

The Head of Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA) Said the Country's Planned Tax Income Has Been Completely Collected In the First Seven Months of the Current Iranian Calendar Year

Brigadier General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, Chief of Aerospace Force of the IRGC, Stated That the U.S. Has Always Sought to Divide Iraq, Making Rift Among The Iraqi People and Officials

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COVID-19 kills 486 More people in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on Monday that some 486 more Iranians have died from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours.

The health ministry spokeswoman said that with the 486 new deaths, the country's total COVID-19 death toll mounted to 41,979.

Some 13,053 new cases of infection with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, some 3,133 of whom have been hospitalized, Sadat Lari added.

She said that a total of 775,121 Iranians have been confirmed infected with the COVID-19, some 564,699 of whom have recovered or been discharged from the hospitals.

Some 5,677 other COVID-19 patients are in critical condition and are being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman further said.

Sadat Lari added that 5,545,444 coronavirus tests have so far been carried out in Iran. **See Page 7**

No Part of Iran Safe For Terrorists

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - Judiciary Chief Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahi Raisi said that the destruction of terrorist positions in the west of the country showed there will be no safe place in Iran for terrorists.

"The arrest of terrorists by the intelligence forces and the destruction of terrorist positions in the west of the country by the IRGC show that the crimes of terrorists will not be ignored and there will be no safe place in the country for them," said Raisi said during a meeting of Supreme Judicial Council on Monday.

Stating that the security-judicial authority must be improved day by day, he added, "The enemy seeks to dominate the minds of the people through threats and distortions."

It must know that people don't trust them anyway, he noted.

"The message of the Iranian nation is the message of active resistance, the production of power in the security and economic spheres and the display of authority in all dimensions," he said, adding, "The Iranian nation will disappoint the enemy with its efforts and resistance."

In a statement on Saturday, IRGC announced that its ground forces have launched an attack on the positions of anti-revolutionary groups across the northwestern Iranian borders which have inflicted heavy damage to the enemies.

Raisi then said self-reliance and trust in domestic capabilities are keys to handle internal challenges amid sanctions. "All challenges can be solved by the help of Iranian youth, elites and brave managers," he said.

While highlighting that looking forward to the developments in other countries to decide for domestic affairs is "a strategic mistake", the Judiciary chief said, "Powerful Iran comes under the cooperation and unification of the government, Parliament and the Judiciary."

Raisi made the comments amid the speculations linking Iran's policies to the U.S.'s recent presidential election. Referring to the events following the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, he said that the U.S. scandal has been exposed.

Raisi added that what is being seen in the United States today is their scandal after a long time of creating a shell of democracy.

"In the recent U.S. presidential election, the world witnessed that the image they have shown to the communities so far is not real and that they are facing many problems," added Raisi.

He stated that the Americans are trying to dominate the thoughts and ideas of different societies in the world through threats and distortions, but an aware and insightful society like Iran is well aware that the American threats are not effective in any way.

Referring to the Iranian people's resistance against the enemies, Iran's judiciary chief said that the Iranian nation's message is resistance and the production of power in the security and economic fields. **See Page 7**

No Change in Iran Borders as Karabakh Peace Deal Unfolds

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has reiterated that no change will take place in the country's borders as the Azerbaijan Republic and Armenia are implementing a ceasefire agreement.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the ceasefire deal between the two countries will not lead to any changes in Iranian frontiers.

"The geographical borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the regional borders have not changed, and will not change in the future. Neither Iran's borders, nor regional borders will change," he said in his weekly press conference.

"Our understanding of what has been published, an understanding which we have clearly told everyone about, is that it is just a simple transit route whose ifs and buts, way of ensuring its security and other issues related to it must definitely be discussed," he added.

"Naturally, the Islamic Republic of Iran will pursue the matter with sensitivity and vigilance. Our envoys are vigilantly following up on the issue in the capitals of the regional countries," the spokesman noted. **See Page 7**

Europeans Mull Post-Trump Investment Chances in Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - In a forum under UN International Trade Centre (ITC) and Iran's TPO, European investors will investigate their investment opportunities in Iranian markets in Joe Biden's tenure.

The Europe-Iran Business Forum, which is funded by the European Union, will run on December 14-16 and will be the first of its kind in two years, according to a statement by its organizers, BNN Bloomberg reported.

International conferences on Iran's economy, trade, and banking sectors had surged following the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran, the US, European Union, Russia, and China, but they virtually disappeared after President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the accord in 2018 and renewed a crippling sanctions regime on the Islamic Republic.

President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to return the US to the JCPOA, which was brokered by the Obama administration when he was vice president. He's said that he wants Iran to return to full compliance with the deal in exchange for the U.S. doing the same and lifting sanctions.

The investment conference is being run by the UN's International Trade Center (ITC) - an agency jointly managed by the United Nations and the World Trade Organization - and the Iran Trade Promotion Organization.

The Milan-based European House-Ambrosetti is also supporting the event, which will be hosted on the company's online conference platform, the statement said.

Iran to Avenge General Soleimani's Assassination

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian military commander has told the Iraqi foreign minister that the Islamic Republic will definitely take vengeance upon the assassins of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Major General Hossein Salami underlined that General Soleimani and senior Iraqi military commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was assassinated along with him in a U.S. drone strike in January, had a key role in breaking up the ISIS terrorist group.

"We are confident that children of great Iraq will also avenge the assassination of brave general Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis," said General Salami, the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Defence Minister Juma Inad.

The top Iranian general reiterated the plan to take vengeance has nothing to do with legal proceedings to bring the assassins to justice.

"Undoubtedly, in the world of Islam, General Soleimani along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis had the most determining role in toppling the ISIS and thwarting Zionist and American schemes in the region," he said. **See Page 7**

German Investors Becoming Active in Iran Manufacturing, Mining Sectors

TEHRAN (PressTV) - New data released by the Iranian government shows German investors are becoming increasingly active in the country's manufacturing and mining sectors as they commit to \$343 million worth of new projects in the country.

The official IRNA news agency cited figures released by the Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade (MIMT) which showed that investors from Germany, along with companies from China, Turkey and India, had committed to a bulk of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Iranian manufacturing and mining sectors.

The figures were related to FDI schemes registered in Iran between March 19 and October 21, a period in which a total of 75 projects involving non-Iranian investors and worth \$1.2 billion had been approved, said the report.

Chinese investors were second to German peers with \$322 million worth of commitments in new Iranian projects, said the report, adding that investors from Turkey and India had also committed to launch \$98.7 million and \$68 million worth of new projects, respectively. **See Page 7**

Zarif Offers Condolences on Passing Away of Syria's Muallem

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - In a message to the head of the Syrian Council of Ministers, Iran's foreign minister expressed his condolences on the passing away of Syrian counterpart Walid Muallem.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote a message to the Head of the Syrian Council of Ministers and Prime Minister Hussein Arnous on Monday and expressed sorrow over the death of Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem.

Walid Muallem played an important role in serving and defending the national interests and security of Syria during his lifetime, Zarif noted.

Zarif prayed to God Almighty for the late Syrian foreign minister and the success and prosperity of the people and the government of Syria.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem died Monday morning at the age of 79.

There were no details on the cause of death, but the 79-year old had for years been in poor health with heart problems. A source close to the Syrian government said it was widely expected his deputy, veteran diplomat Faisal Mekdad, would replace him as foreign minister.

Muallem, who was first appointed foreign minister in 2006 and was also a deputy prime minister, held a succession of top diplomatic posts, including envoy to the United States and was involved in unsuccessful negotiations with Israel in the 1990's on a peace settlement.

"He was known for his honorable patriotic positions," the government said in a statement, adding he died at dawn and would be buried later on Monday in Damascus. **See Page 7**

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No Difference Between Trump, Biden, Obama

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf says the U.S. President Donald Trump reaped the product of the Obama-Biden administration, adding there is no difference between different U.S. administrations.

Qalibaf wrote on his Twitter page that Joe Biden is at best no different from former U.S. President Barack Obama, who designed the so-called crippling sanctions and is the first to violate U.S. commitments and maintain the structure of sanctions.

He added that Biden was Barack Obama's Second-in-Command to formulate the Obama administration's foreign policy principles and that Trump reaped what the Obama-Biden administration had sown.

Gov't Has No Choice But to Impose 'Comprehensive' Lockdown

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani says the surge in Iran's coronavirus fatalities left the government with no other choice but to implement a "Comprehensive Coronavirus Combat Plan", which shuts down all non-essential businesses for two weeks.

"Today the government's main duty is to protect the people's health and contain the coronavirus," President Rouhani said in a Sunday meeting of the cabinet.

"Therefore, considering the spread of the disease, the surge in the number of infections and fatalities, and the heavy pressure on the country's healthcare sector, the government has no choice but to impose new policies and restrictions at the suggestion of experts, and prevent the spread of the destructive virus through a comprehensive lockdown," he noted.

He later issued a statement to call for the mobilization of the entire nation and government to deal with the third wave of coronavirus in the country.

