

**Health Ministry Spokesman
On Friday Said That the Novel
Coronavirus, COVID-19, Claimed
Lives of 406 More Iranians in the
Country Over the Past 24 Hours,
Bringing the Total Tally at 47,095**

IRAN NEWS

**Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of Iran to the United
Nations Has Said That the Sanctions
And Other Unilateral Actions of the
U.S. Against Other Countries Are
Crime Against Humanity**

VOL. XXVI, No. 7102 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2020 - AZAR 8, 1399

2

DOMESTIC

**Iran Can Supply
Products to World at
Cheaper Prices**



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

**Iran Petchem Production
To Hit 100mt/y by 2022**



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

**Trump to Leave Office if
Biden Victory Confirmed**



> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

**Bayern, Man City
Through to Champions
League Last 16**



> SEE PAGE 8

Araqchi Gives Details Of Prisoner Exchange With Australia

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - An Iranian deputy foreign minister elaborated on a "unique prisoner swap" that resulted in the release of three Iranian nationals jailed in Thailand in exchange for an Australian convict after intensive tripartite diplomatic arrangements.

In a note released on Friday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi provided more details of a recent exchange of Iranian and Australian inmates.

"On Wednesday, November 25, 2020, three Iranian prisoners held in Thailand were exchanged for an Australian prisoner in Tehran as a result of an intensive diplomatic work with Thailand and Australia for more than a year," he added.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister said the prisoner swap was "unique in itself", noting, "Three countries were involved in the swap and a trilateral interaction was held; Three Iranians were released in exchange for only one foreigner; The swap was carried out at Tehran's airport, meaning that first the three Iranians were released and arrived in Tehran, and then the Australian prisoner left the country; The swap was performed with an exclusive Australian airplane that carried the Iranian inmates to Tehran first."

See Page 7

Iran, Russia to Work Together on Development of COVID-19 Vaccine

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health ministry spokesperson says Tehran and Moscow are to cooperate on the production of a vaccine for coronavirus.

Sima-Sadat Lari said Iranian experts and authorities have held talks with the Russian side on the joint production of a COVID-19 vaccine, and will work with Russian vaccine producers.

"Relevant documents will be reviewed," she told RIA Novosti. "At the invitation of the Russian side, a meeting is to be held, and plans are to be drawn up in that regard," said the spokeswoman.

She said a coronavirus vaccine trade-named Sputnik V was registered in Russia two months ago.

"The vaccine has been sent to different Russian cities and vaccination has got underway," she said.

"The second coronavirus vaccine named EpiVacCorona was also registered around one month ago," said the spokesperson.

See Page 7

Iran GDP Could Expand 4.4% If Sanctions Lifted



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's economy could expand by as much as 4.4% in 2021 if U.S. President-elect Joe Biden lifts sanctions that have contributed to a deep three-year recession, the Institute of International Finance (IIF) trade body said on November 26, Reuters reported.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis could, however, limit foreign investment even if it is green-lighted by Washington, it added.

Biden has said he will explore taking the U.S. back into the nuclear deal that Iran in 2015 struck with six world powers. Under that deal, sanctions were lifted in return for curbs on Iran's nuclear development programme.

However U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the deal in May 2018 and went back to sanctions.

Iran's rial currency has lost another 50% of its value against the U.S. dollar in 2020 to date, reflecting economic damage from the sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic, a third wave of which has taken hold in the Islamic Republic.

The IIF said that if the U.S. lifted most of the economic sanctions on Iran by the end of 2021, the Iranian economy could expand 4.4% next year following an expected 6.1% contraction in 2020.

It would then grow by 6.9% in 2022 and 6% in 2023, the IIF added. It also noted that if oil exports increase, Iran could see its foreign reserves rise to \$109.4bn by the end of 2023. If Biden drops the Trump policy of using sanctions to block Iranian oil exports, Iran could be exporting around two million barrels of crude per day within a couple of years, according to some estimates.

Garbis Iradian, IIF's chief economist for the MENA region, told Reuters foreign direct investment inflows into Iran would increase progressively from this year's \$890mn to over \$6.4bn in 2025.

Assuming most sanctions could be lifted by late next year, FDI was likely to remain below \$2bn in 2021, with most of the money coming from China, Iradian said, adding: "Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic will limit FDI inflows in 2021."

The Iranian economy would remain fragile, though "not to the brink of collapse" if most of the sanctions remain in place, the IIF said.

Under such a "pessimistic" scenario, Iran would post 1.8% growth next year, while its foreign reserves would gradually fall from around \$80bn this year to \$46.9bn by end-2023.

Approximately 90% of Iran's official reserves are frozen abroad due to U.S. sanctions.

U.S. Accused of Looting Oil, Wealth of Syrian People

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations said that the US forces are looting Syria's oil and wealth as they continue the occupation of Syria.

Addressing a meeting of the UN Security Council on Syria, Majid Takht-Ravanchi said, "After almost 10 years of conflict, the Syrian people continue to suffer from aggression, foreign occupation and terrorism."

"Through unlawful occupation, inhumane sanctions, politicizing the return of refugees and IDPs and preventing international support for Syria's reconstruction, certain countries are responsible for the prolongation of the conflict as they attempt to impose their own will on the Syrian people," he added.

"Such attempts are unlawful and immoral and doomed to fail," he noted, adding, "The Syrian crisis can only be settled through political means and the right to determine the future of Syria belongs exclusively to Syrians and the international community should assist them to realize this right."

Takht-Ravanchi went on to say, "It means sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria must be fully respected by all."

"Any separatist agendas, as well as illegitimate self-rule initiatives, must be rejected and all foreign forces whose presence is not permitted by the Syrian Government must leave Syria," he highlighted.

"In this context, the full, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Syria is essential. Instead of combatting terrorism, they continue supporting UN-designated terrorist groups such as Al-Nusra Front (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham) as well as looting the oil and wealth of the Syrian people," Iran UN envoy said.

He noted, "Combating terrorists in Syria must be continued until the full removal of their threats. Obviously, this must be done with the utmost care for the lives of civilians. Terrorists must not be allowed to continue taking a large number of civilians as hostages and to turn places like Idlib into their safe haven."

"We strongly condemn Israel's continued aggression against Syria's sovereignty. The occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel is unlawful and the recognition of its annexation to Israel by the US is null and void. The recent provocative visit to the Syrian Golan of the US Secretary of State was designed to legitimize the annexation. Golan is and will remain a part and parcel of the Syrian territory," Takht-Ravanchi added.

See Page 7

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Memoirs Business or Disclosing Secrets?

Political personalities in the world sometimes publish their memoirs about the times when they were in office and had political responsibilities. This issue is common in most countries in the world and if I want to enumerate the number of written memoirs of these personalities in numbers and figures, I may point to the number in size of 100,000 volumes of books.

Recently Crown Publishing Group, the publisher of the book "A Promised Land", which is a part of British Penguin Books, in the first day of release of the book on memoirs of former U.S. President Barack Obama, "A Promised Land", set a record of sales of 887,000 copies of the book for the first day sales. It is interesting to know that the previous record for the first day sales of book by a resident of the White House belonged to the book "Becoming", written by the U.S. First Lady, Obama's wife Michelle Obama, as the book sold 725,000 copies in its first day of release. But the significance of this number of sales is, of the secondary importance, well-reception of the book that one can definitely call it business of memoirs. And in my opinion, the first significance of the book for the world community enthusiasm for obtaining a printed copy of it in the era of digitalism is because of its contents that it has been written by a president mostly on the untold events during his presence and administering in the White House. Of course, the contents have been passed through the filtering of the intelligence bodies and experts of international laws, and it gives a hint of implicit information with adding a little bit of disclosure for creating excitement and attraction to read.

The book "A Promised Land" has been published in English, and in the upcoming weeks experts and publishers for the sake of their own profits will publish it in different languages as well as in Persian and it will be available for the public.

What is important for Iranians is those parts of the book regarding the crimes that the leaders of the White House have committed in the West Asia region and especially in Iraq. Of course, Obama might have written some of his open policies regarding Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA. Although I have not received the book yet, some excerpts of the book have been released on the websites which paint Obama, as our Supreme Leader has said, with velvet gloves on steel claws to us, Iranians.

See Page 7

Islamabad Enjoys Having Good Ties With Tehran

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Prime Minister of Pakistan highlighting his government's successful foreign policy said that Pakistan has excellent relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Imran Khan, talking to media in eastern city of Lahore, said strengthening of regional ties and the advancement of successful foreign policy is the biggest achievement of his government.

"Pakistan has very good relations with Iran," said Imran Khan, who hosted Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif for the fourth time in Islamabad on November 10-11.

Imran Khan in a meeting with Iranian foreign minister had emphasized the need for enhanced trade and economic cooperation with Islamic Republic of Iran.

Zarif also praised the Pakistani Prime Minister's stance against the Zionist regime and the conspiracy to normalize relations, and praised Islamabad's support for Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Meanwhile Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson stressing the need for an interactive approach to de-escalate tensions in the region, said that Islamabad supports engagement with the Islamic Republic of Iran to save the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

See Page 7



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Gov't Should Implement Protecting People's Livelihood Law

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf asked the government to implement the law on protection of people's livelihood as soon as possible, Trend reported.

