been taking a balanced stance towards the case.

He stressed that Iran's capacities and good faith can provide a path to sustainable peace in the region.

Earlier Thursday in Moscow, Araqchi and his Russian counterpart Sergei Ryabkov met and held talks in Moscow on Thursday.

During the meeting, the diplomats discussed a range of issues regarding the



developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as Iran's initiative to improve the situation.

Earlier Thursday, Araqchi held talks with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister for Central Asia and Caucasus Andrei Rudenko.

Araqchi had said at Moscow Airport that Iran has put forward that key countries of the region, like Russia, should play a role in resolving the crisis.

Iran's Regional Initiative includes a ceasefire, discontinuation of attacks on residential areas and civilians, as well as the return of the displaced to their homes, he had said.

The Iranian diplomat visited the Azerbaijan Republic on Wednesday and conferred on the issue in five important and constructive meetings with Azerbaijan's president, political assistant to the president, deputy prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and deputy foreign minister.

## IRIB Calls for Suing Persian Broadcasting Abroad

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's state-run radio and television agency, Abdul-Ali Aliaskari, called for the prosecution of Persian-speaking channels abroad, targeting what he described "130 channels in Persian and 140 channels with ethnic Iranian accents" without pointing out which channels he is referring to. The claimed number of channels has raised eyebrows among observers.

According to official Iranian news agencies, Aliaskari said that Tehran has so far filed no lawsuits against what he claimed to be "anti-Iranian content published on foreign-based satellite channels".

However, the Islamic Republic Broadcasting Organization's top official stopped short of providing details about filing lawsuits against Persian-speaking broadcasters outside Iran. He also did not mention where the cases are supposed to be filed.

Aliaskari is expressing his dissatisfaction with Persian broadcasting entities outside Iran at a time when Iran's state-run Seda va Sima (Voice and Vision) national radio and television organization has dozens of television and radio channels that broadcast in different languages.

In recent years, Iranian officials have complained to Ofcom, a British media regulator, about several Persian-language networks based in the United Kingdom that are allegedly guilty of "disrupting national security" and "subversive and separatist actions."

## Leader Raps French President's Insult to Prophet of Islam



TEHRAN (IFP) – Supreme Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has denounced the president of France's "stupid" support for disrespect for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as an insult to the reason of the French voters who elected Macron.

In a post released on the Twitter account of Khamenei, on Wednesday, the Leader asked the young people of France two questions after French President Emmanuel Macron voiced support for satirical outlets publishing caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

"In His Name; Young French people! Ask your President why he supports insulting God's Messenger in the name of freedom of expression. Does freedom of expression mean insulting, especially a sacred personage? Isn't this stupid act an insult to the reason of the people who elected him?" Ayatollah Khamenei asked.

"The next question to ask is: why is it a crime to raise doubts about the Holocaust? Why should anyone who writes about such doubts be imprisoned while insulting the Prophet (PBUH) is allowed?" the Leader added.

Earlier this month, Macron pledged to fight "Islamist separatism", which he said was threatening to take control in some Muslim communities around France.

He also described Islam as a religion "in crisis" worldwide and said the government would present a bill in December to strengthen a 1905 law that officially separated church and state in France.

His comments, in addition to his backing of satirical outlets publishing caricatures of the Prophet of Islam, have drawn widespread condemnation from Muslims across the world.

## President Congratulates Erdogan on Turkey's National Day

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani has offered congratulations to his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the National Day of the Republic of Turkey.

In a Thursday message, President Rouhani stressed the importance of protecting bilateral relations between the two neighboring countries in the current international situation and the spread of coronavirus in the world.

"Health and trade cooperation are of a higher priority," Rouhani said.

"Considering the cultural and historical ties between the two Iranian and Turkish nations, I hope that the friendly and brotherly relations between the two countries will be further strengthened in the present era and that the existing capacities for cooperation in various political, economic, scientific and health fields will be identified and dealt with by the two countries," he added.

He also wished health and success for Erdogan, and prosperity and blessing for the people of the Republic of Turkey, as the anniversary of the country's independence day this year coincides with the twelfth of Rabi al-Awal lunar month, the blessed birthday anniversary of the Holy Prophet of Islam Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH).

## Islamic Ummah Unity Not a Tactic, But Policy

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary-General of Proximity of Islamic Thought Schools stated that Islamic Ummah Unity is not a tactic but a policy and it is our duty to expand the values and principles of Islam.

Delivering the inaugural speech of the Islamic Unity Conference on Thursday, Hamid Shahriari stressed the Islamic elites' cooperation to prevent war, insult, extremism, and enemies' plots.

"Islam's enemies and intelligence services leading by the world's arrogant power (US) are trying to incite division through waging war and terror, like their efforts to normalize some Arab states' ties with the Israeli regime," Hamid Shahriari said.

The 34th International Conference on Islamic Unity titled 'Islamic Cooperation in the Face of Calamities and Disasters' kicked off on October 29, 2020, in Tehran and will be closed on Monday evening, November 2, with the leader's speech of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

"161 foreign participants from 35 countries attended the conference, from whom 92 influential figures will deliver their speech at the conference," according to Shahriari.

The coronavirus outbreak restricted any trip to Iran so the conference will be held via videoconferencing. In the coming sessions of the conference, the Islamic world's moral and ethical challenges, the Islamic world's tactical capacities, and the media's role to inform public opinions will be discussed.

## U.S. Wants to Break Up Iraq Through Soft War, Sedition

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iraq's Harakat al-Nujaba resistance group, which is part of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi, has warned of a "malicious" American plot to disintegrate the country through a soft war combined with political and religious sedition.

Nujaba Secretary General Sheikh Akram al-Ka'abi made the remarks in a meeting with Mohsen Rezaei, the secretary of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council, in Tehran.

Ka'abi said the United States assassinated top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and the PMU's second-in-command Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a bid to change the political-security equation in Iraq, but the scheme was foiled by the nation's vigilance. Washington then adopted "a malicious policy" and lined up media mercenaries, mostly residing abroad, to wage a soft war against Iraq, he added.

The U.S. embassy in Baghdad also sought to create political and religious sedition, with American companies, directly supported by US President Donald Trump, operating like mafia gangs to promote corruption in Iraq, according to Ka'abi.

Additionally, he said, the U.S. gave green light to Turkey to occupy areas in northern Iraq, inciting the Kurds to stand up against the central government in Baghdad while pitting the Sunnis against their Shia brothers.

The deadline set by the Iraqi resistance groups for political parties to end the US occupation is nearing, the Nujaba head warned, describing as unacceptable Washington's disregard for Iraqis' demand for its expulsion. On January 5, Iraqi lawmakers unanimously passed a bill mandating the expulsion of all foreign troops from the country.

It came two days after the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani upon

his arrival in Baghdad International Airport at the invitation of the Iraqi government. "The United States will eventually withdraw from Iraq, and the resistance will strike more powerfully. The number and capabilities of resistance groups in Iraq have increased, and they have risen up against the American occupiers today, just as they defeated Daesh," Ka'abi added.

Ka'abi further touched on the upcoming US presidential elections, saying, "There is no difference between Trump and [his Democratic rival Joe] Biden, and the United States is an absolute evil in any case. The policy of the White House does not change with the change of people." Rezaei, for his part, said the Americans are leaving the region, but they want to bring the Arabs and Israel together and create a defensive barrier from within the region against the resistance front.

He also called the religious authority, Hashd al-Sha'abi and people the three pillars of the Iraqi resistance, predicting that the US will not succeed in repeating the projects in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in Iraq, referring to the two Arab countries' normalization deals with Israel. "The policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to support an independent, strong and integrated Iraq," Rezaei stressed.

On Baghdad's request, Iran provided military advisory support to Iraq in the course of its counter-terrorism operation and helped save its neighbor from disintegration.

"The coming years are the years of the resistance's front development and the battle of independence in the region... We will not allow Israel to replace the United States (in the region); the resistance front must take that position," the Iranian official said.