In the statement, he said due to the mutation of coronavirus and the rise of COVID-19 pandemic in the country, and at the suggestion of the Ministry of Health and the Coronavirus Operational Headquarters, the "Comprehensive Coronavirus Combat Plan" was approved at the National Task Force against Coronavirus, based on which, severe restrictions will be imposed in various cities across the country as of Saturday, November 21, 2020.

The full text of the President's statement is as follows:

Due to the mutation of coronavirus and the rise of COVID-19 pandemic in the country, and at the suggestion of the Ministry of Health and the Coronavirus Operational Headquarters, the "Comprehensive Coronavirus Combat Plan" was approved at the National Task Force against Coronavirus, based on which, severe restrictions will be mandatory in various cities across the country as of next week [starting on Saturday]. In these conditions, the moral, religious and revolutionary duty of all of us is to preserve the life of society and to pay attention to public responsibility and to act in accordance with the requirements of these conditions. Therefore, I consider it my duty to inform the honorable people of Iran of the following:



1- I announce public mobilisation of the nation and the government to confront the third wave of coronavirus in the country;

2- I call on all government departments and other branches and institutions to give assistance to the Ministry of Health and the medical staff of the country with all their facilities by strictly implementing the resolutions of the National Task Force against Coronavirus;

3- I call on the Coronavirus Operational Headquarters to pursue the implementation by the responsible agencies of all the resolutions of the National Task Force;

4- I call on the Plan and Budget Organization to immediately provide the funds required by the Ministry of Health and other agencies responsible for dealing with coronavirus in the implementation of this plan;

5- I call on the Ministry of Health to fully – and without any negligence – implement the plan to monitor the quarantine of patients and identify the contact and warning ring and, if necessary, impose fines;

6- I call on the Police and the Basij to implement in full and without exception the disciplinary decisions, the rules of physical distancing and severe health restrictions, and the officers to take action against the very small minority of violators who endanger the health security of the society;

7- I call on the responsible media and politicians across the country to give priority to the task of informing and persuading the public in observing the health protocols, considering the definite priority of protecting the lives of the people, and confront political and partisan views of coronavirus;

8- I also call on the intelligent and honourable people of Iran to protect other people's general rights and their rights to life, to observe the rules of fighting coronavirus as their religious and social duty, and to invite everyone to this social duty, and do not tolerate any kind of negligence or abuse in this regard.

Official Reacts to Efforts for Anti- Iran Human Rights Resolution

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Judiciary's Human Rights Headquarters Dr. Ali Bagheri Kani reacted to the efforts by western states for adopting human-rights resolution against Iran.



Speaking in the weekly meeting of the Judiciary

officials, Bagheri pointed to the efforts of some countries for approval of a human-rights resolution against Iran in the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly, saying that the resolution which is to be approved in the third committee is not legally valid and it is not based on the human rights realities in Iran, and its planners themselves have a dark record in violating human rights in their own countries, Iranian nation and other nations in the region like Palestinians and Yemenis.

Bagheri noted that Canada which is the main supporter of the resolution is itself systematic violator of the human rights because the establishment in Canada has deprived the indigenous people who are the main owners of Canada of their rights and European immigrants are ruling them.

He further said that the violence against women in Canada is in a level so that human rights bodies have termed it genocide. He noted supporters of the resolution are those countries which give shelter to terrorist groups who have killed thousands of Iranians and support them in different ways or they follow the U.S. maximum pressure policy by implementing the U.S. illegal and cruel sanctions against Iran.

Bagheri noted the UN Secretary General criticizes Iran for executing drugs smugglers while he hints nothing about the role of the U.S. and its NATO allies in the significant increase of drugs production in Afghanistan.

He added that in the UN report there is no sign of 45 times increase in the narcotics production in Afghanistan and preventing Iran from having access to anti-narcotics equipment as well as martyrdom of some 4000 and being disabled of some 12,000 Iranian soldiers.

Bagheri also criticized the UN for its ignorance towards violation of Iranian nation's rights through the U.S. sanctions which is followed by Europeans and its consequences on Iranian people's living and economy.

Tehran, Kabul Stress Finalizing Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Document

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian and Afghan deputy foreign ministers on Sunday stressed the will of their countries to finalize comprehensive document of strategic cooperation as soon as possible.

Prior to the start of the fifth round of negotiations on a comprehensive document on strategic cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan held on Sunday by the two sides' delegations, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and his Afghan counterpart Mirwais Nab met to review process of the negotiations.

Expressing satisfaction with the progress made in this round, Araqchi hoped that the comprehensive document on strategic cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan will be ready for signing by the presidents of the two countries soon.

This document delineates prospects of long-term relations between the two countries in the political, security, economic, cultural and national areas, as well as the issue of water.

Fifth round of negotiations on a comprehensive document on strategic cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan will continue.

Majlis to Take Steps to Improve Value of National Currency

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman of the Iranian parliament's economic commission said that the parliament, in cooperation with the government, takes three steps to improve the value of the national currency.

On the sidelines of parliament session, Mahdi Toghyani said that the parliament tries to return stability to the markets since it is one of the reasons for transferring money from one market to another.

Toghyani referred to the 'tax penalty' as another step in keeping the value of Iran's currency, saying that 'tax on capital' is implemented in most countries, preventing entering money to non-productive markets.

The Iranian lawmaker added that the Central Bank of Iran also plays a role in keeping the value of the national currency by conducting currency and regulatory activities.

Iran, Yemen Stress Expansion of Bilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's newly-appointed ambassador to Yemen Hassan Irloo met and held talks with Yemen's Speaker of Shura Council Mohammed al-Aidarous in Sana'a.

During the meeting, which was held in the presence of members of Yemen's Shura Council, the relations between the two countries and the ways to strengthen it in various fields were discussed.

Al-Aidarous said that Irloo will have the full support and assistance of the Shura Council and the official parties in Yemen in the common interests of the two countries.

Appreciating the Islamic Republic of Iran's stance on ending the war against Yemen, he praised Iran's call for a just peace in Yemen.

Referring to the common ground between the two countries in the face of the conspiracies of the arrogant powers, the rejection of the normalization of relations with the occupying Zionist regime and the support of the Palestinian cause, he appreciated Iran's desire to strengthen bilateral relations.

Other members of the Yemen's Shura Council also praised Iran's political and media support for Yemen in international circles, adding that the presence of the Iranian ambassador to Sana'a broke the diplomatic siege imposed on the Yemeni people by the aggressor coalition.

Emphasizing the expansion of the relation between the two countries, Irloo, for his part, said that the Islamic Republic of Iran will spare no effort to help the Yemeni people in various fields.

8 Iranian Sailors Imprisoned in Tanzania Return Home

TEHRAN (MNA) – Eight Iranian sailors who were released from Tanzanian jail last week have returned home, a senior official said.

"The fishermen were repatriated to Iran this morning," Director of the Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry's Office in Chabahar Free Zone Hamid-Reza Tousi said on Monday.

Tousi said that these Iranian sailors living in Sistan and Baluchestan were arrested and imprisoned by the

Tanzanian coast guard about four years ago.

Following the continuous consultations between the Iranian Embassy in Dar es Salaam and Tanzanian officials, the sailors were released from prison on Tuesday (November 10), he added.

He noted that Iran has about 22 fishermen imprisoned in Tanzania, expressing hope that with the follow-ups, the judicial process of their case to be accelerated, and they will be released soon.

War, Negotiation With Declining Country Wrong

TEHRAN (ABNA) - Secretary of Iran's Expediency Council said that waging a war and conducting negotiations with a declining country are both wrong.

Mohsen Rezaei posted a photo of the protest rally against the U.S. election results in Washington on Instagram and wrote, "This is a picture of a large demonstration of Trump supporters in Washington and protests against election fraud in the United States. The decline of the United States began a long time ago. If Iranian politicians do not make accurate calculations about the United States, they will miss opportunities. War and negotiation with a declining country are both wrong."

He went on to say that the best policy is to strengthen the economy in order to circumvent U.S. sanctions, adding that the following years will bring great crises for Europe and the West.

Tehran, Moscow Review Regional Issues, Bilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali met and held talks with the Director General of the Third Asian Department (3AD) of Russian Foreign Ministry Nikolay Nozdrev.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the bilateral cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran with Russia as well as Russia's cooperation with

some Asian countries.

The lifting of the arms embargo and the imposition of oppressive US sanctions on Iran and Russia were among the topics of this bilateral meeting.

In this meeting, Nozdrev also mentioned Russia's cooperation with Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Kish to Host Austrian Cultural Week



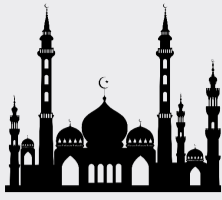
TEHRAN (MNA) – The 2nd Austrian Cultural Week will be held on Kish Island in the last Iranian month in the current year (March 2021).

In the signing ceremony of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kish Free Zone Organization (KFZO) and Austrian Cultural Association in Tehran, the two sides emphasized the expansion of cultural and tourism cooperation. The Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive of Kish Free Zone Organization (KFZO) Gholamhossein Mozaffari pointed to the longstanding and age-old cooperation between Iran and Austria and added, "Suitable ways have been paved for the development and expansion of political, economic, social and cultural cooperation between the two countries."

He pointed to the expansion of Iran international communications and added, "It is hoped that Iran will gain salient achievements in its interactions with the developed and advanced countries in the world."