“Given the Supreme Leader's order on supporting the low-income families, the government is now expected to implement the “People's Livelihood Protection Act”,” Qalibaf said in a statement on his Instagram account.

“According to this law, 60 million of our dear compatriots must be subsidized for basic goods by the end of the year,” he said. He went on to announce that the parliament decided to continue this support in the next Iranian year (Start on March 21, 2021) budget bill.

Iran Can Supply Products To World at Cheaper Prices

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that Iran enjoys a great “resistant economy” that can supply products to the world and regional states at cheaper prices.

President Rouhani made the remarks at an inauguration ceremony of national oil projects in west, southwest and south of the country on Thursday.

Iran thwarted the U.S. unlawful sanctions aimed to isolate Iran, said the President highlighting the Resistance Economy the Government adopted over the past three years since the White House imposed harsh sanctions on Iran.

Iran opens projects with allocation of 30,000 billion tomans almost every day as token of great success that rises hope in the society, Rouhani noted.

He said that Iran proved it is fully resistant to the sanctions as it could resist to the U.S. “Economic War” over the past three years.

President Rouhani said those who confronted the Iranian nation with all their power suffered an ignominious defeat and will be left on “the ash heap of history” in a matter of weeks.

President Rouhani on Thursday and during inaugural ceremony of some projects said Iran stood up to the U.S. economic war and pressure over the past few years.

“With its 3-year resistance against the economic war launched by a bullying power, Iran's economy showed that it is a great and resistant economy,” said the president.

“No country in the region has the power to resist an economic war for three years and emerge victorious, and this shows the grandeur, strength and resilience of the



Iranian nation, which was brought about with people's self-reliance ... and due to Iran's special geopolitical situation,” he said.

“No individual or power in the world can eliminate Iran, with its great geographical situation, [from playing a role] in the region or in the world,” said the president.

“Many intended to destroy Iran, but failed to, and now these were the last ones to claim they were able to do so, but failed to,” he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, President Rouhani said Iran, with its great potential and capabilities, can meet the needs of the region and even the world “at a lower cost and more easily in certain cases.”

He said Iran draws on domestic and international technology to boost local production.

He underlined the U.S. sought to keep Iran from importing foreign know-how, but failed to.

President Rouhani also underscored that Iran favors “constructive interaction” with the world, but noted that constructive interaction will be useful only when coupled with national might.

The president reiterated the projects inaugurated in Iran on a weekly basis shows the country will not retreat in the face of enemy plots and will keep on the path to progress until achieving final victory.

Tehran, Minsk Discuss Bilateral Dialogue



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Iran Yuri Lazarchik met with members of the working group of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran on cooperation with the National Assembly of Belarus, BelTA learned from the press service of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Head of the working group Abolfazl Amouei hailed the interaction between the legislative bodies of the two states and stressed Iran's interest in continuing constructive cooperation. In turn, Yuri Lazarchik expressed hope for achieving practical results from joint work to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The parties confirmed fruitful nature of inter-parliamentary cooperation between Belarus and Iran, and also discussed topical issues of bilateral cooperation in political, trade and economic and legal sectors.

Legal Proceedings Began To Receive Financial Claims From Foreign States

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says Tehran has adopted measures to secure its financial and monetary claims from foreign countries.

Vice President for Legal Affairs Laya Joneidi noted those proceedings should be looked into, and results should be announced accordingly.

“In some cases in two or three European countries, some judicial proceedings have been initiated,” she said.

“We should wait and see what the outcome will be after the proceedings have been reviewed,” she added.

The official added some of the assets owed to Iran are related to investment; hence, “investment agreements” will be used to guarantee the payment of those financial claims.

However, she noted, all these measures should be coupled with legal talks.

Joneidi also said Tehran will compensate for losses caused for the Ukrainian plane crash, happened in January, based on international norms and standards, Trend reports citing IRNA.

She made the remarks while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the cabinet session in Tehran this morning.

Ukraine's passenger plane which was moving very close to a sensitive military spot belonging to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) crashed shortly after taking off from Iran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on January 8, 2020. All 176 aboard were killed.

Iran's Vice-Presidency for Legal Affairs bears civil responsibility for the case, Joneidi told reporters.

These are just legal issues that should not be politicized, she noted.

76 Iranian Professors Among World Top 2% Scientists

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Based on the latest reports of science-wide author databases of standardized citation indicators, 76 Iranian professors from Tehran University were among to 2% scientists in the world.

Some 31 professors were among faculty members of technical colleges.

Based on Scopus reports, Pardis department of Tehran University in technical fields was the most prestigious ones in Iran.

Scopus is Elsevier's abstract and citation database launched in 2004. Scopus covers nearly 36,377 titles from approximately 11,678 publishers, of which 34,346 are peer-reviewed journals in top-level subject fields: life sciences, social sciences, physical sciences and health sciences.

Meanwhile, 433 Iranian researchers were among 2% top scientists in the world.

Tehran, Doha Discuss Regional Developments

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani described Tehran-Doha relations as friendly and growing, saying that Iran's will is based on dialogue, understanding and brotherly relations with Persian Gulf littoral states.

In a telephone conversation with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, he hoped that with new developments in the field of international relations, hostile policies of some countries in the region would be adjusted and the opportunity for dialogue and reaching an understanding in the region would be fortified.

Stressing the need for deepening Tehran-Doha ties in all fields of mutual interest, President Rouhani said that accelerating the implementation of the agreements between Tehran and Doha will be in the interest of both nations and the region.

“We should overcome domineering policies and reliance on foreign countries through wisdom, rationality and honest dialogue within the region,” Rouhani said, noting that allowing the Zionist regime come in the region will cause insecurity and instability in the region.

However, it is really surprising to see some neighbors consider their security tied to their connection with the criminal Zionist regime, which is the enemy of all Islamic countries and the entire region, he said.

“We, the countries of the region, can solve our problems as neighbors and brothers,” he said, noting that no doubt regional relations will experience better conditions in the coming months.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, for his part, described Iran-Qatar relations as strategic and growing, reiterating that implementation of the agreements between the two countries is in the interests of the two nations, and Qatar will make every effort to implement these agreements.

“We believe that cooperation between Iran and the Persian Gulf countries should be further developed in all areas, including water security in the region, and in any agreement to ensure regional security, Iran should be a party to the dialogue to reach an agreement,” he said.

Iranian Navy Powerful, Authoritative in Facing Enemy

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the Navy of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the enemy is trying to show its power, has appeared powerful, prowess and proud.

Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran Major General Seyed Abdul Rahim Mousavi in a message on the occasion of Navy Day noted: “the successful presence of Iranian ships from the China Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, from the Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandeb and the Mediterranean to South Africa, has been recorded and admired everywhere.”

Major General Mousavi reminded: “Today, the Iranian Navy builds everything from advanced ships and floating equipment to modern light, medium and heavy submarines, relying on indigenous knowledge.”

He added that communication, missile and defense systems are made in the country, the navy set and indigenized naval battle tactics based on its battle experience and made them a point of reliance for Iran at sea.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Army, referring to the power of surface-to-air missiles and the Navy's long-range missiles in destroying targets hundreds of kilometers ahead of floating units, emphasized: “If the enemy under the illusion of its naval power makes any mistake, it will receive a strong decisive blow from the strategic navy of the Iranian army.”

Imam Khomeini, the great founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the bravery and heroism of the Iranian navy in defending the islands, ports, coasts and seas of the country, especially defending Abadan and Khorramshahr and the Persian Gulf during the imposed war by the Ba'athist enemy, named the 7th of Azar (November 27th) as Navy Day. 219



Meanwhile on the occasion of Iran's National Day of Navy, the army commanders stated that the navy force has transcended the world's ocean borders and transmitted the Iranian nation's message of peace and authority.

The commanders of Iran's Army has congratulated the Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi on the occasion of the National Day of Navy.

“Thanks to the efforts of the Iranian Navy's brave commandoes, the strategic depth of Iran has gone beyond any line or border and passed all the oceans and water bodies of the globe, and has conveyed the Iranian nation's message of peace, authority, and readiness to the world”, the message read.

“The deterrent and defensive power of the Iranian Navy as the nation's point of trust and confidence is an anchor of stability and sustainable security in the strategic region of the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormoz, and the Sea of Oman. The reputation of this power has resonated all over the world, and friend and foe alike acknowledge this undeniable fact”, it added.

Tehran, Baku Hold Talks Via Videoconference

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his counterpart from the Azerbaijan Republic Jeyhun Bairamov had a videoconference call on Wednesday.

In this conversation, the two top diplomats discussed the latest developments pertaining to mutual relations as well as the post-war situation in the region.

In the virtual meeting, which was also attended by both countries' ambassadors, the two ministers urged further promotion of reciprocal ties.

They also exchanged views on Tehran-Baku cooperation at international circles as well as on the Caspian Sea, reconstruction projects, incomplete projects, putting the Khoda-Afarin Dam into operation, the Rasht-Astara railway, the North-South and East-West corridors, and holding a meeting of Iran-Azerbaijan joint economic commission.

They also discussed other issues of mutual interest.

The two top diplomats further called borders between the two countries “borders of peace, friendship and cooperation,” and underscored the need to ensure their security.

Zarif also invited his opposite number to visit Tehran in the near future.