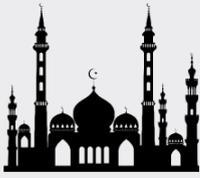
## Major Network Involved in Bank Fraud Busted

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's Intelligence Ministry arrested members of a major network involved in forging bank documents.

In a statement on Thursday, the Intelligence Ministry said 15 members of the network were arrested in the northwestern province of East Azarbaijan over fraudulent activities and organized banking scam.

Members of the network were involved in forging documents and buying and selling dishonored and bounced checks.

According to the statement, close cooperation between the intelligence forces and Judiciary officials of the province resulted in the detection of the network and arrest of its members.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:47
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:28
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:26

77. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who were told to hold back their hands (from fight) but establish regular prayers and spend in regular charity? When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them, behold! a section of them feared men as - or even more than - they should have feared Allah. They said: "Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordered us to fight? Wouldst Thou not grant us respite to our (natural) term, near (enough)?" Say: "Short is the enjoyment of this world: the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: Never will ye be dealt with unjustly in the very least!"  
Surah 4. Women (77)

## Coronavirus Restricted Iran-Sweden Economic Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Iran-Sweden Joint Chamber of Commerce held a meeting on Wednesday in presence of Sweden Ambassador to Tehran and some economic activists.**

In the meeting, Head of Iran-Sweden Joint Chamber of Commerce Abdolreza Rezaei welcomed the participants and Sweden Ambassador as well as Sweden Counselor and pointed to the problems regarding issuing visa for the members of the chamber.

Mr. Rezaei noted the necessity for developing trade cooperation between Iran and Sweden, adding that easing business visa issuance can be a good boost to commercial activities between both states.

He underlined the consular section of the Sweden Embassy should create appropriate condition and better facilities for the members of the chamber in order to accelerate visa issuance and support of the economic activists.

Then Sweden Ambassador to Tehran Mattias Lentz, for his part, pointed to the development of economic cooperation between both states, adding that Sweden Embassy has always done its best to provide facilities to improve commercial level between Iran and Sweden and to develop trade but the current problem is because of the outbreak of Coronavirus which has closed down the visa section of the embassy since March.

He pointed to the ban for arrival of foreigners to the EU zone states, adding that



except the residents of EU states and EU state passport-holders, no foreigner is allowed to enter EU zone and this restriction has several times been repeated and by the end of 2020 it has been extended.

Lentz added that when there is no possibility to travel to EU, there will be no visa, too. So, for this reason commercial sections of European Embassies are closed by the end of 2020 and consular section of Sweden Embassy is also closed, he added.

He expressed hope that as soon as the problems regarding the coronavirus are solved to ease traveling to EU, the embassy will do its best to issue visas but unfortunately it will be impossible by 2021.

He expressed hope that as soon as the problems end, economic cooperation between both states would return to better condition.

Sweden was one of Iran's top trading partners in Europe, which had reached a good level of trade relations after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and world powers, however, with the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions, the restrictions led to a significant decline in the two sides' trades.

## Iran Education Ministry, UNICEF Sign MoU

TEHRAN (IP) - Ministry of Education announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the years 2020-2021.



Iran's Vice-minister of education for International Affairs Gholamreza Karimi in a meeting with UNICEF Representative in Tehran Mandeep O'Brien highlighted that Iran's Ministry of Education is ready to cooperate with UNICEF in order to improve the quality of education in accordance with the approaches of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Karimi presented a report on the Ministry of Education's activities in combating COVID-19 and the reopening of schools and asked UNICEF to provide the ministry with the best global experiences in the field of education.

UNICEF representative in Iran appreciated Iran's progress in the field of education, especially the covering of 99% of student and elimination of inequality in education for girls and boys, and announced UNICEF's readiness to cooperate with Iran in the field of intercultural education for refugees and to provide successful global experiences on education.

## Confectionary Exports Almost Zeroed



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Head of Confectioners Union of town of Rey says exports of confectionary have almost zeroed due to the current conditions and 70 percent of manpower in this business have lost their jobs.

Speaking to ILNA, Mr. Mohammad Bibala said that confectionaries are unable to provide the raw material for their business directly and they have to get it via the middlemen. He pointed to the spiraling rise of price of the raw material like oil which has created a headache for the business.

He added that the middlemen should be blamed for the current rise in the price of types of confectionery. He noted that in the current condition and with the rise of the cost of product, continuation of activities by the confectionaries has no economic justification and profit.

He reiterated that almost 50 percent of confectionaries in downtown of Tehran have closed down their shops and 70 percent active manpower in this business have lost their jobs, noting that due to the rise in the prices, the demand for types of confectionary has declined in the country by 50 percent.

Bibala went on to say that before the outbreak of the coronavirus, the condition for export of confectionary was good and different types of confectionaries were exported to Iraq, Afghanistan and some part of exports were also being exported to Canada and UK but today the exports have almost been zeroed.

He added that the current chaos in the business has nothing to do with the U.S. sanctions and the middlemen should be blamed as their behaviors has inflicted damage to the confectionary industry of the country.

He assured consumers of confectionaries and pastries, reiterating that due to the heat in the process of baking, the virus is killed and people can enjoy eating confectionary safely.

## Pakistan Hoping to Extend Electricity Imports From Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Iran-Pakistan energy cooperation is one of the key factors in development of bilateral relations as the government of Pakistan in a new step has approved to continue imports of electricity it needs from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

About 18 years ago in 2002, Iran and Pakistan signed the first agreement on the import of 34 MW of electricity, later which was increased to 74 MW, and now this figure has reached 104 MW.

In 2018, it was announced that a 220 kV transmission line is under construction in the area of Chabahar, which, if completed, could increase electricity exports to Pakistan and the port of Gwadar in Balochistan to 300 MW.

At present, 104 MW of electricity is exported from Iran to Pakistan through a 132 kV transmission line that runs from Jakigur, Sistan-Balouchestan, Iran, to the Mand region of Pakistan.

According to the report, the eastern neighbor's urgent need for electricity and easy access to Iran's energy capacity led the Pakistani government to continue importing electricity from Iran at 104 MW and extend the contract with Tavanir Company (Iran Power Generation and Transmission).

The Ministry of Finance of Pakistan in statement said that a high-level meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee chaired by Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance, was held during which the



electricity imports from Iran was examined.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Government of Pakistan has issued a permit to extend the contract for the import of 104 MW of electricity from Iran, while the Islamic Republic in recent years has announced its readiness to increase electricity exports to Pakistan to 3,000 MW.

Pakistan's Ministry of Law and Justice is scheduled to complete the legal process of renewal of the contract for the import of electricity from Iran, after which the agreement will be officially signed with Tavanir Iran and its deadline will be extended until December 31, 2021.

During a visit to Pakistan in May 2016, Tavanir Iran Company's then Deputy Planning Director said in an interview with IRNA in Islamabad: "According to the plans and agreements made, Iran's electricity exports to Pakistan will increase to 200 MW."

Pakistan is suffering from an escalating energy shortage crisis, with the Islamic Republic of Iran repeatedly announcing its readiness to supply Pakistan's most important source of energy, including gas, electricity, oil and petroleum products, to resolve the country's energy crisis.

Although the current government of Pakistan has made every effort to reduce the energy shortage crisis in the country and has launched several power plant projects in recent years.

## Iran, Afghanistan Connected by Rail

KABUL (IRNA) - Iran connected eastern town of Khaf with Herat, western Afghanistan, through railway as part of Iran's efforts to create calm and peace in Afghanistan.

The Khaf-Herat railway was made with the help of Iran. The train transported passengers from Iran to Afghanistan for the first time through railroads, which was welcomed by the people of both countries.

Jilani Farhad, spokesman of Herat governor, told IRNA on Thursday that the train transported an Iranian delegation to Herat on Wednesday.

He added that the railroad will soon be able to transport passengers and goods, which bring about sustainable development for both countries.

