

Armenian Airline Announced the Resumption of Tehran-Yerevan Flights, Amid the Coronavirus, Using Aircrafts of Armenian Airlines Via Imam Khomeini International Airport

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Tehran Urges Riyadh To Stop Blame Game

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations says Saudi officials should stop engaging in blame-shifting if Riyadh is down the path of developing nuclear weapons and seeks to invent an excuse for avoiding cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In two tweets posted late on Tuesday, Kazem Gharibabadi responded to recent anti-Iranian remarks by Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir, who told the DPA news agency in a recent interview that the kingdom "reserves the right" to arm itself with nuclear weapons if Iran cannot be stopped from making one.

"Scapegoating and fearmongering are two common and classic methods used by demagogues!" Gharibabadi wrote.

"If you want to pursue a nuclear weapon program, or you are seeking for an excuse to justify your lack of cooperation with the IAEA or your outdated safeguard system, at least have the courage to admit it and pay the price for it, don't blame your wrongdoings on others by lies," he added.

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Situation in Iran to Improve Without U.S. Talks



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani expressed optimism about improving conditions in the country, dismissing the idea of negotiations with the U.S.

Addressing a cabinet session on Wednesday, Rouhani said his administration has the feeling that the situation in Iran will improve in future.

"When we say the situation will improve, some may think that we mean negotiations with the US. No, that's not true," the president added.

He noted that the new U.S. administration is expected to respect the rules, saying the atmosphere of threat created by the rogue administration of Donald Trump would shift towards opportunities.

Highlighting Iran's success in inflicting defeats on the U.S. government in the political and legal arenas in the past three years, Rouhani said Washington's economic plots to create famine in Iran and upset the country's domestic security with the use of sanctions have also ended in failure.

The president also reiterated that the next U.S. administration has no option but to return to law and surrender to the Iranian nation.

"Everybody, from (U.S.) Democrats to Republicans, have realized the fact that the U.S.' maximum pressure on Iran has failed," the president concluded.

Rouhani also said that he hoped that the lockdown on cities categorized as red zones would lead to refreshment of the medical personnel.

Medical personnel are under pressure of relentless services in coronavirus pandemic, so the lockdown will create an opportunity for them to be refreshed, President Rouhani said at the cabinet session held in Tehran this morning.

On November 14, Rouhani announced that new restrictions will be imposed across the country as of November 21 to cope with the pandemic.

There is no shortage of medical equipment in the country; meanwhile, these are nine months that medical teams have been working, and now they need to rest and be refreshed, the President noted.

Since its outbreak in December 2019, the coronavirus pandemic has killed over 1,340,000 worldwide, while the number of the dead in Iran has passed 42,000.

The sole way to tackle the deadly virus is to observe the health protocols and social distancing, the President stressed.

He further described the lockdown as a social warning that tells all to be responsible for their safety and duties as the virus is at new phase.

The President had already said that the aim behind the restrictions is to give people a real view and touch of the critical situation and make them change lifestyle and breeze through the condition with possible minimum loss.

Speaking about the present situation in the country at the pandemic, the President said the future will be better. Some think that when it is talked of the better conditions, it means negotiations with the US will be held, said the President while rejecting connection between the two issues.

He said that today the atmosphere of threat has been changed into opportunity.

He added that during the past three years [after the maximum pressure imposed on Iran by the U.S. President Donald Trump], the country has been under economic war and economic terrorism.

Over 800,000 Iranians Infected by Coronavirus

TEHRAN (IFP) - Health Ministry spokeswoman has confirmed 13,421 new cases of COVID-19 infection in the past 24 hours, raising the total number of cases to 801,894.

In a press briefing on Wednesday, Sima-Sadat Lari said the virus has also killed 480 patients since Tuesday noon, increasing the overall death toll to 42,941.

She said so far 576,983 patients have recovered from the disease or been discharged from the hospital.

Lari went on to say that 5,712 patients are also in critical conditions caused by more severe infection.

The spokeswoman noted that 5,626,631 COVID-19 tests have been taken across the country so far.

She said the high-risk "red" zones include Tehran, Qom, Mazandaran, East Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Yazd, Ardabil, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Hamadan, West Azarbaijan, Bushehr, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Alborz, Lorestan, Markazi, Ilam, South Khorasan, Kermanshah, North Khorasan, Semnan, Gilan, Zanjan, Qazvin, Kurdistan, and Kerman provinces.

The "orange" and "yellow" zones also include Golestan, Hormozgan, Fars, and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces, she added.

Zarif: Biden Can Swiftly Lift Anti-Iran Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Iran is ready to resume its commitments under the 2015 nuclear accord if the US stops violations of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed the deal and lifts its sanctions, adding that president-elect Joe Biden can do so through "three executive orders" once settled in the White House.

In an interview with Iran newspaper, Zarif expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to reverse the suspension of its commitments under the multilateral nuclear deal if Washington returns to the accord and abides by its own obligations.

"America should live up to its commitments. America has no other option. America's [sole] option is to return [to its commitments]. Why? Because the people's resistance has defeated the policy of maximum pressure," he said.

The Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed in 2015 between Iran and six world states — namely the U.S., Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — and was ratified in the form of Resolution 2231.

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Documents Showing Terror Outfit's Saudi Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Intelligence Ministry has published secret correspondence between Saudi Arabia's spy service and a notorious anti-Iran terrorist group.

The documents were published on Wednesday, days after the ministry announced that the ringleader of the so-called Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahvaz (ASMLA) separatist armed group had been arrested.

The Iranian Intelligence Ministry said in a statement last week that ASMLA ringleader Farajollah Chaab, also known as Habib Asyud, had been detained on the back of a set of "specialized and combined" intelligence operations.

It said Chaab was the mastermind of a terrorist attack in September 2018 that targeted a military parade in Ahvaz, southwest of Iran, which killed 25 people and injured 60 others.

He had planned several abortive terrorist operations in Tehran and Khuzestan in recent years and was planning a new assault when he was taken into custody, the ministry said.

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Syria Intercepts Israeli Aggression Over Damascus

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syrian media say the country's air defenses have confronted an Israeli aggression over the capital Damascus, also reporting a number of casualties.

Syria's state news agency SANA reported early on Wednesday that the air defense units of the Syrian army had successfully intercepted the aggression from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights over Damascus' airspace.

There were no official reports of damage or casualties, however, a Syrian military source told SANA that the assault had led to the martyrdom of three soldiers and the injury of another.

Israeli military confirmed in a rare statement that it had launched airstrikes on Syrian targets inside the Arab country.

Israel frequently targets military positions inside Syria, especially those of the resistance movement Hezbollah which has played a key role in helping the Syrian army in its fight against foreign-backed terrorists.

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Iran Feeding Uranium Gas Into Advanced Centrifuges

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Iran has begun feeding uranium hexafluoride (UF6) gas feedstock into the advanced IR-2m uranium-enriching centrifuges installed at its underground plant at Natanz, according to a UN nuclear watchdog report obtained by Reuters on Wednesday.

According to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the Islamic Republic can only accumulate enriched uranium with first-generation IR-1 machines, which are the only ones it can operate at the underground plant.

A previous International Atomic Energy Agency report said that Iran had installed IR-2m machines underground.

"On 14 November 2020, the Agency verified that Iran began feeding UF6 into the recently installed cascade of 174 IR-2m centrifuges at the Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) in Natanz," the International Atomic Energy Agency report to member states dated Tuesday said. Until Iran's new breach on Wednesday, it was unclear whether Tehran had taken the new, expected Biden administration into account with its moves at Natanz.

With the latest report, it is clear that the Islamic Republic is challenging the new incoming Biden administration or responding to new threats by the Trump administration, or both. Also last week, the IAEA revealed that it found Tehran's explanations unsatisfactory for how and why certain nuclear program-related particles were found by agency inspectors at sites where they should not have been present.

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Jahangiri Felicitates Sultanate of Oman on National Day

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian First Vice President congratulated National Day of Sultanate of Oman to the country's government and people.

Addressing Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Omani Cabinet, in a congratulatory message, Iranian First Vice President Es'hagh Jahangiri felicitated the Omani government and the people on National Day of Sultanate of Oman.

In this message, Jahangiri referred to the growing trend of cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman, reassuring this will serve the common interests of the two sides in all fields.

Tehran Ready for Full JCPOA Commitment, Wary of U.S. Behavior

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Speaking in an exclusive interview with Press TV, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman has said the Islamic Republic is prepared to return to full implementation of its nuclear agreement with world countries, but is wary of how the next U.S. administration will act.

"Iran is definitely ready if the other side is ready to get back to full implementation of the JCPOA," Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Tuesday, attending the Iranian international news network's studio in Tehran.

He was referring by abbreviation to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name of the historic 2015 nuclear deal that came about between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group of countries, the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany.