Iran's Strategic Depth Extended to Distant Oceans

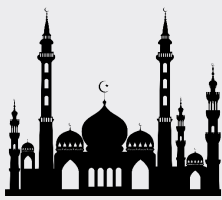
TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's naval power has grown so extensively that its strategic depth has gone beyond the regional waters and has reached the faraway oceans, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said.

In a message released on Friday in commemoration of the Iranian Navy Day, Major General Baqeri said Iran's Navy has gained such a major place that its power has shattered the global arrogance and the trans-regional powers' dream of dominating the security factors in the region.

Describing Iran as the messenger of peace, friendship, and maritime security, the commander said the Iranian naval forces' capability to carry out major and unique missions have extended the country's strategic depth “from the Persian Gulf coasts, the Sea of Oman and the northern parts of the Indian Ocean to the distant waters and faraway oceans.”

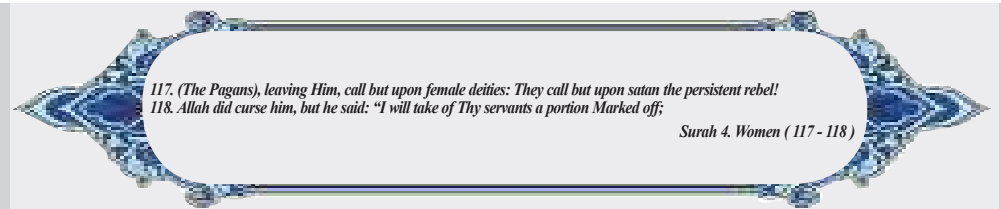
The Iranian naval forces play sensitive roles as “the anchorage of ultra-regional security”, he added.

The top general finally emphasized that the potential threats make it necessary for Iran to press on with the naval progress with firm resolve and accelerate and broaden its activities.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 11:52 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 17:11 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:25 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:54 |



Iran Petchem Production To Hit 100mt/y by 2022

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh said the country's petrochemical production capacity would reach 100 million tons per year by 2022, 80% more than the 2013 levels.

Addressing a virtual ceremony to launch major oil and energy projects on Thursday, the official said that the country's petrochemical revenues would reach 25 billion dollars per year by 2022, adding plans were further underway to bring the amount to \$37b by 2026 while production capacity will stand at around 133 million tons per year.

"As we had promised earlier, 19 petrochemical projects in the second leap with a value of \$11.4 billion with 25 million tons of production capacity will come on stream this year," he said.

According to Zangeneh, since the beginning of the current calendar year which began on March 21, five petrochemical projects with an investment of \$3 billion have been inaugurated by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Lordegan Petrochemical Project is the 6th of these projects to come online this year.

The facility has been constructed by the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) with a daily production capacity of 3,000 tons of urea and ammonia and an annual production capacity of over one million tons of products.

The minister stated that the current production capacity of urea is 6.5 million tons in Iran, and said: "The urea production capacity of the country will increase by another 3 million tons annually by once Lordegan, Masjed Soleyman and Hengam projects fully come on stream. Domestic consumption of urea is 2 million tons currently, and the surplus can be exported."

He went on to say that Iran's oil production capacity from joint fields in West Karoun oil fields cluster increased from 70,000 barrels in 2013 by almost 6 times to 400,000 barrel per day.

Iran Can Earn \$2,200 Per Ton For Exporting Paints, Coatings

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Chemical and Cellulosic Products at Iran Trade Promotion says the value of exporting every ton of paint stands at around \$2,200 on average that its worth is almost five times more than average of every ton of the total exports of the country.



Neda Ataei said that according to the Iran Customs Administration statistics, the value of Iran's total export of paints in 2017 was around \$82m and the figure grew by 15 percent in 2018 and reached over \$93m.

She added that statistics show that in the past years, Iran's share of paints export markets was 27 percent of China's, 24 percent of Afghanistan's, 17 percent of Iraq's, 11 percent of Turkmenistan's, 13 percent of Tajikistan's and 7 percent of Kyrgyzstan's, respectively.

Ataei added that due to the volume of imports of paints in those countries, Iran can increase the volume of its exports to those states.

She further said the number of paint and coating productions in Iran is over one thousand units and their nominal capacity for paint and coating production is over 12m tons per year.

On imports of paints in Iran, she said that in order to support the domestic production, imports of paints have faced restrictions and only paints with special technology which are not domestically produced are allowed to be imported. Ataei reiterated so with this approach, imports of paints in Iran in the recent years have been around \$350m and it has been mostly from Italy, Turkey, South Korea, China and Germany.

She also said that due to the reconstruction process in neighboring countries like Afghanistan and Iraq as well as Syria and Iran's good relations with them, investment in those markets and potential export target countries of Iran as well as launching active offices in the mentioned markets, Iran paint export can see considerable growth.

She further said that producing paints with special technology needs investments of pioneer companies through active negotiations.

Ataei went on to say that types of paint and coating have various usages and they are used in architecture, building, shipping industries, part-manufacturing and other industries that volume of its global market is around 37b liters per year and according to the statistics, China is the biggest paint producer in the world.

She further said that the value of world paint export in the recent five years has been around \$80b as Germany accounted for 20 percent of world paint exports. The U.S. and China each with ten percent trail Germany and Japan as well as the Netherlands each accounts for 8 percent of world paint export.



Zangeneh described the use of skid-mounted rapid-construction refineries as one of the works in the region with the aim of accelerating operations and reducing government ownership, and said: "This project was built in Azadegan field in the form of lease with a European company and \$50 million of investment."

He said this is the first time in the history of the oil industry after the nationalization of the industry that such a processing unit is built and put into operation by the private sector and the government only pays \$1.28 per barrel for the refined oil.

Zangeneh announced on Thursday that Iran extracts 400,000 barrels of oil per day from southwestern joint Azadegan oilfield.

The figure has been 70,000 bpd in the previous years, Zangeneh said in online presence of President Hassan Rouhani at an inauguration ceremony on oil projects in southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Azadegan oilfield is located in west of Karoun River in southwest of Iran near border with Iraq.

Extraction of oil from joint oilfield is important as it is done to preserve Iranian nation's rights, the minister noted.

Landmark Khaf-Herat Railway to Strengthen Iran Position in Regional Transit

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Railroad project linking Khaf in northeastern Iranian province of Razavi Khorasan to Herat in neighboring Afghanistan strengthens Iran's position in the regional transit, an official announced on Thursday.

Khaf-Herat railroad can facilitate Afghanistan's transit with other countries through Iran, chairman of Iran's transit commission affiliated to Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture Hamid Ezatabadi-pour said.

Iran has three cross-border transit roads in northeast and east of the country with the neighboring state through which it can facilitate Afghanistan's access to the outside world, the official said.

He said that the new Silk Road project named 'One Belt, One Road' by the Chinese President Xi Jinping can develop Afghanistan's transit route to Europe through Khaf-Herat railway.

President Jinping introduced the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, a plan to link China with Asia, Africa and Europe via a network of ports, railways and roads in 2013.

Iran, enjoying appropriate capacities to transfer energy to South and East Asia through its maritime routes, can be an important gateway for great eastern economic partners like India and China.

The 191-km Khaf-Herat railroad project includes four parts that are under construction.

About 77 km of the project is in Iran's soil and the rest in Afghanistan.

The railroad project ensures Afghanistan's access to free waters and European markets.

Meanwhile on Thursday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that completion and inauguration of Khaf-Herat railroad project is an important success for both Iran and Afghanistan.

The railroad project will develop Tehran-Kabul economic cooperation, Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

Khatibzadeh was in Afghanistan to hold talks with senior Afghan officials on ways to widen bilateral relations in different areas.

Khaf-Herat railroad will join Afghanistan to Europe through Iran, said the spokesman adding that the project will also facilitates trade exchange.

The project can also prepare the ground for a sustainable development in the region, he noted.

He stated that the timing to inaugurate the Khaf-Herat railroad project will be finalized soon.

It may be set for the coming days, he said.

PGPIC to Launch 4 Petchem Projects by Yearend

TEHRAN (Shana) – The CEO of the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) said the holding company had planned to commission 4 major petrochemical projects by the end of the current Iranian calendar year to March 20, 2021.

Addressing a virtual ceremony to inauguration Lordegan Petrochemical Plant in the presence of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh on Thursday, Jafar Rabiee said the country's petrochemical industry is proud to develop and export tens of millions of tons of petrochemical products during the difficult period of the coronavirus pandemic and the sanctions.

"This industry has not ceased to develop under the current difficult conditions and today we are witnessing the operation of a large unit in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province," he said.

He pointed out that PGPIC, as the largest capital market company in the country, has about 40% of the production and export share of the petrochemical industry in Iran, and added: "The holding has defined 25 major petrochemical projects to ensure the future of the industry and materialize the second and third leaps of the sector with almost €14b of investment."

The CEO of Persian Gulf Holding, stating that this year the company plans to operate four projects in the second leap of the petrochemical industry and Lordegan Petrochemical Plant is its first, continued: "Lordegan is a large urea and ammonia production unit



with a production capacity of about 1.8 million tons, which can supply about 1.075 thousand tons of urea and 80,000 tons of surplus ammonia."

According to Rabiee, after covering domestic demand, 80% of Lordegan Petrochemical Plant's products will be exported, part of which is through swaps with Pardis Petrochemical Plant in Assaluyeh, which will facilitate the transportation of urea in the country.