An Afghan trader, Abdulali Sarvari, told IRNA that the railroad will connect Afghanistan, which is landlocked, not only to Iran but also Central Asia countries and other parts of the world through Chabahar Port.

He added that the railroad can reduce the costs and shorten the time of transporting goods.

The railway is expected to transport two million tons of goods and 200,000 passengers per year.

## MAPNA Industrial Group to Cooperate With Iraq

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Managing Director of Iran's MAPNA Industrial Group Abbas Aliabadi voiced Iran's readiness to make investments in the Iraqi projects.

Aliabadi said that during his current visit to Iraq, he has held talks with the Iraqi side in line with cooperation in various projects.

He noted that MAPNA has previously cooperated with Iraq in a number of successful projects; namely, the Heidarieh Power Plant, Rumaila Combined Cycle Power Plant, and Al-Sadr Gas Power Plants.

MAPNA Group was established under the title "Iran Power Plant Projects Management Company" in August 1993, the official website of the enterprise reported.

Through the development of indigenous know-how and acquisition of leading-edge technology, MAPNA Group designs and manufactures a wide range of advanced industrial machinery.

## Tehran Announces Its Priorities in Academic Cooperation With Beijing

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's deputy science minister announced the country's cooperation priorities in the higher education sector with China.

According to the Deputy Minister of Science for International Affairs Hossein Salar Amoli, Iran intends to expand its cooperation with China in the human workforce, artificial intelligence, knowledge-based companies, and innovative business sectors.

"China is a target country for the development of our cooperation," he said.

"Currently 1,600 Iranian students, mostly studying for Ph.D., are in China. There are also 300 Chinese students studying in Iran," he informed. Amoli expressed content that the recently-founded China Study Center in Iran is continuing its activities in Farsi and Chinese. Iran's Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran established the country's first China Study Center in April 2019, in cooperation with China's Shanghai International Studies University.

The center is meant to serve as a platform for cultural communication and academic dialogue.

## Iran, Italy Hold Fourth Conference on Cultural Dialogue

TEHRAN (PressTV) - On Wednesday, top Iranian and Italian academics and experts attended the fourth conference on Cultural Dialogue between Italy and Iran. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event took place virtually.

It was organized by the Allameh Tabataba'i University in collaboration with the Sapienza University of Rome and the Cultural Institute of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Italy. The conference focused on literary and archeological interactions between Iran and Italy. It is widely accepted that ties with Italy have been one of the most durable in the history of Iran's foreign relations, a durability that coincides with East-West relations in the world. The history of bilateral relations between the two countries dates back over two thousand years, which places one country as the cultural and civilizational representative of the East and the other one as the intellectual and civilizational representative of the West.

During the conference, Italian and Iranian academics and experts touched on a number of cultural issues. Some drew a parallel between the influence of outstanding literary personalities such as the Italian humanist and writer Francesco Petrarca and renowned Persian poet Hafez on their respective regions of origin while others focused on the well-established Italian-Iranian collaboration in the fields of cultural heritage and archaeology. Italy and Iran have for a long time been engaged in an archeological-touristic project in Kermanshah Province.

## Iran-Ukraine Business Forum Set for Nov. 20

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A virtual forum of Iranian and Ukrainian private sectors is scheduled to be held on Nov. 10 with the participation of members of Tehran and Kharkiv chambers of commerce.

About 24 Ukrainian companies active in the fields of food and agricultural machinery, oil and gas, environment, medical equipment, mining, airplane parts, construction materials, chemicals and apparel will participate in the event to discuss ways of expanding commercial ties with their Iranian counterparts, the news portal of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture reported.

## UK Labour Party Suspends Corbyn

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's opposition Labour Party suspended its former leader Jeremy Corbyn on Thursday over comments he made after a report found that under his leadership the party was responsible for unlawful harassment and discrimination. Corbyn has vowed to contest a "political" move to suspend him.

Corbyn's successor, Keir Starmer, apologised and said Labour was facing a "day of shame" after the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found serious failings in how the party had dealt with allegations of anti-Semitism within its ranks.



## French PM Details New Restrictions

PARIS (Dispatches) - French people will only be allowed to leave their homes for food shopping, medical appointments, pressing family reasons and to commute to work, Prime Minister Jean Castex announced on Thursday ahead of a new Covid-19 lockdown starting at midnight.

France goes into its second nationwide lockdown this year from Friday, amid a surge in Covid-19 cases that has threatened to overwhelm French hospitals.

Detailing the new restrictions, Castex said people will be allowed outside for just one hour of exercise per day and no further than one kilometre from their homes.



## Three Dead as Woman Beheaded In Attack in French Church



NICE (Reuters) - A knife-wielding attacker shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest) beheaded a woman and killed two other people in a church in the French city of Nice on Thursday.

A defiant President Emmanuel Macron, declaring that France had been subject to an Islamist terrorist attack, said he would deploy thousands more soldiers to protect important French sites, such as places of worship and schools.

Speaking from the scene, he said France had been attacked "over our values, for our taste for freedom, for the ability on our soil to have freedom of belief".

"And I say it with lots of clarity again today: we will not give any ground."

A police source told Reuters the assailant was believed by law enforcement to be a 21-year-old Tunisian national who had recently entered France from Italy. Tunisia's anti-terrorism court prosecutor began a forensic investigation into "the suspicion that a Tunisian committed a terrorist operation abroad", Mohsen Dali, spokesman for the specialised counter-militancy court, said in Tunis. In Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, state television reported that a Saudi man had been arrested in the Red Sea city of Jeddah after attacking and injuring a guard at the French consulate. The French Embassy said he was in hospital after a knife assault though his life was not in danger. Within hours of the Nice attack, French police killed a man who had threatened passersby with a handgun in Montfavet, near the southern city of Avignon.

France's Le Figaro newspaper quoted a prosecution source as saying the man was undergoing psychiatric treatment, and that they did not believe there was a terrorism motive. Nice's mayor, Christian Estrosi, said the attack in his city had happened at Notre Dame church and was similar to the beheading earlier this month near Paris of teacher Samuel Paty, who had used cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad in a civics class.

Thursday's attacks, on the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), came at a time of growing Muslim anger at France's defence of the right to publish the cartoons, and protesters have denounced France in street rallies in several Muslim-majority countries.

After the Nice attack, Prime Minister Jean Castex raised France's security alert to its highest level. Estrosi said the Nice attacker had repeatedly shouted "Allahu Akbar" even being detained by police.

At around 9 a.m. (0800 GMT), a man armed with a knife entered the church and slit the throat of the sexton, beheaded an elderly woman, and badly wounded a third woman, according to a police source. The sexton and the elderly woman died on the spot, the third woman managed to make it out of the church into a nearby cafe, where she died, Estrosi told reporters. None of the victims has so far been named.

"The suspected knife attacker was shot by police while being detained. He is on his way to hospital, he is alive," he said.

## Mahathir Says Muslims Have Right to Kill French

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) - Malaysia's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad said Thursday that Muslims had a right "to kill millions of French people", shortly after a knife-wielding man launched a deadly attack in Nice.

Three people were killed at a church in the southern French city, with the attacker slitting the throat of at least one of them, in what authorities were treating as the latest jihadist attack to rock the country.

Shortly afterwards, Mahathir -- who was prime minister of Muslim-majority Malaysia until his government collapsed in February -- launched an extraordinary outburst on Twitter.

Referring to the beheading of a French teacher who showed pupils cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, Mahathir said he did not approve of that attack but that freedom of expression does not include "insulting other people".

"Irrespective of the religion professed, angry people kill," said the outspoken 95-year-old, who has in the past drawn controversy for remarks attacking Jews and the LGBT community.



## Putin Calls for Turkish Involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh Talks

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said Turkey should be among countries involved in talks to end fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, as Azerbaijan and Armenia again accused each other on Thursday of shelling civilians in and around the mountain enclave.