The administration of the now-outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump left the deal in 2018 under its trademark policy of "maximum pressure" against Iran.

Washington then reinstated the sanctions that it had lifted once it became a JCPOA member, and also started to cow others into committing to the bans and stopping their trade with Tehran.

The Islamic Republic, however, adopted antithetical economic measures under a directive by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei of "Resistive Economy," and also started to take nuclear countermeasures to retaliate against the U.S. and others' non-commitment to the JCPOA.

Iran's combined retaliation has now prompted many world officials, media outlets, and observers to outspokenly identify the American campaign as an abortive one. Khatibzadeh, in turn, said the push had evolved into "maximum failure" for Washington.

Asked if Iran would "trust" the U.S. if President-elect Joe Biden was to take over the White House, the spokesman said the US had shown everyone that it was not trustworthy.

"The issue is not trust. Actually, the nuclear agreement was negotiated based on mutual mistrust. So, this matters most. And we're just looking at the behavior of who is going to run the White House," he said, and noted that it was too soon to tell what was going to happen in the future.

The Iranian official, meanwhile, addressed the lame-duck U.S. administration's claim that it was going to build a "wall of sanctions" that, some officials have said, no U.S. administration would be able to break down to return to the JCPOA and lift the economic restrictions.



"In their own words... 'there's nothing left to be sanctioned,'" Khatibzadeh said, citing U.S. officials' admissions concerning the extent of Washington's sanctioning spree against Iran.

"These are part of psychological war against Iranians," he said, adding, "There's nothing more they can do other than to continue this psychological warfare against the Iranian nation."

The official said the outgoing U.S. officials were making such claims out of frustration and in order to convince the world that their maximum pressure policy was still alive.

"Everybody knows to what extent they've not been able to reach any goals of their policy."

Separately, Khatibzadeh addressed recent claims that one of the top leaders of the al-Qaeda terrorist group had been secretly killed by Washington-directed Israeli agents in Tehran.

He called the allegations "unsubstantiated," saying the U.S. was very much used to "weaponizing" the media to advance its political ill will and agenda.

"They know better who has founded, who has established, who is recruiting for al-Qaeda right now," he noted.

Also, the official addressed the settlement that was reached recently with Russia's mediation between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

He referred to an initiative that Iran has advanced towards resolution of the roughly-three-decade-old conflict.

The spokesman said the ceasefire that has been agreed enjoyed "large overlaps" with Iran's proposal, and said Tehran always welcomed any bid towards solving the dispute.

He, however, categorically rejected claims that Iran or any other country's territorial borders, for that matter, were to be "changed" under a conflict settlement process between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"Neither Iran's border nor the region's borders will be changed," he said, reminding how Tehran has invariably urged all the parties concerned in the conflict to attach respect for sovereign borders.

Iran Not to Fulfill Commitments If U.S. Does Not So

TEHRAN (MNA) – President's Chief of Staff said if the US does not return to its commitments, Iran will not be able to meet its requirements, either.

In his Wednesday remarks, Mahmoud Vaezi said, "If the Americans do not return to their commitments, we will not be able to fulfill our requirements, and therefore they must first fulfill their commitments."

Answering a question about his prediction of Biden's return to the JCPOA, he said, "The next US administration will come into office two months later and we are not in contact with them to know about their decision."

"Biden and Harris have announced that the US will return to the JCPOA because it is a contribution to world peace," he said, "But the JCPOA is a comprehensive agreement signed by all parties, and if they do not return to their commitments, we cannot do the same. Therefore, they must first meet their obligations."

Tehran, Belgrade Stress Enhancing Defense Cooperation

BELGRADE (IP)

- Iran's ambassador to Belgrade and the defense minister of Serbia stressed the establishment and promotion of cooperation in various fields, including the defense field.



The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Belgrade Rashid Hassanpour met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Serbia, Nebojša Stefanović, on Tuesday and stated that there is the capacity to develop cooperation in the field of military training, military medicine, as well as other areas in the interests of both sides.

Referring to the long history of friendship between Serbia and Iran, Nebojša Stefanović said that Belgrade appreciates Tehran's principled position regarding the non-recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence.

Welcoming the development of comprehensive cooperation between Tehran and Belgrade, the Serbian defense minister stressed that Serbia adheres to the principle of military neutrality and the maintenance of peace and stability with the aim of economic development.

Italian Ambassador Summoned Over Canada's Anti-Tehran Stance



TEHRAN (IFP) - The Italian ambassador to Tehran whose country represents Canadian interests in Iran has been summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In a meeting on Tuesday, the director general for U.S. affairs at the Iranian foreign ministry conveyed to the top Italian diplomat Iran's strong protest at the Canadian government's anti-human rights behavior and its hypocrisy with regards to the civil and consular rights of Iranian nationals living in Canada.

The Italian ambassador was reminded that more than 400,000 Iranian expatriates in Canada have been deprived of receiving consular services over the past few years following the severance of ties between Iran and Canada.

The Iranian official also dismissed as unacceptable and contrary to Ottawa's human rights claims the Canadian government's continued disregard for Iran's requests for the establishment of a consular office or an interests section, and Canada's dodging this humanitarian responsibility.

The Iranian official also expressed Iran's strong protest at other actions taken by the Canadian government.

"Moreover, the Canadian government has turned this country into a safe haven for economic and financial offenders of the world, and keeps shirking the responsibility for prosecuting, arresting and extraditing criminals such as Mahmoud-Reza Khavari, who lives in Canada like an ordinary citizen despite having embezzled \$2.6 billion," said the Iranian official.

"This comes as Khavari is on the Interpol's Red Alert List, and the Canadian government is obliged to cooperate with Interpol to look into the issue and extradite Khavari," he added.

The Italian ambassador was also reminded that these are only two examples of the Canadian government's anti-rights actions, and that Canada's continued politically-motivated approaches will question its competence as a country which claims to advocate human rights while criticizing the status of human rights in other countries.

Reinforcing Domestic Power Effective to Change U.S. Approach

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Wednesday that without reinforcing domestic power, the U.S. will not change its approach.

Qalibaf emphasized the importance of capital market, saying it is no comparable with other markets since we can save the country from being bank-oriented and compensate lack of foreign investment in Iran's economy.

He described the U.S. as main enemy of Iran, saying as Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution had stressed the only way to fight enemy is by working.

He noted that the capital market is clear and should not be subject to bureaucracy.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf referred to recent elections in the U.S. and the new president's approach toward Iran, saying the US approach toward Iran will not certainly change.

In order to change U.S. approach, we should focus on bolstering domestic power. He did not elaborate.

Tehran Supports Gov't-Led Peace Process in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian foreign minister has reaffirmed Tehran's support for the peace process in Afghanistan with the Kabul government's leadership.

"Iran supports the Afghan government-led peace negotiation process and emphasizes maintaining the achievements of the past 19 years within the framework of the current constitution," Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a meeting with Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Mirwais Naab on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Zarif said the only way to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan is to involve all groups in the country's system of government, adding that Tehran has had clear dialogues in this regard with the neighboring countries.

The two sides also discussed bilateral ties and matters of mutual interest and underlined the need for the finalization of the document for comprehensive cooperation between the two countries.

Zarif expressed Iran's readiness to inaugurate the strategic Khaf-Herat railroad project.

Naab, for his part, expressed gratitude for warm Iran's hospitality and cordial atmosphere of the talks, and for the Iranian government and people's sympathy with Afghanistan over the recent terrorist attacks in Kabul.

He added that Kabul appreciates Iran's principled stance in support of the Afghan government-led peace process and negotiations, and has the intention, will and commitment to finalize the comprehensive cooperation documents with Iran.

U.S. Sanctions Put Iranians' Health at Risk

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Co-Chairman of Iran-Greece Parliamentary Friendship Group Ali Jeddi said in a meeting with the Greek Ambassador in Tehran Dimitri Alexandrakis that when the coronavirus has affected international community, the U.S. medical and economic sanctions have put Iranians health at risk.

Jeddi complained that the international community has kept silent and made no direct and explicit reaction to the U.S. horrific crimes against Iranians.

He said that the U.S. terrorist attack to assassinate Lieutenant-General Qasem Soleimani and disrupting security in the Middle East are clear instances of violation of Iranian national sovereignty, the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Referring to the historical and cultural commonalities of Iran and Greece, Jeddi said that Iran-Greece relations are longstanding and historical and can help expand political, economic and cultural co-operation.

Jeddi added that despite the U.S. inhumane and oppressive sanctions, there is hope to expand economic ties through facilitating cooperation of private sectors of the two countries.

Saying that inauguration of Iran-Greece Chamber of Commerce will be an opening for increasing economic and trade relations, he added joint investment can serve to enhance level of economic cooperation.