The plant has been built with the aim of producing 1.075 million tons of urea and 677,000 tons of ammonia per year, of which about 600,000 tons is used to produce urea in the complex.

Tehran-Najaf Flights Resume

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Qeshm Airline flights for Tehran-Najaf, Mashad-Najaf and Najaf-Mashad routes were resumed and they are scheduled for Mondays and Thursdays of course by observing health protocols.

Accordingly, passengers for Iraq should have negative PCR test (for +12 passengers).

Passenger should also fill screening forms at destination.

Valid visa and or occupation permit are essential. Passengers with an Iranian passport and an Iraqi identity card will be able to travel to Iraq, provided that all the contents of both cards are exactly the same.

Iraqi airways have suspended its flights since March 17 to prevent the outbreak of coronavirus and decided to resume them since July 23.

Iran Ready to Transfer Experience of Electricity Generation to Yemen

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Ambassador to Sana'a and the Caretaker of the Yemeni Ministry of Electricity and Energy discussed the transfer of technical and educational experiences in the field of electricity generation.

During the meeting, Hassan Irlou and Abdul Ghani al-Madani stressed the need to increase coordination, strengthen cooperation, and sign contracts and agreements in the field of electricity generation between the two countries.

The two sides also discussed the transfer of Iranian experience and the training of the staff working in the Yemeni Ministry of Electricity with the help of engineers from the Iranian Ministry of Energy.

Iran's ambassador to Sana'a also met with the Yemeni Minister of Agriculture Abdul Malik al-Thawr and discussed cooperation between the two countries.

Al-Thawr, for his part, stressed utilizing Iran's experiences in the field of agriculture, especially in areas of research, agricultural machinery, and combating desertification.

Saudi Arabia, with the support of the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and several other countries, has invaded Yemen since March 2015 and besieged this country by land, sea, and air.

The war has so far killed more than 16,000 Yemenis, injured tens of thousands, and displaced millions of others.

Iran's Investment Capacities in Foreign Countries Introduced

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's envoy to Beijing, in a conference held in China, introduced Iran's investment capacities in the post-corona period.

During "The 12th China's Overseas' Investment Fair: New Opportunities and New Perspective for Multinational Cooperation in the Post Pandemic Era", Iran's Ambassador to Beijing Mohammad Keshavarzadeh introduced Iran's investment capacities in foreign countries in the post-corona period.

In a tweet on Wednesday, he wrote: "In China Overseas Investment Fair, I introduced Iran's investment capacities in foreign countries in the post-corona era."

"The meeting was actively attended by national and international organizations and institutions such as the National Development and Reform Commission of China (NDRC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)."

"Economic reform and liberalization in China, the key role of the digital economy, the development of e-commerce, and the 25-year plan were among the topics presented at the meeting," he added.

The event was held today in Beijing International Hotel. More than 500 participants, including those from foreign countries, attend the forum annually.

Pistachio Exports Soar By 131%

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran exported 110,000 tons of pistachio during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), registering a 131-percent increase year on year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

Ruhollah Latifi put the value of the pistachio exports in the mentioned period at \$676 million, 82.5 percent more than the figure for the previous year's same time span.

According to the IRICA data, 47,000 tons of pistachios worth \$371 million were exported from Iran in the first eight months of the previous year (March 21-November 21, 2019).

Burkina Faso President Kabore Secures Re-Election

OUAGADOUGOU (Reuters) - Burkina Faso President Roch Kabore has won re-election by a comfortable margin, preliminary results showed on Thursday, after an election marred by insecurity that prevented swathes of the West African country from voting.

Some analysts had expected a closer contest on Sunday because of the president's failure to contain a jihadist insurgency that has killed more than 2,000 people this year alone and forced a million people to flee. However, poor turnout may have helped Kabore, as thousands of people in zones most affected by violence did not have access to polling stations. Just under 3 million people cast their ballot, about half the number of registered voters, official figures showed.



Bolsonaro Not to Take Coronavirus Vaccine

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said on Thursday evening that he would not take a coronavirus vaccine, the latest in a series of statements he has made expressing skepticism towards vaccination programs that many hope will bring an end to the pandemic.

In statements broadcast live over multiple social media platforms, the right-wing leader added that Congress was unlikely to require Brazilians to take a vaccine.

Brazil has the second-highest number of coronavirus deaths in the world, and for months, Bolsonaro has played down the seriousness of the pandemic despite being diagnosed with the virus in July.



Trump to Leave Office If Biden Victory Confirmed



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump said Thursday that he would leave the White House if Joe Biden is officially confirmed the winner of the U.S. election, making a further concession of defeat even as he railed against the "rigged" vote.

Trump has made an unprecedented attempt to defy the results of the election by refusing to concede, spreading wild theories about stolen ballots and launching baseless legal challenges that have been thrown out by courts across the country.

Answering his first questions from reporters since the November 3 vote, the president moved closer to accepting that he would serve only one term in office before Biden is inaugurated on January 20.

When asked if he would leave the White House if the Electoral College confirmed Biden's victory, Trump said, "Certainly I will. And you know that."

But "if they do, they made a mistake," he said, adding, "It's going to be a very hard thing to concede."

The Electoral College, which determines the White House winner, will meet on December 14 to certify Biden's victory, with Biden receiving 306 votes to Trump's 232.

"This was a massive fraud," Trump said about the result, again without providing any evidence during his remarks to reporters on Thursday, the Thanksgiving holiday. He described the U.S. voting infrastructure as "like a third-world country."

Earlier in the day he tweeted that "this was a 100% RIGGED ELECTION," while on Wednesday he called on his Republican supporters "to turn the election over."

President-elect Biden has said that Americans "won't stand" for attempts to derail the outcome, and called for Americans to unite to fight the worsening Covid-19 pandemic.

Trump, who tore up countless norms during his four years in power, has carved out new territory with his refusal to concede to Biden. Supporters suggest he is already eyeing an announcement of running for president again in 2024.

Trump, 74, is alleging -- among other conspiracy theories -- that voting machines deliberately deleted millions of his votes, though the government election security agency declared it "the most secure" election in U.S. history.

After coming under pressure from a slowly building trickle of senior Republicans, Trump this week ended his blockade of government assistance to ease Biden's preparation for assuming the presidency.

Biden this week also introduced a slate of veteran diplomats and policy-makers who will make up his national security and foreign policy team, saying: "America is back, ready to lead the world."

"These public servants will restore America's global leadership and moral leadership," Biden, 78, said as the six men and women stood behind him wearing face-masks.

South Korea, China Agree On Early Xi Visit, North Korea Talks



SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea and China agreed on Thursday to prepare for a visit to South Korea by Chinese President Xi Jinping and to cooperate on stalled talks on North Korea's nuclear program and on tackling the novel coronavirus.

China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, arrived in the South Korean capital late on Wednesday, after a two-day visit to Japan, as Asian governments prepare for change under a new U.S. administration.

"Both sides agreed to actively communicate so that the COVID-19 situation stabilises and conditions are created for President Xi's visit," the South Korean foreign ministry said in a statement after Wang held talks with South Korea's foreign minister, Kang Kyung-wha.

China and U.S. ally South Korea have traditionally been suspicious of each other but in recent years they have found common ground in economic cooperation and a shared concern about North Korea's rush to develop nuclear weapons.

Xi was expected to visit South Korea early this year but the coronavirus epidemic put plans on hold.

Wang said his visit was to highlight the importance of efforts by the "strategic partners" to work to promote peace and stability.

"The COVID-19 crisis could not defeat the citizens of our two countries," Wang, speaking through an interpreter, said as his meeting with Kang began. "Bilateral ties are showing their strength and ever more vigour."

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in met Wang separately and they discussed peace on the peninsula, Moon's office said.

U.S. President Donald Trump raised hopes for progress in pressing North Korea to give up its weapons programs in exchange for the lifting of sanctions but talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un stalled.

U.S. President Donald Trump raised hopes for progress in pressing North Korea to give up its weapons programs in exchange for the lifting of sanctions but talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un stalled.

Pakistan Has No Plans to Recognize Israel

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan reiterated Tuesday it will not establish relations with Israel until there is "a viable, independent and contiguous" Palestinian state acceptable to the Palestinians.

The statement came in response to persistent speculative media reports and commentaries that the South Asian majority-Muslim nation might be reconsidering its rejection of recognizing Israel.

The Pakistani Foreign Ministry refuted the media debate as baseless speculation and stressed that Islamabad "steadfastly supports the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination."

Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent statement has been "clear and unequivocal" on the issue, underlined the ministry spokesman.

"The prime minister has made it clear that unless a just settlement of the Palestine issue, satisfactory to the Palestinian people, is found, Pakistan cannot recognize Israel," the spokesman noted.

"For just and lasting peace, it is imperative to have a two-state solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) resolutions, with the pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State," the Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Pakistan has denounced Israel since its inception in 1947. Pakistanis cannot visit the Jewish state because the country's passport states that it is "valid for all countries of the world except Israel."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reported "secret" visit to Saudi Arabia this past Sunday for talks with Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman has fueled speculations Riyadh was moving toward recognizing Israel.

Those speculations stemmed from the historic United States-brokered deal the United Arab Emirates reached with Israel in August establishing ties between the two countries.