With more peace talks scheduled for Geneva this week, the European Union said an escalation in the month-old conflict was "unacceptable" and called for a lasting settlement after the collapse of three ceasefires.

The fighting has been the worst in the South Caucasus since about 30,000 people were killed in a 1991-94 war over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but is populated and controlled by ethnic Armenians.

Azeri presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev said on Twitter that a civilian was killed when an Armenian missile hit his home in Tap, a village north of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia denied this.

Azerbaijan's defence ministry said earlier that Armenia had fired at its forces and civilian settlements along the front line, shelling the nearby town of Terter.

The human rights ombudsman in Nagorno-Karabakh said more than a dozen shells had fallen on Stepanakert, the enclave's largest city, a day after a maternity hospital there was struck. Two civilians were wounded. Armenia's foreign ministry said Stepanakert, and the towns of Shushi and Martakert, had been "under continuous attack".

The OSCE Minsk Group, which has been leading peace talks, is due to meet the Armenian and Azeri foreign ministers in Geneva on Friday, although neither has confirmed its minister will travel. Three diplomatic sources told Reuters, on condition of anonymity, that preliminary talks between the group's co-chairs France, Russia and the United States were taking place. Putin said on Thursday

that "many countries, including Turkey and a host of European states" should work together to find consensus. Turkey, an ally of Azerbaijan, has demanded a greater say in talks.

"The French in the course of their history has killed millions of people. Many were Muslims. Muslims have a right to be angry and to kill millions of French people for the massacres of the past."

Mahathir, who served as Malaysian premier twice for a total of 24 years, said that French President Emmanuel Macron was "not showing that he is civilised", adding he was "very primitive".

"The French should teach their people to respect other people's feelings. Since you have blamed all Muslims and the Muslims' religion for what was done by one angry person, the Muslims have a right to punish the French."

"The boycott cannot compensate the wrongs committed by the French all these years."

He made no direct reference to the Nice attack.

The beheading of the teacher, Samuel Paty, prompted Macron to promise a crackdown on Islamic extremism.

But the move has inflamed tensions, with protests against France erupting in several Muslim countries, with some urging a boycott of French goods.

## U.S. Plans Sales of Top-End fighter Jets to UAE

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States has agreed to sell top-of-the-line F-35 fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates following its recognition of Israel, potentially shifting the regional power balance, a lawmaker said Thursday.

President Donald Trump's administration informally gave a required notification to Congress on the sale, which could "significantly change the military balance in the Persian Gulf and affect Israel's military edge," said Representative Eliot Engel, a Democrat who leads the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The United Arab Emirates -- which has been increasingly assertive in the region, including in Yemen and Libya -- sought the advanced warplanes as it spoke to the United States ahead of its landmark recognition of Israel last month.

The normalization -- followed by similar moves by Bahrain and Sudan -- was a diplomatic coup for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but the Jewish state has also long opposed US sales of top-end warplanes to any Arab states including Egypt and Jordan, which already have peace treaties with Israel.

But Netanyahu indicated last week that Israel would not object to the UAE deal after Defense Minister Benny Gantz, his uneasy coalition partner, received assurances during a trip to the Pentagon that Israel would maintain its military edge.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper was visiting Israel on Thursday for talks with Gantz about bolstering the U.S. ally's military capacities.

A State Department official declined to confirm the UAE deal, saying that it does not comment on notifications to Congress.

The notification comes five days before US elections in which Trump is trailing in published polls to Democrat Joe Biden.

Congress, where the Democrats control the House of Representatives and are seen as having a chance of winning the Senate, has the power to block the UAE sale.

"The export of this aircraft requires very careful consideration and Congress must analyze all the ramifications. Rushing these sales is not in anyone's interest," Engel said.



## Venezuelan Refinery Damaged By "Terrorist Attack"

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro said that a large oil refinery suffered a "terrorist attack" as his government struggles to provide domestic fuel to the crisis-stricken nation.

Maduro also said two foreigners were detained prior to the alleged attack on Tuesday that toppled a large tower at the Amuay Refinery on Venezuela's northern Caribbean coast. He did not name the two people detained or give their nationality.

Maduro said the attack was carried out with a "large and powerful" weapon without providing more details. He said it was under investigation.

This follows the arrest a month earlier of a United States citizen, Matthew John Heath, in the same part of the country. Heath was later labelled a spy by Maduro. He is charged with terrorism, weapons trafficking and conspiracy.

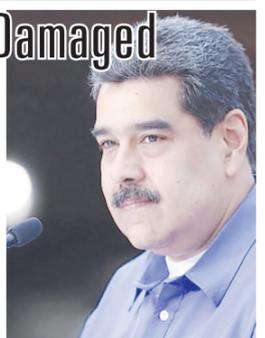
"This is a plot against our lives, against our livelihood and against our public services," Maduro said in a nationwide address, blaming his foe the US and political opponents in Venezuela that wish to remove him from power.

Venezuela was once an oil-rich nation, but its broken refineries fail to produce enough fuel for drivers to fill up their cars. Venezuela, in recent months, has begun importing petrol from Iran, another nation heavily sanctioned by the US.

Heath was arrested along with National Guard Sergeant Major Darwin Urdaneta, Marcos Garces and Daeven Rodriguez, the driver of the vehicle. The three Venezuelans were charged with treason, terrorism, arms trafficking and conspiracy.

Maduro's Attorney General Tarek William Saab has said investigators seized from the vehicle a grenade launcher, a submachine gun, suspected plastic explosive material and bundles of dollars.

Wednesday's announcement of the attack on the Amuay refinery added to the problems of the beleaguered Venezuelan oil industry, already burdened by falling production, financial problems and lack of investment.



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## Samsung Electronics Q3 Net Profit Leaps

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Samsung Electronics' net profit jumped by almost half in the third quarter, it reported Thursday, as the South Korean giant's mobile and chip businesses were boosted by US sanctions against Chinese rival Huawei.

The world's biggest memory chip maker said profits in July-September climbed 48.8 percent year-on-year to 9.36 trillion won (\$8.3 billion), beating expectations according to Bloomberg News.

But the company warned that profits in the current quarter are projected to decline, with chip demand weakening and competition intensifying in the smartphone and consumer electronics market.



## U.S. Economy Grows at Record 33% Rate in Q3

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The U.S. economy grew at a sizzling 33.1% annual rate in the July-September quarter – by far the largest quarterly gain on record – rebounding from an epic plunge in the spring, when the eruption of the coronavirus closed businesses and threw tens of millions out of work.

Yet the recovery from the deepest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s remains far from complete. The Commerce Department's estimate Thursday of third-quarter growth regained only about two-thirds of the output that was lost early this year when the economy essentially froze as safety orders forced restaurants, bars and many retailers to shut down.

The third-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) gain was powered by a record 40.7% increase in consumer spending. Americans began shopping again after the spring shutdown, which had sent consumer spending plunging by a record 31.4%. Consumer spending accounts for roughly two-thirds of economic activity. The economy is now weakening again and facing renewed threats. Confirmed

viral cases are surging. Hiring has sagged. Government stimulus has run out. With no further federal aid in sight this year, Goldman Sachs has slashed its growth forecast for the current fourth quarter to a 3% annual rate from 6%.

Thursday's estimate of growth is the last major economic report before Election Day, after a campaign that President Donald Trump has sought to build around his economic record before the pandemic hit. Trump has drawn generally solid public support for his handling of the economy.

Business investment was up a strong 20.3% last quarter, reflecting a 70.1% surge in investment in equipment. Residential investment surged at 59.3%, reflecting a solid rebound being enjoyed by home builders as demand for homes rises.

Before the big rise in the July-September quarter, GDP had fallen 5% in the first quarter when the country's record-long expansion of nearly 11 years ended and then dropped a record 31.4% in the second quarter when much of the country shut down. Though the unemployment rate, at 7.9%, is down significantly from 14.7% at the start of the pandemic recession, it is still historically high. And hiring has slowed for three straight months. The economy is still roughly 10.7 million jobs short of recovering all the 22 million jobs that were lost to the pandemic.