Greece ambassador in Tehran acknowledged his Government's resolve to expand relations in every field, including economic, trade, and cultural cooperation.

Alexandrakis hoped that with removal of sanctions, Iran-Greece economic ties will grow up.

He said that Iran and Greece enjoy historical and cultural heritage and can share experience in tourism industry to attract more tourists.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:49
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:14
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:12
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:35

103. When ye pass (Congregational) prayers, celebrate Allah's praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides; but when ye are free from danger, set up Regular Prayers: For such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.
104. And slacken not in following up the enemy: If ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships; but ye have Hope from Allah, while they have none. And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

Surah 4. Women (103 - 104)

Tehran, Berlin Seeking Revival of Economic Relation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ambassador of Germany to Tehran Hans-Udo Mutzel in meeting with Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Masoud Khansari called for revival of bilateral trade relation and talked about revival of trade relations between Iran and Europe.

Speaking in the meeting, German Ambassador Mutzel emphasized the recent stance of German government for resumption of a new chapter in cooperation between Iran and Germany in all levels and said creating new economic opportunities are the start of new round of bilateral relations after determination of the result of the U.S. presidential election. He then announced readiness of the economic sector of German Embassy in Tehran for cooperation with Tehran Chamber of Commerce and identifying common trade and industrial grounds between economic enterprises of both states.

Mutzel also called for launching the second project for exchange of humanitarian goods between both states through the trading mechanism of INSTEX and reiterated despite problems and hurdles in way of revival of political relations between Iran and Europe which is still under heavy shadow of Trump Administration sanctions, operationalization of this project can signal a clear message from the economic sector to the statesmen that damaged relations between governments can be fixed very fast.

He also said that the INSTEX should not be tied to the bigger problems that there are still very complications in resolving them, reiterating that economic



relations between Iran and Germany and then between Tehran and Europe can be developed step by step.

Meanwhile Khansari, for his part, called INSTEX a big failure which was not employed properly by the European governments.

He reiterated that INSTEX belongs to the U.S. maximum pressure era against Iran and with recent development in the White House, the hope for removal of sanctions has become colorful. He noted that so in the current condition, they should think of creating the grounds for financial and banking exchanges beyond the INSTEX between Iran and its trade partners, and with Trump's exit from the White House, a good opportunity has been set in front of Germany as one of the major trade partner of Iran in order that Germans step in to restore banking interactions with Iran.

He then pointed to considerable amount of trade exchanges between Iran and Germany after the nuclear deal, the JCPOA, adding but after the U.S. pullout of the JCPOA, European governments had to follow the U.S. and stopped cooperating with Iran.

He added that since currently the hope for revival of the JCPOA has increased, Iran and Germany can start a new round of economic cooperation and announced readiness of Tehran Chamber for any cooperation with private sector as well as German Embassy in line with bolstering the ties.

Iran, Africa Trade Surpasses \$180m Amid U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman for Iran's customs said the value of Iran's trade with the African continent in the past seven months worth \$180,432,161.

The Spokesman for the Iranian Customs Ruhollah Latifi said on Tuesday that the Islamic Republic of Iran has traded with 27 African countries in the past seven months, adding: "This volume of trading despite harsh U.S. sanctions and amidst the global outbreak of the Coronavirus.

With 54 countries, Africa is the second largest continent in the world, with a population of 1.3 billion compared to the global average, and therefore is one of the world's potential future markets.

Iran Can Expand Marine, Rail Trade Through Development of Anzali Port

ANZALI (IP) - As Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development visited the Anzali Free Trade Zone, several port projects were inaugurated in Gilan province, northern Iran.

After participating in the International Conference of the Eurasian Economic Union in the Anzali Free Zone on Tuesday, Mohammad Eslami visited the construction process of the Qazvin-Rasht-Anzali railway.

The railway is one of the most important transportation projects in Iran that can connect the country's northern neighbors and European countries to the Indian subcontinent.

Mohammad Eslami also visited the construction process of the pier in the Anzali Free Zone and the executive operations of the bypass highway of Bandar Anzali.

Signing quadripartite memoranda of Iran Railway Company and inviting investors to invest in port and rail projects were among the other programs of the Iranian minister to Gilan.

Iran Calls for Immediate Completion Of Rasht-Astara Railway

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's ambassador to Russia called for speeding up the Rasht-Astara railway construction, which connects Iran's economy to the east and the west.

Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, at an online conference titled 'the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Geopolitical Role of Free Trade Zones in Development of Regional Relations', noted the high importance of the Eurasian Union in the global and regional economy and said: "Since Iran became a temporary member of EAEU a year ago, it has been agreed that 862 items will be exported and imported."

Iran's ambassador to Russia stated: "In the past year, Iran's exports to the Eurasian Union have increased by six percent."

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Geopolitical Role of Free Trade Zones in Development of Regional Relations were held today with Iranian and foreign officials' participation by following health instructions in Anzali, northern Iran.

Over 706,000 Tons of Copper Concentrate Produced in 7 Months



TEHRAN (MNA) - Production of copper concentrate in Iran stood at 706,816 tons during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21), which was two percent more than the output in the same period of time in the past year.

Copper concentrate output in the seventh month of the current year stood at 107,192 tons, which was five percent higher than the figure for the seventh month of the past year.

In the first seven months of this year, 102.916 million tons of copper ore were extracted from the relevant mines, which shows a three-percent increase compared to the forecast for this year.

Used as raw materials in copper smelting, copper concentrates have a copper content of about 30 percent by weight. The remainder consists mostly of sulfur and iron. Copper concentrates are made mostly from sulfide ores.

In its outlook plan for the mining sector in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), Iran plans to produce 1.427 million tons of copper concentrate.

The country had planned to produce 1.198 million tons of copper concentrate in the past year, while the output reached 1.18 million tons.

Iran has seen its copper exports doubled in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) despite a series of bitter sanctions imposed by the United States aimed at hampering the Islamic Republic's trade of lucrative metals.

A senior official at Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), Iran's largest metals and mining holding, has said that the value of exports for main copper products reached more than \$1 billion over the past year.

Iran, Afghanistan to Ink 5 Cooperation Documents

TEHRAN (IP) - A member of the national security committee of Iran's parliament, Fadahassein Maleki said that five cooperation documents will be signed between Iran and Afghanistan, three of which have been already prepared.

On the sidelines of the open session of Iran's parliament session on Tuesday, Fadahassein Maleki, in an exclusive interview with Iran Press said that Iran's relations with neighboring countries especially Afghanistan is our priority.

He further went on to explain that relations include economic, political, trade, and security sectors.

The Member of the national security committee of the parliament added that regarding the common cultural background with Afghanistan and the transit line of Chabahar (which offers a way to widen regional trade), Iran's relations with the country are more significant.

Referring to the five documents, Maleki noted that they are in various areas, including water (Hirmand and Hamoon rivers, which can be a source of investment and creating job opportunities), citizens, training and cultural affairs, and security.

"These documents are going to be signed by the presidents of the two countries soon," the MP concluded.

Iran, Iraq Trading Exchanges Through Sumar Crossing on the Rise

TEHRAN (IP) - Mazen al-Khazaei, the governor of the Mendali region in Iraq's Diyala province (bordering Iran), announced a boom in the Sumar-Mendali crossing after a few months of reduced activity.

Al-Khazaei told Al-Ma'louma website that the exchange rate at the border crossing had increased by 10% compared to last month.

Iraqi governor added: "This crossing's lack of trading prosperity in recent months had several reasons, including the increase of exchanges in the border crossings located in Iraqi Kurdistan."

Mazen al-Khazaei attributed the increase in trade to more job opportunities in Diyala province. He predicted

that in the coming months, an increase in imports from Iran to Iraq would be expected by resolving some issues and issuing licenses to companies seeking to import goods from Iran.

The Iraqi official then said that the Sumar-Mandali crossing could become a significant economic gateway in Diyala, following the resolving of the Iraqi Kurdistan crossings issue.

According to Al-Khazaei, the crossing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, while in previous months, it only was two days a week.

During a visit to Diyala province on July 11th, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi reopened the border crossing.

MAPNA Among Top 10 Oil Contracting Firms in MENA

TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran's MAPNA Group has been ranked among the top 10 contracting companies in the Middle East and North Africa region by Meed Economic Review (MEED).

Mapna Group has performed well in the domestic market in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries and has succeeded in signing a \$876 million contract for the development of Parsi and Paranj oil fields with the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC).

In this ranking, the Japanese company JGC for a contract with the Iraqi Ministry of Oil at the Basra refinery and a contract with the Saudi company Aramco for the East Saudi gas field, the Korean engineering company Samsung for contracts for a reservoir gas storage project in Saudi Arabia and the Hassi Messaoud refinery project in Algeria, Spanish company Tecnicas Reunidas for a joint contract with Samsung to operate the Algerian Hassi Messaoud refinery and another contract for the installation of a salt water unit at the Aramco refinery were chosen as other top contractors of the MENA region.