Turkey Does Not Expect U.S. Sanctions Over Russian S-400s

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey does not expect ties with the United States to be strained under President-elect Joe Biden and does not anticipate sanctions over its purchase of Russia S-400 defence systems, a senior official in President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party said.

Relations have been tense between Ankara and Washington over issues from policy toward Syria to the U.S. refusal to extradite a cleric Turkey blames for a 2016 coup attempt.

Turkey has relied on the good personal ties between Erdogan and U.S. President Donald Trump to smooth over divisions, but Biden is expected to be tougher on Turkey over foreign and defence policies and Ankara's human rights record.

Ankara's purchase last year of the S-400s, which are not compatible with NATO defences, raised the prospect of U.S. sanctions early next year if Congress approves a defence spending bill which the House of Representatives has already voted to include language requiring the president to sanction Turkey.

In an interview with Reuters, AK Party Deputy Chairman Numan Kurtulmus played down that prospect.

"The U.S. President will most likely watch the balance in the Middle East very carefully for U.S.

interests, and will not want to continue the tense ties with Turkey," Kurtulmus said.

"...I believe they will take positive steps in the future."

Washington says the S-400s pose a threat to the capabilities of its F-35 stealth fighter jets and has removed Turkey from the jet program where it was a manufacturer and buyer.

Ankara says the S-400s will not be integrated into NATO and has called for a joint working group to discuss U.S. concerns. Kurtulmus repeated that Turkey would not bow to pressure to return the Russian systems, or leave them unused.

"Sorry, but we didn't procure these to hide them. We got them to meet Turkey's security needs," he said.

While Erdogan has downplayed the possible fallout from these sanctions and vowed counter-sanctions, he has also promised economic and judicial reforms, following an overhaul of Turkey's economic leadership amid a plunge in the lira.

Asked if the reforms were aimed at easing tensions with the United States and the European Union, which will also evaluate possible sanctions against Ankara next month, Kurtulmus said the government would act only for Turkey's interest.



Brazil Elects Mayors, With Eyes on Presidential Race



RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP)

- Brazil votes Sunday in municipal runoff elections marked by the coronavirus pandemic that will give a preview of where its political players stand going into 2022, when far-right President Jair Bolsonaro is up for reelection.

Bolsonaro upended Brazilian politics when he stormed to victory in the 2018 presidential race, but the so-called "Tropical Trump" looks more vulnerable after the first-round municipal vote on November 15, when just a handful of the candidates he endorsed won.

"As Trump would say, 'He supported a bunch of losers,'" said political scientist David Fleischer of the University of Brasilia.

As a result of that and other factors -- including Donald Trump's own election loss in the US -- Bolsonaro "isn't in too good shape for 2022," Fleischer told AFP.

The second-round vote -- in which 57 cities will decide their mayors, including Brazil's biggest, Sao Paulo -- will now give a clearer picture of the political state of play in Latin America's largest economy and where the top challenges to Bolsonaro may come from.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil's economic capital, centrist incumbent Bruno Covas faces leftist challenger Guilherme Boulos, a leader of the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST).

Covas, 40, won the first round with 33 percent to 20 percent for Boulos, and had an eight-point lead going into the runoff, according to polling firm Datafolha. But Boulos, 38, who is running for the upstart Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), has momentum.

He came from behind in the first round to beat both Bolsonaro's candidate and a leftist rival from the more-established Workers' Party (PT).

Young and charismatic, he is being called the new face of the Brazilian left, which is still reeling from the 2016 impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the jailing of ex-president and PT founder Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on corruption charges.

However, Covas, a cancer survivor, has a powerful backer in Sao Paulo governor Joao Doria, his predecessor and mentor, a top contender to challenge Bolsonaro for the presidency.



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L.balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Fereshteh Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green yard
Nicely Furn

Parsian

(\$1300)
Zaferanieh Apt
140sq.m, 3bdrs
roof garden, S/p
Sauna, Jacuzzi
balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1500) 2bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$2000) 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$3000) 4bdrs, S/p, F.F

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Large balcony
Fully Furn

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Singapore Manufacturing Slips in October

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Singapore's industrial output in October unexpectedly declined 0.9% on-year, missing economists' forecasts, with biomedical and electronics manufacturing cooling from the pace marked in the previous month, official data showed on Thursday. Economists had expected a 6.2% increase in October, according to the median in a Reuters poll. The data was a

sharp drop from September when factory output grew a revised 25.6% -- the fastest in nearly a decade.

Electronics output fell 0.6% year-on-year, compared with a 33.1% growth in the previous month, data from the Singapore Economic Development Board showed.

The biomedical sector, which is typically volatile, slowed to a growth of 10.2% from September's 91.2% surge.



Rising U.S. Weekly Jobless Claims

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The number of Americans filing first-time claims for jobless benefits increased further last week, suggesting that an explosion in new COVID-19 infections and business restrictions were boosting layoffs and undermining the labor market recovery.

Still, the economy got off to a solid start in the fourth quarter, with consumer spending and business investment in equipment topping analysts' expectations in October. Businesses also reported a sharp rebound in profits in the third quarter.

That was, however, insufficient to lift the heavy cloud over the economy. Personal income dropped last month and could decline further with about 13.6 million Americans due to lose government-funded unemployment benefits a day after Christmas.

The benefits, part of a more than \$3 trillion government coronavirus relief package which has largely expired, contributed to record economic growth in the third quarter. Another package is expected only after President-elect Joe Biden is sworn in on Jan. 20. President Donald Trump is heavily focused on contesting his electoral loss to Biden.

Minutes of the Federal Reserve's Nov. 4-5 meeting showed officials discussed how the U.S. central bank's asset purchases could be adjusted to provide additional support to the economy.

"The question is no longer whether the recovery will slow, it will," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economics in Holland, Pennsylvania. "The real issue is by how much will it decelerate."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits increased 30,000 to a seasonally adjusted 778,000 for the week ended Nov. 21, the Labor Department said. That was the second straight weekly increase in claims and exceeded economists' expectations for 730,000 applications in a Reuters poll.

The weekly claims report, the most timely data on the economy's health, was published a day early because of Thursday's Thanksgiving Day holiday.

Unadjusted claims jumped 78,372 to 827,710 last week. Economists prefer the unadjusted number because of earlier difficulties adjusting the claims data for seasonal fluctuations due to the economic shock caused by the pandemic.

Including a government-funded program for the self-employed, gig workers and others who do not qualify for the regular state unemployment programs, 1.14 million people filed claims last week. There were at least 20.5 million people collecting unemployment benefits in early November.

The United States has been slammed by a fresh wave of coronavirus infections, with daily cases exceeding 100,000 since early November. More than 12 million people have been infected in the country, according to a Reuters tally of official data.

The respiratory illness has killed more than 259,000 Americans and hospitalizations are soaring, prompting state and local governments to reimpose a host of restrictions on social and economic life in recent weeks, which could keep claims above their 665,000 peak seen during the 2007-09 Great Recession.

U.S. stocks were mixed. The dollar fell against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices were lower.

Indian Economy to Escape Recession Early Next Year

BENGALURU (Reuters) - India's economy is expected to recover early next year from recession, but at a modest pace, according to a majority of economists in a Reuters poll who said their upgraded growth predictions were based on the progress of COVID-19 vaccines.



The recent vaccine news has boosted Indian stocks to repeated record highs and fueled hopes of a pick-up in economic activity. That, coupled with festive-led demand, has lifted optimism amongst economists over the past month.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 26 of 40, to an additional question said their growth views - which have been raised from a month ago - were based on that vaccine progress.

"We expect growth recovery to strengthen...helped by continued normalisation in economic activity as incoming COVID-19 data remain benign and do not require large-scale shut-downs," said Upasana Chachra, chief India economist at Morgan Stanley.

"We also assume vaccine availability in Q1 2021 would help reduce the tail risks and accelerate the pace of opening up of the economy." The Nov. 18-25 poll of nearly 50 economists showed the economy would contract in the July-Sept and Oct-Dec quarters by 8.8% and 3%, respectively, but less than the -10.4% and -5% predicted last month.

The median expectation for the July-Sept quarter was an upgrade for the first time since polling began for the period in April 2019. While the economy was expected to return to growth, expanding 0.5% in the Jan-March quarter and come out of recession, the consensus of -8.7% for the current fiscal year would still mark the first full year of contraction in four decades.

The economy was then forecast to expand 9% and 5.8% in the next fiscal year and 2022/23, respectively, but it was not expected to return to pre-COVID-19 levels any time soon.

That is in stark contrast to stock market strategists polled by Reuters this week, who overwhelmingly expect company earnings to recover within the next year.

But the recovery still faces several downside risks, including the availability and the distribution of vaccines to over 1.3 billion people in the country.

A resurgence in coronavirus cases in some parts of the country has led to renewed lockdowns, which is likely to further damage the ongoing supply-side disruptions such as transport, increasing the risk of high inflation for a prolonged period.

Indeed, retail inflation, which has remained above 4% - the middle-point of the Reserve Bank of India's target range of 2%-6% - for more than a year, was expected to average above the upper-end of that target this fiscal year.

Lebanon's Central Bank May Lower Obligatory Reserves Threshold

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's central bank is studying lowering the threshold for obligatory foreign exchange reserves in order to continue subsidizing key imports next year, as critically low reserves dwindle, an official source familiar with the matter said.

Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh met relevant ministers in Lebanon's caretaker government on Tuesday and one option under discussion is lowering the required reserve ratio from 15 percent to around 12 percent or 10 percent, the source told Reuters. Foreign exchange reserves currently stand at some \$17.9 billion with only \$800 million left for subsidizing fuel, wheat and medicine imports until the end of 2020, the source added.

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Salameh did not immediately respond to a Reuters' request for comment on the discussions or on reserves. On Aug. 27 he put foreign currency reserves at \$19.5 billion and obligatory reserves at \$17.5 billion.

"Starting 2021 you need a plan," the source said. "There will be a series of meetings. One option is lowering the reserves ratio from 15 percent to 12 percent or 10 percent, along with rationalizing subsidies spending. There is no decision yet."

Crushed by a mountain of debt, Lebanon is facing its worst crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war, ravaging the currency and sending prices soaring. There has been no progress in talks to form a new cabinet after the current government resigned in August following a massive explosion in the port of Beirut.

Many Lebanese have been plunged into poverty and are increasingly reliant on subsidized food. Reducing subsidies risks adding to public anger in a nation that was convulsed by protests as the financial crisis came to a head in October 2019. As dollar inflows have dried up, the central bank has provided foreign currency for fuel, wheat and medicine imports at an official peg of 1,507.5 Lebanese pounds to the dollar, well below the street rate that was above 8,000 on Wednesday.

Russia Plans to Scale Down State Domestic Borrowing After 2020

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's finance ministry plans to scale down selling of OFZ treasury bonds in 2021 and beyond, hoping the budget will no longer require massive borrowing as it did this year amid the global coronavirus crisis, a senior official said.

Running out of options to bolster public finances strained by the pandemic and the collapse of oil prices, its main export, Russia has more than doubled its domestic borrowing plan in 2020.

Russia has raised around 5.2 trillion roubles (\$68.84 billion) in OFZ bonds by end-November and eyes selling 3.7 trillion roubles worth of OFZs in 2021, said Pyotr Kazakevich, head of the state debt department at the finance ministry.

"We assume that 2020 is a unique year for the Russian budget and that such massive borrowing will not be needed in the coming years," Kazakevich told reporters late on Wednesday.

By the end of the year, Russia may need to borrow up to 350 billion roubles more, Kazakevich said, testing demand for various OFZ tenors.

On one auction day in late October, the finance ministry managed to borrow a record 436 billion roubles with the help of state-run banks, the main buyers of OFZ bonds that used to be popular among foreign investors thanks to lucrative yields.

OFZ yields fell this year as the Russian central bank slashed its key interest rate to a record low of 4.25% to support the economy with cheaper funds. But Russian yields remain attractive versus many of its peers.

Non-residents' share among holders of OFZs stays at 25-30%, having slipped recently as the finance ministry increased offering of OFZ with coupon payments pegged to money-market rates, so-called floaters, while foreigners prefer fixed coupon instead, Kazakevich said.

"We don't feel panic mood from non-residents now... We cannot rule out the imposition of new sanctions against state debt but we deem them unlikely as, to a large extent, it will be against the interests of foreign investors."

Shrugging off Washington's decision to impose restrictions for U.S. banks on buying sovereign Eurobonds directly from Russia, Russia tapped the global Eurobond market in November, raising 2 billion euros (\$2.38 billion).

France Orders Tech Giants To Pay Digital Tax

PARIS (Reuters) - France's finance ministry has sent out notices to big tech companies liable for its digital service tax to pay the levy as planned in December, the ministry said on Wednesday.

France suspended collection of the tax, which will hit companies like Facebook and Amazon, early this year while negotiations were underway at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on an overhaul of international tax rules.

The finance ministry has long said it would collect the tax in December as planned if the talks proved unfruitful by then, which is what happened when the nearly 140 countries involved agreed last month to keep negotiating until mid-2021.

"Companies subject to the tax have received their notice to pay the 2020 instalment," a ministry official said.

France last year applied a 3% levy on revenue from digital services earned in France by companies with revenues of more than 25 million euros there and 750 million euros worldwide.

Facebook's stance "is to ensure compliance with all tax laws in the jurisdictions where we operate", it said, adding it had received its tax bill from the French authorities.

Amazon has received a reminder from the French authorities to pay the tax, and will comply, according to a person familiar with the matter at the online retailer.

Paris has said it will withdraw the tax as soon as an OECD deal is reached to update the rules on cross-border taxation for the age of online commerce, where big internet companies can book profits in low-tax countries regardless of where their customers are.

The talks stalled as the Trump administration became reluctant to sign on to a multilateral agreement, officials have said.

"We will levy this digital taxation mid December as we always explained to the U.S. administration," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told a Bloomberg event on Monday.

One in Three Women, Girls Still Experience Violence at Some Point in Their Lives



TEHRAN (UNIC) - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director in her statement on the International Day to End Violence against Women, 25 November 2020 said that one in three women and girls still experience violence at some point in their lives.

The full text of Dr. Natalia Kanem statement reads:

Enough! That's what we say, today and every day, to all forms of violence against women and girls.

Enough to domestic violence. Enough to rape. Enough to harmful practices like female genital mutilation.

Women and girls have every right to live free from violence, everywhere. They have a right to peace in the home, in public and online.

Today, as we mark the International Day to End Violence against Women, it is a moment for everyone to pause and remember how far we have to go on this issue. A staggering one in three women and girls still experience violence at some point in their lives.

This year COVID-19 has fanned the flames. With women locked at home with abusers and household tensions high, calls for help skyrocketed. Many went unanswered because shelters and other services were shut down, but also because assistance is often still not enough, including in humanitarian crises.

We must do better. It is time to stand up and say enough to violence not just on one day, but 365 days a year. We must prevent violence. And until we end it, we must provide everything women and girls need to survive and recover, from physical and mental health care to legal aid and support for regaining livelihoods.

In over 130 countries, UNFPA teams are working tirelessly to help put a stop to violence against women and girls and to support those affected. Last year, UNFPA provided medical or psychosocial support services to more than 760,000 survivors of violence. In humanitarian settings in the first 10 months of 2020 alone, our prevention and response efforts have reached 2.8 million women and girls.

Yet and still, the international community needs to do more. COVID-19 reveals, painfully but instructively, all the ways we need to think and act differently. Saying enough to violence is at the top of the list. This starts with recognizing how pervasive violence is in all societies and disrupting the factors that feed it.

Enough to assumptions that violence is permissible or going away on its own. Enough to treating violence as anything less than a full-scale crisis that we must do everything in our power to stop.

Enough. One word to transform our world.

Acclaimed Iranian Actor Passes Away

TEHRAN (IP) – Acclaimed Iranian actor Parviz Pourhosseini, who had been hospitalized at hospital after contacting coronavirus passed away early Friday. Pourhosseini which was born on 11 September 1941 in Tehran, Iran, was an Iranian film, theatre and television actor. He is best known (outside of Iran) for his roles in Bashu, the Little

Stranger (1989), The Fifth Season (1997) and Saint Mary (1997). Other well-known films he has performed in include The Man Who Became a Mouse (1985), The Night It Happened (1988), Angel Day (1993), and Leila's Sleep (2007). He graduated with a bachelor's degree in performance arts from Tehran University's Faculty of Fine arts.



LatAm Gov'ts Facing Vaccine Distribution Challenges

MONTEVIDEO (AFP) - Cash-strapped Latin American governments face severe geographical, economic and social challenges in trying to ensure life-saving Covid-19 vaccines are made available to vulnerable populations, experts say.

Megacities like Sao Paulo, mountain ranges like the Andes as well as the vast Amazon basin pose just a few of the geographical problems for distributors, given the vital need to maintain the cold chain to preserve the vaccines.

Transporting vaccines "to the most distant parts of the big cities and to peripheral neighborhoods, with the need to conserve the cold chain, will be the first major challenge," Colombian epidemiologist Carlos Trillos told AFP.

Governments also face a race against time to provide training to those handling the doses throughout the cold chain, he said.

Amazon basin countries had an early taste of the geographical challenges ahead for their vaccination campaigns, after health workers struggled to provide care for three million indigenous people scattered throughout the rainforest, an area almost seven times the size of Spain.

Vaccine campaigners also worry about rampant disinformation in the continent worst-affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 12.5 million of the 630 million Latin Americans have been infected with the coronavirus and at least 435,000 have died, a third of the total number of deaths worldwide, according to AFP figures based on official data.

The process will be "challenging and costly" said Jarbas Barbosa, deputy director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

The organization expects to distribute vaccines in the region between March and May 2021 through Covax, a World Health Organization initiative to guarantee equal access for impoverished countries.

All Latin American and Caribbean countries have joined Covax, although some lack funds to purchase vaccines themselves, Barbosa said.

In any case Covax will only provide enough vaccines for 10 to 20 percent of the population, forcing many governments to sign separate bilateral agreements with laboratories and biotechnology companies. Countries in the region are having to spend significant amounts of money on these pre-purchases just as they are experiencing historic economic contractions from the impact of the pandemic.

Lower-income countries like Bolivia, Haiti, Guyana and several Caribbean island states are betting on the Covax-eligible status to receive vaccines without contributing funds. So is El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, recently battered by Hurricanes Iota and Eta.

Covax's latest projections estimate that vaccinating just 20 percent of the region's population will cost more than \$2 billion.