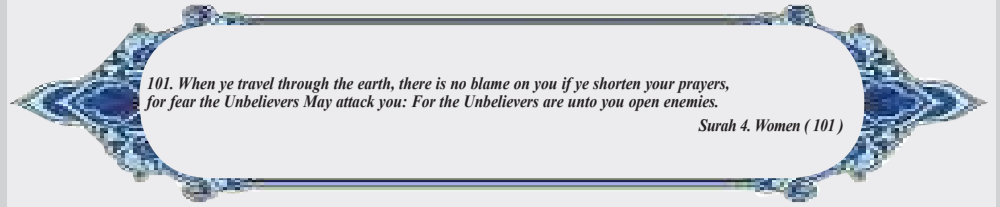
In addition to cooperation in cultural and artistic fields, organizing mixed and joint tours between Austria and Kish as well as taking advantage of prestigious Austrian universities to hold specialized training courses in the field of tourism industry in cooperation with one of the domestic universities were of the proposals of joint cooperation discussed in this meeting. While voicing readiness to hold 2nd Austria's Cultural Week on Kish Island in coming month by fully observing of health protocols and guidelines due to the spread of coronavirus global pandemic, CEO of Kish Free Zone Organization said, "We hope that Kish Cultural Week will be held in Austrian capital Vienna in coming week."

Austrian Ambassador to Iran Stefan Scholz, for his part, pointed to age-old history of cooperation between Iran and Austria, which dates back to 700 years ago and added, "Accordingly, we have always voiced our readiness to develop our relations with Iran."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:49
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:15
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:16
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:33



Seoul Seeking Removal Of Barriers on Exchanges With Tehran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - South Korea's Ambassador to Tehran Ryu Jeong-Hyun announced here on Monday that his country spares no effort to remove obstacles on trade exchange with Iran.

The ambassador made the remarks in a meeting held in Tehran with chairman of Iran-South Korea parliamentary friendship group Rouhollah Motefaker-Azad.

Ryu said bilateral relations between parliaments of the two countries can play an important role in growing friendly ties.

Naming Iran as an important country in world and region, the ambassador said his country attaches great importance to [relations with] Iran.

He further hoped the today meeting would lead to the removal of the existing problems in the near future and pave the way for fostering friendly cooperation.

For his part, the Iranian official noted that Iran-South Korea parliamentary friendship group has been formed to preserve achievements gained after six decades of friendly cooperation in industrial, economic and political areas.

Motefaker-Azad called for making efforts to enhance bilateral relations and interactions. The Iranian lawmaker also emphasized the role of the South Korean ambassador in facilitating cooperation between the two sectors.

Elsewhere, Motefaker-Azad criticized the U.S.' inhumane policies in the world,



adding, "Independent countries of the world will never allow their relations with other countries to be determined and dictated by third parties."

"The importance of communication and cooperation between the two countries requires that the existing obstacles to the development of cooperation be removed as soon as possible," he stressed.

At the end, the chairman called for removing the obstacles to development of cooperation as bilateral relations between Iran and South Korea are so important.

The head of the Iran-South Korea Chamber of Commerce, Hossein Tanhaei, has recently said that Iran's blocked money in South Korea amounts to "\$8.5 billion" and the release of the money "depends on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election."

Tanhaei claimed that negotiations between Tehran and Seoul to release the blocked funds had failed so far, adding, "Both countries are waiting for the result of the U.S. election results."

Tanhaei also said that Iran had proposed a barter agreement to South Korea, beginning with bartering medicine and food, and eventually adding a "petrochemicals, home appliances and automobiles" exchange between the two countries.

Twitter Suspends Account of Iranian Oil Minister

TEHRAN (IP) - Twitter suspended the account of Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh following the imposition of U.S. sanctions against him.

In a breach of freedom of expression, Twitter recently blocked the official Twitter page of the Iranian oil minister following the U.S. sanctions imposed earlier this month

Zanganeh had previously said in response to U.S. sanctions against him: "These sanctions are a passive reaction to the failure of Washington's policy to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero."

He added that the era of unilateralism in the world is over and Iran's oil industry will not be stopped.

By sanctioning the Iranian Oil Minister the U.S. government acknowledges that it has little choice but to impose new sanctions on Iran and that it is more like a psychological war rather than a practical one.

MSC Shines at 7th Conference of Mines And Mining Industries Productivity

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Mobarakeh Steel Group shone at the 7th conference of Iran Mines and Mining Industries Productivity which was held virtually by winning some accolades.

In the conference, Head of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO) Mr. Khodadad Gharibpoor said that in order to boost competitive level between the enterprises, the level of productivity in all mines and mining industrials should be improved.

He further said that all researches should be based on the productivity needs of organizations and the affiliated companies.

He then pointed to the growth of participating companies in this year's annual productivity awards, saying that according to the statistics, the amount of consent of companies regarding their assessment in this year's productivity awards ceremony has been 86.6 percent and IMIDRO is seeking to boost it to 100 percent by resolving problems.

Meanwhile the CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company Mr. Hamid Reza Azimian said that the company has taken into consideration in its strategies the Supreme Leader's emphasis in recent years on resistance economy and pick-up in production.

He further said that so developing and improving the products basket and production of special products in order to decrease dependence on imports and meeting demands of domestic customers have been of major strategies of the company in recent years.

He noted that the project for transfer of crude oil of Gureh to Jask from Bushehr Province to Hormuzgan Province, with the length around 1100 kilometers, is one of the most strategic projects in the country and in this project the pipes with grade X60MS are used which were used to be imported before 2019 when the company started its production. He noted that due to endeavors of the staff in the company and its affiliated companies, more than 430,000 tons of this type of pipe has been produced in the country.

Azimian then expressed his gratitude to his colleagues in the group who are working with strong determination in the current sanctions and coronavirus conditions. He then hailed the organizers of the conference and expressed hope that the country would see boom in its economy and especially in steel industry.



Tehran, Baghdad Targeting 20b-Dollar Trade

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Sulaymaniyah Mehdi Shoushtari said Iran and Iraq are seeking to achieve \$20 billion trade volume over the next two years.

Shoushtari said that Iran and Iraq Presidents have agreed to reach \$ 20 billion in trade exchange between the two countries.

Regarding the economic ties between Iran and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the time of Pandemic Covid-19, he said that trade exchange has continued with all the sanitary protocols on the borders.

The Consul General also pointed to 600 km of borders Iran shares with Iraq's Sulaymaniyah and Halabja provinces and said that the two official border markets of Parviz Khan and Bashmaq are so important in trade between the two countries. Remembering Halabja chemical attack, the Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Sulaymaniyah said that because of the special situation of Halabja, Iran is ready to help the development and prosperity of this province.

As the trade volume between Iran and Iraq grows, Iraq is becoming Iran's main export market, and even in some months of the year, Iran's export to Iraq has outgrown the volume with China, he said.

Also, with the aim of developing trade with Iraq, Iran's ministries of industry and economy, as well as the Central Bank, have already increased granting foreign exchange assistance to support exporters of technical and engineering services to Iraq for two years, the official noted.

Iran Has Sufficient Technical Capacities to Help Afghanistan

TEHRAN (ISNA) - Iran has treaties with neighbor countries in terms of using border water sources that should be respected, said Iranian Minister of Energy.

"Iran's water right in Helmand River is part of these international treaties and Afghanistan is committed to it and hopefully any water (dam) structure in Helmand River should be based on the framework of legal rights," said Reza Ardakanian.

"Afghanistan is aware of the issue that respecting the water right law is a condition. Iran has sufficient technical capacities to help Afghanistan for the implementation of its plans and prevent any violation of our water rights," he noted.

The construction of a dam on the Helmand River in Afghanistan has turned into a dispute with Iran over water rights while water shortage and environmental challenges including droughts, a decline of rainfall have affected agricultural production in both countries.

"There is ongoing work to finalize Iran - Afghanistan comprehensive strategic cooperation document during the current visit of Afghanistan delegation in Iran that would eventually be signed by officials of the two countries," he added.

Iran Mine Sector Overcomes U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO) Khodadad Gharibpoor said despite the most serious sanctions imposed against Iran, mines and mining industry sectors have managed to overcome the US sanctions by increasing production.

Speaking in a conference on passive defense, Gharib Pour pointed out that IMIDRO has materialized a real surge in production. He added that during the first six months of the current Iranian year (started March 21., production of sponge iron, pelletizing, steel and iron ore concentrate experienced 19%, 18%,12% and 8% growth respectively.

In addition to exploration, extraction and production, IMIDRO has taken a scientific and pathology approach in its operations.

Referring to contracts signed between IMIDRO and universities and research centers with regard to passive defense, he said thanks to the measures taken work have only slightly increased.

Earlier, IMIDRO announced that Iran holds the first rank in producing sponge iron, also called direct reduced iron (DRI), with 50 percent of the whole global production in the first five months of 2020, while Iran's sponge iron production increased by 2.7 percent in May. One of the main reasons for the success is that IMIDRO has been cooperating with the private sector in recent years for the production of DRI.