China Petrochemical Engineering Company is fourth with seven contracts in Algeria, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates.

The fifth, sixth and eighth EPC contractors in this ranking are Egypt's Petrojet, NPI and Egyptian Petrochemical Construction Company, which have signed contracts to operate hydrocarbon projects in Egypt.

The French company Technip is ranked ninth. This ranking is due to the company's contribution to the EPC project for the construction of a hydrocracking complex at the Assiut oil refinery in Egypt.

The final ranking of the list belongs to the Greek company Archirodon Group, which has won a contract from the onshore sector of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to develop the Abu Dhabi "Bob" oil field.

1st Cargo From Bid Boland Refinery Exported

TEHRAN (MNA) -Iran's Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refinery, which started operating recently, has exported its first cargo of products, Shana reported on Wednesday.

The destination for the 30,000-ton cargo has not been announced.

As the largest gas refinery project in West Asia with an investment of \$3.4 billion, the Persian Gulf Bid Boland project is now underway and will be officially inaugurated in the near future.

With the project reaching its full capacity in near future, this complex is expected to bring the country \$700 million of revenue every year.

This project was recently nominated for the International Project Management Association (IPMA)'s Global Project Excellence Award at the energy sector.

Bid Boland Refinery, which was also awarded as the country's top mega project by the Ninth National Project Management Award, has been announced as one of the four final nominees for the IPMA's 2020 Global Project Excellence Award in the energy sector.

Located in Behbahan County in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Bid Boland will have an annual production capacity of 10.4 million tons of methane, 1.5 million tons of ethane, one million tons of propane, 600,000 tons of gas condensates, and 500,000 tons of butane.



Corbyn Reinstated After Suspension Over Anti-Semitism Response

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's former main opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn said he has been readmitted to the Labour Party after being suspended following his comments downplaying a report critical of its handling of anti-Semitism complaints.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission said in October it had found evidence of failure adequately to train people investigating alleged anti-Semitism, political interference in the processing of complaints, and harassment of individuals.

Corbyn, 71, reacted to the report by saying the scale of Labour's anti-Semitism problem had been overstated by the media and his political opponents, and that his attempts to deal with the issue had been blocked by "obstructive party bureaucracy".



Saudi to Host Online G20 Summit Amid Pandemic, Recession

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia hosts the G20 summit Saturday in a first for an Arab nation, but the scaled-down virtual format could limit debate on a resurgent coronavirus pandemic and crippling economic crisis.

The two-day meeting of the world's wealthiest nations follows a bitter U.S. election disputed by President Donald Trump and comes amid criticism over what campaigners call the group's inadequate response to the worst recession in decades.

Held under the shadow of a raging pandemic, the summit which is usually an opportunity for one-on-one engagements between world leaders, is reduced to brief online sessions on pressing global issues - from climate change to growing inequality.



Trump Fires U.S. Election Security Official



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Donald Trump fired Tuesday the government's top election security official, who had rejected the president's unsubstantiated claims of "massive" fraud in the vote he lost to Joe Biden.

Trump announced on Twitter the termination "effective immediately" of Chris Krebs, who leads the agency that jointly declared "the November 3rd election was the most secure in American history."

Trump, who refuses to acknowledge that he lost his bid for reelection to Democrat Biden, has repeatedly claimed without evidence that the voting and count was replete with fraud.

"The recent statement by Chris Krebs on the security of the 2020 Election was highly inaccurate, in that there were massive improprieties and fraud," wrote in a tweet.

"Therefore, effective immediately, Chris Krebs has been terminated as Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency."

Krebs, who reportedly told friends last week he expected to be removed, appeared to confirm it in a tweet on his personal account.

"Honored to serve. We did it right. Defend Today, Secure Tomorrow," he wrote.

Krebs was in charge of fending off possible foreign and domestic hacker intrusions into myriad voting machines, sorting and counting machines, databases and other systems that states and localities rely on to tally ballots.

Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said Krebs and his team had "worked diligently to safeguard our elections."

"Instead of rewarding this great service, President Trump is retaliating against Director Krebs and other officials who did their duty," he said in a statement.

The challenge was even tougher this year because of the complexities of the coronavirus, which forced a sweeping turn to voting by mail.

Under Krebs CISA had also warned several times that Russians and Iranians were making attempts to break into US systems, as Russians had tried in 2016.

The White House was reportedly particularly unhappy about a CISA web page set up to fight disinformation called "Rumor vs. Reality".

The page rejected claims Trump and others have made, including that many votes were made in the names of dead people, that counting the ballots days after election day is not normal, and that shifting vote counts indicate fraud.

Through numerous reviews, investigations and lawsuits, no evidence has come up of any significant distortion or loss of votes, by accident or fraud.

Peru's Interim President Sworn In



COLOMBIA (Dispatches) - Peruvian lawmaker Francisco Sagasti was sworn in as interim president on Tuesday, voted for by Congress in an effort to return stability to a country that has seen deadly protests and the departure of two presidents over the last week.

Sagasti, a legislator from the centrist Purple Party, is expected to serve out his term until July next year, with a new presidential election scheduled for April 11.

The Andean nation has been shaken since the abrupt ouster in an impeachment trial of popular leader Martin Vizcarra on Nov. 9. The removal of Vizcarra, whose anti-graft agenda had caused tensions with Congress, triggered often violent protests in which two young people died. Vizcarra's successor, Manuel Merino, resigned on Sunday after just five days in power.

"It is absolutely necessary to remain calm, but do not confuse this with passivity, conformity, or resignation," Sagasti said in an address to Congress after his swearing-in. Sagasti's appointment has indeed appeared to calm tensions, though a deep mistrust of the country's politicians remains. On Monday night, hundreds of people marched in the capital Lima, with calls for a new constitution and "justice for the fallen."

"I think that Sagasti is someone that gives democratic guarantees, who can get a transition towards a new government that will be okay," said one protester, Paloma Carpio.

Jose Murguía, also protesting, was less convinced.

"Quite frankly, it's the same rubbish. The mask has changed but everything is all the same," he said. Sagasti, 76, an engineer and former World Bank official, has yet to name his cabinet, but has said he is open to including ministers from Vizcarra's government, which could open the door to the return of star economy minister, María Antonieta Alva.

"While this shouldn't be a complicated matter to solve, it has become clear that the two delegations are politicizing this topic," Heusgen said, after raising the issue behind closed doors in a formal Security Council meeting.

The Russian mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A spokesperson for China's U.N. mission said the U.N. resolution imposing the refined petroleum cap does not specify what unit of measurement should be used and that negotiations on a conversion rate involve "complicated technical issues" and "it's normal that relevant parties have differences."

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Ethiopian Troops Marching on Tigrayan Capital

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) - Ethiopia said its troops were marching on the capital of the Tigray region on Tuesday after a deadline for rebel forces to surrender passed in a two-week conflict shaking the Horn of Africa and alarming the world.

"The final critical act of law enforcement will be done in the coming days," Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said.

Later on Tuesday, Abiy's special task force on the Tigray conflict accused rebel forces of destroying bridges connecting the regional capital Mekelle with the rest of the country in attempts to hold back federal government forces.

"Anxious about (our) advance, the junta has destroyed four bridges that lead to Mekelle," it said, adding that the TPLF had also destroyed the section of a main road eastwards to Mekelle between the towns of Shire and Axum. Shire was under federal control, the task force reported earlier in the day.

"The TPLF junta will soon be held accountable for destroying this infrastructure and for crimes it has committed so far." There was no immediate TPLF comment on the accusations.

Abiy, Africa's youngest leader and the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner, launched air strikes and a ground offensive on Nov. 4 after accusing ex-comrades and the local ruling party,

the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), of armed revolt.

Tigrayan leaders say Abiy, 44, who comes from Ethiopia's largest ethnic group the Oromo, has persecuted and purged them from government and security posts since taking office in 2018. Tigrayan forces have fired rockets into the neighbouring nation of Eritrea, accusing Eritrean forces of helping the Ethiopian government side, an allegation denied by Asmara.

But the rocket fire has escalated a conflict which has already killed hundreds - one diplomatic source said thousands - and sent about 30,000 refugees into Sudan.

"How could they kill their own brothers and sisters? This is not our custom," Addis Ababa resident Fitawrari Million said of the Tigrayan leaders during a rally to honour federal soldiers.

The United Nations said a "full-scale humanitarian crisis" was unfolding. With communications largely down and media barred, Reuters could not independently verify assertions by either side nor the situation on the ground.