The vaccine will be free of charge, rolled out in a first phase for health professionals, essential workers and, in some cases, older people or those with conditions that put them at risk of developing a serious case of Covid-19.

Storing and distributing the vaccines is emerging as the main obstacle.

Among the companies leading the vaccine race, Pfizer/BioNTech require their doses being stored at temperatures around -70 degrees Celsius -- meaning they can only be distributed in large cities, experts said.

Maintaining the cold chain "is a challenge for all countries" said Barbosa.



One positive is that "there are more than 100 vaccines in development ... the others that are closer to concluding clinical trials use the same cold chain that countries already use," he said, in ranges of - 15 to -25 Celsius and 2 to 8 degrees Celsius.

Argentina, which has signed agreements that so far guarantee vaccines for 28 of its 44 million inhabitants, will deploy the army to ensure doses are distributed.

Peru, the Latin American country with the most deaths per million inhabitants (1,081), has so far secured 9.5 million vaccines and is negotiating with laboratories to cover 24.5 million of its 31 million inhabitants.

Venezuela signed a deal with Russia to receive 10 million Sputnik V vaccines in the first quarter of 2021, and Caracas said mass vaccinations would begin in April.

However, according to Virgilio Vasquez, head of local NGO Doctors United, the problem in Venezuela goes far beyond doubts over the infrastructure and equipment to support the cold chain.

"Vaccines have to reach not only large hospitals but also outpatient clinics in remote areas," he said.

Even if health centers were to receive the necessary equipment to ensure safe vaccine storage, health workers "will still have serious electrical problems, with regions where the power goes out for hours every day."

Vasquez, a specialist in epidemiological data processing, also said Venezuela's vaccination campaigners will lack fuel to power vehicles needed to distribute the vaccine because of a severe gasoline shortage. Brazil's vaccine campaign was well set "to reach the most remote areas," said Natalia Pasternak, microbiology professor at the University of Sao Paulo.

However, the major obstacle there could come from pandemic skeptic President Jair Bolsonaro "and the eventual resistance of the population" to vaccination, she said.

Pakistanis Join Final Trials For China-Made Vaccine



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Thousands of volunteers are flocking to research hospitals across Pakistan to join final-stage clinical trials of a Chinese-made vaccine for the coronavirus.

It is the first time Pakistan has participated in such a trial, which comes amid a string of positive vaccine announcements by Western pharmaceutical companies this month.

The vaccine is being developed by CanSinoBio and the Beijing Institute of Biotechnology China.

"I have volunteered myself for a noble cause that will help humanity," said a volunteer at Islamabad's Shifa hospital, where hundreds of participants are being paid about \$50 for their trouble.

Others should "step forward and take part in this noble cause which will save lives," he added.

For years, China has focused much of its attention in Pakistan on mammoth development projects, bankrolling the construction of roads, power plants and a strategic port.

Beijing has now tapped one of its closest allies to participate in the vaccine trials, despite Pakistan's chequered history with inoculation campaigns.

"We hope to have some findings ready about the accuracy and efficacy of the vaccine in two to three months," Ejaz Ahmad Khan, the principal researcher overseeing the trial in Pakistan, told AFP.

Officials said Pakistan has already inoculated about 7,000 of the 10,000 participants expected to receive a jab.

The trials come with intensive care wards across the country nearing capacity as a second, deadlier wave of the coronavirus spreads and officials struggle to counter public indifference to the pandemic. The country has confirmed more than 382,000 cases including over 7,800 deaths since the virus arrived in late February.

Less than a year after the coronavirus that has claimed 1.4 million lives began spreading across the globe, a number of highly promising Covid-19 vaccines are on the cusp of release.

World Airlines Vow to Keep Fighting

PARIS (Reuters) - For an industry that prides itself on bringing people together, it was a particular humiliation for airlines to have to resort to video conferencing for their annual industry meeting this week - and not one they are ready to repeat.

Brought to their knees by the COVID-19 pandemic and struggling to convince governments to replace quarantines with testing, airlines turned to veteran IAG boss Willie Walsh to lead industry association IATA from next April.

"My style will be different from what has gone before me," said Walsh, known to British Airways unions as something of a bruiser, as he thanked outgoing IATA chief Alexandre de Juniac.

"I too am a businessman and I too understand how governments operate, but I'm even more unhappy and more critical of how they get things done (and) how they've failed to get things done."

Without a doubt, this will be Walsh's biggest challenge yet.

Iran, Russia...

FROM PAGE 1

She noted the mass-production of these two Russian vaccines has begun, and at the moment, both vaccines are passing through final stages of being tested on volunteers who reportedly number 40,000," she said.

Meanwhile Iranian specialists at a domestic knowledge-based company succeeded in designing and producing COVID-19 rapid antigen diagnostic test kits. With the special support of the capability of the domestic potentials, the young Iranian scientists managed to launch the production line of corona rapid diagnosis kits.

This test was performed on approximately 500 patients under the supervision of the Pasteur Institute of Iran and is completely approved clinically.

The kit has gone through all the appropriate research processes and standards with over 85 percent detection power, which is higher than PCR tests.

These coronavirus rapid test kits will be used mainly in health centers, health houses, and hospitals and can be used for outpatients and provide access to people in remote and deprived areas of the country.

Chinese-made COVID-19 rapid test kits are based on antibody but Iranian-made coronavirus diagnostic test kits are based on 'antigen' that is able to diagnose the disease in the shortest time possible.

Iran is among the top 5 countries in the world producing the COVID-19 rapid test kits.

The speed and ease of testing are the advantages of these kits.

The result of other detection tests take 48 to 72 hours, but the results of the rapid detection kits will be announced in less than 20 minutes.

U.S. Accused of...

FROM PAGE 1

"Underlining the importance of a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and UN-facilitated political process, we continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and the SRSG Pedersen for the political settlement of the Syrian crisis. Iran will spare no efforts to that end," he said.

Takht-Ravanchi continued, "In this context, useful consultations including on the work of the Constitutional Committee took place during the recent visit of Mr. Pedersen to Tehran where he met with our Foreign Minister and other high-ranking officials," saying, "Supporting the Constitutional Committee, which must operate without any external interference or pressure or setting any artificial deadline to conclude its work, we are hopeful that the true interests of the Syrian people will prevail over all interests."

"While the Syrian people are facing challenges of conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, avoiding to assist the return of refugees will only increase and prolong their sufferings, which has already been deteriorated due to the imposition of inhumane unilateral sanctions by the United States," he said.

Iran UN envoy stressed, "The international community should not leave the Syrian people alone in their struggle to overcome the threats of terrorism and foreign occupation as well as economic terrorism resulting from these unlawful sanctions."

Memoirs Business...

FROM PAGE 1

As all know well, Obama was the U.S. President between 2009 and 2017. He has compiled his memoirs in a two-volume collection whose first volume with the title of "A Promised Land" in 768 pages was released on November 17, 2020 by Crown Publishing Group, affiliated to Penguin Books publishing company. After amazing sale of the book in the opening day of its release, Obama acknowledged that this amazing sale of the book was indebted to Joe Biden's victory in the presidential election against Donald Trump. His remark indicates that the contents have nothing to do with attractive items for its sales which led to such a volume of sales in Canada and the U.S.

Obama in the very beginning of his book points to the current abnormal condition in the U.S. and writes, "What I never predicted, besides difficulty in putting the words on the paper, has been the trend of events in almost three and a half years since my last flight with Air Force One. Now that I am seating here (and writing the book), the country is still challenging with a global pandemic and its consequent economic crisis; over 178,000 people (currently the number has exceeded 262,000) have lost their lives, businesses have collapsed and millions of people have lost their jobs. People nationwide from all walks of life poured into streets to protest the deaths of black men and women at the hands of police. Maybe the most worrisome issue is that it seems our democracy is tottering on the edge of precipice of crisis; a crisis rooted in a fundamental conflict between two opposite approaches about this point that what is the U.S. and what it must be; a crisis which has caused division, anger and distrust in the political body of the U.S. and caused continuous violations of structural norms, process measures and commitment to the primary truths that once both Republicans and Democrats took it for granted."

Of course I will not be content with this part of Obama's remarks and as soon as I get the book, I will quote more interesting parts of it in my articles, but isn't describing the current condition of the U.S. in just two sentences by a former president whose political party has won the election an evidence to what the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has said that the U.S. like the Titanic ship will ultimately sink?

Araqchi...

FROM PAGE 1

Araqchi said he went to the airport at the time of the prisoner swap to make the final arrangements and make sure that the Iranian diplomats' year-long efforts and hundreds of hours of political consultations would yield results.

"I had the honor of receiving my three dear fellow countrymen. After the arrival of the three persons and making sure about their health, the order for the transfer of the Australian prisoner was issued," Araqchi added.

The exchange of prisoners is customary and accepted by the international norms, and is by no means in violation of the sovereignty of the Judiciary, the deputy minister underlined, adding, "In all countries, after the judicial procedures are over and a person is sentenced to prison, the possibility will be opened up for an exchange. In our country, this is possible with the approval of the Supreme National Security Council. The other countries have their respective procedures."

Araqchi finally noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has made arrangements for at least five cases of prisoner swap over the past year, pointing to exchanges with the US, France, Thailand, and Australia that resulted in the release of eight Iranians (including academics and people involved in countering sanctions) for six foreign inmates held in Iran.