Iran produced 5.6 million tons of sponge iron in a month, which shows a 7.6 percent growth, while India's production was 1.5 million tons, which shows a 55 percent drop.

Iran, FAO Working on Joint Project To Improve Agro-Rural Capacities

TEHRAN (FAO) - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad (MAJ), started the implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project to enhance the resilience of Iranian rural communities and agricultural systems and contribute to prevention and mitigation of the effects of extreme climatic events.

Funded by FAO, the project is focused on improving the knowledge and capacities of Iranian stakeholders for soil and water management in four target provinces: Golestan, Khuzestan, Lorestan, and Sistan and Baluchestan. The Organization lends its expertise to the Iranian parties to strengthen the national disaster risk management systems and mechanisms. In this regard, FAO organized an inception workshop, bringing together different stakeholders of the project, including experts from the MAJ Department of Water and Soil; the Ministry of Energy; Iran Meteorological Organization; Forests, Rangeland and Watershed Management Organization; MAJ's Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO); provincial officials and local communities, to establish an operational national agriculture monitoring system to take necessary steps for the implementation of the project.

Participants discussed the project's implementation requirements and challenges, and the progress made so far in the inception phase. The experts also examined the shared inputs for provincial-level strategies for climate-resilient soil and water management, and disaster risk management. Mentioning the extensive damages caused by the 2019 floods to the country, FAO's Representative to Iran, Mr Gerold Bodeker, in his opening remarks at the event emphasized that "the project strengthens stakeholders' capacities in climate-risk informed soil and water management, flood-risk management systems and mechanisms, and water and soil resources rehabilitation measures to address and mitigate the damages and losses to the agriculture sector caused by floods."

Mr Bodeker added, "all these activities are aimed at reducing risks and enhancing the resilience of stakeholders, enabling them to cope with future extreme events and consequently improving food and nutrition security of flood-affected agricultural communities in the target provinces." Promoting the establishment of enabling policies for climate change action, FAO provides support to strengthen member-country capacities to plan, implement, and report on climate change adaptation and mitigation and build the resilience of the agriculture sector.



South Pars Supplies 40% of Feedstock for Gasoline Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Managing Director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing Iran's giant South Pars gas field, said the field accounts for 40 percent of the feedstock that the country receives for gasoline production.

"While South Pars gas production capacity has increased 2.5 times in the last seven years, part of the field's gas condensate output is sent to the Persian Gulf Star Refinery (PGSR) as feedstock, and 40 percent of the country's gasoline is currently supplied by this field," Mohammad Meshkinfam said. The field's condensate production, depending on natural gas output, is about 600,000 barrels per day, which is mainly transported to the PGSR as feedstock, while the refinery supplies 40 percent of the country's gasoline so we can say that 40 percent of the country's gasoline is supplied from South Pars, he explained.

According to Meshkinfam, during the 20 years of South Pars' development \$80 billion has

been invested in this field. He noted that although the complex's production capacity is over 700 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), the field's output is regulated according to the demand and currently 630 mcm of natural gas is produced in this field on a daily basis.

Mentioning the onshore development of the complex, POGC head said: "out of 13 South Pars refineries, 12 refineries have gone operational so far and Phase 14 refinery is the last onshore processing facility belonging to the massive joint gas field that is being developed and we hope to put it into operation by yearend (March 2021)." The official further said that except for phase 11, the offshore section of the field is fully operational and 36 platforms of the field's total 39 platforms are currently active. South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf water, is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment. The huge offshore field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

Nearly 25,000 Ethiopians Flee to Sudan

KKARTOUM (AFP) - Around 25,000 Ethiopians fleeing conflict in the Tigray region have crossed into neighbouring Sudan, state news agency SUNA reported, as the UN said it was working to find them shelter.

"The number of Ethiopian refugees who have arrived in Gadaref and Kassala states since Saturday has reached 24,944," the agency said. Sudan's commissioner for refugees Abdullah Sulciman toured the border region on Saturday with UN refugee agency assistant representative in Sudan Jan Hansmann to discuss the influx.

Hansmann, quoted by SUNA, said the priority of the UNHCR was to provide the refugees with shelter, food and water and then to transfer them to regions far from the border "for security reasons".



British PM Self-Isolating After COVID-19 Contact

LONDON (Reuters) - British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is self-isolating after coming into contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, a fresh setback after infighting among his top advisers plunged Downing Street into chaos last week.

Johnson, who was admitted to intensive care in a London hospital earlier this year with the novel coronavirus, is well and does not have any symptoms, a spokesman for the prime minister said on Sunday.

"He will carry on working from Downing Street, including on leading the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic," the spokesman said. "The prime minister will follow the rules and is self-isolating."



Erdogan Says Cyprus Made Up of two Separate States



NICOSIA (AFP) - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on a controversial visit to the Turkish-occupied north of Cyprus Sunday that talks about the divided island should aim for a settlement between "two separate states".

Talks in the past have aimed for a reunification of the Mediterranean island, which is split between the Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus, an EU member with effective control over the island's southern two thirds, and the breakaway north occupied by Turkey since 1974. "There are two peoples and two separate states in Cyprus," said Erdogan. "There must be talks for a solution on the basis of two separate states."

Erdogan's visit to the breakaway north, recognised only by Ankara, comes at a time of heightened tensions on the island and in the Eastern Mediterranean and was condemned as a "provocation without precedent" by the Republic of Cyprus. The Turkish president was later to attend a "picnic" in the disputed beachfront area of Varosha along the UN buffer zone that has divided the island since Turkey's invasion.

Erdogan's visit comes as regional power Turkey has openly sparred with neighbors Greece and Cyprus over maritime territories believed to hold vast gas deposits.

An eventual reunification of Cyprus has looked more remote since an Erdogan-backed Turkish nationalist, Ersin Tatar, was elected leader of the north last month. The last UN-sponsored peace talks, based on a reunification of the island, failed in 2017.

Erdogan visited on Sunday to mark the anniversary of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and was to visit Varosha, a long-abandoned beach resort that was once the playground of celebrities and dubbed a "Jewel of the Mediterranean".

The Turkish invasion -- launched in response to an Athens-engineered coup in Nicosia designed to unify Cyprus with Greece -- was followed on November 15, 1983 by the declaration of the TRNC. Since then, Varosha has been a fenced off ghost town, where former luxury hotels and restaurants have fallen into disrepair and overgrown by weeds and bushes.

Turkish troops partially reopened the seafront of Varosha on October 8, stirring international criticism.

Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades condemned Erdogan's visit, as well as what he called the historical "secessionist act of the declaration of the illegal regime" in the north.

He said Erdogan's visit served to "torpedo" UN-led efforts to work toward resolving "the Cyprus problem" in talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Athens, Ankara and former colonial power London. Erdogan's increasingly assertive stance has sparked protests in the Greek-speaking south -- but also in the north, where many Turkish Cypriots resent Ankara's interference in the island's politics.

"No interference! Freedom for all!" hundreds of Turkish Cypriot protesters chanted in northern Nicosia on Tuesday to denounce Erdogan's visit.

Candidates Backed by Brazil's Bolsonaro Sink in Local Elections

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Shaken by the world's second deadliest coronavirus outbreak and deep economic crisis, Brazilians voted on Sunday for experienced politicians from traditional parties in local elections, a move that may damage reelection hopes for President Jair Bolsonaro.

Candidates backed by the far-right populist president, who presents himself as an outsider, were knocked out of the running in the country's largest city Sao Paulo and other municipal races in state capitals.

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second largest, a former mayor Eduardo Paes led the election and will face incumbent mayor, evangelical bishop Marcelo Crivella, in a runoff in two weeks. In Salvador, the fourth city, voters elected Bruno Reis of the Democrats party (DEM), which won mayoral races in Curitiba and Florianópolis and is favored to win Rio with Paes.

In Belo Horizonte, the sixth largest city, voters re-elected Alexandre Kalil, who took tough quarantine and social distancing steps that were criticized by Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly downplayed the gravity of COVID-19.

"The pandemic has put the brakes on the trend towards anti-politics and rejection of traditional parties for being corrupt," said Creomar de Souza, head of Brasilia-based consultancy Dharma Political Risk and Strategy.

"Voters understood that the politicians elected with Bolsonaro in 2018 are flawed and they want to see public services improve," he added.

The results are a setback for Bolsonaro and indicate that the wave of anti-establishment sentiment that got him elected in 2018 following the widespread political corruption uncovered by the Car Wash graft investigation may have subsided.

As voters look to traditional parties, like the DEM and the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), which is leading the race for Sao Paulo mayor, Bolsonaro appears vulnerable because he has no party.

The Social Liberal Party (PSL) he joined for his presidential campaign and later fell out with was nowhere to be seen in major city races on Sunday, despite having surged two years ago to become the second largest in Congress.



Bulgaria to Block EU Accession Talks With North Macedonia

SOFIA (Reuters) - Bulgaria plans to voice its opposition on Tuesday to starting European Union accession talks with neighbouring North Macedonia as the two countries have yet to settle disputes over history and language, Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva said.

The EU's European affairs ministers are expected to discuss launching accession negotiations with North Macedonia on Nov. 17. If any country votes against the framework for negotiations, accession talks cannot be formally launched.