The government's estimate of the third-quarter jump in GDP – the total output of goods and services in the United States – was the biggest such increase on records dating to 1947, surpassing a 16.7% surge in 1950 during the Truman administration. In the January-March quarter this year, GDP had contracted at a 5% annual rate before a record-setting 31.4% annual tumble in the spring.

Mark Zandi, the chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said he thinks GDP will regain pre-pandemic levels by spring of next year, with GDP expanding 4.2% for 2021. But he warned that the job market might not fully recover until perhaps 2023. "Many of the jobs in retailing, leisure and airlines have been permanently lost," he said, "and those folks will have to find different work and that will take time."

The government reports the quarterly GDP changes as annual rates. That means the change for any given quarter is calculated as if it had occurred for an entire year. Using another way to view the figures, GDP peaked in the fourth quarter of 2019 and then fell 10.1% over the next two quarters. Even with the third quarter rebound, the economy remains 3.4% below the peak of output set in the fourth quarter of 2019.

## Asian Buyers Boost Physical Oil as Pandemic Punishes Futures

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Robust demand from China and India has bolstered physical crude oil prices from around the world, traders said, in contrast to the futures market that is wrestling with over-supply and demand uncertainty wrought by COVID-19.

Global benchmark Brent futures LCOc1 are trading around \$40 a barrel, having recovered from more than two-decade lows in April, but still under pressure from concerns a second wave of the pandemic will reduce fuel use.

On the more buoyant physical markets, China's state and independent refiners are the keenest buyers as they fill early-2021 import quotas and as port congestion that has clogged traffic for much of the year has eased.

Their activity has helped to lift differentials in the last two weeks for Russian Urals, Norway's Johan Sverdrup, Caspian Azeri BTC and CPC Blend, as well as West African and Brazilian grades.

"China is again a hope for oil suppliers. Unlike Europe that is currently in the middle of the pandemic crisis, it seems to be the quickest to restore its economy," a source in a global trading firm told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Russian Urals achieved the highest premiums to dated Brent in three months and oil arbitrage shipments to China may increase soon, two traders said, especially for cargoes loading at the end of November and in December.

BP plans to ship the first supertanker of Urals to China since June.



## Gold Demand Fell to Its Lowest in 11 Years in Q3

LONDON (Reuters) - Global demand for gold in the third quarter of 2020 was the lowest in 11 years, as a rush by investors to stockpile bullion slowed and central banks sold metal for the first time in a decade, the World Gold Council (WGC) said on Thursday.

The coronavirus pandemic collapsed jewellery sales, usually the biggest source of gold demand, but this has been offset by investors looking for an asset they see as a safe store of value.

The jewellery market recovered slightly in the third quarter, including in China and India, the largest, but not enough to compensate for the slower pace of stockpiling by investors in exchange traded funds (ETFs), the WGC said.

Global gold demand was 892.3 tons over the July-September quarter, down 19% from the third quarter of 2019 and the lowest since Q3 2009, during the financial crisis, according to the WGC.

Demand in the first nine months of the year, at 2,972.1 tons, was 10% lower than in 2019 and the least since 2009.

Investor demand pushed gold prices XAU= from around \$1,500 an ounce in January to a record high of \$2,072.50 in August, putting off price-sensitive jewellery buyers.

But reduced purchases since then by ETFs, which store gold for investors, have seen prices fall to around \$1,900.

While ETFs slowed their growth, purchases of gold bars and coins increased in the third quarter as rising demand in China, India and Turkey added to high sales in Europe and the United States.

Jewellery demand in China and India is likely to rise in the final quarter and central banks should again be buyers, said the WGC's Krishan Gopaul.

But ongoing economic uncertainty, low interest rates and government stimulus mean investors will remain the driving force of the market, he said.

"The environment we're in is unlikely to change significantly any time soon," he said.

## Chinese Banks Seen Swapping Dollars for Yuan in Forwards to Curb Gains

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China's major state-owned banks have been swapping U.S. dollars for yuan this week, traders said on Thursday, suggesting monetary authorities are trying to rein in the sharply appreciating currency.

Those operations in the onshore currency swap market have caused the value of the yuan to fall in the forwards market, tamping expectations that it will appreciate further and simultaneously making it more expensive for investors to borrow yuan.

Two other traders told Reuters they saw big state banks buying dollars in the onshore spot effectively prevent the market during late night trading sessions to yuan from strengthening too fast.

The yuan has appreciated 7% against the dollar since the depths it hit in May, as China's rapid recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and high-yielding markets draw foreign investor inflows.

Traders took the state banks' action as an official sign that the authorities might not want the Chinese currency to strengthen too much in a short period of time, hurting exports.

"The swap market actions, along with recent policy moves, were all meant to slow down the pace of yuan appreciation," said one of the traders.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) has taken other measures recently to ease the pace of appreciation. It lowered the reserve requirement ratio for financial institutions when conducting some foreign exchange forwards trading to zero earlier this month.

On Tuesday, the PBOC's currency trading system suspended a counter-cyclical factor that local banks had been using to massage the value of the yuan's daily mid-point, effectively removing another tool routinely used to prevent depreciation.

The swaps by the big state banks drove up the one-year premium on dollars CNY1Y=CFXS to as high as 1,700 points this week, implying a 2.5% decline over the next 12 months in the tightly managed yuan.

State banks usually act on behalf of the central bank in the country's foreign exchange market, but they could also trade on their own behalf.

This is not the first time that big state banks are using swaps to affect yuan expectations. They were active in yuan forwards multiple times in the previous two years, using swaps to curb dollar supply as authorities sought to slow the currency's depreciation.

Their swaps this week caused the onshore yuan to be priced weaker in forwards than its offshore counterpart CNHFDOR= for the first time since February 2018, according to Refinitiv data.

## Global Economic Rebound at Risk From Rising Coronavirus Cases

BENGALURU (Reuters) - There is a high risk the resurgence in coronavirus cases halts the global economic recovery by year-end, according to Reuters polls of around 500 economists, a majority of whom expected the rebound next year to be weaker than previously thought.

Governments and central banks around the world have pledged trillions of dollars of stimulus, helping most economies out of deep recessions. But a second wave of infections in places that eased lockdowns is now underway, leading to more restrictions.

That was a top risk repeatedly highlighted by Reuters surveys of economists, FX analysts, bond and equity strategists, as well as global fund managers since the start of the pandemic.

The Oct. 6-27 Reuters polls of economists across Asia, Europe and the Americas covering 46 economies showed scant sign of activity recovering to pre-COVID-19 levels anytime soon.

Nearly three-quarters of 150 analysts who responded to an additional question said the resurgence in coronavirus cases posed a high risk of halting the current global economic recovery as early as this year.

"Even before the renewed lockdowns there was already a broad acceptance that many countries will see a permanently lower level of GDP than they would have done in the absence of the pandemic," noted Janet Henry, global chief economist at HSBC.

"Higher unemployment and higher debt appear inevitable but there are also implications for equality, long-term growth potential and financial stability."

Median growth forecasts for over 65% of those 46 economies were downgraded or left unchanged for 2020 and nearly 60% of those for 2021. The range of forecasts also reveals

mostly lower lows and lower highs.

In the meantime, there is no sign of the pandemic letting up anytime soon. The United States, Russia, France and many other countries have registered record numbers of cases in recent days, and European governments introduced new curbs.

The global economy was expected to grow 5.3% next year after shrinking 4.0% this year, a touch higher than the International Monetary Fund's projection of 5.2% for 2021.

But nearly 80% of economists, or 119 of 150, said a weaker global recovery than previously thought was the greater risk in 2021, rather than a vigorous rebound or a renewed downturn.

## Some 68% of World's Population Will Be City Dwellers by 2050



TEHRAN (UNIC) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on World Cities Day, 31 October 2020, said Urban areas are already home to 55 per cent of the world's population, and that figure is expected to grow to 68 per cent by 2050.