"People are coming out of Ethiopia really scared, afraid, with stories saying they have been fleeing heavy fighting and there's no sign of the fighting stopping," said Babar Baloch, spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).



Modi Calls Biden to Advance Strategic Ties



NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken to U.S. President-elect Joe Biden by telephone to congratulate him on his election victory, which he said showed the strength of U.S. democracy, and he vowed to deepen strategic ties.

Modi initially sent his congratulations to Biden in a social media message soon after U.S. television networks projected him to be the winner of the Nov. 3 election even though President Donald Trump has refused to concede defeat.

Modi followed that up with a phone call to congratulate Biden and reaffirm his commitment to a strategic partnership between the two big democracies, Modi said on Twitter late on Tuesday.

"Prime Minister Modi warmly congratulated President-elect Biden on his election, describing it as a testament to the strength and resilience of democratic traditions in the United States," the Indian foreign ministry said.

Modi had built close ties with Trump. The two leaders held a joint rally in the U.S. city of Houston last year and again in Modi's home state of Gujarat this year, during a visit to India by Trump.

Modi's critics said the prime minister had come dangerously close to endorsing Trump's candidature, which they said could hurt India's prospects under a Democratic administration.

India and the United States drew closer during Trump's presidency as both countries aimed to counter China's expanding military and economic influence in the region.

During the telephone call, Modi also extended his best wishes to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, the daughter of an Indian immigrant whose election to the second highest public office in the United States has been cheered in India.

The two leaders also discussed their priorities, including containing the novel coronavirus pandemic, promoting access to affordable vaccines and tackling climate change, the foreign ministry said.

Shanon
(adviser)

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Niavaran Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, yard
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2700)
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S, J, balcony, F.F

Gheitarieh (\$1600)
140sq.m, 2bdrs
S/p, S, J, F.F

Elahieh bldg (\$4000)
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China to Promote Economic Growth to a Reasonable Range

BEIJING (Reuters) - China will promote economic growth to a "reasonable" range while pursuing higher quality development, Premier Li Keqiang was quoted as saying on Tuesday by state radio.

Li, who did not give specific growth targets, was also quoted as saying that the government would continue to implement policies to support sectors in difficulties in this time of the coronavirus pandemic.

China's factory output rose faster than expected in October and retail sales sped up, as the recovery in the world's second-largest economy from its COVID-19 slump gathered momentum. The government will "make an overall consideration of macro policies for the next phase, and enhance their effectiveness and sustainability", Li said.



OPEC+ Committee Reveals No 2021 Oil Cut Guidance

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC and its allies will keep the oil market guessing for a few weeks on whether they will maintain their deep production cuts into 2021, as traders largely expect and ministers themselves have hinted.

A key monitoring committee led by Saudi Arabia and Russia met Nov. 17 without making any policy recommendations, delegates told S&P Global Platts, despite reviewing proposals to postpone by three or six months the OPEC+ alliance's scheduled 2 million b/d easing of quotas.

The 22-country producer bloc will announce its decision when it convenes online Nov. 30-Dec. 1, still ample time for market fundamentals to shift, delegates said, warranting a cautious approach to publicizing any outcome beforehand.

Analysts and traders have said that, if the quotas are scaled back, the fragile oil market would likely not be able to absorb the additional supplies -- along with Libya's resurgent crude production -- without tanking prices, particularly with the first quarter traditionally a low-demand season. "All participating countries need to be vigilant, proactive and be prepared to act, when necessary, to the requirements of the market," the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee said in a post-meeting communiqué.

The JMMC, tasked with assessing market conditions and tracking member compliance with quotas, will meet again Dec. 17 to review any new deal.

OPEC+ ministers have been cheered by recent news of advances in developing a COVID-19 vaccine, as well as signs of a robust economic recovery in China and India.

But this has been counterbalanced by a surge in infections that has prompted many western economies to reimplement lockdown measures, as well as the rapid recovery of war-torn Libya's oil industry. Libya, along with sanctions-hobbled Iran and Venezuela, is exempt from a quota under the OPEC+ agreement.

The current deal calls for OPEC+ members to cut 7.7 million b/d of crude production from November 2018 levels, tapering down to 5.8 million b/d from January 2021 to April 2022.

Earlier, in his opening remarks to the JMMC, Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman vowed that the alliance would remain responsive to changing fundamentals, warning his OPEC+ counterparts that the oil market could punish prices if they do not remain disciplined about how much they produce.

"There is still a ways to go before we reach the other side of the pandemic," the prince said. "We as a group do not want to give the market any excuse to react negatively... This is why we must be prepared to act according to the requirements of the market."

The JMMC praised the high overall compliance levels achieved by members to their quotas, pegging it at 101% for October and 99.5% since May, but said previous overproduction needs to be made up through "compensation cuts" under the terms of the deal.

So far, only the UAE and Angola have made significant progress among the 11 members that owe compensation, the committee noted. It tallied 768,000 b/d of catch-up cuts that had been made but did not specify how much excess production still needs to be accounted for, nor which countries were responsible.

"I urge all participants of the Declaration of Cooperation to renew their determination to abide by the terms of the agreement that have greatly contributed to the balancing of global markets," Prince Abdulaziz said.

Even so, he criticized the market for any cynicism of OPEC+ efforts and resolve. Having previously warned short-sellers to "make his day," the prince said he would prefer the market focus on the alliance's achieved cuts, which he said had removed 1.6 billion barrels since May.

Europe's Spending Surge Will Not Make Debt Unsustainable

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - A surge in public spending across Europe to contain a pandemic-induced recession will not make debt levels unsustainable, even if some euro zone members are sitting on excessively large debt piles, European Central Bank chief economist Philip Lane said.

Governments are running up record deficits this year to keep their economies going amid partial lockdowns and public debt will exceed 100% of GDP this year, with further small rises seen next year and in 2022.

"Yes, there will be more public debt, but in the context of very low interest rates, in the context of the macroeconomic environment, the assessment should be that this is something that is sustainable," Lane told Portuguese broadcaster RTP.

"There is no reason to believe that this has some kind of intrinsic dynamic that will lead us to a return of the conditions of ten years ago," Lane said, referring to the bloc's debt crisis. "The cost of making the payments on this debt in the years to come will be quite contained."

The ECB has kept borrowing costs record-low but has long argued that governments, not the central bank, need to do the heavy lifting in sustaining the economy until a vaccine is deployed and restrictions are lifted.

But the European Union's plans to deploy 750 billion euros (£673 billion) in a recovery fund were dealt a setback on Monday when Hungary and Poland blocked the scheme, raising the risk that funding will be delayed.

Britain and U.S. Sign Aviation Deal for Post-Brexit Flights

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain and the U.S. have signed a deal for the continuation of flights between the two countries as the UK prepares for the end of its transition period with the European Union.

The deal, called the Air Services Agreement, was reached in November 2018, and signed on Tuesday by UK transport minister Grant Shapps, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. Transport Secretary Elaine Chao.

Britain left the EU earlier this year but in practice remains covered by EU agreements and rules until the transition period finishes at the end of this year.

The newly signed agreement allows the two countries to continue existing operations as they did under the EU-U.S. open skies deal, although flying between them is currently at a very low level due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Before COVID-19, tens of millions of passengers a year travelled between the countries, contributing to a trading relationship with the U.S. worth over 230 billion pounds (\$300 billion), said the UK's Department for Transport in a statement.

British Airways, part of IAG, and Virgin Atlantic, two UK-based airlines which fly trans-Atlantic routes, have called on the two governments to work together to agree a testing regime to allow travel to recover during the pandemic.



Indian Oil Firms Need to Bring in Foreign Players to Unlock Resources

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India's oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan asked exploration companies to consider farming out their acreages to global players with advanced technology to expedite development and raise

oil and gas output.

India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, depends on foreign purchases for over 80% of its oil needs. The nation's oil and gas output has been stagnant for years, forcing it to raise reliance on imports to meet rising fuel demand.

"The government will grant petroleum mining lease rights but the companies should consider a farm-out (of a stake) to get global technology players," Pradhan said in Hindi.

Indian exploration companies should work at "exponential speed" to unlock resources, Pradhan said at production sharing signing ceremony of 11 oil and blocks by state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corp and Oil India Ltd.

India's exploration licensing rounds have so far seen a lukewarm response from global oil majors, with most of the blocks awarded to local companies, mainly ONGC and Oil India.

The companies have to reject a "business as usual approach" and adopt a professionally-run "commercially viable and technological friendly" model to boost output, Pradhan said.

He urged Indian exploration companies to function like holding firms and share revenue and profit with their new technical and financial partners. This will also boost the nation's resources and add to the federal exchequer, he said.

U.S., Allies Need to Set Global Trade Rules to Counter China's Influence

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President-elect Joe Biden said on Monday the United States needed to negotiate with allies to set global trading rules to counter China's growing influence but declined to say whether he would join a new China-backed Asian trade pact signed on Sunday.