"Bulgaria is saying 'No' to the start of negotiations, we are not saying 'No' to North Macedonia's accession to the EU," Zaharieva told private broadcaster BTV on Sunday.

She said North Macedonia is not delivering on the friendship treaty between the two Balkan neighbours signed in 2017 and has policies based on hatred towards Bulgaria.

Sofia wants its neighbor to recognize that its nation and language have Bulgarian roots and it wants it to put an end to anti-Bulgarian rhetoric. Skopje says its identity and language are not open to discussion.

Despite talks in the past month that also included Germany, which hopes negotiations with North Macedonia can begin while Berlin has the EU rotating presidency until the end of the year, the Balkan neighbors have yet to reach an agreement.

"No one is disputing their right to self-define their nation and call their language what they like. But we cannot agree that this right will be based on hatred, history theft and denial of Bulgaria," Zaharieva said.

North Macedonia's prime minister, Zoran Zaev, said he had been prepared for such a move and there was still time until the end of December for the convening of the first intergovernmental conference to launch accession talks.

Hundreds Detained as Belarusians Chant Dead Protester's Last Words

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Belarusian police detained hundreds of people who took to the streets in mass demonstrations on Sunday chanting "I'm going out", the last known written words of an anti-government protester who died last week.

A witness in the capital Minsk said police had used tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the crowds demonstrating against President Alexander Lukashenko.

Belarus has been mired in political crisis for months. Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets every week since an election in August that they say was rigged, something Lukashenko denies. They want the veteran leader, in power for 26 years, to resign.

The street rallies were re-ignited following the death of Roman Bondarenko, a 31-year old anti-government protester. He died in hospital in Minsk on Thursday following what demonstrators said was a severe beating by security forces. The interior ministry has denied responsibility for Bondarenko's death, saying he was killed in a scuffle with civilians.

Security forces in riot gear and shields on Sunday flooded the square where Bondarenko was detained, pulling down opposition flags, kicking over memorial lamps and dragging people from the crowds and frog-marching them to vans, a witness said.

Video footage by local media also showed security forces entering apartments in the area in search of protesters. A video clip posted on social media showed three men in riot gear attending to a man who appeared to be unconscious.

The Viasna (Spring) human rights group said 504 people had been detained so far by police so far during Sunday's protests around the country. Hundreds of protesters, wearing the red-and-white colours that have come to represent the protest movement, had gathered on Sunday for a vigil near Bondarenko's house in Minsk.

Witnesses said Bondarenko was detained after scuffling with people in plain clothes who had come to a playground to remove red-and-white ribbons. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's main opponent, who fled into exile in Lithuania after the election, said on social media she supported Sunday's rallies in memory of Bondarenko.

The European Union has called Bondarenko's death "an outrageous and shameful result of the actions by the Belarusian authorities... (who have) directly and violently carried out repression of their own population".

Police have arrested thousands of people during months of protests, and rights groups say hundreds of detainees have reported being subjected to beatings and other rights abuses.



Pro-EU Candidate on Course to Win Moldova Presidential Run-Off

CHISINAU (Reuters) - Moldova opposition candidate Maia Sandu, who favours closer ties with the European Union, promised to unite the country and tackle corruption as she looked on course to beat pro-Moscow incumbent Igor Dodon in a presidential run-off on Sunday.

Workers at Sandu's campaign office chanted "victory" after the former World Bank economist won 53.38% of votes compared to 46.62% for Dodon, with 96.55% of ballots counted. An exit poll had put Sandu on 54.8% of votes compared to 45.2% for Dodon.

The West and Russia vie for influence in the former Soviet republic of 3.5 million, which is one of Europe's poorest nations and has suffered a sharp economic downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We need the state to work for citizens, not for thieves and corrupt officials," Sandu said.

Dodon, who on Friday had called on supporters to take to the streets if he felt the election was stolen from him, on Facebook said: "I urge everyone to calm, regardless of the election results."

Opinion polls had put the rivals neck-and-neck before the election run-off. Sandu finished ahead in the first round two weeks ago with a late surge in support from voters living abroad, but failed to secure enough votes for outright victory.

Known for her tough stance on corruption, Sandu led a short-lived government last year that was felled by a no-confidence vote.

Sandu, 48, has said she would secure more financial support from the EU as president. Dodon, 45, has been in power since 2016 and has said he will roll out a settlement next year for the breakaway Russian-speaking region of Transnistria.

"I voted for the development of the economy, for a balanced foreign policy," Dodon said after casting his ballot. "I don't want Moldova to be used in geopolitical games."

If Sandu wins, she is likely to seek a snap parliamentary election to consolidate power because parliament is controlled by the Socialists, Dodon's former party.



IMF Predicts S. Korea to Climb Back to 10th in GDP Rankings

SEOUL (Dispatches) _ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that South Korea's gross domestic product (GDP) will climb up two notches to rank tenth in the world this year.

According to the IMF's world economy outlook report on Sunday, Asia's fourth-largest economy is expected to post one-point-58 trillion U.S. dollars in

GDP in 2020 to rank tenth in the world.

The expected rise in the GDP rankings is attributed to the fact that South Korea was less affected by the global economic slowdown amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brazil and Russia, which ranked higher than South Korea last year, are predicted to rank 12th and 11th, each this year.



Asian Countries Form World's Biggest Trading Bloc, Excluding U.S.

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Fifteen Asia-Pacific economies formed the world's largest free trade bloc on Sunday, a China-backed deal that excludes the United States, which had left a rival Asia-Pacific grouping under President Donald Trump.

The signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) at a regional summit in Hanoi is a further blow to the group pushed by former U.S. president Barack Obama, which his successor Trump exited in 2017.

Amid questions over Washington's engagement in Asia, RCEP may cement China's position more firmly as an economic partner with Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea, putting the world's second-biggest economy in a better position to shape the region's trade rules. The United States is absent from both RCEP and the successor to the Obama-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), leaving the world's biggest economy out of two trade groups that span the fastest-growing region on earth.

By contrast, RCEP could help Beijing cut its dependence on overseas markets and technology, a shift accelerated by a deepening rift with Washington, said Iris Pang, ING chief economist for Greater China. RCEP groups the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. It aims in coming years to progressively lower tariffs across many areas.

The deal was signed on the sidelines of an online ASEAN summit held as Asian leaders address tensions in the South China Sea and tackle plans for a post-pandemic economic recovery in a region where U.S.-China rivalry has been rising.

In an unusual ceremony, held virtually because of the coronavirus pandemic, leaders of RCEP countries took turns standing behind their trade ministers who, one by one, signed copies of the agreement, which they then showed triumphantly to the cameras.

"RCEP will soon be ratified by signatory countries and take effect, contributing to the post-COVID pandemic economic recovery," said Nguyen Xuan Phuc, prime minister of Vietnam, which hosted the ceremony as ASEAN chair. RCEP will account for 30% of the global economy, 30% of the global population and reach 2.2 billion consumers, Vietnam said.

Despite being outside RCEP and having been in the administration that propelled the TPP, President-elect Joe Biden - Obama's vice president - is unlikely to rejoin the TPP anytime soon, analysts said, as his government will have to prioritise handling the Covid-19 outbreak at home.

"I'm not sure that there will be much focus on trade generally, including efforts to rejoin" the TPP successor grouping, "for the first year or so because there will be such a focus on Covid relief," Charles Freeman, senior vice president for Asia at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said this month.

RCEP "will help reduce or remove tariffs on industrial and agricultural products and set out rules for data transmission," said Luong Hoang Thai, head of the Multilateral Trade Policy Department at Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The pact will take effect once enough participating countries ratify the agreement domestically within the next two years, Indonesia's trade minister said last week.

Bangladesh Among States More Susceptible to Global Trade Disruptions

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Many emerging economies like Bangladesh will be affected by declining international demand and export revenues as the UNCTAD fears a fall in the volume of global trade in 2020.

In its 'Review of Maritime Transport 2020', the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has predicted that international maritime trade would fall by 4.1 per cent in 2020.

However, for 2021, the UN body has estimated that maritime trade flows would recover by 4.8 per cent.

"While trade had already weakened in 2019, it became clear that disruptions brought by the pandemic had significantly suppressed trade and volumes had collapsed to record lows," the report has observed. It has cautioned that many developing countries would be affected by declining demand and export revenues, remittances, foreign direct investment and official development assistance.

"The least developed countries are hit hard, given their limited resources and exposure to supply-chain disruptions such as in exports of textiles and clothing products," the report said citing Bangladesh as an example.

It also pointed out that less sophisticated manufacturing in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Vietnam, which have recently attracted factories to move their production away from China, is also highly exposed to Covid-19-induced disruptions. "A case in point is Bangladesh, where about 85 per cent of its exports are composed of textile fibres, textiles and made-up articles, clothing and accessories," added the UNCTAD report.

Referring to supply chain disruption caused by fall in demand, the report mentioned that one estimate expects global sales for fashion and luxury brands to drop by 25 to 35 per cent in 2020, compared with 2019.



German Economy Taking Hit From Lockdown Steps

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's economic recovery continued until October but has slowed since August, the Economy Ministry said, adding that lockdown measures implemented to slow the spread of the coronavirus hit the economy in November.