Islamabad...

FROM PAGE 1

Addressing weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said the best approach would be to engage with Iran.

"On JCPOA we believe that negotiated settlement through dialogue was an optimum outcome," he said.

He went on to say that "we have played a reconciliatory role in the past and we are again ready to play our part to ease tensions".

Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan while giving an interview to a Pakistani news channel GNN on November 13 said if newly-elected US President Joe Biden decides to return to the JCPOA it would be in Pakistan's interest.

He strongly believed if the U.S. comes back to the JCPOA it would open new opportunities for enhancing trade between Iran and Pakistan.

Pakistan Cricketers Positive for Covid-19

WELLINGTON (AFP) - Pakistan's cricket tour of New Zealand was in the balance Thursday after six squad members tested positive for Covid-19 and the team received a "final warning" for flouting quarantine rules.

New Zealand health authorities revoked the Pakistan players' ability to train while in isolation at their Christchurch hotel, making clear they would not tolerate risky behaviour in a country that has largely eradicated the virus.

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ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Murray Joins Calls for Domestic Abuse Policy in Tennis

LONDON (Reuters) - Former world number one Andy Murray has joined Novak Djokovic in urging men's tennis governing body ATP to come up with a policy on domestic abuse following allegations made against German Alexander Zverev by his ex-girlfriend Olga Sharypova.

In an interview, former tennis player Sharypova said Zverev was emotionally and physically abusive to her. The U.S. Open runner-up has repeatedly denied the allegations.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2020

Bayern, Man City Through to Champions League Last 16

LONDON (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski set Bayern Munich on the way to a 3-1 Champions League win over Salzburg on Wednesday as the holders joined Manchester City in qualifying for the last 16 with two group games to spare, while Liverpool went down to defeat and Marseille are now the owners of an unwanted record.

On a night when clubs marked news of the death of Diego Maradona by holding a minute's silence in memory of the Argentine before all Champions League games, Bayern eased to a record-extending 15th straight win in the competition.

Lewandowski scored the opener just before half-time at an empty Allianz Arena, his 14th goal of the season and also his 71st altogether in the Champions League, leaving him level with Real Madrid great Raul in third place on the all-time list behind Cristiano Ronaldo (131) and Lionel Messi (118).

Kingsley Coman scored Bayern's second and then crossed for Leroy Sane to head in their third, before Mergim Berisha pulled a goal back for the Austrian champions.

Marc Roca was sent off for Bayern, but they have a maximum 12 points and are guaranteed to advance as Group A winners, while Atletico Madrid sit second but continue to toil in Europe this season after being held 0-0 at home by Lokomotiv Moscow.

Pep Guardiola's City earlier secured progress as Phil Foden swept in from a Raheem Sterling back-heel to secure a 1-0 win away to Olympiakos in Greece, their fourth win out of four in Group C.

City had 21 attempts on goal and their bluntness in attack is a source of concern, even if their European progress provides a tonic to their mediocre Premier League form.

"It will come, we would love to do more, but one day it will come and will break everything," said Guardiola, whose side now just need a point from their final two matches to top the group.

Second-place Porto are on the brink of joining them in qualifying after a 2-0 win at Marseille, which was the French side's 13th consecutive defeat in the competition stretching over three campaigns going back to 2011-12.

Hamilton Aiming For More Records and A New Contract

MANAMA (AFP) - Lewis Hamilton goes into this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix aiming to continue his record-breaking romp this year and make a successful start on final talks to stay with Mercedes in 2021 and beyond.

The newly-crowned seven-time champion will be bidding to claim a fourth career victory at the Sakhir Circuit, where he won last year, and seal his own future with the champion team.

Despite clinching his record-equalling seventh drivers' title in Turkey two weeks ago, the 35-year-old Briton and his Mercedes team have no intention of easing off in the final triple-header of three floodlit Middle Eastern races of this Covid-19 affected season.

"It's a bit more chilled now, but I still have three races ahead of me that I really want to win," said Hamilton, following his momentous victory at Istanbul, his 10th this season.

"It's important for us all to keep working and to maintain our momentum. There is no thought of us slowing down."

Hamilton, now established as the most successful driver in Formula One history, has never won more than 11 races in a season, but has a chance to do that this weekend.

He can go on to reach a total of 13 wins if he triumphs in the following Sakhir Grand Prix, at the same track, and the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, on the two following weekends.

If he does that, he will be only the third driver to claim 13 victories in a season, following fellow-seven-time champion Michael Schumacher and four-time champion Sebastian Vettel.

Hamilton has already overtaken Schumacher's record of 91 wins and is now on 94. He also holds the records for most poles, with 97, and most podium finishes, with 163 — feats that he is likely to surpass next year if, as expected, he stays with Mercedes.

The champions have already clinched their record seventh consecutive title triumph, but they have not yet agreed a new contract with Hamilton beyond this year. Talks are expected to take place during the next three weeks.

The Nigerian Zaidu Sanusi gave Porto the lead six minutes before half-time and Sergio Oliveira scored a second-half penalty after on-loan Liverpool midfielder Marko Grujic had been sent off for the Portuguese side.

Marseille, who had defender Leonardo Balerdi sent off, cannot now qualify for the last 16.

"We have hit rock-bottom," said Marseille coach Andre Villas-Boas.



Nadal Leads Tennis World in Paying Respect to Maradona

MADRID (Reuters) - Spaniard Rafael Nadal led the tennis world in paying tribute to Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona who died at the age of 60 on Wednesday after suffering a heart attack.

"Today the world of sports in general and football in particular has a void," Nadal, who is tied with Roger Federer for a record 20 Grand Slam singles titles, said on Twitter.

"One of the greatest sportsmen in history, Diego Maradona, has left us. What he did in football will remain. My deepest and most heartfelt condolences to his family, the world of football, and to all of Argentina."

The men's ATP Tour remembered Maradona, who took Argentina to World Cup glory in 1986,

with a social media post saying "A champion and icon loved by all", accompanied with a picture of Maradona with Federer.

Argentina's Diego Schwartzman, who said recently his parents named him after Maradona like many others in the country after the World Cup victory, paid tribute in a social media post.

"How could you not be named Diego? I love you forever D10S ('god')," the current world number nine wrote.

And former U.S. Open champion Juan Martin Del Potro joined fellow Argentines in mourning the loss of Maradona, widely regarded as one of the greatest soccer players of all time.

"I feel like you're returning to where you belong, to HEAVEN. For me you will never die," said del Potro.

Ibrahimovic Drops Sweden Return Hint Ahead of Euros

MILAN (Dispatches) - AC Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic said that he missed playing for Sweden and hinted that he may be open to a return to the national side for next year's Euros.

The 39-year-old, who retired from international football after the World Cup in 2016, opened the door for a return after being awarded Sweden's Footballer of the Year award for an astonishing 12th time.

"If you ask me I'll be honest: yes, I miss the national team," he told Swedish daily Aftonbladet. "It's no secret."

"The one who does not miss it, he has already finished his career. And I have not finished my career."

Ibra, who scored 62 goals in 116 internationals, has been in impressive form for AC Milan since his summer move, heading the Serie A scoring charts with 10 goals already this season.

He was more opaque, however, when asked directly how would he respond if coach Janne Andersson called him.

"Give me time, I have to think about it," said Ibrahimovic.

Without him, Sweden qualified directly for the Euros where they will face Spain, Poland and Slovakia there. But a poor Nations League campaign which produced one win and five losses, and resulted in relegation from the A Group has rekindled thoughts of an Ibrahimovic return.

In November, he posted an old photo of himself on social media, wearing a Sweden shirt and the captain's armband with the phrase "Long time no see".

Andersson appeared less enamoured of the idea when he was also cornered by Aftonbladet. "I'm pretty annoyed," said Andersson.

"He told me in 2016 that he wanted to retire and I respected his choice. So now it's up to him.



Argentines Bid Farewell To Maradona as Nation Mourns Hero

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Argentines lined up in the streets of Buenos Aires on Thursday to say goodbye to soccer great Diego Maradona, whose casket lay in state at the Casa Rosada presidential palace draped in an Argentine flag and his famous no. 10 shirt.

Maradona, Argentina's favorite son whose life was marred by struggles with addiction, died aged 60 following a heart attack at home on Wednesday. Huge crowds are expected to pay their respects as part of three days of national mourning.

Early on Thursday, thousands had already formed a snaking line through the streets near the central Plaza de Mayo after a night of mourning and reminiscing. Some scuffles broke out as fans tried to get inside the palace to see their hero.

"Maradona for me is the greatest thing that happened to me in life. I love him as much as my father and it's like my old man died," Cristian Montelli, 22, a fan of the star's former club Boca Juniors said with tears in his eyes.

"If I die young, hopefully upstairs I can play ball and watch a Boca game with him," added Montelli, who had a tattoo of Maradona's face on his leg, after he saw the casket.

Maradona's body lay in a wooden coffin with the blue and white national flag and an Argentina soccer jersey with the number 10 that had been part of his nickname "D10S" - a play on "dios", the Spanish word for God.

Fans held back by a barrier threw soccer shirts, flowers and other items towards the casket as they tried to get near the player, who was a hero in Argentina and beyond both on and off the pitch despite his well-documented flaws.