### The full text of his message reads:

On this World Cities Day, we recognize the extraordinary contribution made by grassroots communities in our cities and towns.

The value of communities has been brought into sharp focus during the response to COVID-19.

Cities have borne the brunt of the pandemic.

Urban areas are already home to 55 per cent of the world's population, and that figure is expected to grow to 68 per cent by 2050.

Our rapidly urbanizing world must respond effectively to this pandemic and prepare for future infectious disease outbreaks.

With the pandemic often overwhelming public health and support services, communities have organized to keep their neighborhoods safe and functioning, engaging with local and national governments to support the official response.

We have seen neighbors shopping and cooking for the sick and elderly, residents cheering health workers, and local volunteer and faith-based groups supporting the vulnerable.

Communities are innovative, resilient and proactive. They play a vital role in building economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cities.

Let us maintain this recognition of their value.

As we rebuild from the pandemic and engage in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, we have an opportunity to reset how we live and interact.

Local action is the key.

When urban communities are engaged in policy and decision making, and empowered with financial resources, the results are more inclusive and durable.

Let's put our communities at the heart of the cities of the future.

## MPs Urge Harsh Diplomatic Reaction to French Insult to Islam

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to show serious reaction to the French president's backing for the insults to the Prophet of Islam, a lawmaker said.

The spokesperson for the Iranian Parliament's National Security

and Foreign Policy Commission said members of the commission have sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Abolfazl Amoei said the lawmakers have asked the Foreign Ministry to show serious reaction to the recent comments from the president of France, who has supported an offensive move by a satirical magazine to publish defamatory cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).



## China, Russia Seek to Curb Use of U.S. Dollar in Eurasian Trade Bloc Deals

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - By creating its own monetary and financial system, an economic and trade bloc backed by Russia is looking to reduce its reliance on the US dollar and euro for internal trading and in deals with China.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), a counterpart to the European Union, has five member states – Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia – and ensures the free flow of goods and economic cooperation among them, but it does not have a single currency like the 19 of the 27 EU states do.

The union has also cultivated a close relationship with China, which has been expanding its influence in Eurasia via the Belt and Road Initiative.

Sergei Glazyev, the union's minister of integration and macroeconomics and a former adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, said on Monday in an online forum about extending EAEU-China collaboration that the union is increasing the use of national currencies to minimize risks.

"Russia and China have created their own payment systems and a system of electronic information exchange between banks, but economic activity participants are still very inactive in using these infrastructure elements and still work in foreign currencies," Glazyev said.

"I believe that we should radically reverse the situation and create our own Eurasian monetary and financial system," he said. "It would insure us against risks and would be reliable, transparent, convenient and efficient, and would not be burdensome for economic activity participants."

At the moment, about half of the payments made within the union are settled in national currencies, while the share when trading with China was even lower – at 15 per cent – according to the EAEU.

Glazyev also stressed the urgent need to stabilise the exchange rates of the bloc's national currencies, to establish Eurasian exchanges and pricing mechanisms, and to offer incentives to settling in national currencies.

The proposal comes as both Russia and China have been seeking to cut their dependence on the US dollar for some time.

The United States has used its control over the global financial system to impose sanctions on Russia since 2014, and this year Washington sanctioned a series of Chinese Communist Party officials and companies for their roles in eroding Hong Kong's autonomy, in helping Beijing build up islands in the disputed South China Sea, and for alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang province.



China and Russia turn on gas pipeline 'Power of Siberia' as they forge stronger energy ties

In a deteriorating Sino-US relationship, Beijing is looking to speed up its internationalisation of the yuan in global payments to reduce the impact of conflicts with the U.S.

In the first quarter of this year, only 46 per cent of bilateral trade between Russia and China was settled in the U.S. dollar – the first time the share had fallen below 50 per cent – according to data from Russia's central bank and Federal Customs Service. This stood in stark contrast to 2015, when almost 90 per cent of their bilateral trade was settled in the U.S. dollar.

Meanwhile, the euro's share in those bilateral deals during the first quarter accounted for a record high of 30 per cent, while the yuan's share reached 17 per cent, and the rouble accounted for 7 per cent.

Beyond trade, Moscow and Beijing have also sought to strengthen their financial collaboration to speed up the de-dollarisation process.

Last year, Moscow said it planned to launch its first yuan-denominated bond, hoping it would boost interest by Chinese investors in Russian assets and help create benchmarks for the setting up of hedging options for roubles and the yuan, sidestepping use of the U.S. dollar.

## Turkey's Economic Confidence Index Posts 6th Straight Month of Recovery in October



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economic confidence index climbed 4.8% month-on-month in October to 92.8 points, official data showed on Wednesday, recording its sixth straight month of recovery from lows caused by measures to combat the coronavirus.

The index was up from 88.5 in September, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said. Economic activity declined sharply in March and April, when the index hit a low of 51.3 points, as Ankara implemented measures to slow the virus spread. Measures were gradually eased in May and mostly lifted in June.

Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak tweeted Wednesday that despite the people who try to paint a picture of Turkey as "bankrupt," confidence in the country's economy is rising. The index, which points to an optimistic outlook when above 100 and pessimistic when below, last stood above 100 points in March 2018.

"This increase in the economic confidence index stemmed from the increases in real sector (manufacturing industry), services, retail trade and construction confidence indices," TurkStat noted.

Among subindices, the services and real sector indices posted the highest month-on-month increases in October with 6.4% and 3.8%, respectively.

Retail trade indices rose by 1.7% and the construction index was up by 0.6% during the month, while only the consumer confidence index saw a small drop of 0.1%.

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

The economic confidence index was 93.6 in the same month last year and had been around the 90-100 level until March 2020 when the effects of the pandemic began being felt worldwide. The October figure marks the highest level since March, said Işmet Demirkol of Bahçeşehir University.

The credit expansion that emerged as the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) continued to cut the interest rates until August, accumulated inventory on the manufacturing side of the industry turning into production and their transfer to the export side had an effect on the rise in the index, Demirkol told Anadolu Agency (AA).

"We need to look at export orders in the next period. We could see a continuation of the rises, albeit moderate, in the economic confidence index especially in case there be no contraction in the eurozone," he added.

## Boeing Deepens Job Cuts as Twin Crises Extend Losses

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Boeing Co BA.N unveiled a fourth straight quarterly loss and deeper job cuts on Wednesday as the coronavirus pandemic and the lengthy grounding of its 737 MAX continued to hammer revenue.

The U.S. planemaker also said it was sticking with reduced production rates announced in July, and signaled it was ready to cut 787 production again if needed with 50 undelivered jets sitting outside its plants. Shares in Boeing fell 4.6%, lagging weaker U.S. markets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sharply reduced air travel, pushing some airlines to bankruptcy or forcing them to seek government aid and delay taking jets.

As a result, Boeing has slashed production and shed thousands of jobs while also working to emerge from a 19-month-old worldwide 737 MAX ban triggered by two crashes.

Chief Executive Dave Calhoun told employees Boeing now expects to eliminate some 30,000 jobs to reach a workforce around 130,000 by end-2021. That is 11,000 more than previously discussed, with 7,000 extra posts disappearing through increased voluntary or involuntary layoffs and the rest through attrition.

Calhoun predicted airline traffic would end the year at around 30% to 35% of 2019 levels, with a return to pre-pandemic levels in about three years.

He also raised the prospect that stricter certification rules following the 737 MAX grounding would further delay its new 400-seat 777X.

"As with any development program ... there are inherent risks that can affect schedule," Calhoun told analysts.

"While we continue to drive towards entry into service in 2022, this timing will ultimately be influenced by



certification requirements defined by the regulators."

Boeing said it still expects to win 737 MAX approval in time to resume deliveries in the fourth quarter.

It reaffirmed plans to hit a build rate of 31 MAX jets a month in early 2022. Airbus is asking suppliers to be ready for potential production of 47 similar A320 jets a month by 2021.