The Economy Ministry said in its monthly report that the restrictions imposed from the start of November which have seen restaurants, bars and entertainment venues such as cinemas and theatres close meant consumption was taking a hit. The ministry said it did not look like the recovery would end in the fourth quarter though, as long as restrictions remain limited.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the premiers of Germany's states will meet on Monday to review whether the circuit-breaker measures imposed for a month on Nov. 2 have been enough to slow a steep rise in new infections. German Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Friday it was too early to say whether the restrictions would be extended beyond November, as the number of new daily coronavirus cases in Germany hit a record of 23,542.

The German government's council of economic advisers on Wednesday said it expected Europe's largest economy to shrink less than initially feared this year thanks to a strong summer, but a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was clouding the growth outlook for 2021. The German economy grew by a record 8.2% in the third quarter thanks to higher consumer spending and exports, but some experts say a second partial lockdown could cause the economy to contract slightly in the fourth quarter.

Argentina Negotiates Its Debt With IMF

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina is renegotiating its debt with the International Monetary Fund these days. "The objective is to achieve a program that does work," says the Minister of the Economy, Martín Guzmán, whose political weight has increased in recent weeks. The big question is the fiscal adjustment that the IMF will demand. While inflation picks up (rose 3.8% in October) and the peso continues to falter, Guzmán affirms that the 2021 deficit

will be less than the 4.5% foreseen in the Budget Law that will be approved next week.

The endemic crisis in the Argentine economy, exacerbated by the pandemic, seemed to end a few days ago. The free exchange dollar or "blue", which had reached 195 pesos on October 24, fell to 149. But the calm was brief. The rise in prices in October suggested that this year would close with an inflation of not less than 35%, the highest in the world after discounting the Venezuelan hyperinflation, and the "blue" dollar rose again to 172 pesos, a very remote change of the 80 pesos to which the official dollar is quoted. "As long as exchange controls exist, we will have to live with that gap," said the minister, during a meeting with representatives of the foreign press.

The macroeconomic picture continues in an emergency situation. For next year it is expected to finance half of the budget with monetary issuance. With the two Argentine printers manufacturing pesos in 24-hour shifts, the Argentine government has had to order 400 million thousand-peso bills from Brazil (at a price of 20 million dollars) and 170 million thousand-dollar bills from Spain (at priced at \$ 21 million). Despite high inflation, the thousand-peso bill is the largest of the existing ones: at real exchange, it is equivalent to less than six dollars.

The Central Bank's reserves have already fallen below \$ 39 billion, which, taking into account immediately non-negotiable securities (such as the "swap" with China) and those that constitute private deposits, is equivalent to practically zero. Argentina needs a break and trusts that the IMF will grant it an "extended facilities loan" with which to immediately repay its debt with the institution (44,000 million dollars of principal and some 5,000 million of interest) to establish repayment terms relatively comfortable: it would start to be paid in 2024 and would end in 2030.

In his meeting with the foreign press, Minister Guzmán refused to speak of "fiscal adjustment", resorting to a euphemism like "fiscal sustainability". He admitted, however, that he did not want to rush the deficit established in the



budgets for next year (4.5%) and pointed out that his objective would be closer to 3.8%. "You have to put the house in order at a speed that is feasible," he said. He announced, as a saving measure, that the Emergency Family Income would cease to be paid, of which three rounds of 10,000 pesos have been disbursed to some nine million beneficiaries, with a cost to the public coffers close to 265,000 million pesos (plus \$ 3.3 billion). The cessation of this subsidy motivated by the pandemic will be compensated with more focused instruments and yet to be determined.

The most urgent thing now is inflation. If in 2020 it reaches the expected 35%, it will have experienced a substantial drop compared to 2019, when it reached 53.8%. But that is largely due to the drop in consumption caused by the pandemic. In October, with the economy more active, prices have risen 3.8%. And an upward trend is emerging in the coming months, due to the unfreezing of fuel prices and rates for services such as electricity or gas. The rent of the house in pesos has already risen 50% so far this year. It will be difficult to meet the 29% inflation target set in the budget law for 2021.

After continuous friction with Miguel Pesce, president of the Central Bank, Minister Martín Guzmán seems to have achieved hegemony in the economic team. President Alberto Fernández has guaranteed him a certain control over monetary policy and even, according to information from the newspaper Clarion, a replacement at the head of the Central Bank as soon as the negotiations with the IMF are finished, something planned for March or April.

India May Skip Rate Cuts as Signs of Economic Recovery Emerge

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's

Reserve Bank is likely to keep its stance accommodative for the monetary policy despite negative real rates and recovering growth alongside high inflation which limit any possibilities for additional monetary stimulus, economists and analysts said. Industrial output in September rose for the first time in six months while recovery was also seen in goods and services tax collections, higher energy consumption, and an increase in the purchasing managers' index among other economic indicators.

With inflation hovering above 7% in October for a second straight month, above the RBI's medium term target of 4%, views that India is approaching the end of the current rate cutting cycle have become more relevant.

"The inflation rate has been consistently ahead of not only your target rate but the upper end of your target range as well. Ideally, you should be looking at rate hikes right now," Sameer Narang, chief economist at Bank of Baroda told Reuters.

Though RBI cannot raise interest rates due to the effect of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on economic activity, it would still consider the long-term impact of negative real interest rates on the Indian economy, economists believe.

High inflation is a risk the RBI cannot afford to ignore, Nomura economists wrote in a note.

The central bank said on Wednesday that chances for an economic recovery have increased, a comment interpreted by some analysts that the RBI may not act more to boost growth.

If the increase in growth is sustained over the next few months, the RBI sees the economy to return to positive growth in the December quarter.

Moody's on Thursday revised its 2020/21 growth forecast to a 8.9% contraction from its earlier forecast of 9.6%, considering the steady decline in fresh and active COVID-19 cases since September

But COVID-19 is widely considered as the joker in the pack by most analysts.

The RBI is expected to support banks and corporates through lower lending costs till a second wave of Covid infections forces it to provide more direct intervention through rate cuts.

India's daily coronavirus infections have now fallen below half their peak hit in September, but the economy is still recovering from strict lockdowns to check the COVID-19 spread.

Since March, the RBI has reduced the repo rate by 115 basis points to insulate the economy from the shock of the growth crisis. "Given the fragile state of the economy, the RBI is likely to continue with its accommodative stance for a prolonged period," Sujan Hajra, chief economist at Anand Rathi Securities told Reuters.



Cement Production Up 14.4% in H1

TEHRAN (MNA)- Iran's cement production hit 35.639 million tons in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21), up 14.4 percent compared to the same period last year.

Based on the data provided by the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, the country's cement production stood at

25.153 million in the first half of the previous calendar year.

Production of the mentioned commodity was reported to be 6.058 million tons in the sixth Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 22-September 21), 5.3 percent less than the figure for the previous month in which the output stood at 6.397 million tons.



UK Set to Ban Sale of New Petrol, Diesel Cars From 2030

LONDON (Dispatches) - The sale of new petrol and diesel cars will be banned within a decade, Boris Johnson is set to announce this week as part of a broader package of green initiatives.

In February the prime minister said he was bringing forward a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2040 to 2035.

Now Mr Johnson is expected to move the date to 2030 in an attempt to jump-start the market for electric cars in the UK and propel the country towards its goal of net zero emissions by 2050, according to government and industry insiders.

However, ministers are expected to keep the less stringent date of 2035 for an end to the sale of hybrid cars that are powered by electric batteries as well as traditional motors.

While electric car sales are rising strongly, they were still below 7 per cent of all new vehicles bought across the UK last month, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, a trade body.

The car industry has long argued that significant funding for infrastructure is required to help convince motorists to switch to electric cars, which are currently more expensive than petrol or diesel vehicles.

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Some £500m of government funding for charging infrastructure is due to be rolled out from next year.

The money will help finance new grid connections to allow remote facilities such as motorway service stations to install more fast charging points.

There is still widespread consumer confusion about the differences between electric cars that have batteries but no engine, and various forms of hybrid vehicles that involve traditional motors.

Last week, the Department for International Trade wrote on Twitter that Nissan's new Qashqai model would be an "electric" car, when the model is actually a hybrid.

The car industry has lobbied for the sale of new hybrid vehicles to be phased out at a later date than petrol and diesel models, arguing that they are a way of getting more consumers acquainted with battery technology.

One in four cars sold in the UK contains some form of hybrid technology.

Toyota, which owns two British manufacturing plants, has previously warned that outlawing the hybrid models made at its Burnaston factory would



jeopardise future investments in the UK.

Honda, which also manufactures cars in the UK, said measures relying almost solely on battery cars within 15 years were "too narrow".

It added that while all of its cars sold in the UK will be hybrid models by 2022, "there are technological and resource constraints that will be more difficult to overcome and which mean that battery electric cannot replace internal combustion engines in all segments".

Mr Johnson is preparing to make a speech this week setting out his vision for switching to a low-carbon economy.

It is expected to feature pledges on increased use of offshore wind for electricity generation, and technologies to capture and store carbon dioxide and deploy hydrogen as a power source.