Asked at a news conference in Wilmington, Delaware, whether the United States would join the Asian-focused 15-country Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, Biden said he could not yet discuss U.S. trade policy because he had not taken office "and there's only one president at a time."

"We make up 25% ... of the economy in the world," Biden said of the United States. "We need to be aligned with the other democracies, another 25% or more so that we can set the rules of the road instead of having China and others dictate outcomes because they are the only game in town."

The signing of the RCEP at a regional summit in Hanoi creates the world's largest trade agreement, covering 30% of the global economy and 30% of the global population, joining for the first time Asian powers China, Japan and South Korea.

It also marks another setback for U.S. influence in the region after President Donald Trump in 2017 quit the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact, negotiated while Biden was vice president. Biden said he had a detailed trade plan he would discuss on Jan. 21, 2021, the day after he is due to be sworn into office.

While TPP members including Japan and many free-trade advocates have expressed hope that Biden would rejoin that trade pact, he has said little about the subject and advisers have said he would not immediately remove tariffs on Chinese goods.

Biden said he had told leaders the United States would approach trade by insisting that Washington would "invest in American workers and make them more competitive," make sure that labor and environmental interests were represented in any new trade negotiations and stop "poking our finger in the eyes of our friends."

Asked why he would not comment on plans for trade agreements when he has said he would rejoin the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Accords, Biden said: "You're asking me about whether I'd join a specific proposal, the details of which are now only being negotiated among those nations. It would require a negotiation."

Singapore to Run Deficit Into 2021 to Buffer Virus Hit



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong sees the government running a budget deficit at least through early next year, and perhaps "a while" longer, as the coronavirus-hit economy bends the city-state's traditional fiscal prudence.

"The next budget is in February. I very much doubt we will have any budget surplus by then," Lee said in an interview with Bloomberg Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait at the New Economy Forum, held virtually this year. "I hope that we will be able to come back to prudence and a balanced budget, but it may take a while."

Governments globally have spent trillions of dollars this year to combat Covid-19 and its impacts. Singapore was among the first in Asia to unveil massive stimulus, and in March sought to tap its national reserves for the first time since the global financial crisis.

In all, the government has pledged about S\$100 billion (\$74 billion) across five aid packages to stem the virus and its hit to the economy, about half of which has been approved to be financed by past reserves. The latest estimated balance for fiscal year 2020 is a deficit of S\$74.2 billion, according to government figures in October.

Lee defended the need for the deficit, saying in the interview released Tuesday that "just from a counter-cyclical point of view, you do not want to have a negative fiscal impulse," and instead must spend to keep people in jobs or support them through unemployment. His comments echo calls by the International Monetary Fund -- usually a proponent of budget restraint -- to set aside debt fears for now and raise public spending to spur economies.

Lee, 68, said Singapore is still in the middle of a crisis, and reiterated that he planned to leave office once he could "hand it over in good shape," which he hoped would be before "too long." Before the pandemic, Lee had said he aimed to step down by the time he turned 70.

While Covid has prompted massive spending, it won't be easy to find ways to offset those costs with higher revenue, said David Sandison, head of tax for Grant Thornton Singapore Pte Ltd., a business adviser. The city-state's "progressively lower taxes" and incentives have been a big draw for businesses, and remain especially so at a time when many economies are looking inward, he said.



Iranian Film "The Enemies" Goes to Estonian Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian film 'The Enemies' directed by Ali Derakhshandeh has been accepted into the 2020 Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia.

The fiction feature will be screened at the international section of the event, which started on Friday (Nov. 13) and will go on through November 22.

The story is about a middle-aged woman in a small town who receives suspicious letters, accusing her of many crimes. We find out after some time she is sending the letters for revenge for her family.

Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival is an annual film festival held in Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia.



World Should Not Be Complacent After COVID-19 Vaccine News

GENEVA (Reuters) - The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomed Moderna reporting on Monday that its experimental vaccine showed 94.5% efficacy but said that "many questions" remained and it was no time for complacency.

Only very limited amounts of any vaccine will be available in the first half of 2021 for people other than priority health workers, WHO officials said.

"While we continue to receive encouraging news about COVID-19 vaccines and remain cautiously optimistic about the potential for new tools to start to arrive in coming months, right now we are extremely concerned by the surge in cases we are seeing in some countries, particularly in Europe and the Americas," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news briefing.

It marked his return to the Geneva agency from quarantine after being exposed to coronavirus some 17 days ago. Tedros said he had no symptoms and had seen no need for a test.

Moderna Inc's <MRNA.O> experimental vaccine is 94.5% effective in preventing COVID-19 based on interim data from a late-stage trial, the company said on Monday, becoming the second U.S. drugmaker to report results that far exceed expectations.

Together with Pfizer Inc's vaccine, which is also more than 90% effective, and pending more safety data and regulatory review, the United States could have two vaccines authorized for emergency use in December with as many as 60 million doses of vaccine available this year.

Soumya Swaminathan, WHO's chief scientist, said that the Moderna results were "quite encouraging". Its final efficacy and safety profile would still be needed, as well as follow-up on trial participants for two months for any side effects.

Pfizer and Moderna candidate vaccines both use mRNA technology and appear to achieve high efficacy, she added.

"But there are many, many questions still remaining about the duration of protection, the impact on severe disease, the impact on different sub-populations especially the elderly, as well as the adverse events beyond a certain period of time," Swaminathan said.



Clinical trials must continue to collect more data, she said, adding that more results were expected in coming weeks from the other vaccine trials.

"We are looking at at least the first half of the year as being a period with very very limited doses. Supplies are going to be limited, there are bilateral deals that many of the companies have done, so many of the doses have already been booked by some countries," Swaminathan said.

Moderna is a two-dose vaccine and its delivery means, as well as storage, were also important considerations, said Kate O'Brien, director of WHO's immunisation department.

"We will be looking really carefully at the ease at which different vaccines can be delivered and certainly about the number of doses that are required," she said.

APEC Ministers Say Free and Fair Trade Key For Economic Recovery

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - Ministers from Asia-Pacific countries on Tuesday said free, fair and non-discriminatory trade practices were key to an economic recovery from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Ministers from the 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group also said in a joint statement that any emergency trade measures designed to address COVID-19 should be targeted, proportionate and not create unnecessary barriers to trade.

"We recognise the importance of a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable trade and investment environment to drive economic recovery at such a challenging time," the ministers said.

APEC members last issued a joint ministerial statement in 2017. Disagreements derailed discussions in Papua New Guinea in 2018 and deadly riots forced hosts Chile to cancel last year's summit.

Officials began top-level meetings this week as host Malaysia organised the first virtual summit, with the pandemic all but halting international travel.

APEC leaders are scheduled to meet on Friday and another joint statement is expected then.

Malaysia's trade minister, Azmin Ali - who chaired Monday's APEC ministerial meeting - said members had some disagreements over the "level of ambition" in pursuing the bloc's post-2020 vision, which would replace the 1994 Bogor Goals - a set of targets on reducing barriers to trade and investment agreed in Bogor, Indonesia - which expire this year.

"There were also divergent views regarding the need to strengthen multilateral trading systems and deepen economic integration in pursued free trade agreements," Azmin told a virtual news conference.

At the last APEC meeting in 2018, the countries failed to agree on a communique for the first time in their history as deep divisions between the United States and China over trade and investment stymied cooperation.

Fifteen Asia-Pacific economies signed an agreement to form the world's largest free trade bloc the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) on Sunday, a China-backed deal that excludes the United States, which under President Donald Trump quit the rival Trans-Pacific Partnership grouping.

U.S., Europe Plan Vaccination Schemes as Second Virus Wave Builds

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Plans for vaccination programmes began taking shape in Europe and the United States following recent breakthroughs, as surging coronavirus caseloads prompted gruelling new restrictions, with Austria taking the unpopular step Tuesday of closing schools and shops.

Global hopes of vanquishing the coronavirus pandemic were high after US biotech firm Moderna said its vaccine candidate was nearly 95 percent effective in a trial, a week after similar results announced by pharma giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech.

Top U.S. infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci hailed the results, telling AFP that the data exceeded expectations. "The idea that we have a 94.5 percent effective vaccine is stunningly impressive," he said.

Moderna, whose clinical trial involved more than 30,000 participants, expects to have approximately 20 million doses ready to ship in the United States by year-end -- with elderly and at-risk people to be first in line for jobs.

The U.S. Food and Drug Agency may approve both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines early next month, according to Moncef Slaoui, head of the government's "Operation Warp Speed" vaccine quest.

He said that from January, 25 million people would be vaccinated per month.