Before it can produce more, Boeing must clear a significant slice of the 450 MAX jets it has built during the grounding.

Chief Financial Officer Greg Smith said he expects about half of that stockpile will be delivered by the end of next year, with the majority of remaining jets handed over in 2022.

Calhoun acknowledged that "without a doubt we lost some share" of the crucial single-aisle market where the MAX sits to European rival Airbus AIR.PA.

He pledged to defend the Boeing's position against Airbus and insisted it was "not out of the (jet) development business" - though the company also stressed that repaying debts accumulated in recent months would be its priority.

"I am not sitting around sucking my thumb that we are disadvantaged with respect to our product offering," Calhoun told analysts.

Reuters reported in April that Boeing had been studying a possible 757 replacement to counter the popular Airbus A321neo, though plans for this and a potential revamped 767 cargo jet had been placed on a back-burner during the crisis.

Fresh reports of such a study pushed up Boeing shares earlier this week. Senior industry sources said Boeing would not launch a new model any time soon, however.

## Too Few Companies Disclose Financial Hit From Climate Change

LONDON (Reuters) - Too few companies specify their prospective financial hit from climate change under a voluntary global disclosure code that needs wider backing from asset managers and others to be fully effective, a global regulatory body said on Thursday.

Climate change can reduce the value of assets or subject companies to costs from flooding and other weather-related events, and a body dubbed the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) in 2017 published a voluntary set of disclosures to help inform investors.

The TCFD, set up by the Financial Stability Board (FSB) which coordinates financial rules for G20 countries, said more than 1,500 organisations worldwide had expressed support for TCFD-aligned disclosures to help cut carbon emissions, up 85% since last year's update.

But the level of disclosure remains inadequate, it said.

"Companies' disclosure of the potential financial impact of climate change on their businesses and strategies remains low," the TCFD said.

Just one in 15 companies reviewed disclosed information on the resilience of their strategy, far lower than other categories of disclosure such as governance and risk management, it added.

More backing was needed given the urgent demand for consistency and comparability in reporting, with support from asset managers and owners of assets likely to be insufficient to give investors the right information, it said.

## China and the U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

In encounter with expansionist policies and creating hurdles for Chinese projects by the U.S. and its allies in the region, China continues resolutely developing its investments in the region and even recently Bank of China has announced that



by the end of June it has earmarked over \$140b in the Belt and Road Initiative and major part of the money has been spent as the money has been financed in over 600 important mega projects in the region.

According to the very statement of Bank of China, in recent years and constantly with reliance on China's long-term strategy for the next three-decades, some important investments have been made in the economies of the economic road of "Silk Road and the 21st Maritime Silk Road".

Regardless of construction and developing Gwadar Port in Pakistan which is according to most people it will become the second Dubai, some institutions have been set up in 24 countries, mainly in those participating countries in the region. To finance these institutions since five years ago, Bank of China, which is the fourth biggest bank of China in terms of investment and properties, has issued and sold five times bonds for this project in seven different national forex and sold them whose total value in October stood at \$14.6b.

China's determination in developing its ties with the countries in the region will undoubtedly put Washington in the bottleneck of losing the strategic presence, and the only option left for the White House will be to put aside its stubbornness in imposing sanctions and to have serious oil investment with cooperation of Iran in the Persian Gulf which can boost the West's rather measurable share in encountering China's strategy. Of course, contradictory approaches in the West, even among the American political parties, hamper making a key and sustainable decision.

## Sanctions Have Failed...

FROM PAGE 1

Tehran says the future U.S. president will first have to compensate Iran for the damage the U.S. has done to the nation with its departure from the 2015 nuclear deal if he wants to rejoin the multilateral accord.

Nevertheless, the coercive economic measures have failed to force Iran to abandon its developmental projects, Rouhani said. "We kept up the projects, and I am certain that our dear people will put these problems behind," he added. The chief executive, meanwhile, advised strongly towards national solidarity and against efforts at demoralizing the people amid the situation.

"Today, the biggest act of treachery against the people of Iran [who are caught] in the middle of the battleground against America, Zionism, and the reactionary regional regimes would be raising talk that could dispirit or frustrate the people or destroy their morale," the president warned. All have to stand by each other's side and lend one another assistance these days, Rouhani concluded.

## Ditching Dollar...

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian authorities have repeatedly said that they are not betting on the outcome of the November 3 votes in the U.S. while insisting that the future of the country's economy would not depend on who occupies the White House.

Jalali said that imposing economic sanctions and launching cyber-attacks are the sole U.S. option to pressure Iran, adding that Washington is no longer capable of threatening Iran militarily as it could trigger a harsh response from the Iranians. "Through continued resistance, America's economic war against Iran would lose its purpose and vulnerabilities will reduce," he said.

## Venezuela...

FROM PAGE 1

Five Iranian vessels carried out fuel delivery missions to Venezuela between May and June, with another flotilla also delivering the equipment that the Latin American country needed to shore up its gasoline industry, which has been hit hard by American sanctions.

Venezuela experienced political turmoil when opposition figure Juan Guido unilaterally declared himself "interim president" in January last year, followed by a U.S.-backed botched coup against the elected government. There was also an attempt at assassinating President Maduro in a drone strike in 2018. Guaido's self-proclamation and his coup attempt received backing from the US administration.

Washington has imposed several rounds of crippling sanctions against the oil-rich South American country aimed at ousting Maduro and replacing him with Guaido.

The sanctions, which include the illegal confiscation of Venezuelan assets abroad and an economic blockade, have caused enormous suffering for millions of people in the country.

## Pakistan Host Zimbabwe as Cricket Rehabilitation Gathers Pace

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan take a further step out of the wilderness as international cricket hosts when they welcomed Zimbabwe for their first ODI in a year on Friday, with England and South Africa both lining up tours.

The three one-day internationals, when Babar Azam was to debut as ODI captain, are also Pakistan's first in the new World Cup Super League, the qualification process for the 50-over World Cup in 2023.

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## Cricket Australia Braced for \$85m Revenue Dip Due to Pandemic

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - Cricket Australia (CA) said on Thursday it posted a A\$45.9 million (25 million pounds) deficit in the last financial year and could see a A\$120 million (\$85.55 million) dip its projected revenue for the 2021 period due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CA, which saved around A\$40 million during the pandemic through a range of cost-cutting measures including the axing of 40 jobs, said the deficit for the year ending June 30 was in line with budgetary expectations.

# Rashford Stars For Man Utd as Barcelona Beat Juventus

LONDON (Dispatches) - Marcus Rashford was again the star for Manchester United in the Champions League with a hat-trick in a 5-0 thumping of RB Leipzig on Wednesday as Barcelona put their off-field troubles to one side to win 2-0 away to a Juventus side deprived of Cristiano Ronaldo.

Rashford's late goal earned United a 2-1 victory away to Paris Saint-Germain last week and at Old Trafford the England striker came on as a second-half substitute and scored three times from the 74th minute on in what was a fine win against last season's semi-finalists.

Paul Pogba released Mason Greenwood to open the scoring in the first half, before the youngster made way for Rashford after the break and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side ran away with the game to make it two wins from two in Group H.

Anthony Martial also netted from the penalty spot as United ruthlessly exposed the side who currently top the German Bundesliga and went clear at the top of the section.

Meanwhile PSG got their campaign up and running by beating Istanbul Basaksehir 2-0 in Turkey, although they lost Neymar to an adductor injury in the first half.

Both PSG's goals were scored in the second half by Moise Kean, the on-loan Everton striker heading in Kylian Mbappe's corner in the 64th minute and then turning to fire in the second late on. In Italy Barcelona bounced back from their weekend defeat in the Clasico against Real Madrid and shut out the boardroom crisis which led to president Josep Maria Bartomeu resigning on Tuesday.

## German League Football Ordered Back Behind Closed Doors

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Chancellor Angela Merkel's government on Wednesday ordered Bundesliga football and professional sport in Germany back behind closed doors as part of a string of measures to curb record-high numbers of the coronavirus.