Mr Johnson is also set to give the go-ahead to new nuclear power stations, notably at Sizewell in Suffolk, and provide funding for small modular reactors.

The government is also drawing up a long-delayed energy white paper that is expected to set out plans for decarbonising the sector.

Mr Johnson is keen to burnish Britain's green credentials ahead of next year's UN Cop26 international climate summit in Glasgow.

His predecessor Theresa May committed the UK to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

84% Concerned About Record Coronavirus Cases in Japan



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Over 80% of respondents expressed concern about the number of new coronavirus cases reaching a record high in Japan in recent days, a Kyodo News survey showed Sunday.

The nationwide telephone survey, conducted over the weekend, found that 68.4% said the government's response to the pandemic should be its top priority rather than economic stimulus.

Despite a recent resurgence of coronavirus infections in Japan, many tourist attractions have been crowded on weekends and holidays. With the country reporting record cases of coronavirus infections for three days in a row through Saturday, the latest survey showed 84.0% of respondents are worried about the recent virus spread.

Respondents were split on the government's efforts to support domestic tourism as part of its stimulus measures, with 50.0% saying they are against the government's extending its Go To Travel subsidy campaign beyond January next year and 43.4% supporting an extension.

Tourism minister Kazuyoshi Akaba has said the government is considering extending the travel subsidy program beyond January, with some government sources saying another extra budget currently being compiled will likely fund the program's extension, among other measures against the pandemic.

The approval rate for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's Cabinet rose 2.5 percentage points from last month to 63.0%, according to the survey.

The support rate declined last month as the public largely felt that Suga, who took office in September, had not offered a sufficient explanation of his controversial decision to bar some scholars critical of government policies from joining a national advisory panel.

In the latest survey, 69.6% still think Suga needs to better explain his rejection of six nominees for the Science Council of Japan, a move widely criticized by scholars. The high percentage was slightly lower than the 72.7% who said in response to the same question in the October survey that the prime minister has more explaining to do on the issue.

Nobel UN Food Agency Warns 2021 Will Be Worse Than 2020

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The head of the World Food Program says the Nobel Peace Prize has given the U.N. agency a spotlight and megaphone to warn world leaders that next year is going to be worse than this year, and without billions of dollars "we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021."

David Beasley said in an interview with The Associated Press that the Norwegian Nobel Committee was looking at the work the agency does every day in conflicts, disasters and refugee camps, often putting staffers' lives at risk to feed millions of hungry people -- but also to send "a message to the world that it's getting worse out there ... (and) that our hardest work is yet to come."

"It was so timely because we've been fighting to get above the choir," Beasley said of last month's award,

pointing to the news being dominated by the U.S. elections and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the difficulty of getting global attention focused on "the travesty that we're facing around the world."

"So this was really a gift from above," Beasley said, recalling the surprise and delight of WFP's 20,000 staffers worldwide, and his own shock at being interrupted during a meeting in Niger in Africa's Sahel region with the news.

Beasley recalled his warning to the U.N. Security Council in April that as the world was dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, it was also "on the brink of a hunger pandemic" that could lead to "multiple famines of biblical proportions" within a few months if immediate action wasn't taken.

Iran to Avenge...

FROM PAGE 1

The IRGC commander noted that the U.S. was dismayed at General Soleimani's success, and that is why it decided to assassinate him. General Salami then underscored the need for U.S. troops to either withdraw from Iraq or be expelled from the country.

"The expulsion of American forces should be done in accordance with the enactments of the Iraqi Parliament, and this is what the Iraqi people want," he said.

General Salami pinpointed that Iran wants Iraq's territorial integrity and unity to be preserved.

He then called for Tehran-Baghdad cooperation to ensure border security.

The top general said Iran would like to see an integrated, united and free Iraq which is not dependent on other powers.

The Iraqi defense chief, in turn, thanked Iran for helping Iraq fight the ISIS terror group while stressing the need for mutual cooperation on border security. He also said his trip to Tehran is aimed at boosting mutual relations and asking Iran to provide the equipment that the Iraqi military needs.

German Investors...

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Most of FDI schemes were concentrated in the fields of petroleum coke production, petrochemicals, chemicals and rubber and plastic manufacturing.

The total number of project with full foreign ownership reached 28 over the seven-month period, said the MIMT, adding that 39 projects would be joint ventures between Iranian and foreign investors and eight others will be carried out in the form of build-operate-transfer (BOT). Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan topped the list of most favorable areas for foreign investment in Iran. The province is home to Chabahar, Iran's only ocean port where the government is implementing a series of massive development plans to turn the area to a trade and business hub on the Sea of Oman.

The total value of FDI projects registered in Iran and across all economic sectors over the first seven months of the current calendar year amounted to \$3.7 billion, said the report by IRNA.

Zarif...

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Muallem, from a Sunni family from Damascus, publicly defended Moscow and Shi'ite Iran's growing military role, backed by its proxies in Syria. "I am ready to be one of Hassan Nasrallah's soldiers," Muallem said in August 2006, referring to the leader of the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, which has in recent years sent thousands of its members to fight alongside Assad's forces. Muallem accused the United States and others in the West of fuelling his country's unrest and labelled insurgents "terrorists" in a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands and led to the exodus of millions of refugees. The veteran diplomat's last statements attacked the Caesar Act - the toughest U.S. sanctions yet against Damascus which came into force last June, saying they were meant to starve Syrians. He vowed that his country would get economic help from Iran and Russia to soften its blow.

COVID-19 kills...

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

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

Meanwhile yesterday Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced that 4 companies in the country have managed to end coronavirus vaccine testing on animals and are ready to conduct humans trials.

"To supply the coronavirus vaccine, we follow three methods: first is to participate in COVAX with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), the second method is cooperation with Pasteur Institute and the countries which are active at international level to produce vaccine, and finally with the efforts and seriousness of my colleagues in the knowledge-based companies and Razi Institute, where good measures have already been adopted," Namaki said, addressing a joint virtual meeting with the WHO officials.

"Fortunately, 8 companies out of 12 firms which had taken good steps to produce the vaccine are in a desirable situation and 4 of them are entering the phase of testing coronavirus vaccine on humans," he added.

Spokesman of Iran's Food and Drug Organization Kianoush Jahanpour had announced on Friday that five Iranian vaccines have been put on the list of WHO COVID-19 candidates.

"Some five Iranian COVID19 vaccines have been put on the list of the World Health Organization (WHO)," Jahanpour wrote on his Twitter account.

No Change in...

FROM PAGE 1

He further highlighted Iran's policy of seeking to resolve the crisis in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

"Iran has welcomed, and will welcome any permanent settlement of this crisis. Over the past three decades, Iran has tried to help resolve this issue peacefully.

Naturally, Iran embraces any move that will contribute to this trend," he noted.

"As a country which has good, regular and balanced access to both capitals, the Islamic Republic of Iran will definitely concentrate an important part of its efforts on settling this issue.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal, which was also presented to the capitals [of the concerned countries], has considerable overlap with the initiative being implemented at the moment," he said.

He then emphasized that terrorists reportedly operating near Iran's borders should leave the region.

"I hope the Takfiri troops reported to be operating in our backyard have left the region by now because they no longer have any excuse for their continued presence in the region," he said.

"We have announced time and again that this (the presence of terrorists near our borders) is our red line. I hope Takfiri forces are no longer there, as we've been told. I hope they have already left the region," said the spokesman. Khatibzadeh also said that Saudi Arabia must stop repeating baseless accusations and they cannot create peace in the region this way.

In response to the remarks of the King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the foreign ministry spokesman advised the Saudis, he noted: "The rulers of Al Saud should be loyal only to the capabilities of the Islamic world and the region, and Iran's friendship with Islamic countries continues."

Khatibzadeh stated that the repetitive sentences and boring statements of the Saudi rulers are not unnatural, adding: "Iran's message was quite clear: The Al Saud regime cannot manage the region with the greed to buy weapons and the lack of proper understanding of the regional and international equations and the repression of its people."

He also reiterated that it will not accept any change in the contents of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which has been approved by the UN, implying that any U.S. demand for a renegotiation of the nuclear deal is rejected outright. "The JCPOA has been signed between Iran and the Group 5+1 but the U.S. ended its partnership and the nuclear deal is something which has been negotiated for years, has been finalized and concluded and sealed," Khatibzadeh told reporters in a video conference.

He added that Iran has not received any message from any party for renegotiating the deal, but stressed that the agreement should be implemented with no change. "The JCPOA should be implemented within the framework of the JCPOA."

Khatibzadeh called on all parties to the nuclear deal, specially the Europeans, to implement their undertakings as soon as possible, noting that if the US wants to return to the agreement, it should fully implement the deal.

"This is the only path to keep the nuclear deal," he added.

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Peaty Breaks 100m Breaststroke Short Course World Record

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's Adam Peaty set a world record for the short course 100 meters breaststroke at the professional International Swimming League (ISL) in Budapest on Sunday, finishing in a time of 55.49 seconds. The previous record of 55.61 seconds was set by South African swimmer Cameron van der Burgh in Berlin 11 years ago. "It's my first short course world record, which I struggle with, but no-one works harder on the last length and that one was for my family," Peaty told the BBC.