France too said it was "getting on the starting blocks" for a vaccination programme to launch in January pending French and EU regulatory approval, budgeting 1.5 billion euros (\$1.8 billion) for the rollout in 2021, according to spokesman Gabriel Attal.

Fauci, who heads the National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases, warned it would be crucial to convince people to take the vaccine, particularly in the US, where anti-vaccine sentiment runs high.

"A vaccine with a high degree of efficacy is of no use if nobody gets vaccinated," he said.

Yet with widespread availability of any vaccine still far off, restrictions on free movement, gatherings and business were inevitable as the second wave of the coronavirus continued to build.

In the hardest-hit United States, President-elect Joe Biden expressed frustration over Donald Trump's refusal to cooperate on the White House transition process, saying "more people may die" of Covid-19 without immediate coordination on fighting the pandemic.

Globally, infections have surpassed 55 million with more than 1.3 million deaths, and experts caution the months ahead will still be difficult and dangerous.

Curbs have returned in Europe -- often in the face of protests -- from Greece to Britain, where Covid-19 survivor Prime Minister Boris Johnson was self-isolating after coming into contact with an MP who later tested positive for the virus.

Sweden, which has drawn attention for a softer approach to combating the virus, decided to ban gatherings of more than eight people for the first time.

Tightened restrictions took effect Tuesday in Austria, with schools and shops shut until December 6.

Chancellor Sebastian Kurz drew a sharp backlash for the new measures, which Pamela Rendi-Wagner, leader of the opposition Social Democrats, said reflected a "total loss of control".

"Austria has gone from being a model country to being the bottom of the table in terms of infections," said Rendi-Wagner, herself a doctor and former health minister.

The number of daily infections in the Alpine nation of 8.8 million people grew from 1,000 in early October to 5,984 on Tuesday.

Italy meanwhile said Tuesday it had inspected over 230 retirement and nursing homes and identified 37 with violations, shutting down four of them outright.

The virus tore through the country's care homes during the first wave of the pandemic, with many residents dying before they could be hospitalised and without having been tested. Italy, which is currently reporting over 500 deaths a day from the virus, has seen a spike in the number of contagions in such structures since the start of November.

Tehran Urges Riyadh...

FROM PAGE 1

Riyadh's nuclear ambitions have become a source of heightened concern for the global community in recent years, especially after Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman first hinted in 2018 that the kingdom may go for nukes.

During a trip to the US in mid-March 2018, the heir to the Saudi throne said if Iran develops a nuclear bomb, "we will follow suit as soon as possible."

The kingdom has so far kept its nuclear activities secret, defying calls for it to implement the IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, a system of inspection and verification of the peaceful uses of nuclear materials.

Reports about Saudi Arabia's undeclared nuclear activities were confirmed earlier this year by satellite images, which showed a large compound in a suspicious location in the heart of the desert.

Citing Western officials, The Wall Street Journal reported in early August that Saudi Arabia, with Chinese help, has built a facility for extraction of yellowcake from uranium ore near the remote town of al-Ula.

A clandestine Saudi nuclear programme has been confirmed by satellite images showing a checkpoint, towering security fences, a big building about 150 feet on a side and pools for the collection of uranium waste; a typical blueprint for yellow-cake mills.

The New York Times also said American intelligence agencies had spotted what appeared to be an undeclared nuclear site not too far from the town of al-Uyaynah, located 30 kilometers northwest of Riyadh, and its Solar Village.

The agencies, the report said, are scrutinizing attempts by the kingdom to build up ability to produce nuclear fuel that could potentially lead to the development of nuclear weapons.

Zarif...

FROM PAGE 1

If Biden "opts to fulfill commitments under Resolution 2231, we too can fully return to our commitments immediately. This process is not time consuming at all. It can be done by several executive laws by the president of the United States," Zarif said. "If Biden becomes the US president and settles in the White House, he can lift all of them (sanctions) through three executive orders."

Asked about Iran's stance if Biden makes the removal of sanctions conditional on certain measures by Iran, he replied, "The U.S. is not in a position to set conditions. The United States is required to implement Resolution 2231 as a member of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council."

If the U.S. honors the resolution, lifts sanctions and stops hindering Iran's economic activity, Iran has announced that it will fulfill its JCPOA obligations, Zarif added.

"This can be done automatically, and with no need for conditions or even negotiations. The United States carries out its duties under Resolution 2231 and we will carry out our commitments under the JCPOA," the top Iranian diplomat added.

He also said, "Trump's policy of withdrawing from the JCPOA and his maximum pressure on Iran has failed... Currently, our uranium reserves are not comparable at all to those before Trump and our [nuclear] research and development (R&D) is more advanced than before the JCPOA. Of course, we took these measures under the JCPOA. They show that America has not only failed to achieve its goals, but has moved away from them. This is a negative point for them."

Documents Showing...

FROM PAGE 1

The separatist armed group, according to the ministry, has the support of Saudi and Israeli regimes, and directed terrorist operations inside Iran despite international arrest warrants against its ringleaders.

Following his arrest by Iran's Intelligence Ministry, Chaab admitted to collaboration with the Saudi intelligence service and said the Ahvaz attack was planned and carried out following several sessions with Riyadh's intelligence agents.

He confessed to other crimes as well, including armed robbery targeting a contracting company and a bank in Ahvaz.

The terror outfit has been after separating the southwestern province of Khuzestan — home to the country's Arab population — from the rest of Iran through engaging in armed conflict against the Iranian government.

Syria Intercepts...

FROM PAGE 1

The Arab country has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

Israel mostly keeps quiet about the attacks on Syrian territories which many view as knee-jerk reaction to Syrian government's increasing success in confronting terrorism in country.

The Tel Aviv regime has been a main supporter of terrorist groups that have opposed the government of President Bashar al-Assad since militancy erupted in Syria nine years ago.

Syrian government forces have taken back many areas once controlled by the terrorist groups.

Iran Feeding...

FROM PAGE 1

The IAEA made it clear that it will maintain pressure on Tehran on the issue to explain the discrepancies.

But the bigger issue remains the new advanced centrifuges being installed.

Iran had previously informed the agency that it would transfer three cascades of the uranium-enriching machines from an above-ground pilot plant at the Natanz nuclear site to the underground one, after an above-ground centrifuge workshop exploded in an apparent act of sabotage.

The escalation can still be described as being a limited one.

So far, Iran is only using 174 of its IR-2ms, of which it has far more than 1,000 and is allowed to use around 6,000 IR-1s under the nuclear deal. Put simply, 174 IR-2ms do not hugely change the speed at which Iran could break out to a nuclear weapon.

Furthermore, although the IR-2m is more advanced than the IR-1, it is nowhere near as advanced as the IR-4 and IR-6, which Iran finally succeeded at getting to work in 2020. If Iran keeps the number of IR-2ms low, and even if it at some point installs the other advanced centrifuges but also keeps their numbers low, it may be simply trying to restore what it had above ground prior to the July 2 sabotage of its previous Natanz advanced centrifuge facility.

Ukraine's Nations League Match off Due to Virus

KIEV (Dispatches) - Tuesday's Nations League match between Switzerland and Ukraine has been called off, the Ukrainian football association said, after six of its players tested positive for the coronavirus.

The association said in a statement that it was informed by UEFA the match "cannot take place" after Swiss health authorities made the decision "to quarantine the entire delegation of the national team of Ukraine."

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Herrera Injures Thigh Ahead of Barcelona Clash

MADRID (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid midfielder Hector Herrera is set to miss Saturday's La Liga clash with Barcelona after sustaining a thigh injury.

The 30-year-old sat out Mexico's friendly against South Korea last week and returned to Spain to undergo tests, where it was confirmed he had suffered an injury to a muscle in the upper leg. "Herrera returned from the Mexico National Team's squad due to some discomfort," Atletico said in a statement.

Stunning Spain Hit Germany for Six

MADRID (Dispatches) - Ferran Torres grabbed a hat-trick as Spain condemned Germany to their worst defeat in 89 years on Tuesday, winning 6-0 in Seville to qualify for the UEFA Nations League finals and join France, who came from behind to beat Sweden 4-2.

Manchester City forward Torres was the star for Spain, who were as brilliant as Germany were bad. The result raises further questions about Germany coach Joachim Loew, who was already under pressure coming into this game.

"This has been a black day for us," admitted Loew after Germany's heaviest defeat since losing 6-0 to Austria in 1931.

They came into their final game in League A, Group 4 on top, a point clear of Spain, and so only needed a draw at an empty La Cartuja to qualify for the finals in October next year.

But Alvaro Morata headed Spain in front in the 17th minute before Torres crashed in the second on 33 minutes after Dani Olmo's header hit the bar.

His City team-mate Rodri headed in another to make it 3-0 for Spain before the end of a first half in which they lost Sergio Canales and skipper Sergio Ramos to injury, with the latter coming off feeling his hamstring.