The latest measures will come into effect from November 2 until the end of the month after Germany announced a record high Wednesday of 14,964 new cases in the last 24 hours.

Since the 2020/21 Bundesliga season started in mid-September, Germany's football clubs had been allowed to host small numbers of fans for home games, providing each local health authority granted permission.

One noticeable exception is European champions Bayern Munich, who have had to play all their home games at the Allianz Arena behind closed doors since the pandemic first hit Europe in mid-March on advice of the local health authority.

But from Monday all professional sport in Germany will go back behind closed doors after Merkel and the regional leaders of Germany's 16 states agreed to the new measures.

Borussia Dortmund's Champions League home match against Zenit Saint Petersburg on Wednesday must also take place without fans on site. The health authority in North Rhine-Westphalia rejected an application to allow 300 fans into the 81,000-capacity stadium for the European game.

"That makes me sad," admitted Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke after around 300 Dortmund fans were allowed to watch last Saturday's 3-0 home league win over Schalke.

## Hamilton Looks to Steer Mercedes to 7th World Title

IMOLA (AFP) - Fresh from his record 192nd career win last Sunday, Lewis Hamilton will be the centre of attention again this weekend when his Mercedes team aim to seal a record seventh constructors title.

In addition to leading the 'silver arrows' bid for unprecedented glory at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, Hamilton will face inquiries about his future following Monday's unanimous agreement, by all 10 teams, to support the introduction of a salary cap from 2023.



name on the scoresheet late on, netting a stoppage-time penalty to seal Barca's second victory in as many Group G outings.

Juve had Turkish defender Merih Demirel sent off late on as their underwhelming start to the season under novice coach Andrea Pirlo continued. Their next game is away at Ferencvaros, who came from behind to draw 2-2 with 10-man Dynamo Kiev in Budapest.

Viktor Tsygankov's penalty and a Carlos de Pena effort had the Ukrainians in control but they then had captain Sergiy Sydorchuk sent off and the hosts -- with a sizeable crowd behind them -- took full advantage.

Tokmac Nguen pulled one back and Ivorian Franck Boli scrambled in a stoppage-time leveller for the Hungarians. In Group E Chelsea were comprehensive 4-0 winners away to Krasnodar in Russia, with Jorginho missing a penalty before Callum Hudson-Odoi opened the scoring.

Timo Werner smashed in a spot-kick on 76 minutes to double Chelsea's lead, with Hakim Ziyech and Christian Pulisic adding late goals. For Ziyech it was a first Chelsea goal on his first start since signing from Ajax for £37 million (\$48 million).

Sevilla beat Rennes 1-0 in the same section with Luuk de Jong scoring the only goal.

Borussia Dortmund claimed their first points in Group F with Jadon Sancho's 78th-minute penalty and Erling Braut Haaland's stoppage-time strike securing a 2-0 win over Zenit Saint-Petersburg. The Germans are a point behind Lazio and Club Brugge, who drew 1-1 in Belgium with a Hans Vanaken penalty securing a draw for the hosts.

Lazio had travelled without a host of players due to coronavirus, including star striker Ciro Immobile, but had gone in front early on through Joaquin Correa.



LONDON (Reuters) - Former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has said the main reason clubs on the continent are keen to establish a new European Super League is because they cannot compete financially with their rivals in the Premier League.

Manchester United and Liverpool are reported to be in talks over the creation of a new \$6 billion (4.6 billion pounds) breakaway tournament that would feature up to 18 clubs from Europe's top five leagues.

The founding members are aiming to get the tournament underway in 2022 and Josep Maria Bartomeu, who resigned as Barcelona president on Tuesday, has said the La Liga club had already accepted a proposal to join.

But Wenger, now FIFA's head of global development, said the plans were aimed at eroding the Premier League's "superiority".

"The other leagues tried to destroy the advantage the Premier League has. For them, the best way to tame that is to create a European League," he told the Guardian.

"That means to destroy the Premier League basically."

A Super League would see the top sides in Europe face off more regularly but Wenger said the real beneficiaries would be the club owners.



# Maradona Turns 60 in Self-Isolation

Buenos Aires (Dispatches) - Notorious for his wild lifestyle, Argentina great Diego Maradona turned 60 on Friday in far more sober circumstances sheltered in self-isolation to protect him from the coronavirus pandemic.

Having suffered two heart attacks in the last 20 years and contracted hepatitis, Maradona's precaution after a bodyguard started displaying coronavirus symptoms earlier this week is understandable.

A life of excesses with cocaine and alcohol have taken their toll on the mercurial talent's health. "It was impossible that this lad would turn out well," said former international and

Boca Juniors team-mate Hugo Perotti said earlier this year. Perotti was referring to Maradona's early fame that set him on a path to brilliance, glory but also excess and almost tragedy.

Born in a poor Buenos Aires neighborhood on October 30, 1960, Diego Armando Maradona quickly marked himself out as special talent.

Since then this charismatic and contradictory man has fallen many times only to rise again from the abyss, and always in his unique and inimitable way.

Defiant and ingenious, macho, a loyal friend and spiteful enemy, Maradona has always been magnetic. "At 18 he couldn't walk around in Africa. A plane was stuck because the runaway was full of people," said Perotti.

## Djokovic Virtually Assures Year-End Top Ranking for Sixth Time

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic virtually ensured equalling Pete Sampras's record of ending the year as world number one for the sixth time on Wednesday when he reached the Vienna ATP quarter-finals.

Djokovic defeated Croatia's Borna Coric 7-6 (13/11), 6-3 and will secure the year-end top spot as long as Rafael Nadal does not take an unlikely wild card into the Sofia event next month.

If the 33-year-old Serb wins the Vienna title on Sunday, he will make sure of the landmark regardless of whether or not Nadal plays in Bulgaria.

Djokovic, who now has 39 wins and just two defeats in 2020, 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 Nadal.

Sampras achieved the feat six years in succession between 1993 and 1998.

"Sampras was my childhood idol growing up and it will be amazing to tie his record by being the year-end world number one six times," Djokovic said on Sunday.

Djokovic also has another target -- beating Federer's all-time best of 310 weeks spent on top of the rankings.

He is currently enjoying his 292nd week in total as world number one.

Should he stay in pole position, he will pass Federer in early March 2021.

Djokovic, a 17-time Grand Slam title winner, is playing his first tournament since his straight sets loss to Nadal in the Roland Garros final over two weeks ago.

He is seeking a fifth title of the year and next faces either Poland's Hubert Hurkacz or Italian lucky loser Lorenzo Sonego.



## UEFA Reiterates Strong Opposition to European Super League

NYON (Dispatches) - UEFA has repeated its "strong opposition" to a European Super League after the controversial project received a surprise shot in the arm from Josep Maria Bartomeu as he stood down as Barcelona president.

In a resignation bombshell on Tuesday night Bartomeu declared that one of his last acts as the Catalan team's chief had been to accept a proposal for Barcelona to play in "a future European Super League" which "would guarantee the financial stability of the club".

The notion of a splinter league for the continent's high rollers first surfaced through a series of leaked emails and documents in November 2018 claiming that a host of Europe's biggest clubs were working on plans for a 16-team Super League to kick off as early as 2021. The idea was knocked on the head by European football boss Aleksander Ceferin the following February.

He vowed that while he and Andrea Agnelli, president of the European Club Association (ECA), were in office "there will be no Super League. This is not a promise. It is a fact".

Responding to Bartomeu's Tuesday night admission for the first time of the project's existence UEFA told AFP that Ceferin "has clearly indicated on several occasions UEFA is strongly opposed to a Super League".

Any Super League involving only Europe's wealthiest clubs would be in direct conflict with the UEFA-run Champions League and Europa League, competitions open to any team based on their domestic league performances. "The principles of solidarity, promotion, relegation and of open leagues are non-negotiable," UEFA said.

"This is what is behind European football and makes the Champions League the best sporting competition in the world."