Sabalenka Defeats Mertens To Win WTA Linz Title

LINZ (Dispatches) - Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka finished the 2020 WTA season in style, winning her third title of the year with a straight-sets victory over her doubles partner Elise Mertens in the Linz final on Sunday. Top seed Sabalenka saw off the second-seeded Mertens 7-5, 6-2 to tie Simona Halep for most tournament triumphs in the coronavirus-disrupted season. The usual year-ending WTA Finals in China were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving the event in Austria as the last of the campaign.

Hamilton Wins Record-Equaling Seventh F1 World Title

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton secured a record-equalling seventh Formula One world title on Sunday after winning the Turkish Grand Prix and then warned pretenders to his crown "I'm only just getting started!" After a momentous drive from sixth on the grid, the Briton matched Michael Schumacher's haul of drivers' crowns with three races of the season remaining. The 35-year-old sealed his latest title 12 years after his first with a typically measured masterclass, handling treacherous wet early conditions to claim his 94th career win. It was widely declared as one of his finest triumphs and entirely appropriate on the day he drew alongside the legendary German in the record books. "That's for all the kids out there that believe in the impossible," said an emotional Hamilton on Mercedes' team radio. "You can do it." Hamilton admitted he found it difficult to express his feelings afterwards. "I'm definitely a bit lost for words," he said. "Naturally, I have to start by saying a huge thank you to the guys here and the guys at the factory. The journey we've been on is monumental. I want to also thank 'Team LH' for sticking with me, and my family." Hamilton, who sealed his first title in 2008, added to his unprecedented roster of records -- most wins with 94, most pole positions (97), most podium finishes (163) and most consecutive points finishes (47). He added: "We dreamed of this when I was young.



He lapped his team-mate and only remaining title rival Valtteri Bottas, who finished 14th after a desultory outing, to claim his 10th victory in 14 races of a season delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Hamilton came home over half a minute clear of Racing Point's Sergio Perez. Both chose to make only one pit-stop and spent most of the race on a single set of intermediate tyres as their rivals pitted several times to cope with the slippery conditions.

Hamilton's old rival, four-time former champion Sebastian Vettel, finished third ahead of his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and, after a wild and impulsive afternoon, Max Verstappen in the leading Red Bull.

Alex Albon came home seventh in the second Red Bull ahead of Lando Norris in the second McLaren, Lance Stroll, who had started from his maiden pole position for Racing Point, and Daniel Ricciardo of Renault.

This latest triumph gave Hamilton an unassailable lead over Bottas, with two races in Bahrain and the season-closing Abu Dhabi Grand Prix to come.

Vettel, who grabbed a podium finish on the final lap, was the first man to congratulate Hamilton in the pits, leaning into the Englishman's cockpit to tell him he had made history.

Liverpool Great Clemence Dies Aged 72



LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Liverpool and England goalkeeper Ray Clemence has died aged 72, his family said on Sunday.

Clemence, who been living with advanced prostate cancer since 2005, was one of the finest keepers of his generation, winning three European Cups and five First Division titles during 14 years at Liverpool.

An £18,000 signing from Scunthorpe in 1967, Clemence was a key member of the Liverpool team which won the club's first ever European Cup in 1977. He also played in their 1978 and 1981 European Cup final triumphs and won the UEFA Cup in 1973 and 1976.

The 1974 FA Cup and the 1981 League Cup were also won by Clemence during his time playing for Liverpool boss Bill Shankly and his successor Bob Paisley.

Clemence left for Tottenham in 1981, aged 32, for a fee of £300,000 and won another UEFA Cup and the FA Cup in his seven-year stay in north London.

He is survived by his wife Veronica, son Stephen - a former player himself and now a coach - and daughters Sarah and Julie.

"With great sadness, we write to let you know that Ray Clemence passed away peacefully today, surrounded by his loving family," a statement from the Clemence family said.

Imperfect 10 for Tiger At Augusta's 12th Hole

AUGUSTA (Reuters) - Defending champion Tiger Woods made an ignominious 10 at the famous par-three 12th hole in the final round at the Masters on Sunday.

It was his highest score on the hole by four shots. In 89 previous rounds at Augusta National, he had never had worse than triple-bogey.

Woods' problems started when his tee shot, an eight-iron from 155 yards, landed short of the green and rolled back into the tributary of Rae's Creek that has gobbled up so many balls over the year.

The way the former world number one played the hole was a far cry from last year, when Woods safely found the putting surface to seize control of the tournament while four of his nearest rivals ran into trouble.

After taking a penalty stroke, he pitched his third shot onto the green, but the soft putting surface repelled it and his ball again rolled back into the water.

Now playing five, he made sure of avoiding the water, only to end up in the back bunker, from where he knifed his sixth shot all the way across the green and back in the water.

He then pitched his eighth shot to the back of the green and two-putted to finally end his misery.

Euro Heroes Scotland's

Unbeaten Run Ended in Slovakia

LONDON (Dispatches) - Scotland failed to follow up their heroics of reaching a first major tournament for 22 years as Steve Clarke's men were beaten 1-0 by Slovakia on Sunday, their first defeat in 10 games.

Jan Gregus's deflected strike on 32 minutes decided the meeting of two teams who qualified for Euro 2020 this week as a much-changed Scotland were left to rue not taking a series of chances.

A first defeat in 13 months for the Scots means they have to wait to secure top spot in Nations League Group B2.

That could still happen on Sunday if the Czech Republic fail to beat Israel or if Scotland are victorious when they travel to Israel on Wednesday.



Thiem Beats Tsitsipas in ATP Finals Opener

LONDON (Dispatches) - Dominic Thiem beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in the opening singles match of the ATP Finals on Sunday as Rafael Nadal prepared to launch his bid for a first title at the elite eight-man event.

In a repeat of last year's final at London's O2 Arena, won by Tsitsipas, U.S. Open champion Thiem stumbled after winning a first-set tie-break but found his range again to win 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3.

Thiem was impressive on serve in the first set, winning 79 percent of service points, but failed to convert three break points against the Greek world number six.

The Austrian third seed found himself in deep trouble when trailing 4-1 in the tie-break but battled back and made his first set point count when Tsitsipas went long with a backhand lob.

Tsitsipas produced a forehand winner in the third game of the second set to break the Austrian and haul himself back into the contest, facing no break points as he levelled the match.

The defending champion appeared to have the momentum but it was Thiem who drew first blood in the deciding set, earning a break with a delicately dinked forehand at the net in the second game.

The fifth game ultimately proved to be decisive. Tsitsipas had a chance to break but caught the net with a powerful backhand and could not engineer another break point in a game that contained six deuces.

In the evening match in Group London 2020, second seed Nadal, appearing at the end-of-season event for the 10th time, takes on Russian debutant Andrey Rublev.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion has qualified for the ATP Finals for a record 16 consecutive years but has missed six editions due to injury.

Earlier, Novak Djokovic received the ATP Tour No. 1 trophy after finishing the year at the top of the rankings for a record-equalling sixth time.

Mir Wins MotoGP World Championship

VALENCIA (AFP) - Suzuki's Joan Mir won the MotoGP world title on Sunday a week after finally securing his maiden Grand Prix triumph at the same Valencia circuit.

The 23-year-old from Mallorca inherited the crown left vacant by the injured six-time champion Marc Marquez when finishing seventh in the Valencia Grand Prix won by Italy's Franco Morbidelli.

The champion celebrated by pulling wheelies and screeching his smoking tyres in front of the paddock where his family awaited him to celebrate.

"I've been fighting for this all my life, I can neither laugh nor cry but I'm flooded with emotions," said Mir.

This was the first MotoGP title won by a Suzuki rider since 2000.

Morbidelli won the penultimate race of the season, leading from pole until the very last lap when he came under intense pressure from Australian Jack Miller.

"I just came up short," said the Australian

Morbidelli and Miller played cat-and-mouse overtaking each other several times over the final tight corners. Morbidelli's teammate at Yamaha's satellite SRT team, Frenchman Fabio Quartararo, ruined any chance he had of prolonging the title race with a fall to follow his crash on the opening lap at the circuit last week.



Ganguly Says Stumper to Be Fit For Australia Tests

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Indian cricket board (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly has no doubt wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha, currently nursing a double hamstring injury, will be fit for India's four-test series in Australia beginning next month.

Saha, considered technically the best wicketkeeper in India, injured both the hamstrings during the Indian Premier League and missed the playoffs in the United Arab Emirates.

The BCCI last week said it would take a late call on Saha's availability for the tour which begins with the first of six short-form internationals on Nov. 27 in Sydney.

"I think people don't know how the BCCI works," Ganguly told The Week magazine, dismissing criticism of the board's handling of player injuries.

"The BCCI trainers, physio and Wriddhi himself know that he has two hamstring issues." "Wriddhi is travelling to Australia because he will be fit for tests. He is not part of the shorter formats."

Rishabh Pant is the other wicket-keeper in India's test squad.

Confusion was also rife on Rohit Sharma's hamstring injury which the opener had sustained during the IPL. Rohit was initially considered unfit for the Australia tour, but continued to play, leading the Mumbai Indians to their record fifth IPL title in Dubai.

He was subsequently brought back to the test squad.