Germany's defence was posted missing as Jose Gaya burst through and squared for Torres to get the fourth on 55 minutes, and Fabian Ruiz teed up the 20-year-old Torres to complete his hat-trick.

Serge Gnabry hit the bar for Germany before substitute Mikel Oyarzabal completed the rout. "It was one of the best and most complete matches of the Spanish national team," said Spain coach Luis Enrique. Germany now have several months to reflect on this loss before the start of 2022 World Cup qualifying in March and then the delayed Euro 2020 in June and July.

Spain, meanwhile, become the second side to qualify for the Nations League finals after France clinched their place by beating Portugal at the weekend.

The World Cup holders finished off their League A, Group 3 campaign by beating Sweden behind closed doors at the Stade de France as Olivier Giroud continued his



remarkable scoring record for Les Bleus with a brace.

Viktor Claesson's deflected early strike gave Sweden the lead, but Giroud soon equalised and Benjamin Pavard put France ahead before half-time.

Giroud then headed in Kylian Mbappe's cross to make it 3-1 before the hour mark, and Kingsley Coman scored France's final goal at the death after Robin Quaison had netted Sweden's second.

Having recently overtaken Michel Platini's tally of 41 goals for Les Bleus, Giroud is now on 44 and is closing in on Thierry Henry's overall record mark of 51.

The 34-year-old remains a key player for France despite being on the periphery with his club Chelsea, for whom he has started just once this season, in the League Cup.

Sweden finish bottom of the group behind Croatia and are relegated to the second-tier League B for the next edition of the competition.

That is despite 10-man Croatia losing 3-2 at home to Portugal in Split, with Manchester City defender Ruben Dias getting a 90th-minute winner for the 2019 Nations League champions.

Chelsea's Mateo Kovacic had scored twice for Croatia, either side of Dias's first of the night and a Joao Felix effort for Portugal, who featured Cristiano Ronaldo wearing the captain's armband.

Marko Rog was sent off for Croatia. The remaining two spots in the Nations League semi-finals will be decided on Wednesday, with Italy and Belgium currently in pole position.

Elsewhere, Montenegro's 4-0 victory over Cyprus saw them top League C, Group 1 and win promotion to League B. Gibraltar and the Faroe Islands won promotion to League C.

Thiem Rocks Nadal in ATP Finals

LONDON (Dispatches) - Dominic Thiem held his nerve to claim an impressive 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/4) win against Rafael Nadal at the ATP Finals as the Austrian moved to the brink of a place in the semi-finals on Tuesday.

Thiem over-powered Nadal behind closed doors at London's O2 Arena to put a dent in the Spanish star's bid to win the ATP Finals for the first time.

The world number three, who defeated reigning champion Stefanos Tsitsipas in his opening game, has won his first two matches in this year's tournament as he looks to go one better than last year's runner-up finish.

Thiem will be guaranteed a semi-final place if Tsitsipas beats Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev in Tuesday's other tie.

The 27-year-old has already enjoyed a year to remember, reaching two Grand Slam finals and winning one of the four majors for the first time when he defeated Alexander Zverev in the US Open final in September. "It was a great match. I was pretty lucky to get that first set after being 5-2 down in the tie-break," Thiem said.

"He is there 100 percent from the first point to the last and I knew I had to stay focused.

"I had the feeling that the match was a very high level. The atmosphere would've been unreal if fans were in the arena."

Barcelona Hit Hard As La Liga slashes Salary Caps

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona's salary cap for this season has been cut by almost 300 million euros according to La Liga's list of spending limits for Spanish clubs, announced on Tuesday.

The coronavirus pandemic has had huge economic effects on Spain's top-flight teams, with Barca among those worst affected.

Their wage cap for the 2020-21 season will be 382.7 million euros, down from 671.4 million euros last term, when they had the highest limit in La Liga. Real Madrid will have the biggest budget this season although theirs has also been reduced from 641 million euros to 468.5 million euros.

Atletico Madrid have seen a decrease of 131.8 million euros to 252.7 million euros, which leaves Atletico with nearly half as much to spend as their city rivals Real.

La Liga's 20 first division clubs will be able to spend a total of 2.33 billion euros on wages this season, which represents a drop of 610 million euros. Salary allocations in Spain can be spent on players, coaches and academy players, with the aim to bring greater financial stability to the 42 teams in the top two divisions.

Barcelona is already negotiating another round of cuts for their players while Real Madrid may also begin negotiating a reduction in salaries, according to reports in Spain.

Tech Firms Asked For Better Visuals For Tight VAR Calls

ZURICH (Reuters) - FIFA has asked technology companies to develop ways to improve visuals to help its officials with close video assistant referee (VAR) decisions on offside, the global soccer governing body said on Tuesday.

The current system, which involves the use of dotted lines to determine whether a player is offside, has come under fire following a string of controversial calls in Europe's top leagues.

In a bid to improve the system, FIFA said companies would be provided with "anonymised datasets" of offside decisions based on which they should present possible solutions.

Success Means Nothing Without Change



LONDON (Reuters) - Lewis Hamilton has said becoming the most successful Formula One driver of all time means nothing unless he can help tackle racism and push for change.

The Mercedes driver became world champion for the seventh time in Turkey on Sunday, equalling the record previously held by Ferrari great Michael Schumacher.

The 35-year-old Briton now has more career wins, pole positions and podiums than the retired German, however, and plans to add to those records.

"Competing and winning championships is a great thing, but what does it really mean? It doesn't mean anything unless you can help push for change," he told the Guardian newspaper in an interview published on Tuesday.

"I cannot keep silent during this time."

The interview was conducted by Michael Eboda, chief executive of Powerful Media, whose annual Powerlist on Tuesday named Hamilton as Britain's most influential Black person.

He was the only sportsman named in the top 10, which included rapper and philanthropist Stormzy at number three and British Vogue editor-in-chief Edward Enninful fifth, and he was the first to top the list.

Hamilton has used his platform more than ever this year to make his voice heard on subjects from racial injustice to diversity and the environment.

The Briton has set up a commission of experts to help increase the representation of Black people in British motorsports, and routinely takes a knee and promotes Black Lives Matter at races.

"It is very symbolic to continue to utilise that platform and use that message," he said.

"And it's important to continue to do it, to keep awareness, because otherwise this thing could die a quiet death and go back to how it was in the past. So I don't see this changing for some time."

Athletes Won't Be Forced to Get COVID-19 Vaccinations

TOKYO (Reuters) - International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said on Tuesday that athletes would not be forced to get COVID-19 vaccinations ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, but he said they should as a "demonstration of solidarity" with the Japanese.

Bach visited the Athletes' Village on Tuesday before concluding his two-day Tokyo trip with a visit to the National Stadium.

"We will encourage athletes that whenever possible they have the vaccination because it is better for their health, and it is also a demonstration of solidarity with their fellow athletes and also the Japanese people," said the German.

Bach's trip, his first to Japan since the decision to postpone the Games in March, has been up-beat throughout and he has spoken about the great impact a vaccine could have on Tokyo's ability to host the Olympics next year.

More than 11,000 athletes are expected to descend upon Tokyo for the Olympics, which are due to begin on July 23, with thousands more coming for the subsequent Paralympics.

However, when pressed whether athletes were going to jump the queue to get any potential vaccine before the Games, Bach was adamant this wouldn't be the case.

"We made it clear from the very beginning that the first priorities are for the nurses, medical doctors and everybody who keeps our society alive, despite the coronavirus crisis," Bach told reporters at the National Stadium.



Club World Cup in Qatar Rescheduled For February

DOHA (AFP) - Qatar will host the coronavirus-delayed Club World Cup, an important test event ahead of the 2022 World Cup, in February, FIFA said on Tuesday.

The virus has thrown the sporting calendar into chaos with organizers forced to postpone flagship events like the Olympics and Euro 2020, while other events have been cancelled outright.

The Club World Cup, which had been due to be played in Doha in December of this year, will instead be held from February 1 to 11, 2021.

The competition sees club champions from the six regional confederations and the champions of the host nation, Qatar's Al-Duhail, brought together for the annual contest.

Bayern Munich are due to take part after winning last season's UEFA Champions League.

"The FIFA Club World Cup 2020 will now be held from 1 to 11 February 2021, taking place in Qatar," FIFA said in a statement.

"FIFA and the host country will provide the required safeguards for the health and safety of all involved."

Liverpool lifted the trophy in 2019 after beating Brazil's Flamengo in the final.

A revamped 24-team Club World Cup, including eight sides from Europe, was due to be played in China in 2021, but is set to be rescheduled for a later date after Euro 2020 and the Copa America were pencilled in for next June and July.

Qatar was named as the hosts of the 2019 and 2020 tournaments, which are seen as

